



At least 11 people

have been killed

allegedly by

August 5.

muggers since





DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 22, 2024

REGD. No. DA 781 Vol. XXXIV No. 331 POUSH 7, 1431 BS www.thedailystar.net JAMADIUS SANI 19, 1446 HIJRI 16 PAGES: TK 15.00

City dwellers on edge as mugging runs rampant

Beefed-up patrolling hardly making any difference

RAFIUL ISLAM

A young man slips between vehicles stuck in traffic at night and snatches a phone through an open car window with astonishing swiftness at the capital's Asad Gate.

As he steals the phone, two other men, one of them holding a machete,

stand nearby. And the three of them disappear within seconds. Video footage of the incident on December 16, filmed by someone in a

nearby car, went viral on social media. According to police, incidents of mugging and snatching have significantly increased in recent months, with commuters feeling

concerned about their safety. Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali have ordered increasing patrols and setting up checkpoints. But these measures are hardly

making an impact. According to the police database, at least 22 cases were filed with Dhaka metropolitan police stations over mugging in September, 43 in SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Cars torched at the Department of Disaster Management during the July uprising lie abandoned on the Mohakhali-Gulshan Road, obstructing vehicular and pedestrian movements. The photo was taken vesterday.

Police listing extortionists, planning drive against them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali has said the police are making a list of extortionists and will soon launch drives to arrest

He made announcement during a meeting with police SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



No place for Islamic extremism in Bangladesh

Says Yunus in an interview with The Economist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamic extremism will never find a place in Bangladesh again, said Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus recently.

"I can assure that's not taking place at all. These are very enthusiastic young people -- they are very neutral about their religion," Yunus told the weekly British magazine The Economist's foreign editor Patrick

Foulis in an interview recently. Yunus's response came when Foulis mentioned both American and Indian officials have warned that there

is some risk of Islamic extremism coming back in Bangladesh. The interview was taken on the occasion of Bangladesh being selected as The Economist's country of the year for 2024, an accolade that the influential magazine hands out every year to a country it deems to



be the most improved country in the world. "But for toppling a despot and taking strides towards a more liberal government, Bangladesh is our country of the year," The Economist said. In response, Yunus said: "Oh, we are delighted. We feel very proud that

we made a big change because of the student uprising that took place. And from then on, we are saying we are creating a new Bangladesh."

The youth want to build a new Bangladesh, he said. "Young people can change the whole world. It's not about changing one country or another country. What Bangladesh has done is one example of how powerful this young generation is. Let's pay attention to

the young people.' He said particular attention must be given to the young women. "Young girls played a very important role in the Bangladeshi uprising."

They were on the frontline just like any other young person in the country. We should be paying attention to the young girls, young boys and make sure they can fulfil their dreams. If they have the opportunity, they have the capacity to do that."

Top officials face off over promotions

BAHARAM KHAN

Top government officials are at odds over promotions, positions and associated privileges, with a section announcing a pen-down strike to press home their demands.

Yesterday, officers from the 25 cadres announced a pen-down strike for December 24 from 11:00am to 12:00pm and also planned a rally in Dhaka on January 4.

Although the administration cadre has not announced any formal programme yet, their junior officers are pressing for tougher measures, including work abstention.

Meanwhile, District Commissioners (DCs) from all 64 districts have issued statements opposing the movement.

Administrative experts, however, argue that such actions are against the conduct rules for government employees.

"Government employees cannot stage pen-down or work stoppage programme such actions, especially during a national crisis, are unacceptable," said AKM Abdul Awal Mazumder, a former secretary.

The reality is that actions by admin cadre employees following political changes in the past have set problematic precedents, including physical altercations and sit-ins, even at the highest levels, he said.

In the past, the discriminatory quota system meant many top scorers in the BCS exams were unable to secure their desired cadres.

"Hence, the 25 percent quota for other cadres in the Deputy Secretary post was logical. However, with

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Has IMF experiment delivered?

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

Two years after Bangladesh turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) IMF for assistance, Bangladesh initially for a \$4.7 billion bailout to address its resisted. In July 2022, AHM Mustafa worsening macroeconomic pressures, the nation stands at

a crossroads. While the programme has provided some respite, the question remains: Has it steered the country away from the brink of financial crisis, or merely postponed a reckoning?

The economic

turbulence began in earnest after the IMF's loan programme, committing to Covid-19 pandemic when the Russia- a series of structural reforms. Two years Ukraine war sent shockwaves through later, the depletion of foreign exchange global markets. Bangladesh's foreign reserves slowed and eventually stabilised exchange reserves began to deplete at around \$20 billion, yet the country's rapidly, and inflation surged, squeezing

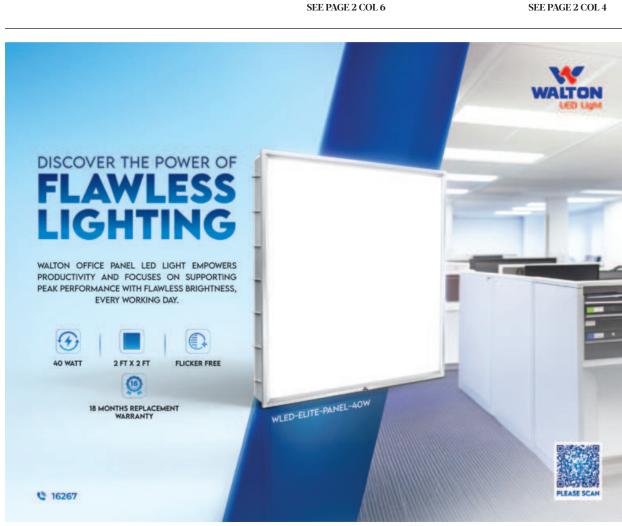
millions of low- and fixed-income households. As regional neighbours Sri Lanka and Pakistan raced to the Kamal, the then-finance minister,

dismissed the need for an IMF bailout. Yet, within days, he reversed course, appealing to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva for emergency financial support.

By January 2023, Bangladesh had formally entered the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

- Bangladesh stabilises foreign reserves around \$20b
- Continues to grapple with inflation
- Progress in transitioning to market-driven interest rates
- Broader tax reforms remain inadequate





India reacts to Mahfuj Alam's deleted FB post

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has strongly protested a status update posted on the verified Facebook profile of Adviser Mahfuj Alam.

The social media post that was taken down within hours of being posted on December 16, stated that Bangladesh would not be able to overcome its challenges in its current location and advocated for an expanded geographic existence comprising parts of several Indian provinces on India's eastern flank.

Responding to a question from a journalist on Friday, Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India had taken this up with the Bangladesh government. "We have actually strongly registered our protest on this issue. We understand that the post...has been taken down.

"We would like to remind all concerned to be mindful of their public comments."

He added that India has repeatedly signalled interest in fostering relations with the people and the interim government of Bangladesh, "such comments underline the need for responsibility in public articulation".



People, mostly women, looking to buy essential commodities at subsidised rates form a queue and waited patiently in the port city's Chandgaon area since 8:00am yesterday for a TCB truck, which is yet to arrive when the photo was taken around 11:00am. Limited-income groups have been under pressure for a long time from rising commodity prices and are dependent on TCB's discount goods.

Devotee killed, valuables looted at Natore crematorium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a devotee with his hands and legs tied from Kashimpur crematorium and temple at Natore Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Tarun Kumar Dash, 55, a resident of Alaipur area.

Police and locals primarily suspect that he was killed by criminals, who stormed into the temple and looted cash and valuables anytime between Friday night and early yesterday.

The crematorium and temple management committee's General Secretary Satyanarayan Roy said the crematorium staffers and guards completed evening rituals on Friday and subsequently left the temple after locking it like other days.

The staffers returned to the crematorium yesterday morning and saw Tarun's body lying on the corridor.

"I got a phone call from one of our temple's staffers at around 9:00am. I rushed to the spot and found that the body's hands and legs were tied with rope," he said.

"The temple's donation box was broken, and the cash was looted. Utensils made of brass that were used for puja and other rituals were looted. These utensils weighing around three to four mounds are worth around Tk 200,000," Satvanaravan told

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Has IMF experiment delivered?

economic challenges remain formidable. Inflation continues to bite, contrasting sharply with Sri Lanka, where IMF-backed measures have tamed spiralling prices and steadied the economy.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES AND DELAYED ACTION

Economists argue that Bangladesh's crisis was never as severe as Sri Lanka's, but poor policy choices exacerbated its vulnerabilities. For years, the Hasina-government maintained rigid controls on interest and foreign exchange rates, which stifled economic flexibility and delayed necessary reforms.

In April 2020, the central bank capped lending rates at 9 percent and deposit rates at 6 percent to spur cheap borrowing and boost GDP growth. While global interest rates surged over the past two years, Bangladesh clung to these caps, fuelling excessive credit growth and weakening monetary discipline. leaned heavily on the central bank to finance its deficits, undermining its purported contractionary monetary

Adding to these internal missteps, the country faced an unprecedented electricity tariffs and steps toward series of external shocks. "When liberalising fuel prices are underway the programme started, we didn't have the effects of Russia's war Hussain noted that while unifying approach the IMF early in its crisis on Ukraine. We didn't have the financial inflationary pressures, which became much larger as the programme progressed. Commodity prices soared, and as we know, Bangladesh imports a lot of its food and commodities. These are three shocks, almost one after the other," Chris Papageorgiou, head of the IMF staff team for Bangladesh, said at a media briefing in Dhaka on

Papageorgiou further highlighted the socio-political turmoil that disrupted progress. "As we were making progress and the shocks

were hitting, we then had the meaningful reforms have been uprising in the months of July and August, which is, as you can imagine, another major socio-political shock," he noted.

The IMF programme has forced a reckoning. By mid-2023, Bangladesh abandoned its fixed interest rate regime and began transitioning to market-driven mechanisms. Similarly, long-standing inefficiencies tied to multiple exchange rates were addressed, unifying rates under IMF directives. While necessary, these steps were long overdue, said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.

REFORMS FALL SHORT OF **AMBITION**

Despite progress in some areas, Bangladesh has struggled to meet key targets set under the IMF programme. During its first review, the government fell short of its revenue collection target. This shortfall forced greater reliance At the same time, the government on domestic bank borrowing, exacerbating money supply growth and keeping inflation elevated.

Tax reforms -- a central pillar of the IMF's agenda -- have been halfhearted at best. Adjustments to incomplete. Zahid remain the exchange rates and lifting interest rate caps were significant achievements, the absence of broader fiscal reforms continues to

hinder progress. LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's experience offers a sharp contrast. After its IMF bailout, the country enacted sweeping reforms, including granting independence to its central bank. These measures brought inflation under control. restored financial stability, and bolstered confidence in its banking system.

Bangladesh,

limited. Public expenditure remains inefficient, and financial sector overhauls have been more cosmetic than substantive, said Professor Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling. "The previous government failed to seize the opportunity to enact decisive reforms. What we've seen so far are surface-level changes, insufficient to yield meaningful outcomes," he said. THE ROAD AHEAD

While foreign exchange reserves have stabilised somewhat, the broader economic benefits of the IMF programme remain elusive. The current government faces a formidable dual challenge: reining in inflation and tackling structural inefficiencies. Monetary tightening has shown early signs of progress, but inflationary pressures are deeply entrenched and linked to systemic

The IMF, too, has drawn criticism for its role in the programme's uneven execution. "The IMF's reviews often offered a rosier picture than reality, failing to hold the government accountable for unmet reforms," said Raihan. He called for greater vigilance and transparency in future evaluations.

Bangladesh's decision was commendable, experts agree. But the programme's potential remains unfulfilled without comprehensive reforms. "The country sought help at an early stage, which was wise," said Raihan. "But without sustained reforms, the programme risks becoming a missed opportunity."

As Bangladesh navigates its economic future, the urgency of reform looms larger than ever. Whether the country can translate IMF prescriptions into lasting stability will determine whether this chapter is remembered as a turning however, point -- or a temporary reprieve.

Police listing extortionists

officers, students, and residents of the Ramna area at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the capital's Kakrail yesterday.

"Extortion is causing the prices of daily necessities to surge, exacerbating the sufferings of lowerand middle-income groups.'

He warned that no one involved in extortion would be spared. "We are preparing an updated list of extortionists, and it will be completed within a day or two, and then we will take action against them."

Meanwhile, Sazzat Ali expressed his desire to bring order to the city streets, as residents suffer greatly from the city's perennial traffic problem.

"Political parties have the right to hold programmes, but if they are arranged on the streets haphazardly, daily commuters get stuck for several

Noting the increasing number of battery-run rickshaws, the DMP chief urged the authorities to enforce a licensing system for these vehicles so that they don't appear on the road so easily, causing congestion.

Regarding street vendors, he said it is inhumane to evict them entirely and put them out of a living.

However, he urged street vendors to practice discipline and refrain from occupying the roads, also requesting them not to pay extortion.

Top officials face off

FROM PAGE 1

the recent reduction of quotas in recruitment, the justification for these quotas in higher positions has diminished," Mazumder added.

The public administration reform commission recently proposed a 50:50 quota between the admin cadre and the other 25 cadres for the deputy secretary posts. Currently, the ratio stands at 75:25.

Officials from the admin cadre Association (BASA). argue that the deputy secretary position is exclusive to their cadre.

Although the 25 percent quota for other cadres was acceptable due to a court ruling, any further revision would necessitate reserving all positions for the administration cadre, they said.

On the other hand, officers from the other 25 cadres are demanding competitive exams promotions to the deputy secretary and higher posts as the posts belong to the government -- and not to any specific cadre -- and should therefore be accessible to all on equal terms.

Interestingly, they are not demanding similar exams for cadres, including the admin cadre. The remaining 25 cadres have

promotions within their own cadres.

Currently, the government has 26

admin cadre has refrained from joining the movement officially. "At this critical time, our priority is to

united in their protest, while the

provide the government with maximum support. The existing promotion system has been resolved at the highest court, and we trust the Reform Commission to make sound decisions on the matter," said Anwar Ullah, president of the Bangladesh Administrative Service

On the other hand, Muhammad Mofizur Rahman, coordinator of the "Inter-Cadre Disparity Removal Council" said: "Senior service pool positions, including that of deputy secretary, do not belong to any specific cadre."

The admin cadre incorporated the positions into their structure after repealing the 1975 Service Act, which is a significant barrier to creating a welfare-oriented state, he said.

"We are appointed to solve problems, not create them. It is true that there is discontent among our junior officers, but we are urging them to remain patient," said Mahbubur Rahman, general secretary of BASA.

Reform Commission comprises experienced individuals who will undoubtedly make balanced decisions, he added.

Ctg Bar probe body members

FROM PAGE 12

formed the five-member probe committee to investigate the clashes, vandalism, and murder incident centring the bail hearing of former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, also the spokesperson for Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote."

"As the whole incident is sensational and much-talked across the world, I have recommended a judicial probe by a judicial judge or district judge for the sake of fair investigation, avoiding controversy, and ensuring justice. Lawyers cannot properly investigate such an incident as it may involve police officers, administrative personnel, and court officials," he said.

CDBA Secretary Ashraf Hossain Chowdhury told journalists that the head of the investigation committee and its four other members have sought to be relieved from committee and have made various recommendations.

A decision on the next steps will be taken at the association's meeting

No place

He cited the case of the "three of the young people who led the uprising' and are in his cabinet.

"They are doing an excellent job. They are capable. They are not the young people of the previous centuries -- they are young people of this century. They are as capable as anybody else."

Asked what he would do after the 'election is held in 2025 elections", Yunus said: "I was actually taken away from my job. I was forced into this work. I was doing my job. I was enjoying it -- that's why I was in Paris. I was dragged out of Paris to do something else. So I'll be happy to go back to my work that I always did and enjoyed all my life -- the young people love it. So I go back to that team and that movement that I tried to generate around the world.

A night of unity, music, remembrance

enriched with a graffiti exhibition on the July Revolution, stage dramas, and the Mugdha Water Zone.

The gates opened at 2:30pm, and the event ran from 4:00pm to 11:00pm.

Qawwali band Silsila opened the show with a soulful performance, after which rappers Hannan and Shezan energised the crowd with songs like "Kotha Ko", "Risk", and "Din Bodol".

slightly Logistical issues dampened the experience, and our photojournalists even reported restricted access to media and criticised the inadequate sound system at the venue.

However, the crowd's enthusiasm

remained undeterred. Aftermath Bangladesh took to the stage next, delivering powerful performances, including tracks like "Odhikar", "Utshorgo", and

"Hoongkar". Around 6:30pm, popular band Chirkutt captivated the audience withastirringinstrumentalrendition of the "Amar Sonar Bangla" – the national anthem, followed by hits like "Ahare Jibon", "Jadur Shohor", and "Na Bujhi Duniya". Lead vocalist Sharmin Sultana Sumi's heartfelt performance brought an emotional depth to their performance.

Notably, the concert's atmosphere faced challenges, with reports of

terms and conditions not being enforced. The highlight of the evening was

at 8:30pm with their timeless song of -- a nation of hope and freedom." 'Poth Chola". Vocalist George Lincoln D'Costa

and bandmate Sumon paid tribute to the July martyrs with renditions of "Maago Tomar Bhabna Keno" and "Teer Hara Ei Dheuer Shagor", resonating deeply with the audience. They also performed iconic songs "Oniket Prantor", "Dhushor Shomoy", and "Dukkho Bilash".

