



STATE WITNESS

War of words erupts at ICT during cross-examination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tempers flared at the International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday as prosecution and defence sparred during the cross-examination of a state witness in the Ashulia murders and body-burning case, tied to the July 2024 mass uprising.

The confrontation unfolded when defence counsel Syed Mizanur Rahman, representing former additional SP Abdullahil Kafi, pressed approver and former sub-inspector Sheikh Abzalul Haque on whether he had learnt about the killing of ASI Raju.

During questioning, Abzalul said he left Ashulia Police Station without permission on August 5 last year and returned on August 15.

Mizanur then asked if, upon returning, he had heard about Raju's death.

Prosecutor Md Mizanul Islam objected, arguing that the defence

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



With a paddy sheaf tied to its bumper, a pickup marked “Rab-4” being used yesterday to campaign for BNP nominee Fazle Huda Babul in Naogaon's Mahadevpur upazila. Campaigners said they had bought the vehicle at an auction but could not explain why they did not remove the law enforcement agency's markings or make the required modifications. Contacted, Babul said campaigners may use vehicles “as they wish” but claimed he was unaware that this particular car was in use. Rab-5 Company Commander in Joypurhat, Nazmul Hoque, told The Daily Star that using any vehicle that once belonged to the agency -- even if bought at an auction -- is illegal when official markings are still visible.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

SECURITY MEETING

Khalilur urges unity against threats of misinformation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman yesterday emphasised the need for implementing collective actions among Colombo Security Conclave member countries to address the challenges of cybersecurity, misinformation, and disinformation.

While making the country statement at the seventh CSC meeting at the level of NSAs in New Delhi, he also said Bangladesh cannot “afford to allow any exogenous or indigenous forces to challenge the security and well-being of our community...”

“Of late, we have been facing a constant barrage of misinformation and disinformation. We are committed towards securing our own cyberspace, critical infrastructure, and technology.

“However, national actions are not enough We need to articulate and implement our collective actions in facing up to the challenges of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BCL PROCESSION

15-yr-old sent to jail on anti-terrorism charges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A 15-year-old eighth grader has been arrested in Cumilla's Nangolkot and sent to jail on anti-terrorism charges for allegedly participating in a procession of the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League.

According to the case statement, he took part in a procession on November 17, the day the International Crimes Tribunal-1 sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to death for crimes against humanity during last year's uprising.

The student's father, a businessman, claimed his son is not involved with any political party and was at home when the procession took place in the evening, the time mentioned by police.

Police picked him up from his home around 3:00am on November 18 and produced him before a Cumilla court later that day. The family sought bail, but the court rejected the petition and sent him to jail.

Yesterday, they filed a fresh bail petition, which will be heard on Sunday.

The boy is now in Cumilla Central Jail, and the process of transferring him to the Juvenile Development Centre in Gazipur is underway, said Halima Khatun, senior jail

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

NEW MOORING CONTAINER TERMINAL

Govt moves for UAE lease amid protests

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The government is forging ahead with its plan to lease the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT), the Chattogram port's largest functioning terminal, to the UAE-based DP World by December, despite widespread protests.

As part of the procedure, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) on November 16 asked the shipping ministry to form a seven-member committee, to be headed by Additional Secretary Md Mahbub Alam Talukder, to evaluate the tender for the project, which would be done under the public-private partnership model.

The proposed committee would include a deputy secretary-rank official from the ministry, three representatives from the Public-Private Partnership Authority, an external member nominated by the CPA and Kazi Meraz Uddin Arif, the port's deputy chief finance and accounts officer.

The development comes on the heels of the government entering into long-term deals with two foreign port operators for operating the Laldia Container Terminal in Chattogram and Pangaon Inland Container.

Originally conceived by the ousted Awami League government, the plan to lease NCT to DP World gained momentum under the interim

government headed by Muhammad Yunus.

The move immediately faced strong opposition from different political parties, port users and experts, while street protests have been ongoing since October last year.

The protestors argued that NCT, which was constructed and equipped from the port's own fund, should not be leased to any foreign operator as there is little scope for investment.