After that, four advisers took to the stage along with Syed Ahmed Maroof, the Pakistani high commissioner to Dhaka, who expressed his satisfaction with the event.

"I am overwhelmed by this wonderful concert and the crowd's energy. 'Ami tomake onek beshi bhalobashi Bangladesh [I love you very much, Bangladesh]'.'

Farida Akhter, adviser to the fisheries and livestock ministry, said, "The martyrs gave their lives to give us a new Bangladesh. Justice for their sacrifices must be achieved; our war is not over."

Youth and Sports Adviser concert was not just a musical Asif Mahmud, reflected on the significance of the event.

"In 2021, as a member of Silsila, we performed Qawwali at TSC amidst shape Bangladesh's journey towards attacks by the fascist regime's student a brighter future.

open sales of tobacco and certain organisation. Today, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan's presence on this stage symbolises how far we've come. Let us honour the wounded and martyrs by Artcell's performance, beginning building the Bangladesh they dreamt

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan took the stage at 9:50pm.

"Bangladesh, ami bhalobashi [I love you Bangladesh]. Dear brothers and sisters, I am from Pakistan, and we are here to bring love and peace to you all," he said as he graced the floor.

The musician opened with the soulful "Tuna Jane Asma Se Khuda" from the film "Anjaana Anjaani".

He later introduced his son, Shazmaan Khan, who performed a selection of classics by the legendary stad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Continuing with "Sanu Ek Pal Chain" followed by "Nit Khair Mangda" from the film "Raid", "Ore Priya Re" from the film "Aaja Nachle", and "Zaroori Tha", "Mere Rashke Qamar".

Rahat mesmerised the audience with a heartfelt performance of his timeless hits, evoking both nostalgia and excitement.

The "Echoes of Revolution" celebration but a powerful reminder of unity and resilience, paying tribute to the sacrifices that continue to

City dwellers on edge as mugging runs rampant

October, and 31 in November. Law enforcers say the actual number of mugging is much higher

as many victims do not report the crime. They add that petty crimes started rising across the city after

August 5, the day the Awami League government fell amid a mass uprising and the law enforcers deserted their At least 11 people have been killed

allegedly by muggers since August 5. On December 18, a apparel trader named Kamrul Hasan, 23, was stabbed to death by muggers right after he stepped off a bus on Mayor

Hanif Flyover. The muggers took away his mobile phone and Tk 3,000, according to a case filed later.

Yesterday, police arrested two suspects aged 16 and 17 in the Jatrabari area. Officers said they stabbed Kamrul because he tried to hold on to his phone.

and killed Zarraf Ahmed, a software engineer, in Darussalam area. He was returning home after

On August 27, muggers stabbed

the bus stop, he took a rickshaw which the muggers intercepted around 5:00am. As he tried to protect his belongings, they stabbed him and took away his phone, laptop and cash, police said.

The gangs typically target individuals returning from abroad or are alone at late-night hours, officials said.

motorcycles and flee after snatching mobile, cash, handbags, ornaments and other valuables by brandishing guns or knives.

gangs sometimes use

Naimur Rahman, a photographer with the Ittefaq, was mugged and assaulted in the Mohammadpur area November 13 night. "I was on foot. Four or five men

blocked my path and dragged me into an alley and hit me. One of them had a machete. The muggers took my camera, backup batteries, phone, and cash," he told The Daily Star.

Mohammadpur police arrested four suspects and could recover the camera only.

Law enforcers say when the interim government made a major reshuffle in DMP many officers from outside visiting his parents in Naogaon. From were posted in the capital.

These officers lack experience with urban crime patterns and familiarity with hotspots, streets, and neighborhoods. They also do not have reliable networks of informants. Senior officers believe it may take a long time to address these challenges.

Lt Col Munim Ferdous, legal and media wing director at Rab, said, "We are analysing the locations and times of these incidents. Based on this data, battalions are being deployed to intensify patrols, strengthen checkpoints, and increase other activities in those areas.

"Rab is also analysing its database to find out whether new individuals are getting involved in mugging."

On December 15, Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said, "We have asked the police to increase patrolling [in early hours] to decrease mugging."

Yesterday, DMP Commissioner Sazzat said, "Mugging has increased recently. The muggers mainly target mobile phones.

"You have to take care of your mobile phones and handbags when you are walking on the street or shopping or having snacks on the footpaths.

SENIOR CITIZEN PUBALI DEPOSIT SCHEME (SCPDS)

 Any Bangladeshi individual aged 59 years and above can open account under this scheme.

> Attractive Interest Rate / Profit [6 Months FDR rate plus 1% p.a.]





DHL-The Daily Star Business Awards.

Open your Account from anywhere

27001:2022 Islamic Banking services are provided through online from all our branches and sub-branches (deposit & withdrawal only)

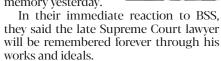
ISO/IEC

Hassan Ariff will be remembered thru his works

Say colleagues while paying tribute

BSS, Dhaka

Colleagues, friends and well-wishers of late Civil Aviation and Tourism Adviser A F Hassan Ariff paid rich tribute to his memory yesterday.



The country had lost an eminent lawyer and an excellent human being at his death, they added.

They made the remarks following his Second Namaj-e-Janaza held at Bangladesh Supreme Court premises vesterday morning.

Hassan Ariff died of a cardiac arrest at the capital's Labaid Specialized Hospital yesterday at the age of 83.

Eminent Jurist and Constitution expert Dr Kamal Hossain expressed deep shock at the demise of his close friend and long-time colleague Hassan Ariff.

"We have lost an experienced lawyer and a good friend. His loss has created



Naripokkho received the "2023 Ruby Ghuznavi Award for Social Justice" yesterday, in recognition of its long-standing work with the Biranganas, the war heroines of Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971. The award was presented at a ceremony held at the BRAC Centre in the capital.

The dialogue, held at CIRDAP,

Munira Khan, chairperson of

was part of the CGS's "Dialogue for

Democratic Reconstruction" series.

CGS, presided over the event, while

Executive Director Zillur Rahman

Speakers said that political will

Maj Gen (retd) ANM

Muniruzzaman, chairman of the

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and

Security Studies (BIPSS), stressed

the need for broader security

without engagement from political

parties. Current commissions

lack sufficient consultation with

declassification of police records

and implementation of oversight

comprehensive code of conduct.

He also urged periodic

including

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

political stakeholders," he said.

"Reforms will not happen

is key to effective police reform.

moderated.

sector reforms.

mechanisms,

SOCIAL JUSTICE Naripokkho gets 2023 Ruby Ghuznavi Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women rights organisation Naripokkho received the "2023 Ruby Ghuznavi Award for Social Justice" in recognition of its long-standing work with the Biranganas, the war heroines of Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at the BRAC Centre in the capital yesterday, according to a media release.

The award was introduced in 2023 by the Board of the AF Mujibur Rahman Foundation to commemorate the life and work of its late chairperson Ruby Ghuznavi.

Ruby devoted a great deal of her life to public service, inspired by her two great passions -- the protection of the rights of marginalised groups and the preservation of Bangladesh's craft heritage through support for its craftspeople and traditions.

She served in a variety of organisations working on human rights, women's empowerment, and child protection and also spearheaded efforts to support the Biranganas.

The award is intended as a recognition of exceptional work by individuals and organisations that exemplify the values that Ruby Ghuznavi held dear.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Jamaat ameer calls for national unity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Jamaat e - I s l a m i Shafiqur Rahman vesterday called



for national unity and condemned the interference by India in Bangladesh's internai aitairs.

"You [India] should remain in peace, and let us remain in peace. We don't want to intrude into your private matters, so please don't interfere with ours," Shafiqur said while speaking as chief guest at a Jamaat conference held at Moulvibazar Government High School grounds.

Pointing at India, he said, "You speak to us about communal harmony, but take a good look at your own reflection. How do you treat those SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Political will key to police reforms

Speakers tell CGS event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

During the 15 years of Awami League rule, police promotions heavily favoured high-ranking officials close to power, leaving lower-tier officers neglected, experts said at a dialogue organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) in Dhaka yesterday.

Zarif Rahman, a member of the Police Reform Commission, presented data from the police headquarters showing disproportionate promotion rates between 2009 and 2024.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) positions saw a 200 percent increase, Additional DIG positions 491 percent, and Additional Superintendent of Police positions 332 percent.

Meanwhile, promotions for constables were just 32 percent, while sub-inspectors saw just over a 100 percent rise.

The police have transformed into a power-centric force rather than being public-centric."

> ZARIF RAHMAN Police Reform

Public servants must not be turned into private servants of political parties.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

"These figures show how the police have transformed into a power-centric force, prioritising political interests over public service." Zarif said.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amar Desh

relaunched

The daily Amar Desh is set to return to circulation today, according to the announcement of its publisher and editor Mahmudur Rahman.

At a press conference at the Jativa Press Club on Friday, Mahmudur said the newspaper will not support particular political party.

"We never gave any special coverage party... We will support parties that will support Bangladesh, stand against domination, and stand by democracy," he added. The daily was first

published in 2004.

On April 11, 2013, it was shut down by the then Awami League government. Earlier in June 2010, it remained shut for 10 days. Its Editor Mahmudur Rahman was arrested both times.

During the second time, after spending over three and a half years in SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Beximco workers block road for 5hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Workers of 16 factories owned by Beximco blocked the Nabinagar-Chandra highway in Gazipur yesterday for five hours, demanding the reopening of the factories. Witnesses said the demonstration started

around 9:00am in the Chakraborty area and continued till 2:00pm. They said during this time workers engaged in

chases and counter-chases with the joint force. The workers also vandalised several vehicles. Shahidul Islam, sub-inspector of Naojor Highway

Police Station, said traffic was halted for five hours. To manage the congestion, long-distance

vehicles travelling from North Bengal to Dhaka were redirected through Gazipur and the Kaliakoir-Dhamrai regional roads, he added. Assistant Superintendent of Police of Gazipur

Industrial Police Abu Taleb said vehicle movement started around 2:00pm after joint forces drove away the protesting workers from the highway. Talking to reporters, the agitating workers said

they had received their salaries and allowances on time until August 5.

However, the factory closures have left thousands of workers unemployed. This situation has left thousands of workers struggling to cover daily necessities, fund their children's education, and repay debts to local shops. However, this correspondent could not reach

the factory authorities for comment.

ATTACK ON SUNAMGANJ HINDUS

Security beefed up yet fear persists

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from Dowarabazar, Sunamganj

When a mob of at least a hundred locals was about to attack Minoti Rani's house on the night of December 3 at Manglargaon village in Sunamganj, she grabbed her child and ran to the riverbank, leaving her home and belongings behind.

She heard from afar the roar of the mob as they pillaged her neighbourhood. Minoti spent the entire night by the river. "They vandalised

our home and looted valuables, including the gold my parents gifted me during my marriage," Minoti

Her house was among at least 40 houses, one temple, two family temples, and four shops attacked that night, as per the count of this correspondent who visited the area lately.

The attack took place after local Muslims said a 21-year-old Hindu man, named Akash Das, posted an image on Facebook and it hurt their feelings, said Zahidul Haque, officer-in-charge of Dowarabazar Police Station.

Akash was detained by the police earlier that evening 3) (December transferred

district headquarters for his safety.

locals

demonstrated, saying they were outraged by the Facebook post, we took the man in custody for his safety. The mob attacked our team and tried to snatch him. They then vandalised the

"As

others and shops owned by Hindus," said the OC. Akash was later shown arrested in a case filed under the Cyber Security Act and sent to jail.

houses of the man and several

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Workers at the bee farm of young entrepreneur Pavel Hossain in Madankhali union, Sreenagar, Munshiganj. Continuing a family tradition dating back to 1862, Pavel has modernised the 65-year-old business. With 130 bee boxes, he aims to collect 60 maunds of honey this year -- 20 maunds each from three fields. The photo was taken recently.

Three more die of dengue

Three more deaths were reported from dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the number of fatalities from the mosquito-borne disease in Bangladesh to 561 this year.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), recent fatalities have been reported in various divisions of the country. One death each occurred in the Dhaka South City Corporation, Barishal Division, and Khulna Division (outside the city corporations).

During the same period, 141 additional patients were hospitalised with viral fever, the DGHS added.

Of them, 35 dengue patients were admitted to hospital under Dhaka North City Corporation while 35 were hospitalised in Dhaka South City Corporation.

As of now, 1,199 patients are receiving treatment in hospitals across the country.

cases have been reported.

Since January 1, 2024, a total of 100,029 dengue Last year, dengue claimed the lives of 1,705 people,

making it the deadliest year on record. According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), there were 321,179 dengue cases and 318,749 recoveries in 2023.

However, his absence did little to quell the mob's anger.

On December 14, ten days after the attack on neighbourhood, police filed a case and

arrested four people. The arrestees are Alim Hossain, 20: Sultan Ahmed Raju, 20; Emran Hossain, 26, and Shajahan Hossain, 21. All four are members of the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League, said OC Zahidul Haque.

Of the accused, 12 are named and 150-170 unnamed, he added. THE TRAUMA

The next morning, Minoti and her child left the village. She returned three days after that, but even now, fear lingers.

"Though I have returned, I am still scared. I live alone husband works abroad,"

Others shared similar experiences.

Rani Das recalled hiding in the nearby jungle as the mob attacked. "We left the village silently when the mob left after over an hour. But when I returned on December 6, i found my house destroyed and belongings stolen. It's hard to feel safe despite repeated assurances," she said.

"On the evening of December 3, police officers, local leaders, and others came looking for Akash. We handed him over, hoping it would prevent violence. It didn't."

physical and emotional.

Fifty-five-year-old Subodh Das suffered severe injuries, beaten with sticks. "My hands, legs, and hip were injured. I'm still undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital and cannot return home anytime soon," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Sixty-five-year-old Pranati Bala Das, who fled with her daughter and granddaughters, broke into tears while recalling the night. "We left the village the next morning and returned after five days. Even now, I can't sleep at night," she said.

Kalpana Rani Das, whose bedridden husband was attacked, echoed these fears. "They broke into our

on the forehead, and took away everything."

The shop owned by Roni Das, located by the main road, was among the first to be attacked. "They looted and vandalised goods worth over Tk 2 lakh. It was my family's sole income source. Now, I don't know how I'll look after my family," he said.

Besides, the Loknath Temple and two family temples were vandalised.

Mohammad Ilias Mia, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj, said, "Given the present context, even a house hit with a stick can be considered an attack.

"The Loknath Temple was given Tk 50,000, and two other family temples in the village received Tk 25,000 each. Besides, 10

families of Manglargaon village received Tk 10,000 each as compensation.

avoid further incidents, meeting in the upazila. We have decided to form social committees with from representatives all religions to work on upholding harmony.

VIGILANCE, GLIMMER **OF HUMANITY**

In the aftermath, police set up an outpost, and the army often patrols the area.

The steps taken by the administration have been successful in preventing further attacks. Reassured, many families, who left on the night of December 3, have returned.

However, the trauma stays. Men of the village still stay awake at night to guard

against further attacks.

especially women, have not returned," said Birendra Das, a village elder. "We don't know when life will

feel normal again." When the situation spiralled out of control, Maulana Ekramul Haque, the Imam of Dowarabazar Central Mosque, rushed to

Manglargaon to help. "My home is adjacent to Manglargaon, and we've lived in harmony with the Hindu community for decades," he said.

"Islam does not support vandalising or looting. Although we couldn't save the houses already attacked, we tried our best to control the mob. Otherwise, the destruction could have been far worse, added Maulana Ekramul.

Hassan Ariff will be remembered

a vacuum in the Supreme Court Bar. He was one of the lawyers who worked with compassion for the country," he added.

Court Bar Supreme Association President Barrister A M Mahbub Uddin Khokon said no one can raise a question over Ariff's integrity as he earned respect from everyone during his long professional career.

Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-Chairman Zainul "In 2001, Abedin said, the then prime minister Khaleda Zia asked me to find a good lawyer suitable for appointing as the Attorney General. Later, I introduced Hassan Ariff

appointed Attorney General and served for a long time."

He was known as a good lawyer in the legal field, Zainul said, adding that his vacuum cannot be fulfilled in the country.

Bangladesh Bar Council Enrollment

Hassan Ariff was a very

to her. Finally, Ariff was Tribunal Chief Prosecutor establishing environmental Muhammad Tajul Islam said, "Ariff had many dreams for Bangladesh. He always thought for the

Environment Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Nasreen Jahan attended the janaza, among others, said an official handout.

While delivering a memorial speech after paying tribute to Hassan Ariff, Rizwana said Hassan Ariff was a perfect lawyer responsibilities, remained unparalleled.

His professional integrity, compassionate outlook and application of law for environmental conservation stand as an inspiring model for all, she said

"As an environmental lawyer, whenever I sought his guidance, he prioritised advising on cases involving encroachments of sand hills, and rivers, setting personal matters," she said.

After the namaz-ejanaza, various ministries paid rich tributes to the late adviser Ariff by placing Crimes whose contributions to wreaths on the coffin.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Host and FDMN Enhancement of lives through **Infrastructure Improvement Project (HELP)** Workshop Bhaban (Level-3), Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207. www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.0000.560.07.004.24.04

Date: 19/12/2024

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI) (CONSULTING SERVICES – FIRM SELECTION) [INTERNATIONAL]

Country: Bangladesh

Name of Project: Host and FDMN Enhancement of lives through Infrastructure Improvement Project

Assignment Title: Consulting Services for Design & Supervision Reference No: HELP/S-01 Credit No: IDA-7545-BD

1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received credit & Grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group toward the cost of the Host and FDMN Enhancement of lives through Infrastructure Improvement Project (HELP) and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the consulting services of Design and Supervision (D&S).

- 2. The consulting services ("the Services") include: The Design & Supervision consultancy Firm will support the implementing agency in the Design phase to prepare the initial and final detailed designs; technical specifications, bill of quantity (BoQ), cost estimate and procurement support including bidding documents, and followed by the Supervision phase including contract management, construction supervision, and project management support. The firm will also support the preparation of the site screening and environmental and social reports required by and complied with the World Bank's new Environmental and Social Framework (ESF); developing, maintaining and improving the Information, Communication Technology (ICT) based monitoring and decision support systems and integrating with the LGED and the concerned project, etc.
- 3. The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment and soft copy of prescribed format for submission of Expression of Interest can be found at the following address and website: www.lged.gov.bd. The duration of the assignment will be about 48 (Forty-eight) months covering the full project period. The assignment is expected to commence on June 2025.
- 4. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) now invites eligible consultancy firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing Design & Supervision Consulting Services. Interested Consultancy firms should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:
 - General Experience of the Firm (core business and years in business);
 - · Experience in similar assignments of compatible size, complexity and technical specialty in the required area. International experience and experience in development partner-financed contracts will be considered an advantage;
 - Firm's financial strength;
 - Firm's in-house staffing resources with relevant expertise (extent of relevant expertise available among the staff who are on the firm's regular payroll). However, CVs of individual staff will not be evaluated in the EOI/shortlisting stage.
- 5. Consultants are requested to submit at least the following supporting documents in support of the above-mentioned criteria: (a) The Firm's Incorporation/Trade/registration documents from the country of the firm; (b) JV agreement/letter of intent (if applicable); (c) Firm's brochure; (d) Audited financial reports for last 3 years; (e) list of the firm's in-house/regular staff with relevant expertise (f) description of experience of similar assignments in Project Data Sheet (which shall include, among others, project & assignment name, scope of services, contract amount, duration of the assignment, total person-months of the assignment, name of the client with address, period of contract (date of contract signing to date of completion), funding agency(s), location/country of service, description of the project with components, services actually performed etc.) completed during the last 10 years.
- 6. The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (Fifth Edition, September 2023) ("Procurement Regulations") setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
- 7. Consultants may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. The qualifications of sub-consultants will not be considered in the EOI evaluation and Shortlisting process. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected, and it is preferable to limit the maximum number of JV partners to 04 (four) including the Lead Firm. In the case of an association (JV or Sub-consultancy), the Consultants must explain in the EOI submission (a) the rationale for forming the association and (b) the anticipated role and relevant qualifications of each member of the Joint Venture and/or of each sub-consultant for carrying out the assignment, to justify the proposed inclusion of the JV members and/or sub-consultants in the association. Failure to provide the above explanation in the Expression of Interest may risk the association not being shortlisted for the assignment.
- A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (Fifth Edition, September 2023).
- 9. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours from 09.00 to16.00
- 10. Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below in person, or by mail or by email by 15.00 local time (GMT+6 hours) on or before 26 January, 2025. In the case of hard copy, one original and three copies should be submitted.

GD-1239

(Md. Abdus Salam) Project Director HELP Project, LGED e-mail: pdhelp.lged@gmail.com

Committee Member Ruhul Quddus the same day.

Kajal said, "There are very few people who have served in important positions in the state during both the caretaker government and the interim government."

learned and honest man, he said, adding that as the Attorney General, he played a crucial role in the field of law and justice.

Intelligence agencies, he

to review to ensure

criticised the police for

serving as political tools to

suppress opposition and

"False cases and misuse

systemic issues," he said,

doubting political parties'

ASM Nasiruddin Elan,

Odhikar,

corruption.

accountability.

director

perpetuate

Shafqat

inefficiencies," he said.

Nurul Haq Nur, president

of Gono Odhikar Parishad,

highlighted similar issues

in the judiciary, where

promotions and positions

are often dictated by

political affiliation. "Internal

Party, called for citizens

authoritarian tendencies.

Sohrab Hassan, joint

pointed out that the July

uprising brought minimal

avoid

Barrister

governments

senior

"The deaths of police officers in recent conflicts as independent watchdogs, need thorough investigation," he added.

Rashna Imam, a Supreme Court lawyer, argued that the colonial-era Police Act of 1861 perpetuates a mindset of suppression. "Guidelines of power have become to prevent misuse of the act are often ignored, and a lack of judicial independence enforcement, unaffected by commitment to genuine exacerbates the crisis," she political influence.

said. Former IGP Muhammad research fellow Nurul Huda emphasised at BIPSS, added that the that the police must not be politicised. "Public militarisation of the police has hindered their ability to servants must not become serve the public effectively. private servants of political "Specialised units with parties," he said, advocating overlapping roles only create for laws to prevent the

excessive use of force. Former Judge Ikteder highlighted Ahmed systemic failures, citing a conviction rate of less than five percent in cases investigated by the police.

Former IGP Dr M Enamul democracy within political Huq, a member of the Law parties is essential for any Commission from 2004 to meaningful reform," he said. 2007, proposed forming a Andaleeve commission to evaluate the Rahman Partho, president of the Bangladesh Jatiya

reform recommendations. He said one must have to ensure that future the courage to say "no" to orders from political leaders when they conflict with their conscience. "Without editor of Prothom Alo, this courage, nothing will

change," he said. The dialogue also change. He criticised the underscored the need for

reform commissions for greater transparency and accountability. lacking inclusivity and noted, should be subject representation.

called on the media to act while ASM Nasiruddin Elan noted that police reforms have been consistently hindered motivations.

Samakal, stressed the need for binding reforms in law

killings by Rakkhi Bahini, including Siraj Sikder's torture and death, arguing that justice then could have prevented later atrocities like disappearances and abductions.

progressed since 1952.

uprisings as a result of prolonged public frustration. Azad proposed dissolving the Rapid Action

implementation of previous adviser to the BNP chairperson, questioned whether reforms should focus on enhancing police service or maintaining police control.

Jamaat ameer

lecture us on communal harmony. This country has a long history of communal harmony, and the people of Bangladesh have always demonstrated that."

emphasised that in Bangladesh, there is no concept of majority and

"Everyone is a proud citizen of this country,' he stated, calling on the party leaders and activists to unite and work together for the betterment of the

Amar Desh

jail, he was released on bail in November 2016, and he went abroad in 2017. He lived in exile first in Malaysia

After over five years, he returned to the country on September 27 and announced the relaunch of Amar Desh.

On the other hand, the Mujibur Rahman Foundation, founded in 1985, supports a wide

Naripokkho

FROM PAGE 3

range of institutions and activities. Its primary mission is the expansion of educational opportunities improvement in the quality

of education with a special emphasis on mathematics. The release yesterday's ceremony opened with a musical performance by noted

inger Farida Parveen Prof Naila Kabeer and Prof Perween Hasan then spoke on behalf of the foundation, while Barrister Sara Hossain and Prof Firdous Azim spoke on behalf of Naripokkho.



Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 5-25 12-45 3-45 5-24 7-00 JAMAAT 6-00 1-15 4-00 5-27 7-30

FOR SALE **BGIC Tower**, 34-Topkhana Road, Dhaka. 5700

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

sqft. commercial 9th floor. Cont: 01818367255

01979367255 NOTICE OF PERMANENT CLOSURE OF REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE

This is to notify all concerned, including clients, partners, and stakeholders that GRASIM INDUSTRIES LIMITED will be closing its Representative Office at 10B, Ataturk Tower, 22 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh, effective 25th March, 2025. As such, the Representative Office in Bangladesh will cease all activities and operations on the aforementioned date.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of our partners, clients, and employees in Bangladesh for their support and collaboration throughout our time in the country. We remain committed to maintaining strong relationships with all stakeholders.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation during this transition period. Thank you for your continued trust in GRASIM INDUSTRIES

LIMITED. Vice President (F&C)

Grasim Industries Limited Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Security beefed up yet fear persists with my child because my The mob left scars -- both house, hit my husband

she said.

Milon Sixty-year-old

Pinki Rani Das, Akash's sister-in-law, recounted the moments leading up to the attack.

country's welfare.' Meanwhile, the third namaz-e-janaza of Hassan Ariff was held at the Bangladesh Secretariat on

Political will key to police reforms

ANM Muniruzzaman

publisher AK Azad, and editor of

cited the

Azad blamed political parties for the decline of the police, questioning whether the force has

He described the July Battalion and reallocating

its resources to police. Zahir Uddin Swapon,

FROM PAGE 3

you call minorities? Don't

Jamaat ameer minority.

nation's future.

FROM PAGE 3 and then in Turkey. LAXMAN DAS CIRCUS

A DYING ART The last of the riverboat circus

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The crew of Laxman Das Circus once travelled from one place to another on their steel-bodied boats, carrying the magic of their craft wherever they went. Troupes lived aboard the boats, disembarking to perform at fairs or events across Barishal's many riverbank communities. After the show, they would pack up their props, hoist the gangway, and set off to the next destination.

But with shifting cultural trends, the circus lost its charm. Audiences dwindled, bookings became scarce, and income dried up. Paying the crew turned into an uphill battle, and one by one, they left for more secure livelihoods.

Today, 79-year-old Arun Das, custodian of this fading legacy, clings to what remains.

"I don't know anything else," says Arun, who has spent more than four decades living on the boat. "This boat holds my father's memory. I can't leave it."



LAXMAN DAS

Once filled with laughter, chatter, and the thud of acrobats practising flips, the boat is now eerily quiet. Arun keeps it afloat — both literally and figuratively — waiting for the rare call to perform. These days, gigs are few and far between, and performances are stripped down to their bare bones, with Arun often working solo or with just one or two crew members.

Inside the boat, traces of the past linger. Drums echo faintly in the compact space as Arun rehearses. Ladders and ropes dangle from the ceiling, gleaming steel rods and vintage circus props lean against walls, and the scent of old wood

fills the air.

The Laxman Das Circus, formed in 1948, was once renowned for its daring acts – from cutting iron rods with teeth to motorcycle stunts inside a steel sphere.

Arun remembers the golden years vividly. "People would cheer so loudly, you could feel it in your chest," he recalls with a wistful smile.

Now, the cheers have faded into memories.

But Arun remains anchored to his past, living on the hope that one day, the circus might hear its call again. Until then, he waits, preserving what he can of the Laxman Das Circus, as the boat rocks gently on the waters of the Arial Khan River.

A STORIED PAST

The circus's roots trace back to Laxman Das, who founded it after honing his skills under the tutelage of his relative, Sadhu Das, the owner of Dhaka's famed Lion Circus.

Initially named "The Royal Pakistan Circus," it quickly gained popularity, showcasing awe-inspiring acts such as bending iron rods with one's neck, weightlifting, and the spinning trident.

After the brutal killing of Laxman Das during the Liberation War, the circus was renamed "The Laxman Das Circus" to honour its founder.

Arun Das' journey with the circus began at an early age when he performed a motorcycle stunt in place of an absent performer. That singular moment would lead to a 65-year career performing the

very act that once mesmerised him as a child.

At its peak, the circus would employ 70 to 80 performers, including artisans, t e c h n i c i a n s , and players. Their repertoire, which

included rope games, cycling stunts, and dagger boards, was renowned for its diversity.

Among the troupe members was Runa Mondal, a rope artist who had once dazzled audiences with graceful acrobatics. He still returns occasionally to assist Arun.

"When the shows stopped, it felt like a part of me had been cut away," Runa shared.

"Without regular performances, we lose not just our craft, but a piece of who we are."

1971 AND A FOUNDER'S SACRIFICE During the Liberation War of 1971, Laxman Das provided financial support to the freedom fighters, including a contribution of Tk 2,000 to Hemayet Uddin Ahmed, the chief of the Hemayet Bahini

This marked Laxman Das as a target for the Pakistan Army and their collaborators.

In May 1971, tragedy struck. Laxman Das' family sought refuge in Kodaldhoa village, but the Pakistani military, aided by local collaborators, discovered their whereabouts.

Laxman Das and his wife, Lila Das, fled to a pond but were eventually caught. Laxman was shot through the throat, and Lila was bayoneted.

The family's elephant, Batasi, was also not spared.

Shot first in the leg and then the head, Batasi's agonised screams echoed for miles before she succumbed.

After the war, the circus found a way to rebuild.

The circus resumed its performances with support from freedom fighter Nizamuddin, who provided a relief tent.

A STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE Declining interest,

bureaucratic

and financial woes have pushed the Laxman Das Circus to the brink. "The situation is not good. There are no fairs or festivals, and the administration does not grant us permission," Arun Das said.

hurdles,

Arun describes the administrations restrictions as an "undeclared ban on circus".

The circus has not performed regularly in years.

Last year, it held a 12-day stint in Kalapara, but since then, invitations have dried up.

"During performances, our expenses exceed 40,000 taka per day. But we did not earn much in return. Besides, without shows, it's impossible to even meet the boat's operational expenses," Arun said.

"To cut costs, most of the troupe members, who are from Rangpur and Dhaka, have been sent home."

Arun was even forced to place the circus's elephant, Madhubala, under the custody of a mahout.

Without government assistance, the legacy of Laxman Das Circus may soon fade into obscurity.

As Arun Das reflects on his life aboard the boat that doubles as his home and the circus's headquarters, he remains hopeful but pragmatic. "I hope I can stay like this as long as I have. I don't know what will happen next."

Cold brings life to a halt in the north

S DILIP ROY

The northern districts of the country, particularly Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, have been experiencing a harsh winter over the past several days, with temperatures dropping significantly on a regular basis.

The severe cold has forced many farmers and agricultural workers to stay indoors, unable to tend to their crops.

Daily activities in the region have come to a halt, especially in villages along the Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dudhkumar, Gangadhar, Jinjiram, and Dharla rivers, as well as in the chars.



Low-income daily wage earners are among the hardest hit, struggling to survive without adequate winter clothing.

Many have resorted to warming themselves by burning dry straws and leaves to combat the cold, particularly during the mornings and nights.

Kutub Uddin, 60, a farmer from Fulgach village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said when he and others went to the crop field, it was so cold that they had to rush back home without completing any work.

So harsh was the weather that his hands and feet started feeling numb after just a few minutes outside. Maminul Islam, 44, a van puller at Shaheed Shahjahan Colony in Lalmonirhat town., said, "We have to find warmth by burning straw or leaves.

This is particularly the case during the morning and night."
Some, like farm labourer Manindra Nath Barmon, 55, from Jorgach village in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, have no choice but to continue

working despite the extreme conditions.

The farm labourer said workers like him have no other choice but to take to the fields no matter what.

He also shared that many of them had shifted

it might not be possible to be outside as regularly.
Nazir Hossain, 50, a day labourer, said he spends most of his days near fires as he cannot afford winter clothes.

to working on contract rather than a daily wage, as

According to the Rangpur Met Office, Lalmonirhat recorded a low temperature of 11.6 degrees Celsius, while Kurigram recorded 11.5 degrees Celsius. The lowest temperature in the Rangpur division was 9.5 degrees Celsius in Tentulia.

Abdullah Al Mamun, Deputy Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Kurigram, warned that prolonged disruptions caused by the cold could lead to crop damage and significant losses for farmers.

Date: 19/12/2024



The Harry Potter x Miniso store was launched at Centrepoint Uttara, Dhaka, on December 20, featuring themed decorations and merchandise. Fans enjoyed costume contests, photo opportunities, and giveaways, celebrating the wizarding world in style.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

3 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed and another was injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Tangail, two people were killed when a bus ran over a CNG-run three-wheeler Ashekpur bypass area.

The decayed are three-wheeler

The deceased are three-wheeler driver Sohrab Hossain, 55, from Pathalia area in Kalihati upazila; and Pradeep Pal, 40, from Karatia area of Sadar upazila.

Locals took the victims to Tangail Medical College Hospital where Sohrab was declared dead.

The other died while he was being

transferred to another hospital for better treatment. Sergeant Saikat Hossain of Elenga

Highway Police Station said they handed

the bodies over to their families.

In Joypurhat, a motorcyclist was killed and his pillion injured as their motorcycle collided head-on with a passenger bus, said Joypurhat sadar police station OC Sahed Al Mamun.



A bus ran over a CNG-run threewheeler Ashekpur bypass area in Tangail yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

The deceased -- Maruf Hossain, 22 -- was from Kochnapur village in Sadar

Teen killed after being hit by train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenager named Apon, 18, was killed after a train hit him at Moghbazar level-crossing in the capital yesterday.