The way the government signed deals with two foreign operators for Laldia and Pangaon terminals hastily and without disclosing details of the deals are concerning, said Sheikh Nurullah Bahar, Chattogram convener of Sramik Karmachari Oikkya Parishad, a platform of different workers' organisations.

As per the transaction structure report submitted by the International Finance Corporation on April 30 this year, a 62-day timeframe for completing the process from the submission of the terminal operator's proposal to the signing of the agreement was recommended.

However, the CPA completed the entire process in just two weeks, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

APM Terminals submitted its technical and financial proposals on November 4 while

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

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Baul singer lands in jail for ‘hurting religious sentiment’



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A court yesterday sent renowned baul singer Maharaj Abul Sarkar to jail in a case filed over hurting religious sentiments.

Earlier yesterday, Sarkar was arrested in Madaripur by the Detective Branch of the police in connection with a case filed by Mufti Md Abdullah, imam of Ghior Bandar Mosque.

Later in the afternoon, he was produced before the Manikganj Chief Judicial Magistrate Court, where the judge sent him to jail.

The case was filed at Ghior Police Station yesterday morning. According to the case statement, the baul singer made religiously misleading remarks while performing at a programme in Ghior upazila on November 4.

The case is under investigation, said Md Kohinur Islam, officer-in-charge of Ghior Police Station.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Bangladesh loses \$8b annually Says UNICEF

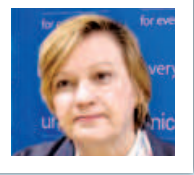
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is losing around \$8 billion every year due to child marriage, yet government investment in prevention remains “shockingly low”, UNICEF said yesterday while presenting the latest child rights findings from the MICS 2025.

At a media briefing in the agency's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar office, UNICEF officials said the country allocates only 0.01 percent of GDP to child protection systems, a level they described as grossly inadequate for a country facing some of the highest child marriage rates in the world.



“Are we honouring the dignity of girls when they face the highest levels of violence, early pregnancy, poor nutrition, higher neonatal mortality and rising divorce rates? The answer is no.”



RANA FLOWERS, UNICEF representative to Bangladesh.

The lack of trained social workers, case workers and community-based support systems severely limits the country's ability to intervene in vulnerable families, they said.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey-2025, conducted by the BBS with technical support from UNICEF and published on Sunday, found that the rate of currently married girls aged 15-19 has risen sharply from 32.9 percent to 38.9 percent between 2019 and 2025.

Conducted on around 63,000 households countrywide, it said child marriage costs the country \$7-8 billion annually in lost productivity and human potential.

The loss in this case is estimated by comparing

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



MAA BRINGS BREAKFAST

A mother little grebe brings breakfast to its chick in the wetlands of Chuadanga -- a scene of tender love. These tiny waterbirds live on ponds, marshes, canals and flooded fields from Europe and Africa through Central Asia to Japan and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh. Expert divers, they slip under with barely a ripple, chasing small fish, tadpoles, insects and snails before popping back up with a meal. Little grebes build floating nests hidden among reeds and gently cover their eggs with wet plants when they leave. Once the chicks hatch, the striped young often ride on their parents' backs. Though listed as Least Concern, the little grebe's future rests on clean wetlands, threatened by drainage, pollution and disturbance.

PHOTO: MONJUR MORSHED

Advertisement

Shetu Pesticides Factory in Trishal Earns LEED Platinum, Setting a Landmark in Bangladesh's Agro-Chemical Sector

Shetu Pesticides Ltd's factory, Trishal Mymensingh, has achieved green building status, by scoring 87 and earning Platinum-rated LEED Certification. This is awarded by the global USGBC, based on audit of transformation performance, energy, water, and waste management.

This is the first factory to achieve LEED status in the agro-chemical sector. Bangladesh is the global leader in number of LEED-rated green buildings in the apparel's sector. In practice, this will lower carbon emissions, lower operating costs, conserve resources, and promote healthier and a more sustainable environment through building design and operation. This certification reflects the company's deep commitment to environmental responsibility and plays a crucial role in addressing climate challenges while improving quality of life for future generations.