Bappi, a pedestrian, said a train hit Apon near Moghbazar level-crossing. He was rushed to a

nearby clinic. When his condition deteriorated, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Doctors at the DMCH

Apon's cousin Shariful Islam later identified him at DMCH.

later declared him dead, he

added.

Md Farouk, in-charge of the DMCH police camp, said his body was sent to the DMC morgue for autopsy.

Office of the Bhandaria Paurashava

Upazila: Bhandaria, District: Pirojpur

www.bhandariapouroshova.pirojpur.gov.bd

Memo No. Bha/poura/engr/2024-25/933

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

e-GP Notice No. 03/2024-25 (LTM)

Closing selling & Opening Package No 1053945 date Construction of Public Toilet at Kalima Chottore in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/1 (A) Construction of 02 (Two) Nos. Dustbin at Near Bazar & Kalima Chottor Deferent Place in Ward ADP/BHAN/P No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) Construction of CC Road Starting from East Luxmipura 154 No. GPS Back side (Ch.0.00-71.0m) in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava. OU/2024-25/2 Construction of CC Road Starting from East Bhandaria, Bhandaria-Kathalia RHD Road (Poura ADP/BHAN/P Complex Front) to Akon Bari (Ch.0.00-150.0m) in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava OU/2024-25/3 Construction of CC Road Starting from Freedom Fighter Late Gazi Nuruzzaman Babul Saheb Bari to Mundikhali Canel Side UIIP BC Road (Ch. 0.00-87.0m) in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria 1053948 ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/4 Pourashava, Pirojpur (A) Construction of Earth Filling & HBB Approach at Mahatab Hossain Sojib Bapari House Front 1053949 Box Culvert Both Side in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) Construction of ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/5 CC Road Starting from IUIDP-2 RCC Road to Mizanur Rahman House (Ch.0.00-85.0m) in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava. (A) Construction of CC Road Starting from BCCTF BC Road to Vuboneshor River Side Ghatla Via ADP/BHAN/P Foraji Bari Mosque (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 04. (B) Construction of CC Road Starting from OU/2024-25/6 Niz Bhandaria Vuboneshor River to Kabiraj Bari (Ch.0.00-77.0m) in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur 1053951 (A) Construction of CC Road Starting from Kakima Chottore Alfalah Mosque Near Public Toilet CC Road & Boundary (Ch.0.00-18.0m) in Ward No. 04, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (B) ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/7 Construction of Gate at Bhandaria Upazila Complex in Ward No. 01, under Bhandaria Pourashava. 1053952 Construction of (A) 02 Nos. Small Gate, (B) Brick Boundary Wall, (C) Earth Filling Work at ADP/BHAN/P Date: 06/01/2024 Time:12:00 Bhandaria Shishu Park, in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. OU/2024-25/8 Construction of CC Road Starting from 74 No. Government Primary School Yard Side to Nur Islam ADP/BHAN/P Bari (Ch.0.00-86.0m) in Ward No. 06, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. OU/2024-25/9 (1) Construction of CC Road (A) 74 GPS IUIDP-2 RCC Road Alamgir Howlader house & (B) 1053954 ADP/BHAN/P Vuboneshore River Side BC Road to Freedom Fighter Late Ab. S Alam Khan Teacher house in OU/2024-25/10 Ward No. 06, 07 under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (2) Construction of RCC Road Repair at Pourashava Complex in Ward No. 05, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. (3) Construction of CC Road From Niz Bhandaria IUIDP-2 RCC Drain to Sabina Akter Bari (Ch.0.00-24.0m) & (B) Construction of Construction of Culvert Approch at Rakhal Mondol House front (East-West-side) in Ward No. 03 & 06 under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur... Construction of Temporary Poura Parking Shed at Pourashava Complex in Ward No. 05, under 1053955 ADP/BHAN/P Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. OU/2024-25/11 1053956 Construction of 02 Nos. 1.00X1.00X5.50m RCC Box Culvert at South East Bhandaria Md. Jahidul ADP/BHAN/P Islam Rony House Front ADP CC Road & Lakshmipura UIIP BC Road in Back Side of Freedom OU/2024-25/12 Fighter Late Gazi Nuruzzaman Babul Saheb House in Ward No. 06 & 0, under Bhandaria Pourashava. 105395 Construction of CC Road From Bhandaria Hospital Front BC Road (South side) to Pona River Side ADP/BHAN/P (Ch.0.00-92.0m) in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur. OU/2024-25/13 1053958 (A) Construction of CC Road From Niz Bhandaria Vuboneshor River Side to Sikder Bari (Ch. 0.00-ADP/BHAN/P 120.0m) in Ward No. 03, under Bhandaria Pourashava. (B) Construction of CC Road From South OU/2024-25/14 - East Bhandaria Near Switch Gate BC Road to Mokbul Ali Foraji Bari Road (Ch. 0.00-60.00) in Ward No. 06, Bhandaria Pourashava. 1053959 (A) Construction of CC Road From Lakshmipura Howlader Bari Bari Graveyard to Howlader House (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 02, under Bhandaria Pourashava, Pirojpur (B) Construction of ADP/BHAN/P OU/2024-25/15 CC Road at Jamirtola Nazem Foraji Bari (Ch.0.00-40.0m) in Ward No. 04, under Bhandaria

Pourashava, Pirojpur.

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 document 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 National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



ARTS & ENTERTAINMEN

'I don't see films through a gender-biased lens'

Planning a cinema outing can feel like an all-day affair. Moreover, attention spans have shortened, but I'm hopeful that viewers will find the experience rewarding.

SHARMIN JOYA

On December 20, Priyo Maloti graced 20 cinema halls nationwide. Featuring Mehazabien Chowdhury in the titular role of Maloti Rani Das, the film marks a significant milestone for both the actress and its director, Shankha Dasgupta, as their silver screen debut.

Shankha, who began his career as a journalist, transitioned into the entertainment industry and eventually established himself as prominent director of television commercials (TVCs), and later OTT platforms. Reflecting on this journey, Shankha shares, "The best feeling a director can have is when the audience experiences your story on the big screen. Witnessing my project screened at an international festival, where the language and context were foreign to the audience, yet

Determined to delve into long-form narratives, Shankha ventured into OTT projects like Boli. While visually striking, the project faced criticism for its screenplay and storytelling. "The mixed reception taught me invaluable lessons, which I applied to my next project, Guti. I implemented everything I'd learned in my career, and that success inspired me to take the next big step, thus making a feature film," reflects Shankha.

The journey to create **Priyo Maloti** began with a clear vision. "I was certain that this story deserved the silver screen. When I proposed the idea to stakeholders, including Frame Per Second, Chorki, and Mehazabien, everyone believed in its potential," says the director.

The film serves as a philosophical reflection of Shankha's own societal and political views. It addresses pressing issues and flaws within society, layered with a deeply personal and universally echoing narrative. Despite initial concerns about censorship, the film received uncut clearance. Shankha notes, "Members

of the censor board personally called to congratulate me, acknowledging the importance of the issues addressed. Such support might not have been possible during the previous regime."

Maloti already earned acclaim the international festival circuit. While 'festival films' often struggle local attract audiences, Shankha confident this project will widely. resonate "We've crafted a simple yet powerful story that connects

with ordinary people. It's not about traditional entertainment or item songs; it's a story about life—a tale that educated and progressive audiences will appreciate. I believe that word of mouth will work in our favour," he adds. Shankha acknowledges the challenges of

drawing audiences to cinemas, particularly with the limited number of halls and the logistical hurdles audiences face. "Planning a cinema outing can feel like an all-day affair. Moreover, attention spans have shortened, but I'm hopeful that viewers will find the experience rewarding. They won't leave disappointed; the film will leave them with something to reflect upon."

Breaking stereotypes, Shankha's debut centres on a female protagonist, risky in a film industry where male-centric narratives dominate. However, the director

> dismisses the notion of risk. "I've never viewed stories through a gender-biased lens. This could have been about a male character or a transgender individualwhat mattered was the story itself. When envisioning Maloti, I immediately thought of Mehazabien. Her passion, talent, discipline, and dedication made her the perfect fit." Shankha is effusive in his praise for his leading lady.

"Mehazabien is exceptional artiste. incredibly ľm fortunate have her in my debut film and to witness her own silver screen debut through this project. From

until one now, her contribution has been tremendous. I have no regrets about casting her or preferring to produce a female-centric film for my debut."

Aurthohin's former guitarist Piklu no more

Minhaz Ahmed Piklu, former guitarist of iconic Bangladeshi bands Rockstrata and Aurthohin, passed away last Friday at around 9pm. He was 56.

Piklu fell ill during a performance in Rampura and was rushed to a nearby clinic, where he was pronounced dead, his close friend Sipat Altamus told The Daily Star.

Piklu, a student of legendary guitarist Niloy Das, started his musical journey in the mid-1980s, playing with hard rock bands like Rockstrata, Jolly Rogers, and briefly with Warfaze in the early 1990s.

In 1999, he joined Aurthohin, contributing to several of the band's timeless tracks, including Odbhut Shei Cheleti, Shurjo, Rater Train, and Guti from Hell.



Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine as Light' to compete at Oscars

Co-producers Slideshow announced yesterday that Payal Kapadia's debut feature, All We *Imagine as Light*, will independently compete in the 97th Academy Awards across all categories, including Best Picture, Director, and Original Screenplay, despite not being India's official entry.

The Film Federation of India chose Kiran Rao's Laapataa Ladies over All We Imagine as Light as its Oscar submission. Still, Rao's satire on rural patriarchy failed to make the Oscar shortlist revealed last week.

This recognition adds to the growing list of accolades for Kapadia's film. All We Imagine as *Light* was named the best international feature film at several film festivals worldwide.



being applauded for its visual storytelling, was surreal. It reinforced my confidence for presenting the film to our local audience."

evolution. "In my early days on television, I often felt like I underperformed, believing I wasn't producing work matching the calibre of my contemporaries due to various limitations. Transitioning to TVCs changed my perspective. It demanded a process-oriented approach, allowing me to work with some of the best resources in the industry. Between 2013 and 2018, I honed my skills as a TVC director, which

Shankha describes his career as a steady

COUNTRYWIDE

Mustard cultivation | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | From page 12 | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | From Page 12 | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 12-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads | 13-party | 13

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Farmers in different upazilas of the district are busy sowing mustard seeds in their standing Aman paddy crops, applying relay method.

Using this unusual method, farmers will get the opportunity to produce an additional crop, alongside Aman or any other Rabi crops, in same land, without spending any additional cost.

Patuakhali Agriculture Department has set up 347 demonstration plots - 100 in Bauphal, 60 in Galachipa, 40 in Dashmina, 30 each in Kalapara and Dumki, 22 in Rangabali, 20 in Mirzaganj and 45 in Sadar upazila -- to motivate local farmers to cultivate mustard using relay method.

Meanwhile, many farmers are now showing their interest in cultivating mustard using this unusual method in order to meet the demand of edible oil.

Local farmers said Aman is their main crop. After harvesting Aman paddy their land remain fallow for about two and a half months as nothing can be grown in this period.

Dashmina Upazila Deputy Assistant Agriculture Officer Robi Faisal said in relay method farmers have to spray mustard seeds prior to harvesting their Aman paddy when the land remains much soft.

One kilogramme of mustard seed is required for one bigha of land, he said, adding that relay method offers farmers the opportunity to harvest an additional crop within a short time.

Usually, farmers have to plough their land before sowing mustard seeds, which would cost them Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,500

Moreover, sometimes farmers have to irrigate their mustard field at least once that would cost them another Tk 1,000

But, farmers does not require such extra expenses if they apply the relay system in their standing crop fields, Robi

Farmer Majnu Pyada of Gachani village in Dashmina upazila said it costs at least Tk 5.000 to cultivated mustard in one acre land, but since he is applying the relay method this year he doesn't required any extra money.

Sadek Matbor, another farmer of the village, said earlier they used to keep their land fallow for several weeks in order to prepare it for another crop. Patuakhali Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Mohammad Nazrul Islam said they have set up a total of 347 demonstration plots in all the upazilas of the district with the goal to motivate more farmers to cultivate mustard, applying relay method.



A farmer in Patuakhali's Dashmina upazila spraying mustard seeds in his standing Aman field, using relay method.

institutional and structural reforms to restore order in the transport sector, reports UNB.

"Political influence is intertwined with the chaos on our roads. Resolving this issue will not be easy," he said.

The adviser urged political parties to take an active role in tackling corruption, noting that many of the issues involve their leaders and activists.

their failure to prioritise public-focused development.

"Development past governments was not centered on the people. As a result, the public did not benefit. Future government policies must prioritise inclusive development that addresses the needs of the population."

Mohammed Yasin, chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority

He also criticised (BRTA), emphasised the solutions such as evictions "FROM PAGE 12" "We have initiated the Nahid stressed the need for previous governments need to modernise the are insufficient. "The dialogue, and the parties sector and transport outlined steps to improve the system.

> "Old buses will no longer be allowed to operate. A timeline has been set, and necessary measures must be implemented within this period.'

Yasin also highlighted the importance of a long-term plan to clear roads and footpaths of encroachments, pointing Chairman Mahbub Uddin that temporary

solution must be wellplanned and sustainable." PIB Director General

Faruk Wasif, Road Safety Foundation Vice Chairman Syed Jahangir, Executive Director Saidur Rahman, and several other stakeholders from the transport sector also addressed the programme, which was chaired by Road Safety Foundation

> (Kazi Zafar), noted that the meeting also addressed the possibility of organising

joint programmes between the BNP and its allied parties. "The need for unity We remains. must strengthen this unity moving forward.

will announce our joint

programmes soon," he said.

have assured us of their

continued support, as they

did during the anti-Awami

meeting focused on the

country's current political

and economic situation,

with further discussions

planned with other like-

minded parties. "We will

make decisions after these

chairman of Jatiya Party

Mostafa Jamal Haidar,

talks conclude."

He added that the

League movements."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Alamgir, Bangladesh LDP Secretary General Shahadat Hossain Salim, Bangladesh Jatiya Dal Chairman Syed Ehsanul Huda, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh Chairman Nurul Amin Bepari, and Jatiya Ganatantrik Party President Rashed Pradhan, among others, were also

Education disparities once designed to serve FROM PAGE 12

growth rates, high per capita incomes and the most impressive human development indicators, Prof Sobhan said.

He said that the distinguishing feature of the educational system European many countries was the move to universalise the provision of quality public education.

Children from working class families, if they are talented, could enter well-known universities, whatever may be the economic circumstances of their parents. The offspring of a prime minister and business elite or workers and schoolteachers attend a common school system in these countries. In countries like China,

Vietnam, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, a common school system is the preferred mode of choice for public education. But in Bangladesh, the education system is trifurcated between public, religious school systems catering to different social and economic classes.

Sobhan said Prof English medium schools Bangladesh have proliferated. International English medium schools, expatriate residents in Bangladesh, are now largely occupied by children of the Bangladeshi elite. Many local English medium schools cater to the upper middle-classes and some of them now drawing in the lower middle-class and even children from the working class.

There are a few betterquality Bangla medium schools such as the cadet colleges and some private schools serving the middle class and lower middle-class children of professionals or civil servants.

The largest number schools, providing education to children of the lower middle- and working-class in the rural and urban areas, are mostly run by the state, but some are operated privately.

With the elite sending their children abroad and the next tier sending their children to the private universities, the principal casualties of such a system have been the public universities, Prof Sobhan said.

renowned universities largely cater to lower income households who cannot afford to pay fees to the "profit-making" private universities, he said.

governance the public failures politicisation universities, of the administration and teaching faculties, and the domination of the students' bodies have corrupted higher education system to a level where surgical intervention may be needed to restore both administrative discipline and quality education, he said.

"Today Bangladesh's ruling class no longer have any stake in improving the quality of public education because their children or grandchildren have been, are being, or will be expected to be educated in quality English medium schools private universities."

Prof Sobhan proposed making it mandatory for all candidates of the national polls to demonstrate their children are being educated in Bangla medium schools.

recommended setting a goal to re-build the public education provides system that quality education at least to the level of cadet colleges.

He also recommended raising the number of seats in the cadet colleges as well as top state and private schools to allow entrance of children of low-income

households

Ahmed.

scholarships. He proposed to bifurcate one high-quality secondary school in every upazila into general and technical sections which would exclusively cater to lower income households.

Furthermore, suggested tripling the allocation for education in the national budget to at least 5 percent of the GDP. However, this large

investment in education would only be meaningful if there is a quantum advancement in the quality of governance in the education system, Prof Sobhan added. Prof Abu Sayeed said it

is hard to have democracy in the society and state if the education system is not democratised. Unfortunately,

politicians do not listen to what educated people say and expert opinion does not have any place in politics, he added.

Prof Rounaq Jahan, CPD; Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of CPD; Dhaka University Prof MM Akash; Mahfuz of The Daily Star; and Ala Uddin Ahmad, CEO of Metlife Bangladesh also spoke at the programme.

150 broadcast FROM PAGE 12

present at the meeting.

minority of the channels only about 20 percent provide this benefit, while 72.4 percent do not provide any life insurance.

Only about a quarter distinguished fellow of of the channels provide provident fund, while 10 percent provide gratuity.

Additionally, 90 percent of the channels do not have Anam, editor and publisher regular annual increments, and as many as 72.4 percent do not pay for overtime when workers are on duty on government holidays.

Pak military courts convict 25 PTI men

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan military courts convicted sentenced 25 people for involvement in pro-Imran Khan unrest last year, the armed forces said yesterday, with the majority handed decade-long prison terms.

Ex-prime minister Khan was arrested in May last year after being ousted from office and mounting an unprecedented campaign of defiance against the nation's powerful military leaders.

detention over His graft allegations sparked nationwide unrest some targeting armed installations, forces prompting rare prosecutions of civilians in military courts.

Amnesty International called the move "an intimidation tactic, designed to crack down on dissent".

All of the convicted are men and 14 have been sentenced to a decade of "rigorous imprisonment", the military said with the remaining 11 set to serve lesser prison terms.

announced by the military courts are disproportionate and excessive," said a spokesman for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "These sentences are rejected."

The verdicts announced just three weeks after the capital Islamabad was gripped by fresh unrest, as tens of thousands of Khan supporters flooded in to demand his release.

The government said at least five security personnel were killed whilst PTI allege at least 10 of their own were shot dead by security forces before crowds retreated



Palestinian women mourn a dead child, killed in an Israeli strike the previous night, at Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MYANMAR CIVIL WAR

Rebels 'capture junta western command in Rakhine state'

AFP, Bangkok

A Myanmar ethnic rebel group has captured a military regional command in Rakhine state, it said, in what would be a major blow to the

INTERNATIONAL

The Arakan Army (AA) had "completely captured" the western regional command at Ann on Friday after weeks of fighting, the group said in a statement on its Telegram

Ann would be the second regional military command to fall to ethnic rebels in five months, and a huge blow to the military.

Myanmar's military has 14 regional commands across the country with many of them currently fighting established ethnic rebel groups or newer "People's Defence Forces" that have sprung up to battle the military's 2021 coup.

Fighting has rocked Rakhine state since the AA attacked security forces in November last year, ending a ceasefire that had largely



held since the putsch.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory in the state that is home to China and Indiabacked port projects and all but cut off state

The AA posted photos of a man whom it said was the Ann deputy regional commander, in the custody of its fighters.

 $\overline{AFP} was \, unable \, to \, \overline{confirm} \, that \, information$ and has contacted the AA's spokesman for

AFP was unable to reach people on the ground around Ann where internet and phone services are patchy.

In decades of on-off fighting since independence from Britain in 1948 the military had never lost a regional military command until last August, when the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) captured the northeastern command in Lashio in Shan state.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to myriad ethnic armed groups who have battled the military since independence for autonomy and control of lucrative resources.

Last month the UN warned Rakhine state was heading towards famine, as ongoing clashes squeeze commerce and agricultural production. "Rakhine's economy has stopped functioning," the report from the UN Development Programme said, projecting "famine conditions by mid-2025" if current levels of food insecurity were left unaddressed.

BORDER OUTPOST ATTACK

Pak Taliban kills 16 Pak soldiers

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani Taliban claimed a brazen overnight raid on an army outpost near the border with Afghanistan yesterday, which intelligence officials said killed 16 soldiers and critically wounded five

The siege started after midnight and lasted about two hours as around 30 militants pummelled the mountainous outpost from three sides, one senior intelligence official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A second intelligence official also anonymously confirmed the toll of dead and wounded in the attack in the Makeen area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 40 kilometres (24 miles) from the Afghan

Pakistan's domestic chapter of the Taliban claimed the attack in a statement, saying it was staged "in retaliation for the martyrdom of our senior commanders". The group claimed to have seized a hoard of military gear including machine guns and a night vision device.

Drone attack hits Russia city 1,000 km from frontier

AFP, Moscow

Kyiv yesterday staged a major drone attack on the Russian city of Kazan. 1.000 kilometres (620 miles) from the frontier, as Moscow's troops captured a new frontline village in eastern Ukraine.

The drones damaged buildings in Kazan, capital of the Tartarstan republic, with a population of more than 1.3 million, but there were no victims, local officials said.

Kazan City hall said some fires had started and were being tackled by the fire brigade. The city's airport was temporarily closed, the Russian civilian aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, said.

Videos on Russian social media networks showed drones hitting high rise buildings setting off fireballs.

Russia on Friday staged strikes on the Ukraine capital, Kyiv, that left one dead and 13 wounded, according to the city's authorities. Another five people were killed in a Ukrainian attack on the Russian frontier region of Kursk, the local governor said.

Devotee killed, valuables looted at Natore crematorium

FROM PAGE 2 The Daily Star.

found that the lock of the temple's Then he became a bit imbalanced storeroom was broken. The iron grill mentally. He often used to stay at the of the window was cut off" he added crematorium.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body. said Shafiqul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Natore Sadar Police Station.

"Primarily, we suspect that the victim was strangled to death as he could identify the criminals. We are investigation the incident to get details," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, the

victim's elder brother Arun Chandra Dash said, "Tarun used to run a "A stone statue is also missing. We laundry at a local market until 2006.

> Tarun has a son and daughter. His son Topu Dash filed a murder case in this connection, said Arun.

> Contacted, Subrata Sarker, general secretary of Natore district unit of Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Oikya Parishad, said, "The criminals killed Tarun to loot the cash and valuables from the crematorium. We demand a fair investigation into the incident and immediate arrest of the killers."

Brazil bus accident kills at least 32

AFP, Sao Paulo

At least 32 people died early yesterday when a bus crashed into a truck and then caught fire in southeastern Brazil, officials said.

Around four in the morning, the bus travelling from Sao Paulo blew a tire near the town of Lajinha, in the state of Minas Gerais, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle and hit a truck, the state's fire department said in a statement.

The bus went up in flames and at least 32 passengers died, the statement said. Another vehicle rammed into the bus from behind, but its occupants

Uprising leaders drafting charter

vote, the sources told The Daily Star.

They are now examining the structure, operation and political practice of some youth-based parties in South Asia, including the Aam Aadmi Party and Lok Janshakti Party in India, and the National People's Power in Sri Lanka.

When asked about the plan to form a new political party, Nasiruddin Patwary, the convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, confirmed to this newspaper that they have not finalised the name yet.

"A draft on the name and other relevant matters is being made now. We hope to reach a decision soon after consulting the stakeholders. After that, we will publicise everything."

The charter will be finalised upon consultation with civil society members and other stakeholders, three leaders of the two platforms told this newspaper.

Although The suggested names will be put to a Discrimination Student Movement will not be directly affiliated with the new party, many individuals from the platform are expected to take leadership roles in the new party.

> Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam, who was a key organiser of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, may quit the council of advisers to lead the new party, the sources said.

> Akhter Hossen, member secretary of Jatiya Nagorik Committee; its spokesperson Samantha Sharmin; and Sarjis Alam, a key organiser of the movement and general secretary of July Shaheed Memorial Foundation, are likely to be in the forefront of the new party, said sources inside the two platforms.

> The plan to form a new party by the leaders of the student-led uprising has been in discussions since the ouster of the Awami League on August 5.

They launched their civic

platform the Jatiya Nagorik Committee in September. According to the leaders of the platform, the foundation for the political party will be established once the civic platform's organisational structure is established at the grassroots level.

Talking to The Daily Star, a key leader of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee said they have expanded their activities nationwide by forming committees in around 100 districts and upazilas over the past three months.

"We believe that we will complete the formation of committees in all possible areas by December. In the next phase, as we expand ward by ward, we can begin the process of creating our political party," said the Nagorik Committee leader, wishing to be unnamed.

The leader also said they did not want to specify a time for the formation of the party, but they are hopeful about the launch within one or two months.

London to help Dhaka

legislation and instruments which can be used to support asset recovery requests," said the statement.

"Requests require significant domestic political support, as well as cooperation from law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. We are in discussions with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre hosted by the UK's National Crime Agency and the International Centre for Asset Recovery on how to support the Interim Government of Bangladesh," it added.

in October, the UK National Crime Agency visited Dhaka as part of the UK's effort to support Bangladesh in

"We will continue to support these recoveries to the extent that we can,"

Hatton's question to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs is the latest in line of Brisith parliamentarians

criticising kelptocracy in Bangladesh. A newsletter sent on Friday by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on

The statement went on to say that Anti-Corruption & Responsible Tax said that they have engaged with all 56 MPs representing constituencies where the properties of former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury are located.

On October 15, the group held a parliamentary briefing to discuss how the UK can help Bangladesh recover its stolen money.

The parliamentary group's chair Joe Powell MP posted on his X profile, "We are at the epicentre of the housing crisis and must do what we can to prevent kleptocrats from snapping up London property with illicit wealth."



EDITORIAL

The Baily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

From repression to recognition

Bangladesh named 'Country of the Year' for triumphing over tyranny

Bangladesh being named The Economist's Country of the Year in 2024 is a tremendous achievement for the countryone that all Bangladeshis can be proud of. Each December, The Economist awards this title to a country that has made significant progress over the past year. This year, Bangladesh earned the prestigious accolade for "toppling a despot and taking strides towards a more liberal government." This recognition is particularly meaningful for a nation that has recently undergone a major political transition, overthrowing an extremely corrupt and autocratic regime of 15 years through a student-led mass uprising.

The report highlights the remarkable journey of the Bangladeshi people in overcoming political repression and paving the way for a brighter, more democratic future. As the Hasina regime grew increasingly repressive-marked by election rigging, jailing of opponents, and violent crackdowns on dissent-the people united and took to the streets to assert their rights. During the July uprising that ultimately led to the fall of Sheikh Hasina, hundreds were shot dead by the regime, and around 20,000 were wounded. The heavy toll paid to oust an autocratic regime is a rare and profound example of resilience in modern history—even though Bangladeshis are no strangers to demonstrating such resilience in the face of oppression.

While the political transition has inspired optimism both nationally and globally-showcasing the resilience and determination of the Bangladeshi people-the nation now faces significant economic challenges. Rebuilding the country will require addressing the economic consequences of the previous regime. During Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule, narratives of substantial economic growth were propagated, but these claims have since been exposed as largely illusory. A government-commissioned white paper revealed that an estimated \$234 billion was syphoned out of the country between 2009 and 2023. Additionally, Bangladesh has long struggled with inflation and unemployment, issues that must now be tackled urgently. However, with unity, these challenges can be overcome.

The interim government, led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, has prioritised rebuilding trust and stability. Its initiatives include economic and other reforms, restoring public order, and addressing social grievances. Despite the challenges, the progress made so far has been promising. Moving forward, Bangladesh must establish positive relations with other countries for mutual benefits, ensure judicial neutrality, and organise free and fair national elections. These steps are critical to solidifying the country's progress towards a more liberal democracy.

This is also a time for Bangladesh to correct past wrongs and begin anew-building a nation founded on equity, justice, the rule of law, and human rights. We hope the global community will continue to recognise our achievements and stand by Bangladesh as it strives to fulfil the democratic aspirations of its people.

Three DSCC hospitals crippled by neglect

Prioritise recruitment and efficient management

We are appalled by the findings of a report by The Daily Star on three hospitals run by the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), highlighting an acute shortage of staff and underutilised facilities, which cause unnecessary suffering for patients. In a city where accessible healthcare is increasingly out of reach for ordinary citizens, it is unacceptable that these public hospitals offer substandard services. This is a direct result of neglect and apathy from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Ministry of Health, a situation that has worsened over decades.

These hospitals are vital for low-income and lower-middleclass communities, as they offer subsidised healthcare. However, patients are forced to wait for hours due to the severe shortage of doctors, nurses, and other essential staff. As patient numbers rise, one hospital operates with half the required manpower. For instance, Mohanagar General Hospital, which installed ICU units and high-flow oxygen equipment during the Covid pandemic, cannot use them because there are no trained personnel. The surgery department has been non-functional since 2015, and highdependency unit (HDU) beds installed in 2021 remain unused. Many posts are vacant, further crippling the hospital's ability to function.

A similar manpower crisis exists at Dhaka Metropolitan Children's Hospital, where the paediatric surgery department has been inactive since 2012, and 40 of the 100 beds remain unused. Nazirabazar Matri Sadan is also grappling with a shortage of doctors and essential medicines.

In all three hospitals, staff are spread too thin, leaving patients without the necessary medical care. Despite repeated official letters sent to the health ministry and DGHS, no action has been taken. These hospitals reflect the dysfunction plaguing public healthcare across the country, with severe staff shortages making them nearly non-functional. The DGHS and health ministry have ignored the needs of these hospitals for years. Why has this been allowed to continue? What happened to the allocated budgets? If they were insufficient, why wasn't more funding provided?

The healthcare system, especially in public hospitals, continues to be marked by gross inadequacies. And the conditions at these hospitals are a perfect example of that. We urge the interim government to immediately investigate these issues and take corrective action. The recruitment of medical personnel should be a top priority, along with the training of staff to operate specialised equipment. Meanwhile, strict management oversight is necessary to ensure that no resources go underutilised. Access to healthcare is a basic right, and the government must restore functionality to these hospitals as soon as possible.

The path to recovering our stolen assets

AN OPEN development. For example, the ML **DIALOGUE**

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and works for Change Healthcare, Inc., an information technology company. He also serves as senior research fellow at the US-based International

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Corruption, embezzlement, and money laundering have been endemic in Bangladesh but reached new heights during the last 15 years of the nowtoppled regime led by the Awami League. The recently published "White Paper on the State of the Bangladesh Economy" reported that \$234 billion was syphoned off from Bangladesh between 2009 and 2023. The interim government has promised to work tirelessly to identify the perpetrators of this massive mayhem-to loot and plunder the country and its poor people—and bring back some of the illgotten resources.

Tax havens around the globe, particularly in the Middle East, Malaysia, the UK, Canada, the US, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore, provided a golden opportunity for businesses, bureaucrats, and politicians to use a well-crafted system of patronage and crony capitalism to take advantage of the country's incompetent leaders and financial regulators to launder an average of \$16 billion a year.

The White Paper documented the mechanism used for money laundering (ML)-these tricks have been wellknown for a long time. The then foreign minister of Bangladesh stated during an interview with The Daily Star in 2020 that the AL government had information that politicians, businessmen, and government officials, including some "serving officials," had pilfered and whitewashed money by buying properties in Canada. It is no secret that Bangladesh Bank and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) were fully aware of the scale of ML and the role played by the key protagonists!

The previous government was, on many occasions, alerted by the World Bank, multilateral financial institutions, UN agencies, and national watchdogs about the scope of illicit financial flows (IIF). In 2011, during negotiations with the World Bank to secure financing for the Padma Bridge, the bank provided "credible evidence of corruption" to the government. These

In my brief discussion on this matter with members of the current administration, it is clear that money laundering and its prevention are among its highest priorities. Last week, the BB governor publicly reiterated his intention to bring back stolen assets from other countries. He chairs a nine-member taskforce with representatives from important state

activities of the owners of the S Alam Group have resulted in the bankruptcy of the various businesses they own. If their overseas resources are liquidated and the proceeds repatriated and invested in their domestic enterprises, the local economy will receive a shot in the arm.

Also, we need to send a message to the culprits. In the language of criminal justice system, the purpose would be "deterrence, retribution, and restoration.'

asset recovery encompasses several steps that need to be pursued diligently. To begin, a special sub-unit comprising legal and financial experts could freeze, without delay and much fanfare, the funds or other assets of designated persons or entities. Fortunately, Bangladesh can leverage the goodwill earned

Why is international collaboration so important? Most of the stolen money is invested overseas or stashed away in foreign banks. The process of identifying these investments and recovering them will be slow and involve tackling the lawyers, trust experts, real estate agents, accountants, and financial institutions representing the individuals—the Saifuzzamans and the Benazirs—who might have already been identified and tipped in advance. The money, once taken out of the country, is most likely to have been invested in real estate or businesses through a process known as "layering," where the ownership is completely fuzzy. We need to hire the best global investigators to trace the money since the beneficial owner may be hidden behind multiple layers of shell companies or a nominee company director.

Since the US, Canada, Singapore, and the UK have some of the strictest antimoney-laundering (AML) legislation and enforcement mechanisms, our embassies or high commissions in these countries must be notified of the business entities or persons of interest. Several newspaper accounts of Bangladeshi residents in Singapore, New York, Toronto, and London have surfaced over the last few years. The taskforce can forward the list of suspects to MLARS and target the three most corrupt sectors identified by the White Paper: financial, ICT, and power.

The ultimate goal of the current administration is to lay the foundation of an anti-ML programme that will prevent future occurrences. A comprehensive ML programme will include investment in employee education, stricter internal controls, accountability, and early detection.

We need to build stronger defences against corruption, money laundering, and fraudulent trading practices. Key sectors like banking should have guardrails against the "bad influence of party politics," to quote Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud. Various policy measures and actions recommended by the Farashuddin Commission, set up after the Bangladesh Bank heist, need to be implemented. A whistleblower programme to reward individuals who provide helpful information on illegal

financial activities must be established. Finally, this most recent money laundering and kleptocracy saga underscores the pressing need for unwavering diligence and proactive implementation of a comprehensive AML compliance framework in system.



FILE VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

agencies, which has been assigned to track down stolen assets abroad and support investigations aimed at their recovery. The taskforce seeks to expedite legal proceedings for asset recovery, identify and address barriers to recovery, manage frozen or recovered assets abroad, and strengthen communication with relevant domestic and international bodies to gather essential information while enhancing internal coordination and capabilities.

While asset recovery is a tough and time-consuming process, it needs to be done, and for many reasons. The money looted from the coffers is now being used to undermine the present government. If we reverse the resource were brushed aside and dismissed as outflow and turn back the tide, that "trumped-up" allegations by the former would rejuvenate our economic

by the interim administration and seek assistance from three powerful international bodies: i) The World Bank's Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (STAR); ii) The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), based in Paris; and iii) The US Department of Justice's Money Laundering and Asset recovery Section (MLARS). Going forward, the taskforce must

initiate and hire staff to undertake and strengthen legal action in the following areas: identifying stolen assets, including non-performing bank loans; collecting intelligence and evidence and tracing overseas assets; determining the beneficiaries of ML and ownership transparency; initiating international cooperation between involved jurisdictions; coordination between agencies participating in the Bangladesh to safeguard the financial taskforce; and legal actions, domestic

The role of CITES in combating illegal wildlife trade



Fardeen Bin Abdullah studies LLM at the Department of Law, University of Rajshahi.

FARDEEN BIN ABDULLAH

Bangladesh, with its diverse ecosystems, harbours an array of wildlife species critical to global biodiversity. Yet, this rich natural heritage faces immense threats due to the illegal wildlife trade, both as a source and transit route. The role of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), established in 1973, is vital in curbing this alarming trend. However, recent developments have highlighted serious gaps in the country's compliance.

Illegal wildlife trade in Bangladesh encompasses a wide range of species, including Bengal tigers, turtles, exotic birds, and marine life. The country's geopolitical location, bordering India and Myanmar, makes it a strategic transit point for traffickers.

According to field studies, Bangladesh has 16 key trafficking hotspots along its borders, including Teknaf, Benapole, and the Chattogram seaport. Smugglers exploit porous borders and weak enforcement to move wildlife into neighbouring countries such as India, Myanmar, and Vietnam—countries with booming wildlife markets.

Since joining CITES in 1982. Bangladesh has committed to regulating international wildlife trade through strict permits and documentation to protect species from overexploitation. However, in August Myanmar. 2024, Bangladesh faced suspension

from CITES due to persistent failures in enforcement, hindering efforts to protect endangered species such as tigers, elephants, and various marine life forms. Despite this setback, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan expressed optimism, citing the government's commitment to stronger compliance and enhanced wildlife monitoring.

Challenges persist due to fake permits and insufficient training among port personnel, allowing smugglers to exploit these loopholes and traffic protected species via air and land routes, notably through Dhaka and Chattogram airports. And while the government has made progress in some areas, wildlife trafficking, especially through less-regulated borders, continues to thrive.

The Wildlife Crime Control Unit (WCCU), established by the Forest Department, has been at the forefront of efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Recent seizures of animals, such as Hoolock gibbons, fishing cats, and Kalij pheasants, underscore the ongoing struggle to stop wildlife smuggling. According to law enforcement, wildlife trafficking routes often pass through major international ports like Chattogram before moving to destinations such as India and

In March 2021, a significant

Patagonian Mara, an exotic species from Argentina, in Satkhira. This demonstrates how international traffickers exploit Bangladesh as a transit point. Similar seizures of zebras, lion cubs, and other species further highlight the scale of the illegal trade operating within the country.

Bangladesh is home to several species listed under the CITES appendices: Appendix I: Includes species threatened with extinction, such as the Bengal Tiger, Indian Elephant, and Red Panda, as well as marine species like the

Olive Ridley Turtle. Appendix II: Includes species like the Saltwater Crocodile, Gharial, and Indian Star Tortoise, which are at risk without trade controls.

Appendix III: Includes certain mangrove species from the Sundarbans and orchids from the Dendrobium genus, protected due to over-harvesting.

Despite these protective measures, enforcing CITES regulations remains challenging. Combating wildlife trafficking in Bangladesh is hampered by weak enforcement, inadequate resources, and insufficient training for the Wildlife Crime Control Unit. Online marketplaces like Facebook and YouTube complicate regulation, while domestic demand for wildlife products exacerbates the issue. Corruption and lack of expertise among port officials and border guards allow traffickers to exploit false declarations and evade detection, further endangering biodiversity.

Wildlife trafficking poses significant threat to Bangladesh's biodiversity. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), over 390 species in Bangladesh are at risk of extinction. Poaching, habitat destruction, and trade disrupt ecosystems and push

operation led to the rescue of seven species towards extinction. Marine life, such as turtles and sharks from the Bay of Bengal, is particularly vulnerable. Bangladesh has already lost 31 species in the last century, and many more are at risk if illegal trade continues unchecked.

> The Bangladesh Forest Department, in collaboration with international organisations like Interpol, has intensified anti-trafficking measures. These include:

> Rescue operations: Seizures of exotic and native wildlife, including endangered species.

> Public hotlines: Encouraging citizens to report wildlife crimes.

Legal frameworks: Enforcing the Wild Animals (Preservation and Security) Act, 2012.

Capacity building: Plans for a DNAbased tiger gene bank to strengthen anti-poaching measures.

However, recurring and inadequate market monitoring undermine progress. Given this reality, here are some steps that should be taken to address wildlife trafficking effectively: i) Enhance enforcement through training programmes for law enforcement and customs officials; ii) Use modern technology, such as drones and checkpoints, to deter smuggling; iii) Launch public awareness campaigns to reduce domestic demand for wildlife products; iv) Strengthen international cooperation for intelligence sharing and joint operations; and v) Revise policies to enforce stricter penalties and wildlife trade regulations.

Bangladesh's biodiversity faces significant pressure from illegal wildlife trade. Effective CITES enforcement and collaborative efforts among government agencies, international organisations, and the public are crucial for safeguarding ecosystems and global biodiversity.

Dhaka is an island

is an architect and writer, and directs Landscapes and Settlements.

KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF

Living within the hullabaloo of the city, in the belly of the beast, so to speak, there is a vital aspect of Dhaka that has become invisible. We can no longer see a city framed and encircled by rivers. How ironic is that! In a *nodi-beshtito* landscape, the river has disappeared from view. Not quite literally, but perceptually and ideationally. And, often, quite literally. That is, the river is no longer in our minds and is not accessible either. This is not the case for someone living in Paris, Bangkok, or Kolkata. Think of Buriganga, that is, if you can, the banks of which nurtured the beginning and growth of Dhaka. The river is now polluted beyond repair and its banks are almost inaccessible to the general public.

Once upon a time, rivers, wetlands, flood plains and canals used to completely girdle the city in a beautiful tapestry of green and blue. Now, a short ride on any of the rivers of Dhaka will show how that landscape is being mistreated and River. Other than one or two leisure boats, 90 percent of boats were sand barges slithering on the darkish water for the purpose of filling up nearby wetlands. We found a few instances where the riverbanks were recognised, but mostly it seemed like a long-disowned wasteland. be Even such planned enterprises as cartographer James Rennell's map of Purbhacahal and Jolshiri failed to Dhaka clearly showed its location in recognise the beauty of the rivers in a riverine geography. Earlier, in the their grand plans.

I describe this phenomenon, in which the rivers have receded from our lived experience, as the vanishing scope of the city. Accelerated by planning priorities and development drives, and a clear disregard for the virtues of rivers, rivers and a whole ecology associated with them are receding from our urban priorities. This is unequivocally disastrous.

Writing in the book Designing Dhaka in 2012, I proposed the viewpoint that "Dhaka is an island." The architect Muzharul Islam made a similar claim in 1993: "Dhaka has rivers on three sides, and lowland on the other, it is extended along the north-south. It is like an island." The claim is both rhetorical and prospective. It is rhetorical in the sense that Dhaka city is not quite an island but the way it is framed by water on all four sides, it appears to be one. Metropolitan Dhaka and its immediate areas are framed by four rivers—the Buriganga, the Turag, the Balu, and the Shitalakhhya. Like a garland or ring, the four abused. A couple of days back, a few rivers encircle a region on which the of us took a boat ride on the Balu historic city of Dhaka originated and developed, and where the expanding footprint of the modern city is fast growing. We calculate that the total linear length of the four riverbanks, considering both sides, is 216 kms!

> historical importance The of this "ring of rivers" cannot overemphasised. 15th century, the Chinese emissary

Kazi Khaleed Ashraf Ma Huan and his companions of the Turag. Jute factories on the wetlands and floodplains that still urban riverbank, unfettered and travelled up to Sonargaon and Dhaka in their Chinese junks. At the southern tip, Idrakpur Fort was constructed by the Mughals at the perfect location facing the daunting south that brought in marauders and troublemakers. Birulia village, once a hub of commerce, now sits as a desolate island in the river route

write her novel The River which became the basis for Jean Renoir's 1951 film of the same name. It was Renoir's film that inspired Satyajit Ray. Such is the web of rivers.

Rivers are not just ribbon-like channels. It also suggests a vast water ecology that includes canals, lakes,



not forget the essence of a river: it is in impermeable surfaces and engineered systems have disrupted both flows and absorptions. If we we are actually nullifying the lifeenhancing gift of nature.

Claiming that Dhaka is an island is an earnest call for an ecological and nature-oriented restoration of the city, and to experience, in the words the "free, fertile, vigorous and poetic landscape."

By prospective, I mean how we can erect our buildings, infrastructures and cities, that is, a whole new city form, with the rhythm of the river rings. How can we create an active public realm all along the riverbanks? And how can we experience a passenger river route in the ring? There are a few tasks involved here.

The first task is environmental, that is, to retain the rivers as rivers, by cleaning up the rivers, depolluting them, and maintaining their flow. This is fundamental and there is no two-way about this. The second task is legal, to create distinct policies for the definition and usage of the riverbanks for what happens on riverbanks lead to the eventual deterioration of rivers. Both these tasks are fairly well known in our prioritised. discourse on rivers, but they have not been able to restore the primacy of those rivers. If policies and outcries will not, what will?

There is a third task that may actually save rivers-we need to show by examples how the rivers dreams, no humanity. In a time of and riverbanks can be used. I argue that people abuse the riverbanks when there is no demarcated or defined public realm. Riverbanks Earth, we need to explore a "natureare actually a natural public realm. based path" for redemption in which

Sitalakhhya led Rumer Godden to infiltrate the body of the city. Let us unobstructed. And once there, he or she should be able to take in all about flows. The blatant increase the full glory of a river. A singular and time-tested way to preserve riverbanks is to create unobstructed walkable public spaces along all the are deleting rivers from our horizon, riverbanks. Our rural riverbanks are like that but the moment a river enters or passes by a city or town, it immediately becomes an object of abuse in which encroachment and privatisation turn the rivers black and deny the riverbanks to the wider of the Chinese landscape architect citizens. If any strategy that will save and ecological planner Kongjian Yu, our riverbanks, it is the publicisation of its banks.

> It does not take too much to create public spaces along riverbanks. All that is needed is an attention to public access and making simple gathering spaces such as parks, gardens and pathways. Pathways could be for both walking and biking. Ideally, I should be able to walk from Ashulia along the Turag and the Buriganga and reach the southern tip of Narayanganj (we calculated it would take 9 hours at 10 mins/km).

> We need to develop a hydrophilic image of the city, where the rivers are passionately loved and used. A civic activism is needed around the primacy of rivers in the life of a city. A map of a city is often a way to iconise that primacy. Such an iconic map of Dhaka is yet to be drawn. We propose a new visualisation of Dhaka in which the ring of rivers is

In Kongjian Yu's optimistic view, rivers and civilisations are closely bound up in which the big rivers will continue to nourish human civilisations. "No rivers, no dreams," as he declares. One could add: no paradoxical development, when industrial growth and technological optimism have wrought havoc on MAP COURTESY: **RIDA HAQUE** Anyone should be able to reach an the central role is played by the river.

> government, the interest rates continue to spike, adding further

July revolution and Prof Yunus: A winning combination



is associate professor at the Department of English and Modern Languages in North

MOHAMMAD SHAMSUZZAMAN

When Prof Yunus was sworn in as the chief adviser of the interim government on August 8 of this year, a feeling of déjà vu consumed me. I was transported back to 2006, when I was a graduate student at a university in California. I was working out at the gym in the morning. The TV right in front of my treadmill flashed Prof Yunus, as the newscaster mentioned that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize. I jumped out of the gym and started running to the office of my course coordinator. Before she could greet me as she suddenly found me next to her chair, I said, "Dr Lynne, a Bangladeshi won the Nobel Peace Prize this year." She smiled and said, "We know Professor Yunus. You are the next." I was so delightfully delusional that I had no idea what she meant. All I knew was that Bangladesh achieved nothing more dignified and desirable than winning the Nobel Peace Prize since our independence in 1971. When I left her office, I realised that Prof Yunus had re-defined Bangladesh, which was off to a new beginning. Unfortunately, nothing apparently has changed since. Politics has swamped everything.

While our political crisis climaxed this past July, Bangladesh has always been politically precarious since its bloody birth in 1971. The lever of political power alternated between demagogues and dictators. Most of them were intellectually halfbaked. They understood neither politics, nor economics. All of them were apparently con artists. They attempted to become popular, while their credibility nixed. They rigged elections. They celebrated trumpedup victories. They led without knowing whatsoever how a country runs. The country runs anyway, backward or forward, with or without a leader. A gated community of gonifs (the Hanifs, in our case!) feeds the fantasy of such a leader that she is inevitable and accomplished. While she ensconces herself in power and pride, the carpetbaggers erode the vitals of the country. Mismanagement the interim government took over, the

metastasises. People feel betrayed and vulnerable. What happens when such political paralysis persists? Hasina happens! Fascism happens! Genocide happens! In a political climate such as this, winning a Nobel Prize is apparently criminal. No wonder that they filed 198 court cases against Prof Yunus, as Deutsche Welle claims. Nothing, however, diminishes the fact that Prof Yunus is our one-off achievement. He has the charisma and credibility to help the nation achieve further. The Hasnats knew it. When the July

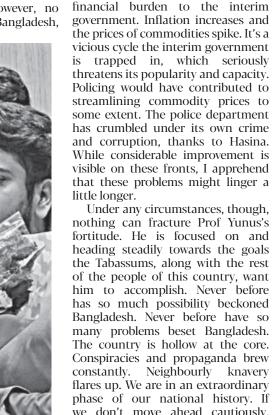
revolution culminated in Hasina's flight from the country on the August 5, the architects of the revolution (i.e., the student coordinators) realised that it occasioned an extraordinary opportunity to reclaim and reform the country that the Hasinas continue to own and run and ruin for decades. Unless a comprehensive electoral, judicial, bureaucratic, and constitutional reform is enacted, the Hasinas will continue to kill the Abu Syeds. The nation will continue to barrel backward, when crime, corruption, and injustice mount. Under these circumstances, the country didn't need a steward, who could smoothly transition power through an election. The country needed a reformer, who would ensure a fair and participatory election having undertaken some fundamental reforms. The country needed someone, who was authentic and exemplary. Only Prof Yunus seemed to have the sentimental and professional capital to fill the slot. Hasina's government was so disconnected from the people that they didn't realise that the more they disgraced Prof Yunus, the more love and respect and empathy hemmed around him. Add to that his accomplishments, global connections, and reputation. When he consented to become the chief adviser of the interim government, the most critical foundation of the

July revolution was laid. As we started to look forward when

forces of the fallen regime threatened anything but a magician. to push us backward. Movements The country seemed volatile and breathing life into a corpse. Dictators unpredictable. People started to feel are addicted to killing. They kill

A transition from a dictatorial

unemployment, and zero net carbon \$17 billion was syphoned from the emissions. He is deeply invested in country's financial system in the 15 erupted. Law and order deteriorated. regime to democracy is almost akin to making the world a better place. years of Hasina's regime. The country Besides, he has aged gracefully. He is apparently cash-strapped now. is never publicly angry or annoyed. When the country reels under heavy hopeless and helpless. The interim people. They kill institutions. They He maintains a low-key demeanour. foreign loans incurred by Hasina's government looked severely strained. kill courage and conviction. Along A personality of his stature doesn't Such a situation was very unfortunate the way, they massively infiltrate fit in the political mess that Hasina's but was never unexpected. Hasina the members of incestuously Bangladesh was. It's, however, no flooded the country with illegal arms interconnected families into a system longer Sheikh Hasina's Bangladesh,



Under any circumstances, though, nothing can fracture Prof Yunus's fortitude. He is focused on and heading steadily towards the goals the Tabassums, along with the rest of the people of this country, want him to accomplish. Never before has so much possibility beckoned Bangladesh. Never before have so many problems beset Bangladesh. The country is hollow at the core. Conspiracies and propaganda brew constantly. Neighbourly knavery flares up. We are in an extraordinary phase of our national history. If we don't move ahead cautiously, tomorrow's Bangladesh is anyone's guess. Arundhati Roy reminds us in her Boston Review interview, "How to Think About Empire," what Prof Yunus reiterates since he took over that we must not fool ourselves into believing that the change we want will come with fresh election as the "old bastards" are out of office. They will bounce in if we renew the politics of voting with the same old system in place. That's not an option for the new Bangladesh that emerged following the July revolution.

It was a goosebump moment for me when Prof Yunus won the Nobel Prize in 2006, and the same feeling renewed in 2024, when he was sworn in as chief adviser. I'm persuaded to think that no one is more poised to embody and draw from the unity and harmony that the July revolution built across Bangladesh. We needed interest and material greed, for Bangladesh to emerge anew. We have

Relax, Bangladesh!



Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus is pictured during a press briefing as he arrives at the Hazarat Shahjalal International Airport, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, August 8, 2024. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

and money. The country was already massively insecure and explosive. The agents of anarchy stalked all around the country. They resisted, as Hasina suddenly sneaked out of the country. And their resistance was not political; it was existential, instead. They stood exposed and felt endangered, as Hasina's regime fizzled. They wanted her back for their survival. Hasina has been a textbook example of a dictator, like the Peruvian dictator, Óscar R Benavides, who famously said, "For my friends everything, for my enemies the law." She changed the political culture and calculus of the country so irreversibly during the last 15 years that a quick fix is unlikely. However, the "reset button" is already set. As things gradually continue to fall on the right track, we must remember that Prof Yunus is

that thrives in isolation, intimidation, and pessimism. Resistance and unity dwindle. Stupidity becomes strength. Arrogance becomes a virtue. In the meantime, some bridges, flyovers, and tunnels happen. The cronies besetting the dictator construct a grand narrative of development claiming, "She has shown us out of pobeti [sic]."

Hasina's Bangladesh was a political circus. She had "LOL" models to rule the country, who were devoid of brainpower, integrity, and patriotism. Prof Yunus exists at the opposite end of such a political spectrum. He is an intellectual, who is worldly. He knows how politics functions. His vision of the world is not romantic or recondite. He wants the political system re-shaped around the economics of zero poverty, zero

Therefore, Prof Yunus becomes critical to guiding and transforming the nation to a new height. The nation wants to get out of the politics of bullshitting and blood-shedding. However capable Prof Yunus potentially is, we must not forget that he has inherited bankruptcy. Hasina left the country shattered. Hasina was psychologically unhinged. She was a narcissistic megalomanic. She was always smut and huffy, when she pretended that she was above human follies. She never confessed to have erred. For example, she bragged about her zero-tolerance policy to corruption, when she claimed that a stalwart, who is above partisan her peon scrounged around Tk 400 crores. Citing the governor of Bangladesh Bank, The New York Times reported recently that about

as our Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said.

Combating oral diseases through tobacco harm reduction

Leading international health experts unveiled a pioneering four-point plan to address the global crisis of oral diseases, which afflict more than 3.5 billion people worldwide.

Their landmark report, launched at a conference of highly regarded health professionals in London, provides a bold vision for reducing tobacco-related oral diseases by promoting safer alternatives and integrating tobacco harm reduction (THR) strategies into public health frameworks.

The report, Transforming Oral Health for All: The Case of Tobacco Harm Reduction, sets out four strategic objectives.

Encouraging risk-proportionate regulation: Governments should revise regulations and tax policies to increase access to safer, smoke-free nicotine alternatives while restricting combustible tobacco products, encouraging people who smoke to switch, and reducing the global burden of tobacco-related oral diseases.

Activating oral health professionals: Oral health professionals, especially dentists and hygienists, are crucial in educating patients about tobacco harm reduction. Providing them with proper training enables them to guide patients away from smokingrelated oral diseases.

Strengthening alliances and consumer representation: The report advocates for forming science-based consumer groups and collaborations among healthcare providers, NGOs, and the private sector to amplify voices affected by tobacco-related diseases and support evidence-based policy reforms.

Investment in research and local science: The report urges increased investment in research to understand tobacco harm reduction's impact on oral health, advancing knowledge on safer smoke-free nicotine products while protecting youth from tobacco use.



Mental health disorders should not be stigmatised or seen as a curse

SALMA AKTAR PRIYO

Mental health disorders affect millions of people worldwide, yet they remain one of the most misunderstood aspects of human health. Too often, these conditions are stigmatised or dismissed as curses, leading to discrimination, neglect, and a lack of proper care. Such perceptions not only harm individuals but also hinder societal progress. The time has come to address this stigma and view mental health with the same importance as physical well-being.

Neglecting mental health carries dire consequences. Individuals who suffer from untreated mental disorders often declining experience physical health, as chronic exacerbates stress conditions like diabetes cardiovascular diseases Social isolation is another significant outcome, as stigma prevents people from seeking help, leaving them alienated and hopeless.

This neglect also contributes to the high global suicide rate, with nearly 800,000 deaths annually, many of which could have been prevented with timely intervention. In Bangladesh, suicide remains a pressing issue, with a rate of 7.8 per 100,000 people. Beyond the personal toll, the neglect of mental health imposes significant societal and economic burdens, including reduced workplace productivity, increased crime, and strained family dynamics.

One of the greatest barriers to marked a significant step forward. addressing mental health issues is the persistence of cultural myths and superstitions. In many parts of South disorders, prohibits discrimination, Asia, mental illnesses are still viewed and mandates the establishment as spiritual punishments or signs of of mental health facilities. Sections moral failure. People often turn to of the act specifically criminalise

professional care, resulting in harmful practices that delay recovery or worsen the condition. Education and awareness campaigns are

essential to dismantle these harmful beliefs and encourage communities to embrace evidence-based solutions.

Research and policy advancements provide a glimmer of hope. Globally, initiatives like the Lancet Commission on Mental Health in 2023 have called for increased

funding, integration of mental health

into primary healthcare, and the use

In Bangladesh, the enactment

of the Mental Health Act, 2018,

This legislation guarantees the

rights of individuals with mental

of community-based care models.

traditional healers instead of seeking inhumane treatment and promote the dignity of those affected. However, gaps in implementation, resource allocation, and workforce availability continue to pose challenges.

Technology offers opportunities to bridge these gaps. Digital platforms like Moner Bondhu are expanding access to counselling services, particularly for rural and underserved populations. Telemedicine intelligence-powered tools can also provide preliminary assessments and guidance, ensuring that help reaches those who need it most.

> Addressing mental health multifaceted approach. Family and community support are crucial in breaking the

silence and encouraging affected individuals to seek help. Schools and workplaces must also play their part by promoting mental health awareness and creating inclusive environments. Governments must prioritise mental health in national budgets, increase the number of trained professionals, and

ensure that laws protecting mental health rights are effectively enforced. Mental health disorders are

not curses or weaknesses; they are health conditions that demand understanding, compassion, and action. By normalising conversations around mental health dismantling the stigma, we can create a world where seeking help is seen as a sign of strength rather than shame. Mental health is a shared responsibility, and addressing it is essential for building a healthier, more inclusive society.

 $The \it writer is from \it the Department of Law$ at the World University of Bangladesh. Email: pori16pm@gmail.com

Alternative treatments for anxiety

Anxiety disorders are common worldwide. While therapy medication traditional treatments, alternative therapies can be a valuable addition for managing mild anxiety. These methods aim to reduce anxiety symptoms with fewer side

effects and can complement standard treatments when approved by a healthcare professional.

1. Reduce caffeine and avoid alcohol and nicotine: Excessive caffeine intake can worsen anxiety, even in amounts as low as 200 mg per day. Reducing caffeine consumption may help minimise anxiety. Similarly, while alcohol and nicotine might temporarily ease symptoms, they often make anxiety worse in the long run.

2. Eat a nutritious diet: A healthy, well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats supports mental health. It is also important to avoid processed foods and high sugar intake, which can trigger anxiety symptoms. Staying hydrated by drinking enough water is equally important for managing stress levels.

3. Engage in regular physical activity: Exercise, particularly cardiovascular activities, is proven to reduce stress and anxiety. Even a short burst of activity, like a brisk 10-minute walk, can provide hours of relief. Regular physical activity not only alleviates anxiety but also promotes overall well-being.

4. Prioritise sleep: Quality sleep plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety. Aim for 6-8 hours of sleep each night, and establish a consistent sleep schedule.

5. Practice relaxation techniques: Techniques such as meditation, yoga, and deep breathing exercises are effective in managing anxiety.

6. Consider supplements and essential oils: Herbal supplements like chamomile, passionflower, and L-theanine may help alleviate mild anxiety.

Understanding high arches: causes, symptoms, and treatment options

High arches, or occur when the arch of your foot is raised m o r e than normal, creating a structural that issue

can lead to foot pain and discomfort. Unlike flat feet, where the arch is low, high arches cause the middle part of the foot to be excessively elevated. This condition can affect your posture, skeletal structure, and overall comfort while walking or standing.

What causes high arches? High arches can be caused by genetics or neurological disorders. Conditions such as spina bifida, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and stroke can lead to cavus foot. Inherited high arches typically remain stable over time, whereas those caused by neurological issues tend to worsen as the individual ages.

Common symptoms of high arches: Individuals with high arches often experience symptoms like: foot pain during walking, standing, or physical activities; difficulty finding properly fitting shoes; claw-like, bent toes when standing; heel tilting inward, causing instability; calluses on the foot's ball, side, or heel.

If you suspect you have high arches, you can perform a simple test at home by stepping on a piece of paper with wet feet. If you see little or no imprint of your foot's arch, it may indicate high arches.

Treatment and management: Treatment for high arches depends on the underlying cause and the severity of the condition. Non-surgical options include: Orthotic devices for added foot support; Corrective shoes that provide stability and reduce pain; Braces for additional ankle support.

In severe cases, surgery may be needed to improve foot stability, reduce pain, and prevent muscle imbalances. If the condition is genetic, one surgery is typically enough, but for neurological causes, multiple surgeries might be required.

Consult with a healthcare provider to determine the best treatment plan based on your individual case.

T-BOOSTER A revolutionary step in immunity enhancement

DR MD ARIF SHEIKH

The journey to restore immunity and reverse age-related decline has taken an exciting leap with the development of T-BOOSTER. This groundbreaking natural food supplement is poised to address a critical issue: thymic involution, a process where the thymus gland shrinks with age, leading to a decline in T-cell production and a weakened immune system.

The role of the thymus in immunity: The thymus gland plays a pivotal role in the body's immune defence, producing T-cells that combat infections, cancer, and autoimmune diseases. However, thymic involution significantly reduces its effectiveness over time. Factors such as stress, infections, and cancer treatments can temporarily shrink the thymus, but research has shown that it has the potential to regenerate. Leveraging this capability, the creators of T-BOOSTER have formulated a supplement that aids thymus regeneration, enhancing immunity and unlocking youthful vitality.

The science behind T-BOOSTER: T-BOOSTER is a blend of 18 clinically proven compounds, including vitamins, minerals, and natural food extracts. Using artificial intelligence and advanced computational tools, the team has ensured that each ingredient interacts optimally with the thymus. The supplement targets multiple mechanisms to support thymus health, such as:

- Protecting the gland from oxidative damage using
- Balancing gut flora to reduce inflammatory signals.
- Preserving vital thymic cells and boosting T-cell functionality. • Mitigating age-related inflammation, restoring a youthful

Manufactured in the UK by G&G Vitamins, T-BOOSTER adheres to the highest safety and quality standards. It is free from artificial additives, GMOs, and allergens, making it suitable for vegetarians, vegans, and halal consumers.

Clinical trials: a commitment to validation: To back its claims, T-BOOSTER has undergone rigorous scientific evaluation. A double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial involving 240 participants is currently underway. This study aims to evaluate its efficacy in enhancing immune function over four months, using advanced DNA-based analysis to assess thymus health.

A vision for the future: T-BOOSTER's developers, led by Dr Md Arif Sheikh, a molecular and structural biology expert, have an ambitious roadmap. The supplement is set for a global launch in 2025, targeting markets in the UK, Europe, Bangladesh, and the USA. With a focus on direct-to-consumer and retail channels, including e-commerce platforms like Amazon, T-BOOSTER aims to make its mark on the burgeoning health and wellness industry.

The project is supported by a distinguished team, including advisors and co-investigators with expertise in clinical trials, drug discovery, and business strategy. Together, they are working to ensure the product not only delivers health benefits but also meets the regulatory standards required for its international rollout.

Empowering consumers for a healthier tomorrow: T-BOOSTER is designed for individuals seeking to enhance their immunity and overall health, from seniors aiming for rejuvenated immune function to wellness enthusiasts and biohackers. Through a combination of robust research, innovative marketing strategies, and a consumer-centric approach, T-BOOSTER aspires to become a trusted name in immunity enhancement.

This innovative supplement underscores the potential of science and natural compounds to address pressing health challenges. With T-BOOSTER, the promise of longevity, vitality, and robust immunity is closer than ever.

The writer is the founder and CEO T-BOOSTER Limited United Kingdom. Email: arif@t-booster.co.uk

A revolutionary treatment for low back pain

DR MOHAMMAD ALI

Over 80% of people worldwide experience low back pain (LBP) at some point in their lives. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), LBP is the leading cause of disability globally. LBP is typically classified into three categories: acute, subacute, and chronic. Pain lasting three months or longer is termed chronic low back pain (CLBP). Identifying the exact cause of CLBP is challenging, with WHO data suggesting that 90% of CLBP cases lack a specific cause and are referred to as nonspecific low back pain (NSCLBP).

Traditionally, treatments for LBP have included pain medications, electrotherapy, and steroid injections. However, extensive steroid research published in The Lancet in 2018 declared these conventional treatments ineffective for longterm management. Instead, the study emphasised the importance of a biopsychosocial approach to treatment.

What is STOPS?

STOPS, or Specific Treatment of the Problems of the Spine, is an treatment method innovative developed by Australian researchers. Its core principle is precise diagnosis. Since chronic LBP often lacks a single identifiable cause, STOPS focuses on identifying multiple contributing factors. These factors may include:

Conditions like PLID Physical: (prolapsed lumbar intervertebral disc).

Issues such as Psychological: depression.

Socioeconomic: Stressors like family discord.

The treatment process begins with a detailed assessment of these factors. A personalised plan is then created to address the obstacles the patient faces in recovering from pain. Additionally, the patient's profession and daily activities are analysed to devise a fitness program tailored to their post-recovery lifestyle. As a result, the treatment approach varies for each patient,

based on their unique contributing

Effectiveness of STOPS

Extensive clinical trials have demonstrated that STOPS is significantly more effective and cost-efficient than conventional treatments. In Bangladesh, LBP treatment is often prohibitively expensive, with hospitalisation costs frequently escalating to many times the initial expense. In contrast, STOPS emphasises reducing treatment costs, even for spinal pain conditions like neck pain.

Patients typically undergo therapy once or twice a week, minimising hospital visits. Consequently, STOPS is recognised globally as an affordable and highly effective treatment option.

The writer is a back pain researcher at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, and a Doctor of Physical Therapy student at the University of Montana, USA. Email: hprc2005@

Early surgery vs. endoscopy for painful chronic pancreatitis

Chronic pancreatitis, marked by persistent abdominal pain and compromised quality of life, is commonly treated with surgery or endoscopy. A randomised trial, initially conducted in the Netherlands, compared these two approaches in 88 patients (mean age 54) with chronic pancreatitis, dilated ducts, and chronic pain. The trial found that after 18 months, surgery provided slightly better pain relief than endoscopy, though the difference was not significant.

In the latest follow-up, with a median of 98 months, surgery continued to half of the endoscopy-first patients show greater pain relief and higher eventually crossed over to surgery due patient satisfaction compared to to inadequate pain relief, and these endoscopic treatment. However, patients had worse outcomes than Source: JAMA Surgery



overall quality of life and disease progression markers were similar between the two groups. Notably, about

those who initially underwent surgery. Conversely, about one-third of surgeryfirst patients required endoscopic interventions during follow-up.

These findings suggest that surgery may offer more durable pain relief, but the decision should be individualized. While surgery appears more effective in the long term, endoscopy can still be a viable first option for some patients, especially those seeking less invasive treatment. A stepwise, flexible approach that adapts to patient response may provide the best outcomes. Further research is needed to refine treatment strategies and better understand the long-term impact of both methods.

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1 Premier League Man Utd vs Bournemouth Live from 8:00 pm Tottenham vs Liverpool Live from 10:30 pm U-19 Women's Asia Cup

Final Bangladesh vs India Live from 7:30 am **PTV SPORTS** South Africa vs Pakistan Third ODI Live from 6:00 pm

Women's BCL kicks off

SPORTS REPORTER

Left-arm spinner Nahida Akter shone on opening Women's Bangladesh Cricket League - the firstever three-day women's first-class competition as the Central Zone player returned seven wickets for 48 runs against North Zone at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in

Rajshahi yesterday. North Zone declared their first innings at 240-9, courtesy of Farzana Haque's 86 and Ritu Moni's 57. Central Zone finished at 29-0 at stumps.

Meanwhile, in the other contest at the Bangla Trac Cricket Academy Ground, Sharmin Akther Supta struck 88 but her side, East Zone, could only manage 193 runs.

Ayesha Rahman made an unbeaten 82 while RH Jhelik scored 38 not out as South Zone finished the opening day at 164-1, trailing by 29 runs.

Player payment concern looms over BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is facing challenges in obtaining bank guarantees from franchises participating in upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), raising concerns over players' payments ahead of the T20 competition starting on December 30.

Despite collecting Tk eight crore in guarantees from each franchise in previous years, BCB has struggled to ensure timely payments to players, with several local and foreign cricketers voicing complaints about unpaid dues. Some even reported the issue to the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA), forcing BCB to step in and settle the payments.

After becoming BCB boss, Faruque Ahmed significantly reduced the bank guarantee amount following requests from franchises. Currently, BCB is asking Tk three crore from each franchise as a bank guarantee, which they wanted to confirm by December 24 after extending the deadline multiple times and reducing the amount on each occasion.

It was learnt that some franchises are unwilling to provide a bank guarantee this year, citing the current financial situation in the country, and have instead promised to clear the payments themselves.



DECISIONS AT BCB MEETING

Members of the U-19 Men's squad to receive Tk three lakh each as prize money for winning the ACC U-19 Asia Cup.

In addition to central contract, 30 more women's cricketers will be added to firstclass contract. Bonus money for winning international matches, ranking-wise, will also be introduced in women's cricket.

Decision regarding captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's captaincy will be taken next month.

When questioned about the matter, it seems he BCB boss is also aware of the situation.

"Our country is facing tough times financially now. We all live in Bangladesh, so we know about it. That's why we are increasing which I think is a good amount," he concluded.

the time (deadline for the bank guarantee)," Faruque told reporters following the board of directors meeting in Mirpur yesterday.

"We want to serve our purpose, and there shouldn't be any extra pressure on BPL teams. We definitely want to confirm the bank guarantee from them as we have increased the time. Apart from that, we reduced the amount due to the financial conditions right now," he said, adding that BCB is also struggling to secure other sponsors.

"It has been challenging for both the board and team owners to get sponsors. We want to make things easier, keeping everything in mind," he said, adding that the board has also started clearing last year's pending payments to players.

"The board has started to pay the local cricketers from those teams that are not participating this year. We have already cleared 25 franchises from last year," said Faruque, confirming that they secured Modhumoti Bank as the title sponsor for the BPL Music Fest, scheduled to be held in Dhaka, Sylhet, and Chattogram on December 23, 25, and 28, respectively.

Modhumoti Bank has come on board as the title sponsor of the BPL Music Fest. They are kind enough to pay close to Tk five crore,



Shuttlers from 5 nations triumph

SPORTS REPORTER

The Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge came to an end yesterday, with top-seed Ukrainian shuttler Polina Buhrova expectedly emerging as champion in the women's singles in

Polina, who participated in the Paris Olympics, handed a 21-19, 21-19 defeat to Thailand's Lalinrat Chaiwan at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium, while Sri Lankan Viren Nettasinghe lifted the men's singles title with a 21-12, 21-17 win over Canada's Xiaodong Sheng.

In the women's doubles, however, Polina and her compatriot Yevheniia Kantemyr narrowly lost 23-25, 21-18, 11-21 to Thailand's Kodchaporn Chaichana and Pannawee Polyiam. The men's doubles title went to Malaysia's Lau Yi Sheng and Lee Yi Bo, who overcame Indonesia's Muhammad Bariq Al Hanif and Ali Faathird Rayhan.

The mixed doubles saw Indonesians Hee Yong Kai Terry and Jin Yu Jia emerge victorious with a 21-14, 21-16 win over India's Navaneeth Bokka and Ritika Thaker.

New lease of life for Jibon at Rahmatganj

SPORTS REPORTER

National discard forward Nabib Newaj Jibon scored in his third successive match in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) to help Rahmatganj MFS register an emphatic 3-1 win over Brothers Union at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Mymensingh yesterday

Jibon, who joined the Old-Dhaka outfit this season following a long stint at Abahani, struck in the second half in between a brace from Ghanaian forward Boetang.

Jibon's strike restored Rahmatganj's lead after Brothers' Senegalese recruit Cheikh Sene had cancelled out Samuel Boateng's second-minute goal by converting a penalty in the 70th minute. Boetang scored his second in the stoppage time of the second half.

"I was a victim of bias in Abahani and did not get many matches last season," Jibon told The Daily Star about his goal-less run for Abahani in the BPL last season.

"This season the coach has given me more minutes by drafting me in the starting eleven. I am also more focused on helping my club by scoring goals. That's why I am getting goals regularly," he added.

Jibon came off the bench in their league opener against Fortis FC but could not find the back of the net. He struck twice in the following match against Chittagong Abahani and netted one against Bashundhara Kings before scoring once again yesterday against Brothers.

With four goals, he is now second in the goal-scorer's list this season, one goal behind joint top-scorers Al Amin of Police FC and Souleymane Diabate of Mohammedan SC.

"My target is to return to the national football team," said 34-year-old Jibon, adding that age is just a number and only fitness and performance matters.

Meanwhile, Fakirerpool YMC tasted their maiden victory in the professional football league with a 2-0 win over winless Chittagong Abahani in Mymensingh while promoted Dhaka Wanderers Club also secured their first point by playing a 1-1 draw with Fortis FC at Kings arena.

Rangpur qualify for NCL T20 final

Khulna, Metro face off in 2nd qualifier today

SPORTS REPORTER

Rangpur Division became the first finalist in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL) T20 by handing Dhaka Metro a four-wicket defeat in the first qualifier at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Earlier on the day at the same venue, Khulna Division booked a place in second qualifier by knocking Chattogram Division out of the competition with a seven-run win in the eliminator.

In the first qualifier, pacer Robiul Hoque starred with the ball, claiming 3-19 while Alauddin Babu finished with 2-25 as Rangpur restricted Metro to 107-9 in their stipulated overs after they had been sent to bowl first.

Metro, who had won all seven of their league matches, were at risk of getting dismissed below made a dogged 30 off 42 balls, departed as the sixth batter in the 15th over with just 66 runs on the board.

But Aminul Islam Biplob's unbeaten 24-ball 23 and Abu Hider Rony's eight-ball 16 pushed their total

Rangpur were also in a spot of bother chasing the meagre target, getting reduced to 62-4 in 12.1 overs. But Tanbir Hayder and Ariful Haque then each scored 22, with the former remaining unbeaten, to take them across the finish line with four balls to

In the day's first match, sent to bat, Khulna had set up the base for a big finish thanks to skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan's 39-ball 52.

But Chattogram pace duo of Ahmed Sharif (4-26) and Fahad Hossain (3-20) spoiled those plans, jointly dismantling Khulna's batting lineup by taking their last five wickets for just nine runs to bowl them out



for 146 in 19.3 overs.

In reply, Chattogram lost half their side for just 64 inside 11 overs before Yasir Ali (37 off 27 balls) and Nayeem Hasan (34 not out off 27 balls) shared a 53run stand for the sixth wicket to bring their side back in the contest.

But after pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana (2-12) dismissed Yasir, Chattogram could not keep up with the asking rate and despite taking 16 runs in the last over from Al-Amin Hossain, could only manage 139-6 in their 20 overs.

Metro and Khulna will face off in the second qualifier today and the winner will take on Rangpur in Tuesday's final.

SHORT CORNER

Afghanistan take ODI series against Zimbabwe

Teenage spinner AM Ghazanfar took 5-33 as Afghanistan defeated hosts Zimbabwe by eight wickets in the third and final one-day international on Saturday to claim the series 2-0 after the opening game was washed out by rain.

World Cup-winning England international Eastham dies aged 88

George Eastham, a member of England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad, has died at 88, his former club Stoke City said on Friday. Son of England international George Senior, midfielder and inside forward Eastham played for Newcastle United, Arsenal and Stoke City in the English topflight league in a professional career spanning two decades, and earned 19 international caps.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website



Bangladesh captain Sumaiya Akter and her Indian counterpart Niki Prasad pose with the ACC U-19 Women's Asia Cup trophy for which the two teams will battle out in the final in Kuala Lumpur

Slot says he is Postecoglou 'fan' ahead of Spurs clash

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Arne Slot says he is a fan of Ange Postecoglou's gung-ho approach to football and hopes he wins a trophy -- just not the League Cup -- after the teams were paired together in the semifinals.

Premier League leaders Liverpool travel to

face Spurs in English the flight on Sunday, needing to win to keep fast-charging Chelsea at bay.

Tottenham chasing their trophy first since 2008, beat Manchester

United 4-3 in a chaotic League Cup quarterfinal on Thursday.

Postecoglou has been criticised by some for his unwillingness to compromise on his attacking instincts but he gave a passionate defence of his approach after the match, asking: "Are you not entertained?"

And Slot admits he is a devotee of the Australian's methods, saying his team are a "joy" to watch.

"I hope, hope that he wins a trophy," he said on Friday. "Not the League

Cup but I'm completely a fan of his team for the Europa League because people always talk about trophies, trophies, and that is so important.

"Now, for me, his brand of football, his style of football is so much more important and if he can combine it with something, that would be so good for football in general because then people can stop

> as too attacking or whatever. "How on earth can you play too much attacking

talking about it

football?" Postecoglou appreciated Slot admiring his style

attacking and backing Spurs' bid to win the Europa League, where they are currently ninth in the standings.

That respect is mutual for me. We've all got really difficult tasks and we go about it in our way," he added.

Liverpool had a nine-point cushion at the top of the Premier League earlier this month but Chelsea could be at the summit when Slot's team kick off in London on

Slot said it was too early to make judgements about his team's title chances.



Aston Villa's Colombian striker Jhon Duran sets off in celebration after scoring the opening goal against Manchester City in their Premier League fixture at Villa Park in Birmingham yesterday. Unai Emery's side won the game 2-1, heaping more misery on defending champions City, who are in sixth position with 27 points from 17 matches. Liverpool lead the table with 36 points from 15 matches. PHOTO: REUTERS





12-party to back BNP for polls by 2025

Its leaders hold meeting with BNP liaison committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the 12-party alliance, who previously organised joint movements with the BNP against the former Awami League government, have expressed support for the BNP's position on holding the next parliamentary elections by 2025.

They argue that failing to conduct the elections within this timeframe could lead to further delays. As a result, they have agreed to exert pressure on the interim government to ensure the elections take place by next year.

This stance was shared during a meeting with the BNP's liaison committee at the party chairperson's Gulshan office last evening.

The alliance leaders also reiterated their commitment to supporting the BNP's decisions regarding the national election and the formation of a new political party by student leaders involved in the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement in July and August.

A source from the meeting told The Daily Star that the meeting agreed to demand the election be held by December 2025.

'We heard their [the BNP's] views on the formation of the new political party, which appears to have support from the interim government. While everyone has the right to form a political party, doing so with state backing is unacceptable," the source, speaking anonymously, said.

This dialogue marks the beginning of the BNP's consultations with like-minded parties that stood with them during the anti-Awami League movements. The talks aim to solidify unity among political parties and gather their opinions on the upcoming general election.

After the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan told reporters that no final decisions had been made regarding the meeting's agenda.





Rahat Fateh Ali Khan performs at the "Echoes of Revolution" concert at the capital's Army Stadium yesterday.

ECHOES OF REVOLUTION A night of unity, music, remembrance

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan yesterday performed at the "Echoes of Revolution" concert, a charity event aimed at raising funds for families of martyrs and those injured during the July uprising.

The legendary musician waived his fees for the event so that all proceeds from ticket sales are donated to the Shaheed July Smriti Foundation, which is providing financial support to the affected families.

The programme was organised at the capital's Army Stadium by the "Spirits of July" platform.

stellar included prominent Bangladeshi bands such as Artcell, Chirkutt, and Aftermath, alongside the Qawwali group Silsila and rap artists Shezan and Hannan.

The concert, hosted by Dipty Chowdhury and Zulhaj Zubair, was further

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Political clout intertwined with chaos on roads Says Adviser Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 37,000 people have lost their lives and more than 65,000 have been injured in road accidents across the country over the past five years, according to the Road Safety Foundation.

This data, covering accidents from 2020 to November 2024, was

revealed during a national dialogue institutional management and structural reforms aimed at bringing order to the road transport sector.



Speaking at the event, Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam highlighted that corruption in the country's road transport sector remains a critical issue. Although its dynamics have shifted, the problem persists.

The dialogue, held at the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) in the capital, also pointed out that while public transport carries 53 percent of passengers, private vehicles transport only 11 percent. Yet, private vehicles occupy 70 percent of the road space, leaving less than 30 percent for public transport.

This disparity was described as "grossly unfair" to the general public.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Education disparities may cause more social conflict

Says Prof Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Disparities in the country's educational system have widened over the years and more social conflict lies ahead if the gap is not reduced, renowned economist Prof Rehman Sobhan has said.

"Sadly, Bangladesh, notwithstanding the transformative changes which have taken place in our society and economy, has seen disparities in our educational system widen over the years," the chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said.

This has caused social and political injustices which have disfigured the country's political journey, he said while delivering a lecture in honour of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

Bishwo Shahitto Kendro Prakton Savya Sangha, an association of the Kendro's alumni, organised the lecture "Democratising Education: Pathways to a Just Society" at the Kendro in the city.

"There are many sources of inequality, 'Boishommo' [discrimination], but in my view, the disparities in access to education remain one of the most pernicious factors," said Prof Sobhan.

"... If we cannot close this divide in our education, more social conflict lies ahead of us," he said.

He said many countries, including those in Europe, East and South East Asia, as well as Cuba in the Americas,



Prof Rehman Sobhan suggests tripling the allocation for education in the national budget to at least 5pc of GDP.

have built their educational system on more democratic principles

And these societies have also emerged as more efficient and productive societies, with higher GDP SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

150 broadcast journos lost jobs this year **BJC survey finds**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Throughout this year, over 150 broadcast journalists lost their jobs, said a survey by Broadcast Journalist Centre (BJC) released yesterday

The survey was based on data collected from 30 national television channels.

BJC's Executive Coordinator Shahnaz Sharmin revealed the findings at the International Mother Language Institute.

It was also found that at least 48.3 of the channels do not provide termination benefits, while 44.8 do not give any notice period for terminations, which are mandatory by the law.

Meanwhile, less than half of the TV channels pay their workers on time at least 20 percent of them keep their workers waiting for several months at a time for salaries and take two to five months to pay arrears.

Salaries are irregular and paid in instalments in 35 percent of the channels. Moreover, more than 82 percent of the channels do not have a sexual harassment prevention committee, BJC found.

This too was mandated by a $2009\,\mathrm{High}$ Court ruling, which instructed that such committees be set up in all workplaces and institutions.

Health insurance too is paid by only a SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

Govt updates uprising death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

toll, it's 858

The government has updated its draft list of casualties during the July uprising, putting the death toll at 858 and the number of wounded at

The two lists, published on the website of "Special Cell on Uprising Affairs" (https://musc. portal.gov.bd) will be continuously updated. The lists will remain open for public review until December 23, according to a press release issued yesterday by the Health Services Division.

The health services division and directorate, 64 district committees along with the uprising cell are working to finalise the list, said Khandaker Zahirul Islam, team leader (additional secretary) of the newly formed special cell, the release said.

The cell urges family members and next of kin to review the lists, which include names and addresses of the martyrs and wounded, and provide their feedback or corrections. Any opinions or suggestions regarding the draft

lists can be submitted via email (muspecialcell36@ gmail.com) to the Special Cell on Uprising Affairs by December 23.

Uprising leaders drafting charter for new party

They're also looking for a name

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Youths who spearheaded the student-led July-August mass uprising have started drafting the charter of their planned political party ahead of the official launch.

They are studying the models of other youthbased parties in South Asia, but have not yet finalised a name for their political party.

They will seek suggestions for the name from the people after completing the formation of ward-level committees, according to sources inside the civic and student platforms: the Jatiya Nagorik Committee and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

London to help Dhaka recover siphoned money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in the UK said that it is committed in helping Bangladesh track down and recover assets acquired in the UK using funds misappropriated by the previous government.

The office made this statement on December 17, 2024 in response to a question asked by a parliamentarian, Lloyd Hatton to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

'The UK is committed to assisting investigative, prosecuting and judicial authorities in combating international crime. We have robust illicit finance

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

SAIFUL MURDER Ctg Bar probe body members step down en masse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Members of the probe formed Chattogram District Bar Association (CDBA) to investigate the vandalism, clashes and murder of the lawyer Saiful Islam Alif in Chattogram court premises, recommended judicial probe seeking exemption from the probe committee.

committee's The convener metropolitan prosecutor (PP) and lawyer Abdus Sattar, made this recommendation the CDBA leaders last Thursday and requested to be relieved from the probe

committee. Earlier, four other members, including the committee's secretary, had also sought exemption from the committee.

Abdus Sattar told The Daily Star, "The CDBA SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



It drizzled all over Khulna city yesterday because of an active low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal. On top of the usual challenges of venturing out during winter, the continuous drizzle made the daily tasks of ordinary citizens even more difficult. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN