



Dialogue not on AL's mind at the moment

Amu makes U-turn a day after saying AL is open to talks with BNP

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The Awami League at this point is not considering talks with the BNP to solve the current political impasse over the next general elections.

According to AL sources, the party believes this is not the time to invite the BNP for talks and that dialogue with the BNP will never bear any fruit as the latter's main demand is the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

AL veteran Amir Hossain Amu brought the issue to the fore through some remarks on Tuesday.

At a programme of the AL-led 14-party alliance on Bangabandhu Avenue that day, Amu said, "The door for dialogue is open. Keeping the constitution in mind, we are ready to do anything for a solution. Come forward, we are willing to sit with you [the BNP]."

"Let a representative of the United Nations come. We want to sit with the BNP face to face and see where the differences are," he added.

Sources said AL President Sheikh Hasina spoke to Amu about his statement yesterday morning after she placed a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Dhanmondi-32 on the occasion of the historic Six-Point Day.

They said Hasina conveyed to Amu that what he said on Tuesday was not the party line. There is no need to go so soft, she said.

Later in the day, Amu, during a discussion which was presided over by Hasina, made a U-turn and said nothing was said about dialogue and no one was invited.

"There is no chance of inviting anyone. It's not like the Awami League will treat someone in its house by inviting them," he said.

"Elections will be held as per the constitution and all political parties must participate in the election following the constitution," Amu continued.

"Let them [the BNP] do whatever movement they want to do. We'll not say anything."

AL President **Sheikh Hasina**

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A traffic policeman splashes water on his face to beat the oppressive heat at the capital's Nilkhet intersection. The Met office forecasts that the mild to moderate heatwave will continue in Dhaka and some other parts of the country for a few more days. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Depreciation, tax pose medium-term risk

Finds finance division study

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

One of the consequences of years of economic mismanagement is the dramatic depreciation of the taka against the dollar in recent times, and its fallout will spill over into the medium term markedly, said a finance division study.

And one of the ways it will manifest is through the public sector debt, which may shoot up if the taka depreciates further, said the medium-

term macroeconomic policy statement (MTMPS).

The public and publicly guaranteed debt is estimated to reach Tk 36,400 crore in fiscal 2023-24, Tk 36,600 crore in fiscal 2024-25 and Tk 37,100 crore in fiscal 2025-26.

Now, if the taka depreciates by 10 percent in the coming fiscal year, the debt stock will be Tk 40,200 crore instead of the projected Tk 36,400 crore.

The taka depreciated by about 21.3

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SATIRE ARTICLE Mayor Taposh serves legal notice on Star Seeks Tk 100cr for 'defamation'

STAR REPORT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh's lawyer yesterday said the mayor has served a legal notice on The Daily Star, seeking Tk 100 crore for "defaming him in a satire piece on May 13".

Speaking at a briefing on the Supreme Court premises, Taposh's lawyer Mejbahur Rahman said The Daily Star published the "column", titled "Cutting trees to make way for air", in both their print edition and online.

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Our reply to legal notice

The Lex Counsel sent a legal notice dated June 5, 2023, undersigned by Barrister Mejbahur Rahman, on behalf of Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation. It finds a satirical article, published in our May 13, 2023, issue of Satureday under the title "Cutting trees to make way for air," highly offensive and defamatory to the notice giver.

The legal notice, which we received late on June 6 afternoon, allowed us

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UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said no external forces would put BNP in power, rather they would use the party against her government.

"They think someone, coming from somewhere else, will put them in power... No one will do that. They will use [them], but won't give them power," she said in an oblique reference to BNP's reactions following the announcement of the new US visa policy for Bangladesh.

The PM was addressing a discussion arranged by the Awami League at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city, marking the historic

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Blender's Choice - The Daily Star OTT AND DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS 2022

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The Daily Star
OTT & DIGITAL CONTENT AWARDS 2022

A collaboration of



The Daily Star

The categories that are in
FILM/ DRAMA/SERIES

1. Best Actor, Male
2. Best Actor, Female
3. Best Actor in Negative Role
4. Best Supporting Actor, Series (Male)
5. Best Supporting Actor, Series (Female)
6. Best Director, Series
7. Best Director, Film
8. Best Cinematographer
9. Best Drama/Series
10. Best Film
11. Best Makeup Artist
12. Best Editing
13. Best Script Writer, Story

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1. Best Actor, Male
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3. Best Film/Drama/Series
4. Best Director Film/Drama/Series

The categories that are in
INDIVIDUAL CONTENT

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3. Best Content Creator, Kids
4. Best Content Creator, Food & Recipe
5. Best Content Creator, Sports

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PADMA BRIDGE WB realised its allegations were false: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has realised that it had brought false allegations against the Awami League government regarding corruption in the Padma Bridge construction project, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

The premier said this in parliament in reply to a query from Jatiya Party MP Syed Hossain of Dhaka-4.

Hasina said during her recent visit to the World Bank's headquarters in Washington DC, she again raised the issue of "false allegations" while holding a discussion.

"(In my speech) I firmly mentioned that I will never patronise any evil purpose which will diminish the dignity of the people of Bangladesh," she said.

She added, "After my speech, I presented a painting of Padma Bridge to the World Bank president. World Bank

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Braving scorching heat in the line of duty

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was around 2:30pm on Tuesday.

Amid the boiling heat, dozens of vehicles were lined up at two sides of the Bijoy Sarani signal in the capital, patiently waiting for their turn to go.

Among the passengers stopped at the signal, Rubel Hasan, 32, was waiting inside a CNG-run three-wheeler, sweating profusely as a blistering



heat wave has been sweeping over the country. "How can we possibly survive in this city with such chaotic traffic?" a frustrated Rubel said.

Just a few yards away, stood Alamgir, a traffic constable in his mid-40s, to control the flow of vehicles under the sizzling sun. A few minutes later, Alamgir let the vehicles go with his handheld signal and the vehicles, including the one Rubel was in, started moving again.

Rubel might have found some relief after crossing the signal. However, for Alamgir, it is the road where he has to stand for almost the entirety of his eight-hour-long shift, no matter how high the temperature is out on the street.

"What else can we do? It is our daily duty but

sometimes it is unbearable to stand for a long time under the sun. Yet we cannot leave the road unauthorised," Md Alamgir told The Daily Star.

The capital is enduring a prolonged heat wave this summer, with midday outdoor temperatures reaching 37 degree Celsius at times. Despite the intense heat, several hundred traffic sergeants like Alamgir work hard to maintain traffic order on major streets wearing synthetic uniforms.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

There are around 4,000 traffic personnel working under the traffic division in Dhaka to maintain vehicular movement. The scorching heat is taking a heavy toll on them as they are exposed to the constant heat for a long time.

Md Mushfiq, 41, a constable stationed at the Agargaon intersection, said, "I already have knee problems from standing for extended periods while on duty. Now, the heatwave exacerbates these issues, leaving me feeling fatigued quickly."

"We are trying to drink as much water as possible. Still, the heat makes us feel drained out," he said.

Sergeant Asaduzzaman Jewel at the Farmgate

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Preventable, yet a public health concern

Say speakers on fatty liver disease

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 45 million people in the country are affected by fatty liver disease, adding an economic burden of Tk 75,690 crore which is more than double the health sector's annual budget, said Dr Md Saiful Islam Elin, a consultant hepatologist at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), at a roundtable yesterday.

"The doctors need to step up and raise awareness as the number is increasing with every passing day," he added.

He made the remarks at a discussion titled, "Fatty Liver: National Economic Burden of Bangladesh" organised by Hepatology Society, Dhaka at the capital's Cirdap auditorium, marking sixth International Nash (non-alcoholic steatohepatitis) Day.

According to the attending physicians, a healthy liver turns into a fatty one when the weight of its stored fat equals 5-10 percent of the liver's weight. Upper abdominal pain, sudden weight loss and fatigue are the most common symptoms.

However, opting for a healthy lifestyle can prevent these health problems.

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WORKERS IN MALDIVES 47pc don't get promised wages

Says RMMRU study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 47 percent Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Maldives do not receive the wages promised to them, according to a recent study.

The study, conducted by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), said on average, a worker earns Tk 35,147 per month there.

It also said documented Bangladeshi workers in the Maldives earn an average monthly income of Tk 37,066, while undocumented ones Tk 25,650.

The study, titled "Migration Dynamics of Bangladesh and the Maldives Corridor," was

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Plastic waste a threat to soil fertility Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plastic pollution is deteriorating the germination capacity of soil by killing larvae, microbes and earthworms that enriches the soil's fertility, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They made the remarks at the event jointly organised by seven developmental organisations at Department of Environment auditorium in the capital's Agargaon marking World Environment Day.

The organisers are Bangladesh Resources Centre for Indigenous Knowledge, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Environment and Social Development Organisation, A Better Bangladesh Trust, Bandhu Foundation, Green Savers, and Association for Land Reforms and Development.

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Stellar Women is an initiative of The Daily Star and bti, through which we will be recognising extraordinary women every month, playing a vital role in their distinguished fields for the development of the society and nation.

We are inviting you to register in the following categories:

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Budget designed to plunder nat'l wealth: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

Terming the proposed budget for anti-people and deceptive, BNP yesterday said it has been designed to loot several billion dollars of national wealth under the shelter of a corrupt regime.

Speaking at a press conference, party secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir also said it will not be possible to ensure people's welfare through the budget.

BNP arranged the press conference to give the party's formal reaction to the proposed budget.

In the budget, Fakhru said, the finance minister did not acknowledge the ongoing economic crisis, growing income disparity, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, rampant money laundering, and huge debt burden on the shoulders of the country's people.

He said the government also did not give any outline in the budget about how to overcome the economic crises and challenges and completely avoided the concept of good governance and justice.

"There is also no direction in the budget to prevent widespread corruption and money laundering," he observed.

He said all arrangements have been made in the budget to smartly loot lakhs of crores of taka, plunder banks, and public money through a syndicate.

He said an accountable, democratic, and responsible elected government must be established to get rid of the ongoing national crisis. "The only way to do this is to hold a free, fair, impartial, inclusive and acceptable election under a polls-time impartial government."



There is also no direction in the budget to prevent widespread corruption and money laundering.



MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR
BNP secretary general

Mrs. Latifa Begum (Huri)

08/04/1948 – 30/05/2023



Daughter, Sister, Friend, Wife, Mother, Teacher
Milad on 09/06/2023 after Asr prayers. All well-wishers welcome.

Address: Mirpur-10, Senpara Parbata, 89, Boundary Road, Villa Magnolia, Maloli 2-D
Contact: 01912046495

MJL Bangladesh PLC.

Mobil House, CWS (A) 13/A, Gulshan Avenue, Bir Uttam Mir Shawkat Sarak, Dhaka-1212

Notice regarding change of company name

Notice is hereby given that the renowned company of the country "MJL Bangladesh Limited" changed its name to "MJL Bangladesh PLC." as per section 11 (Ka) of the Companies Act 1994 (Amended Act 2020) with the permission of the shareholders of the company, Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchange respectively.

Therefore, from now on "MJL Bangladesh Limited" will be operated under the following name:

MJL Bangladesh PLC.

On behalf of the company

Md. Rokibul Kabir
Company Secretary

Dhaka, Bangladesh
Date: 8 June 2023

Mobil

MJL Bangladesh PLC.

Businessmen rule the race in Barishal city polls

Finds Shujan analysis; Khair unveils manifesto

SUSHANTA GHOSH and MD ABBAS

The literacy rate and compliance with income taxes among the candidates of the Barishal city polls have increased, which is a positive sign, according to Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan).

The number of cases against candidates has also decreased. However, there is a concerning trend in terms of occupation, as the highest number of candidates contesting the polls are businessmen, compared to the 2018 elections. In 2018, 58.80 percent of the candidates were businessmen. The percentage has now increased to 62.87 percent.

Dilip Kumar Sarkar, central coordinator of Shujan, made these observations at Kirtankhola Auditorium in Barishal after analysing the information provided by the candidates who are contesting for the Barishal City Corporation elections scheduled for June 12.

According to the Shujan report, there are cases against



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

With less than a week to go, Khulna is gearing up for the city polls. Technicians are setting up CCTV cameras at polling centres for close monitoring of the situation on the polls day. Meanwhile, police have imposed stricter security measures. As part of which, they have started checking vehicles for proper documents at different points of the city. The photos were taken in Sonadanga and Boyra areas yesterday.

KHULNA CITY POLLS

Who will get BNP's vote?

DIPANKAR ROY and MD ABBAS

With BNP's significant vote bank up for grabs, politicians and experts are now wondering which candidates will emerge victorious in the upcoming Khulna City Corporation polls slated for June 12.

KCC elections have always been a closely fought battle between BNP and the ruling Awami League. In the past five elections, BNP candidates have clinched victory thrice, while the AL nominees emerged triumphant on two occasions.

In BNP's absence, Islami Andolan Bangladesh and Jatiya Party candidates have thrown their hats into the ring, leaving no stone unturned in their bid to capture the hearts and votes of those faithful to BNP.

Both parties firmly believe that the absence of BNP from the race provides them with a golden opportunity to rally the BNP supporters under their respective banners.

Meanwhile, the BNP leadership in Khulna maintains that their supporters have lost faith in the electoral process and are unlikely to turn up at the polling stations on election day. So, the question of who the BNP loyalists will vote for simply does not arise.

A total of 535,528 voters residing in 31 wards of the city are expected to exercise their voting rights in the



upcoming KCC elections.

WILL THEY SHOW UP ON ELECTION DAY?

Sazzad Hossain, a councillor candidate from ward 5, has been expelled from BNP for participating in the polls. Despite the party's instructions to stay away from the polling stations, Hossain remains undeterred.

"I will make every effort to bring voters to the polling centres on the election day, to vote for the councillor candidates," he said.

Meanwhile, Shafiqul Alam Mona, convener of the

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PHOTO: TITU DAS

Awami League mayor candidate Abul Khair Abdullah presenting his election manifesto yesterday.

two mayoral candidates, which account for 28.57 percent. This percentage remains the same as in the previous elections.

On the other hand, there are cases against 32 councillor candidates, which is 27.12 percent, compared to 49 cases (41.53 percent) in the previous elections.

Furthermore, there are two criminal cases against the candidates for the female councillors in the reserved category, which is 4.76 percent at present, whereas the previous number was six, and the percentage was 14.29.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of cases

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PHOTO: TITU DAS

Children take a dip in the cool water of Kirtankhola to beat the heat. As they engage in water-play, their tired and worn-out faces adorn a smile of relief. This photo was taken near the Barishal city's Beltola Ferry Ghat yesterday.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Power Division
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.

Invitation for Tender (OTM)

1	Ministry/Division	Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources		
2	Procuring Entity Name	Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources		
3	Procuring Entity Code	Not used at present		
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka, Bangladesh		
5	Invitation for	Goods, Printer Toner & Metting Software.		
6	Invitation Ref No	27.00.0000.043.07.006.22.250		
7	Date	07.06.2023		
KEY INFORMATION				
8	Procurement Method	OTM		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
9	Budget and Source of Funds	Revenue/GOB		
10	Development Partners (if applicable)	Not Applicable		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
11	Tender Package No.	01 (2022-23)		
12	Tender Package Name	Procurement of Stationary goods, Printer Toner & Metting Software.		
13	Tender Publication Date	08.06.2023		
14	Tender Last Selling Date	13.06.2023		
15	Tender Closing Date and Time	14.06.2023		
16	Tender Opening Date and Time	14.06.2023		
17	Name & Address of the office(s)	Power division, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.		
	Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Assistant Secretary, Administration-3, Power Division, Room#212, Building#6, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.		
	Selling Tender Document (Others)	Accounts officer, Power Division, Secretariat Link Road, Biddut Vabon (level-10), Dhaka.		
	Receiving Tender Document	Assistant Secretary, Administration-3, Power Division, Room#212, Building#6, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka		
	Opening Tender Document	Deputy Secretary, Administration-1, Power Division, Room#205, Building#6, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
18	Eligibility of Tender	The tenders should be well Experienced with (1) Trade License (2) Incomes Tax Certificate(TIN) (3) Vat Registration Certificate (3) Bank Solvency Certificate (4) Minimum 3(Three) successful completion Certificate within last 3(Three) years etc.		
19	Brief Description of Goods	Lot-01 Stationary goods, Lot-02 Printer Toner & Lot-03 Metting Software.		
20	Brief Description of Related Services	Not Applicable		
21	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	LOT (1, 2 & 3) Tk. 5,000/-		
22	Lot No	Identification of Lot		
	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk)		
	Completion Time in Weeks			
22	Lot-01 Stationary goods, Lot-02 Printer Toner & Lot-03 Metting Software.	Power Division Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.	Lot-01 for Tk. 6,000/- Lot-02 for Tk.7,000/- Lot-03 for Tk. 5,000/-	Ready stock or purchase/supply from main dealer/reputed company of Bangladesh within 30 days from the date of issue work order. Must submit sole distributor certificate /distributor authorization letter along with tender document. The authorization letter (for lot 2) in favor of majority product must be granted. If the company/supplier provide fake or edited letter/certificate, the respective company/supplier have to become black listed.
23	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Power Division		
	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Assistant Secretary (Admin-3)		
	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Room#212, Building #6, Power Division, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.		
	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel. 02223390024	E-mail: Admin-3@pd.gov.bd	
24	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject all or any tender.			
25	Special Condition: This invitation for tender notice will be available at Power Division's Website.			

GD- 999

(Md. Delwar Hossain)
Assistant Secretary
Ph: 02223390024.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Chattoogram City Corporation
Tigerpass, Chattogram
www.ccc.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.36.06.589.23

Dated: 07-06-2023

e-Tender Notice-LGCRRP/CCC/2022-23/02

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

SI No.	Package No.	Name of the sub-project	Tender ID	Tender document last selling/downloading date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
1	LGCRRP/ Chattogram/ 2022-12/W-05	Construction Footpath of Bayezid Bostami Road at 2 No. Ward.	840432	04-Jul-2023 12:30	04-Jul-2023 14:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to particular date and time specified on the tender notice. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.helpdesk.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Md. Refatul Karim Chy
Executive Engineer (A/C)
Division- 6
On behalf of Chief Engineer
Chattoogram City Corporation
Tigerpass, Chattogram

CCC/PRD-185/22-23
Size-06X4 col
GD-1002

THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY'S PREMIER AWARD SHOW IS BACK

Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2022 announced

This year Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2022 will have 28 categories, out of which 14 are for Film/Drama/Story, 4 for Music, 4 critics award and 6 for content creators.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

To celebrate and honour the innovators of 2022 in the OTT industry and the digital space, *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards* was unveiled yesterday at The Daily Star Centre, through a press conference. The awards, presented by Ispahani and The Daily Star, are being organised for the second time to honour the groundbreaking work done by the artistes in the OTT space, alongside content creators.

The press conference was headed by Imran Kadir, Head of Marketing & Sales, The Daily Star, along with Omar Hannan, General Manager, Ispahani Team Limited, and Ajoy Kumar Kundu, CEO of Mediacom Limited. Celebrities, including the likes of FS Nayeem, Shohel Mondol, Syed Ahmed Shawki, Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, Khayam Sanu Sandhi, Aisha Khan, Sharif Siraj, Goutam Koiri, and Shahnaz Sumi, among others, graced the occasion with their warm presence.

This year Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT & Digital Content Awards 2022 will have 28 categories, out of which 14 are for Film/Drama/Story, 4 for Music, 4 critics award and 6 for content creators.

"Ispahani has a long history of supporting and promoting Bangladeshi arts and culture. The collaboration between Ispahani and The Daily Star for the *Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards 2022* is an endeavour to acknowledge, appreciate, and inspire the competitive spirit among both on-screen and off-screen contributors in Bangladesh's OTT and digital content industry," mentioned Omar Hannan.

He also expressed hope that this initiative



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



will foster the growth of a thriving creator's economy and culture, nurturing positive and innovative digital content.

Tajdin Hassan, Chief Business Officer, The Daily Star told A&E, "It is truly monumental that OTT has become such an essential ingredient of our entertainment. The goal of this initiative is not just to recognise the outstanding performers, but to inspire the upcoming artists to set greater benchmarks."

He also added, "This is our second iteration, and I'm certain that over the upcoming years, we'll see this industry reaching greater heights."

FS Nayeem congratulated this initiative sharing his thoughts. "Recognising talents in the OTT arena is a great way to appreciate and inspire artistes to work more cautiously. I believe the best may take the prize home."

Taqdeer and *Karagar* director Shawki appreciated the initiative, and added that other than the National Film Award, no other awards in the country provides recognition for behind the scene, technical artistes.

The submissions for the nominations are open from today (June 8) and it will be closed on July 8.



Captain America's 'Brave New World'

Recently, Marvel Studios made an exciting announcement, revealing the official title of their upcoming and fourth *Captain America* film as *Brave New World*. Previously known as *Captain America: New World Order*, the studio took to Twitter to share the new title with fans.

The film is set to hit theaters on May 3, 2024, as stated in a post on Marvel Studios' official page, accompanied by a first-look photo featuring stars Anthony Mackie and Harrison Ford on the film's set.

Souls disclose 50th anniversary plans at press conference

On Tuesday, Souls arranged a special press conference to announce plans for their 50th anniversary and their newly designed logo. Partha Barua, the band's vocalist and lead guitarist, told the media that they had been planning their 50th anniversary for a long time.

"We are currently in discussion with various sponsors related to the programme. We will inform everyone as soon as everything gets finalised," shared Partha Barua.

The musician also shared the band's plans of going on international and national tours at the end of August, adding that they have also recorded multiple songs, which will be released along with their music videos soon.



COUNTRYWIDE/NEWS

Bridge tilted before inauguration not repaired in 5yrs

MIRZA SHAKIL

An important bridge at Nirail village in Basail upazila that tilted just after completion of its construction work has not been reconstructed in the last five years.

As a result, thousands of people of the village and nine other adjacent villages have been facing immense sufferings for long.

According to the office of the Project Implementation Officer (PIO) in Basail, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief constructed a total of 128 bridges in 12 upazilas of Tangail during the 2016-2017 fiscal years.

Under the project, one of the bridges was constructed at Nirail village under Fulki union in Basail upazila.

Construction Firm Ms Abdullah Enterprise built the 60-foot-long bridge at a cost of Tk 54 lakh.

But the newly constructed bridge got tilted amid huge pressure of flood water just before its inauguration, sources at the PIO office said.

Local people, however, blamed use of sub-standard materials in the construction work.

Later, authorities concerned requested the contractor to reconstruct the bridge again.

But, after conducting the demolition

work partially the constructor concern didn't continue the work further.

The contractor could not continue the bridge reconstruction work due to ending of the project period, the PIO office said.

Meanwhile, people of at least 10 villages, including Balia, Fulki, Fulbari, Baghli and Nirail have been facing huge sufferings to go to their destinations due to the incomplete bridge construction work.

Several villagers said now they are compel to move several kilometres more to reach the upazila health complex or taking agricultural goods to the nearby markets.

"We have been deprived of getting fair prices of our crops as we cannot take our agricultural products to the local markets due to the broken bridge," said Robi Miah of Nirail village.

Meanwhile, several students of the area said they have to face serious troubles while going to and from their institutions during the rainy season for not having a bridge.

Contacted, Basail PIO Shakhawat Hossain said out of the Tk 54 lakh bill the contractor got only Tk 12 lakh.

The Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) have a plan to construct a large bridge there, he added.



This bridge, tilted just before inauguration, at Nirail village in Tangail's Basail upazila has not been repaired in five years, much to the suffering of local people. PHOTO: STAR

High inflation

FROM PAGE 12
sector. Real household earnings are yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels despite an improvement in employment," the WB said.

While the central bank raised policy rates, transmission to the broader economy was impaired by a cap on lending interest rates, it said.

In the next fiscal year, gains in market share in key export destinations are expected to sustain Bangladesh's export growth.

Growth is projected to accelerate to 6.2 percent in fiscal 2023-24 - which is again below the government's target of 7.5 percent - as inflationary pressures ease, reform implementation accelerates and transportation and

energy infrastructure megaprojects are completed.

This is similar to the growth projection made for India in fiscal 2023-24: 6.3 percent, a 0.3 percentage point downward revision from January.

In the next fiscal year, gains in market share in key export destinations are expected to sustain Bangladesh's export growth.

However, for Bangladesh, financial sector risks remain elevated, with high levels of defaulted loans, weak capital buffers and weak bank governance, said the World Bank.

Now water crisis heaps misery upon residents

FROM PAGE 12
the power cuts.

Dhaka Wasa has 1,061 pumps. It has generators, but those are not enough to turn all the pumps at once.

AKM Shahid Uddin said, "We have almost 400 generators. But we are not able to extract enough water with these generators."

On an average, Dhaka needs 255-260 crore litres of water a day. But the heatwave has pushed up the demand for water and created a crisis, he added.

"The water crisis will subside if there are fewer outages and there is rainfall," he said.

Meanwhile, the Met office forecast rains or

thundershowers in eight divisions of the country including Dhaka in the 24-hour period starting from 6:00pm yesterday.

However, the mild to

moderate heat wave will continue in Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions and some parts of Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions, it added.



FILE PHOTO

Blinken in Riyadh

FROM PAGE 12
considers a pariah over its contested nuclear activities and involvement in regional conflicts.

On Tuesday, the day Blinken arrived, Iran reopened its embassy in Riyadh after a seven-year closure, with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alireza Bigdeli hailing a "new era" in ties.

On the same day, Prince Mohammed hosted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, the head of a fellow oil power who has long sparred with Washington.

Last month, in a major shift, Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad attended an Arab League summit in Jeddah, his first since Syria's membership was suspended at the start of its 12-year civil war. Washington criticised the

decision to invite Assad.

Yesterday's meeting at the GCC headquarters in Riyadh was attended by Qatar's prime minister among other top Gulf officials.

On the agenda were key regional issues, including conflicts in Yemen, Sudan, Syria and the Palestinian territories, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson Majid al-Ansari said on Tuesday.

"The meeting undoubtedly constitutes an opportunity to draw a common position here in the region in relation to the United States of America and to define the form of the American positive influence in the region through partnership with the GCC," he said.

Blinken's visit is aimed at boosting ties

with longtime ally Saudi Arabia, which has begun forging closer relations with Washington's rivals.

The visit will also focus on the joint battle against the Islamic State group and the Arab world's relations with Israel.

Blinken had "an open, candid discussion" with the 37-year-old Prince Mohammed in Jeddah, a US official said on condition of anonymity.

"The secretary raised human rights both generally and with regards to specific issues," the official said.

The meeting, which lasted about 100 minutes, touched on topics including Saudi Arabia's support for US evacuations from Sudan, the need for political dialogue in Yemen and the potential for the

normalisation of relations with Israel.

The two men discussed "our shared priorities, including countering terrorism through the D-ISIS Coalition, achieving peace in Yemen, and deepening economic and scientific cooperation", Blinken said on social media.

Since announcing resumed relations with Iran in March, Saudi Arabia has restored ties with Tehran ally Syria and ramped up a push for peace in Yemen, where it has for years led a military coalition against the Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

Regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran have been at loggerheads for years, backing opposing sides in a number of conflicts around the volatile region.

Two die of diarrhoea in Rangamati

FROM PAGE 12
Confirming the outbreak, Baghaichhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rumana Akter said the disease is spreading mainly because of drinking water.

Baghaichhari Upazila Health Complex's Medical Officer Arbindu Chakma said he was already instructed to send a medical team there.

Initially, saline has also been supplied in the areas from nearby BGB BOP.

Arbindu Chakma said, "We have already left for Sajek with the necessary medicine saline and water purification tablets. It will take a day to reach the remote villages from Konglak Para of Sajek on foot."

Air India sends plane after US-bound jet stops in Russia

AFP, New Delhi

Air India said yesterday it had sent a relief airplane after a jet from New Delhi to San Francisco had to land in eastern Russia with an engine problem.

The flight with 216 passengers and 16 crew was diverted to Magadan on Russia's eastern coast, over 5,900 kilometres (3,670 miles) from Moscow on Tuesday night.

With "infrastructural limitations around the remote airport", passengers were put up in "makeshift accommodation" in the town, Air India said.

"Our ferry flight AI195 from Mumbai to Magadan, Russia is now airborne," Air India said in a statement, noting it was expected to arrive at 6:30 am yesterday (1930 GMT yesterday).

"The aircraft operating the ferry flight will take all passengers and crew onward to San Francisco", it added.



A view shows a flooded area after the Nova Kakhovka dam breached, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kherson yesterday. Inset, police evacuate local residents from flooded area.

PHOTO: REUTERS

VIOLENCE IN INDIA'S MANIPUR Army steps up security after family burnt alive

REUTERS, Guwahati

Indian security forces stepped up operations to prevent further violence in Manipur state yesterday after a seven-year-old boy, his mother and a relative were burnt alive when a crowd set fire to an ambulance ferrying them to a hospital.

The boy was being rushed for medical treatment on Sunday night after he was shot amidst deadly ethnic clashes between tribal groups and the majority Meitei community in the northeastern state.

The Indian Army yesterday said it had launched operations in hill and valley areas across Manipur "to dominate sensitive areas and recover snatched weapons".

"Locals in possession of such weapons being urged to surrender them to the Security Forces for the sake of peace & harmony," the army said on Twitter.

The ethnic violence in the state began in early May when tribal groups clashed with the Meitei community, worried that the economic quotas and benefits granted to them would also be extended to the Meiteis.

NOVA KAKHOVKA DAM COLLAPSE

Ukrainians face disease, homelessness

Floodwaters crest across a swathe of south; Ukrainian troops advance in Bakhmut

REUTERS, Kherson

Ukrainians abandoned their inundated homes as floodwaters crested across a swathe of the south yesterday after the destruction of a vast dam on the front line between Russian and Ukrainian forces that each blamed on the other.

Residents waded through flooded streets carrying children on their shoulders, dogs in their arms and belongings in plastic bags while rescuers used rubber boats to search areas where the waters reached above head height.

Ukraine said the flood would leave hundreds of thousands of people without access to drinking water, swamp tens of thousands of hectares of agricultural land and turn more into deserts.

The disaster at the Nova Kakhovka dam coincided with the apparent start of a long-awaited counteroffensive by Ukrainian forces, seen as the next major phase of the war. Each side accused the other of continuing to shell across the floodzone and warned of drifting landmines unearthed by the flooding.

Kyiv said yesterday its troops in the east had advanced by more than a kilometre around the ruined city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, its most explicit claim of progress since Russia reported the start of the Ukrainian offensive this week. Russia said it

had fought off the attack.

Residents in the flood zone in the country's south blamed the bursting of the dam on Russian troops who controlled it from their positions on the opposite bank.

"They hate us," Reva said. "They want to destroy a Ukrainian nation and Ukraine itself. And they don't care by what means because nothing is sacred for them."



Russia imposed a state of emergency in the parts of Kherson province it controls, where many towns and villages lie in lowlands below the dam. Residents there have told Reuters by telephone that Russian troops patrolling the streets in waders were threatening civilians who approached.

Ukraine expects the floodwaters will stop rising by the end of yesterday after reaching around five metres overnight, presidential deputy chief Oleksiy Kuleba said.

Two thousand people had been evacuated so far from the flood zone, and the water level had reached its highest level in

17 settlements with a combined population of 16,000 people.

"The sheer magnitude of the catastrophe will only become fully realised in the coming days," UN aid chief Martin Griffiths told the Security Council.

Targeting dams in war is explicitly banned by the Geneva Conventions. Neither side has presented public evidence demonstrating who was to blame.

"The whole world will know about this Russian war crime," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly address, calling it "an environmental bomb of mass destruction".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Ukraine had sabotaged the dam to distract attention from a new counteroffensive he said was "faltering".

Washington said it was still gathering evidence about who was to blame, but that Ukraine would have had no reason to inflict such devastation on itself.

"Why would Ukraine do this to its own territory and people, flood its land, force tens of thousands of people to leave their homes - it doesn't make sense," Deputy US Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood told reporters.

Even as the evacuation was under way, Russia shelled Ukrainian-held territory across the river. The governor of the region said one person was killed.

GLOBAL WARMING Arctic summer ice cap to disappear in 2030s Say scientists

AFP, Paris

The Arctic Ocean's ice cap will disappear in summer as soon as the 2030s and a decade earlier than thought, no matter how aggressively humanity draws down the carbon pollution that drives global warming, scientists said Tuesday.

Even capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius in line with the Paris climate treaty will not prevent the north pole's vast expanse of floating ice from melting away in September, they reported in Nature Communications.

"It is too late to still protect the Arctic summer sea ice as a landscape and as a habitat," co-author Dirk Notz, a professor at the University of Hamburg's Institute of Oceanography, told AFP.

Decreased ice cover has serious impacts over time on weather, people and ecosystems globally.

"It can accelerate global warming by melting permafrost laden with greenhouse gases, and sea level rise by melting the Greenland ice sheet," lead author Seung Ki Min, a researcher at Pohang University of Science and Technology in South Korea, told AFP.

FOOD, ENERGY CRISIS 10 billion global population 'unsustainable'

AFP, Oslo

US special climate envoy John Kerry told AFP that the world's population will not be tenable in 2050, when it is projected to hit nearly 10 billion, but refrained from asking Americans to give up steaks.

Since November, the global population has officially crossed eight billion, more than three times the figure in 1950. This has already stretched food and energy needs and supplies. UN projections say the figure will balloon to 9.7 billion in the middle of the century.

"I don't think it's sustainable personally," he said in an interview on Tuesday. "We need to figure out how we're going to deal with the issue of sustainability and the numbers of people we're trying to take care of on the planet."

Global warming is exacerbating the problem. The 2015 Paris Agreement calls for capping global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius and 1.5C if possible.

Producing food for eight billion mouths accounts for over a fourth of greenhouse gas emissions.

"I've been to a number of African countries where they're very proud of their increased birth rate but the fact is, it's unsustainable for life today, let alone when you add the future numbers," Kerry said.



CNN chief Chris Licht is out

CNN ONLINE

Chris Licht, the embattled chief executive and chairman of CNN, whose brief one-year tenure at the network was stained by a series of severe missteps, announced yesterday that he will depart the company. "I met with Chris and he will be leaving CNN," David Zaslav, the chief executive of parent company Warner Bros. Discovery, told CNN employees at the start of the network's daily editorial call yesterday. Licht's departure, which came days after a devastating 15,000-word profile in The Atlantic, capped a tumultuous year for CNN, marked by layoffs, historically low ratings, and rock-bottom employee morale. Zaslav told CNN employees that the company is "in the process of conducting a wide search," both internally and externally, for a new network chief.

2024 WHITE HOUSE BID Trump foe Chris enters race

REUTERS

Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on Tuesday launched his 2024 presidential campaign with a withering attack on the Republican front-runner, Donald Trump, calling

him a "self-serving mirror hog" and faulting other rivals for avoiding direct confrontation. Christie, 60, was an adviser to Trump's successful 2016 White House campaign but has since become a vocal critic over the former president's false claims that the 2020 election was rigged.

A former federal prosecutor, Christie presented himself as the lone Republican contender willing to go toe-to-toe with the bellicose Trump.



Will discuss relook at total ban Says Karnataka CM on cow slaughter

AGENCIES

AMID protests by the BJP over a statement by Indian's Karnataka Animal Husbandry Minister K Venkatesh indicating that the Congress government would amend the stringent cow slaughter Act passed by the previous BJP regime, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah weighed in, saying the matter was on their table.

Speaking to reporters Monday, Siddaramaiah said the Cabinet was yet to discuss the issue and there was "no decision yet", reports The Indian Express.

However, he went on to refer to the version of the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act passed in 1964, and pointed out that it did not restrict the slaughter of cattle above 12 years, barren cows and other cows not fit for agricultural purposes.

"They (the BJP) amended it once. We reverted it to the earlier provisions. They have amended it again. We will discuss it in the Cabinet meeting," the CM said.

The BJP held protests in parts of the state Monday against the statement made by Venkatesh last week, responding to media queries, that though the government had not taken a call on the legislation yet, they would discuss it and take a decision.

Under the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, passed in 2020, cattle were designated as "cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock and he or she buffalo", and their slaughter banned. The only exemptions under the Act are for buffaloes above the age of 13 and certified by a competent authority as fit for slaughter.



Members of Inter University Students' Federation throw stones towards the riot police during an anti-government protest against alleged government efforts to undermine free education by permitting the setting up of private universities, and demand a change to the governance system, in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

2 dead, 5 hurt in US school shooting

AFP, Washington

Two people were killed and five injured Tuesday during a shooting near a high school graduation in the US state of Virginia, police said, the latest in an epidemic of mass shootings plaguing the country.

The shooting took place around 5:00 pm (2100 GMT) outside a theater in the state capital of Richmond, where students from a local high school were celebrating their graduation, Richmond interim police chief Rick Edwards told reporters.

The deceased included an 18-year-old graduate and a 36-year-old man, he added. Of the five injured, one remained in critical condition. "People scattered, it was very chaotic at the scene," Edwards said.

A nineteen-year-old suspect fled the scene, but was soon arrested and is to be charged with second-degree murder, Edwards said.

Power sector must answer for its failure

Frequent outages amid heatwaves lay bare its dysfunctional state

Amid unforgiving heatwaves, acute power outages are hurting the nation, and the reason, in case there was still any doubt, lies in the inefficiency of the power sector. According to a recent report, only one third of power plants are currently running at full capacity. The country has 153 power plants, and apart from the fully operational 49, at least 51 are producing at less than half the capacity, while 53 others have been completely shut, leading to the current debacle. Energy security is a key requirement for any state, and the current situation is yet another example of how the government's approach lacks the foresight needed to ensure that.

Over the past decade or so, the government has invested heavily in large-scale projects, defying warnings of energy experts. One of those projects, Payra Power Plant, shut down this week due to a coal shortage and overdue bills worth \$390 million. Rampal is also producing at half its capacity due to complications surrounding opening Letters of Credit to import coal. It's an irony that despite having a higher power generation capacity than needed, Bangladesh is struggling with unmet demand, largely due to its ill advised overreliance on outsiders, undertaking collusive deals and empowering fossil fuel plants. These plants, even when sitting idle, receive payments in capacity charges, in a sheer wastage of public funds. It is beyond unfair that people are continuously having to pay for such short-sighted decisions of the government.

In Dhaka and other major cities, they have been left without power for many hours a day. The situation is even worse in rural areas. The crisis is also proving to be a blow to the industries, especially the RMG. This calls for an urgent intervention that looks beyond the ongoing dollar crunch, and into long-festering issues that made us vulnerable in the first place.

In the proposed budget for FY2023-24, the government allocated Tk 34, 819 crore to the power sector, and only Tk 994.31 crore to the energy sector. Experts have long called for exploring our own gas reserves and prioritising renewable energy for self-sufficiency and security in the energy sector. The budget allocation, with an inadequate amount for energy development, thus signals that the government would rather maintain the shambolic status quo. This is totally unacceptable. We need proper policies to address our energy vulnerability.

Why are we intent on killing forests?

Chattogram district administration must answer for felling 5,000 trees

It seems that the importance of forests for the well being of people is completely lost on those running government offices. The latest case in point is the Chattogram district administration, which is currently on a mission to clear out a mangrove forest in the coastal area of Uttar Kattali. The reason? It wants to build a sanctuary for birds and wildlife, and more than 5,000 trees have already been felled to this end.

Setting aside the totally ludicrous idea of clearing out a natural habitat of birds to create an artificial one, we are baffled by the administration's move against a mangrove forest. Mangrove forests are not like ordinary forests – they can grow only in a select few locations around the world (like Bangladesh), and their ecosystems and biodiversity are unique. Destroying a mangrove forest would be detrimental to a number of flora and fauna species – both terrestrial and aquatic.

Then there's the fact that the forest in question is supposed to be a reserved area under the forest department's jurisdiction. The Chattogram deputy commissioner, however, claimed that it is a khas land recovered from encroachers. It should be noted that the cabinet banned cutting trees in reserved and natural forests following Bangladesh's pledge to end deforestation by 2030. So, whether the forest was on a khas land or not, the Chattogram district administration had no right to cut down those trees, especially since it did not even get the required approval from the forest department – a practice that is, unfortunately, becoming the norm.

Bangladesh is currently struggling through the hottest summer in recent memory. We all know how trees can bring down the atmospheric heat. Why then are government agencies sacrificing trees for their ill-conceived projects? The forest department needs to pull its act together and work to expand our measly forest coverage, not watch as others destroy it. And the government must make all its branches fall in line to achieve this goal. Development cannot come at the cost of our trees.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Heatwave sweeping over the country

The frequency and intensity of heat waves have increased due to climate change, making them a pressing concern. While people of all ages are susceptible to heat-related illnesses, certain groups, such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions, are particularly vulnerable.

By appointing a Chief Heat Officer, implementing urban planning strategies, and fostering collaboration, we can work towards reducing the devastating consequences of heat waves and safeguarding the well-being of the people of Bangladesh.

Thamid Thasin
North South University

What the law minister's DSA statement reveals



BLACK, WHITE AND GREY

Ali Riaz is distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, a non-resident senior fellow of the Atlantic Council and president of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS).

ALIRIAZ

The brief statement from Law Minister Anisul Huq in parliament on Monday regarding the Digital Security Act (DSA) 2018 is a welcome development in the sense that we finally have a count of the number of cases filed under the law since its introduction in October 2018. The minister informed that, until January 2023, a total of 7,001 cases had been filed under the law. Until now, there was no account from the government that provided a picture on the extent of the use of the law. The law minister, however, has not informed us as to how many people have been accused in these cases. He has deferred it to the home ministry, and we hope at some point the home minister and/or respective officials will come forward to provide this number, too.

The number of cases is staggering by all accounts, but far from surprising to those who have been closely following the wanton use of the law over the past 56 months. Instead, it only reaffirmed what national and international human rights organisations have been saying: it is a draconian law. The number of cases in 52 months, as provided by the law minister, shows that 134 cases have been filed on average each month, which means the average number of cases filed each day was 4.48 (or roughly five cases a day).

Although this piece of information does not present a comprehensive picture, it does provide a glimpse into the gravity of the situation.

Since January 2020, under a research project sponsored by the Center for Governance Studies (CGS), we have been tracking the use of the DSA since its inception. Gathering data, especially from government sources, has been an uphill task. Saad Hammadi, a human rights activist, requested the data from the police in June 2021. He was given a runaround. Drawing on various sources, as of May 31, 2023, we have been able to track 1,325 cases in which 4,121 individuals have been accused. The data show that the average number of people accused in each case was 3.11. There are no reasons to believe that there is a different pattern in the total number of cases. As such, we can extrapolate the total cases based on our sample, which will suggest that at least 21,770 people have been accused.

Of our sample of 4,121 individuals,



Demand for scrapping the DSA has been raised since its inception.

FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

1,454 had been arrested – which is roughly one in three accused. Based on that pattern, of the 21,770 accused, it is safe to say at least 7,692 were arrested. That would mean that the average number of arrests per month was 137, roughly five individuals a day. This number should give pause to anyone and make them realise how widespread the use of the DSA has been for the past 56 months.

The primary reason for being accused and arrested under the law is expressing contrarian views in cyberspace. Anyone expressing a view that annoys the government and supporters of the ruling party has been subjected to persecution through the use of this law. Over the years, the DSA has become the weapon of choice for ruling party activists. Research data published in our report in February 2023 – titled "What's happening: Trends and Patterns of the Digital Security Act 2018 in Bangladesh" – have documented that 39.13 percent of the cases were filed by individuals affiliated with political parties, 22.17 percent by law enforcement agencies, and 8.02 percent by government officials. Of those who were affiliated with the political parties, almost 80

percent were directly involved with the ruling Awami League. Unless there is a serious break in this pattern, we can make an informed guess as to who the accusers are in the 7,001 cases that the law minister mentioned in parliament.

Demand for scrapping the DSA 2018 has been raised since its inception as human rights organisers, journalists,

the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Olivier De Schutter expressed grave concern over the misuse of the Digital Security Act and urged for the suspension of the law. Despite international clamouring, the law minister has unequivocally rejected the possibility of scrapping the DSA. He,

however, has said that the law will be amended by September. The promise to amend the law has been made by ministers many times over the past years, only to be broken repeatedly. In fact, even before the DSA was passed by parliament in September 2018, ministers had promised to editors that the law would be amended. The figure provided by the law minister reveals the gravity of the situation pertaining to the use of the DSA. Although we won't hold our breath, we hope that the government will release information about the number of individuals accused and detained under the law. Given that most of the offences are considered non-bailable, hundreds of people are languishing in jails as pre-trial detainees. Lest we forget that Mushtaq Ahmed, an author, died in jail in February 2022 after being detained for ten months and denied bail six times. But most importantly, the number has once again reminded us that it is time to repeal the DSA 2018 altogether and replace it with a law, developed in consultation with stakeholders, to protect the citizens rather than criminalising freedom of expression.

In May, during his trip to Dhaka,

Our 'entangled freedoms'



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SHAKIL RABBI

Watching a great writer think out their ideas is always a thing of wonder. I was lucky enough to have this experience when I attended the Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture recently. Given as a part of the annual PEN World Voices Festival, this year's honoree was the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Ta-Nehisi Coates. It was a fascinating lecture that took perennial themes of US-American history and weaved them into something new, timely, and universal. Coates argued for seeing rights as "entangled freedoms", and it made me think about how fragile real freedom is, and what this means for a young democracy such as Bangladesh.

This year, the PEN World Voices Festival focused on the current fever of book bannings in the US, alongside the ever-increasing threats to writing and writers around the world. The curtailment of free speech and writing is especially distressing for the liberal classes in the US, given the values enshrined in the First Amendment with its guarantee of freedom of expression and the press. Yet, values are not not only abstract ideals but things that must be made real through our actions in the world, and the US, despite all its rhetoric, has rarely measured up to its talk meaningfully.

Coates laid out the significance of current book bannings in terms of

the history of violence against Black people. He pointed out that literacy was banned for slaves by the slave codes and then censored for their descendants for most of US history through targeted laws such as Jim Crow.

Coates spent much of his lecture on the hurdles placed for Black people against participating in public discourse, and how their critics often appealed to free speech while denying this same right to them. He cited the life of Fredrick Douglas as evidence of the former, and how those enslaved had to persist, hoping that their words would make a difference. He talked about the debates over the movie *The Birth of a Nation*, recognised for inciting the Ku Klux Klan, the White terrorist organisation, in the 20th century, and how films intended to rectify the movie's fabrications were widely excluded from theatres.

The double standards faced by Black people extend beyond the realm of expression, and to voting and owning property. Coates argued that people's rights and capabilities are interconnected and, in an eloquent turn of phrase, all true freedoms exist entangled. He likens them to a concert and a symphony; they are like music in that they only are real when being performed. The phrase "entangled

freedom" has stuck with me, with its inherent semantic contradictions echoing a resonant truth. Only a sensitive writer with a nuanced understanding of the world, and the obligations people have towards one another, could have penned it.

I found his point about the experience of Black folk vis-a-vis freedom of expression and the freedom to write and express especially poignant. For the Black population in the US, literacy has been deeply connected with liberation. It marched hand-in-hand with democratic practices such as voting and entering the middle class, particularly through property ownership. These achievements, consequently, were also harder for minorities. This was so because they were capabilities that allowed people full personhood in both private and public contexts – privileges only afforded to white men for much of US history.

Our abilities to write books, poetry, and novels, as well as fully participate in society through ownership of property and citizenship rights, all speak to a wider sense of power and freedom. Literature simultaneously symbolises and manifests these capabilities. It is in this complex interconnection that our entangled freedoms emerge. Consequently, book bans and similar acts of intimidation on writers and people's freedom of expression, Coates was saying, also have to be understood as a part of a suite of rollbacks that are widescale economic inequality and the curtailing of voting rights. They are the canary in the coal mines for the collective backsliding on our abilities to improve our material lives and our lives as citizens in a democracy.

I think the lessons of Coates'

expositions on entangled freedoms apply to Bangladesh well, where our democracy is still young and democratic traditions have not yet firmly taken root in our social institutions. We have to recognise how much of our freedoms are interdependent. Our freedom of expression, for instance, is connected to our ability to access proper education, participate in politics without fear, and pursue economic opportunities unhindered.

The importance we have placed on literacy and education in our developmental goals has helped our country move ahead of our giant neighbour, as per Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, in key social indicators of development. Literacy and education have been a tool for liberation for Bangladesh as they had been for Black people in the US; they let us express ourselves, engage in civic activities, and pursue upward mobility. Our NGOs and social enterprises are lauded across the world largely because they have played such an effective role in bettering education and health for Bangladeshis.

At the same time, it is precisely because we have come so far so fast that we have to be mindful of the fact that our capabilities are fragile and can be easily rolled back. We risk being complacent over threats to our broader democratic rights, especially our freedom of expression, at our peril, and we also have to ensure people's right to economic mobility and democratic participation. The current fever of book banning in the US shows how deeply ingrained values of freedoms can quickly unravel even in mature democracies. We have to ask if we see the canaries in our coal mine.

Are we aware of aluminium phosphide poisoning?

The lethal gas that may have caused the death of two siblings in Dhaka



Naznin Tithi
is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

NAZNIN TITHI

The tragic death of two siblings in the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area, allegedly from pesticide poisoning, has yet again reminded us how cheap our lives can be in a country that has failed to ensure basic safety and security of its citizens. Sadly, news of unnatural deaths – in road crashes, fire incidents, gas explosions, etc – have become a regular part of our everyday lives. However, the fact that two children would have to die in the “safety” of their own home just because a pest control agency did not do its job properly is inconceivable.

Reportedly, Mobarak Hossain, the father of the two children – Shayan Mobarat Zahin, 15, an eighth-grader, and Shahir Mobarat Zayan, 9, a third-grader – hired a pest control agency to rid their home of cockroaches. The employees of the agency spread the pesticides in their house on June 2 and asked the family to stay out of the house for two to three hours. But the family decided to take extra precaution and returned to the house after about 10 hours. Yet, all five family members fell sick soon after arriving home and inhaling the toxic fumes. As the state of the two children deteriorated, they had to be admitted to a private hospital, where both of them passed away.

I was horrified at the news, and the first question that came to my mind was: did the children die of aluminium phosphide poisoning? Aluminium phosphide is a chemical that emits a poisonous gas that not only kills insects, but is also dangerous for humans. A local news agency later reported that the pest control company had used

aluminium phosphide tablets as a pesticide in the house, which likely led to the death of the two children.

I first learned about this life-threatening chemical a few years ago, when a relative was looking for a solution to bed bugs and had hired a pest control agency to get rid of the insects from his house. The agency

which the countries have implemented stricter regulations to control the use of this chemical. The UAE banned pesticides containing aluminium phosphide for public use back in 2009.

But aluminium phosphide is available in the form of tablets in Bangladesh, largely being sold by street vendors and used by

my commute to my office in the capital's Farmgate area, I regularly come across street vendors advertising and selling these tablets (among other pesticides) to people, under the very noses of law enforcers. Once, I asked a street vendor how to use these tablets. He gave me specific directions to keep the tablet in a room and stay out of the

antidote for those affected by it? Reportedly, the company that used the chemical in the Bashundhara house had told the residents to enter the house two to three hours after the pesticide had been spread – while the gas was still present in the house. This clearly indicates the company's lack of knowledge about the chemicals they are using in fumigating households. Their incompetence and negligence have now possibly caused the deaths of two young children.

According to a BARI official, aluminium phosphide tablets are not banned in the country, but their use is restricted. These tablets are basically meant for use in warehouses to protect foodgrains from insects. They should never be used for household pest control. How, then, are the pest control agencies using them?

Unfortunately, aluminium phosphide is not the only pesticide that is being sold openly in the city. According to Dr Syeda Sultana Razia, a professor at the department of chemical engineering in Buet, many other harmful insecticides which should only be used for pest control in agricultural fields are being sold in the capital's markets, without any monitoring from the authorities.

The onus is now on the government to look into the issue and take the required measures to restrict the sale of these lethal chemicals in the country. It is also high time that government authorities learned about pest control from the experiences of developed nations and formulated strict regulations regarding the use of such dangerous chemicals in households. Otherwise, we might see more such deaths from pesticide poisoning in the future.

Since the father of the deceased children has filed a case against the pest control company, it is up to the police now to properly investigate the incident and bring those responsible for the children's death to justice. Such acts of negligence must not go unpunished.



Brothers Shayan Mobarat Zahin (15) and Shahir Mobarat Zayan (9) fell sick and passed away likely after inhaling aluminium phosphide gas.

used some tablets to kill the bugs while the entire family was away for a whole day. And this did result in their house being free of bed bugs from thereon.

However, after a brief internet search, I came across news of how people across the world, including in the US, UAE, Thailand, and India, had died after inhaling this poisonous gas, following

pest control companies.

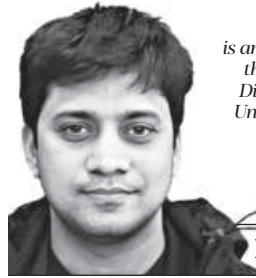
Reportedly, if aluminium phosphide gas is inhaled by humans, it can prove fatal within hours. And if not treated properly, a majority of the affected may die within 24 hours. The chemical is particularly lethal for children and the elderly.

However, in Bangladesh, it is sold openly for pest control purposes. During

house for at least two days. It is supposed to “work like magic.”

Forget about street vendors; professional pest control organisations in Dhaka have been using this lethal chemical for years. The question is: are they using it with approval from the government? Do they have the necessary knowledge and training to safely use this highly toxic pesticide, which has no

How well can we deal with LANDSLIDES?



Bayes Ahmed
is an associate professor at the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction of the University College London (UCL).

BAYES AHMED

Although landslides are a natural occurrence due to rainfall, recent landslides in Bangladesh have primarily been triggered by human activities. In 1968, landslides were first observed due to damage to the then Kaptai-Chittagong road. The five hilly districts of Chattogram division – Bandarban, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Khagrachhari, and Rangamati – were significantly affected.

Research has shown that between 1990 and 2010, deforestation took place in nearly 1,130 sq km of the five hilly districts, and approximately 420 sq km of land has been transformed into urban areas, indicating extensive hill-cutting.

Notable reasons behind landslides in Bangladesh include construction of settlements without proper planning, cutting down of forests and trees, construction of unplanned settlements on risky slopes, conversion of hills into plots and flats, inappropriate forest management, lack of appropriate cultural knowledge and skills to build houses on hills, population pressure, unplanned urbanisation, extraction of stones from hilly streams and foothills, and lack of coordination among relevant government, autonomous, and non-governmental institutions.

Usually, two types of communities are found on the hills of Bangladesh. One group consists of indigenous communities – who have lived in the mountains for centuries. The second group consists of local Bangalees, who have lived in these hills for almost a generation. Various information and evidence analyses show that the settlers, mainly Bangalees, face landslide risks. Bangalees living in densely populated urbanised areas (such as upazila sadar or large municipalities) are mainly from extremely poor sections. Due to a lack of adequate civic facilities, they are forced to live on risky slopes. Although most of the hills in Bangladesh are considered government-owned land, and cutting hills is prohibited, a specific class of people are haphazardly settling

on these hills from different parts of the country. Within a radius of about half a kilometre, there are facilities such as jobs, adequate roads, schools, markets, banks, playgrounds, medical facilities, etc, which attracts countless low-income people, including climate migrants, towards these hills.

The residents – usually garment workers, day labourers, drivers,

lifestyle and agricultural practices, illegal logging and stone extraction, construction of roads without sufficient geological surveys and slope stabilisation measures, promotion of unsustainable tourism, and lack of ecological restoration activities.

In the three hill tract districts, landslides primarily occur in road-cut and hill-cut sections. Communities living



The Chattogram hill districts are very likely to face catastrophic landslides during the monsoon seasons. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is not yet prepared to deal with landslide disasters.

FILE PHOTO: STAR/ANVIL CHAKMA/MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

shopkeepers, and small business owners – live in rented houses. Hundreds of thousands of people live at risk of landslides on these hills and regularly face various economic and social problems.

One noteworthy aspect of these hills is the cultural differences between the Bangalees and the Indigenous communities. The Indigenous people have traditional and deep-rooted cultural knowledge about which slope of the hills to build their homes on and what kind of materials to use. They also know how to cultivate and earn a living on the mountains and how to survive in a challenging environment. Their houses are built on bamboo stilts, and the roofs are thatched using bamboo leaves. These homes are not designed to withstand severe weather conditions, but are resilient against landslides. However, in recent years, the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) region has become vulnerable to landslides due to changes in Indigenous

in funnel-shaped locations surrounded by hills are marked as highly risky. This scenario is common for most of the hilly towns and municipalities in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, the Rohingya crisis has added another dimension to the landslide vulnerability in Cox's Bazar. Currently, the district is hosting over one million refugees who have faced serious crimes against humanity in Myanmar and fled to Bangladesh. A vast protected hilly forest was quickly converted into a mega-informal settlement by cutting hills and destroying forests. This changed the entire local forest ecosystem and hilly landscape. As a result, the Rohingya residing in the camps also face the risk of major landslides and flash floods every year. Similar landslide vulnerability also exists in other neighbouring upazilas and for host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Given the overall context, the Chattogram hill districts are very likely to face catastrophic landslides during

the monsoon seasons. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is not yet prepared to deal with landslide disasters. We do not even have national or regional landslide early warning systems (LEWS). Some organisations and academic institutions are trying to develop and introduce the country's first LEWS. However, those systems or technologies are still ineffective or have not gone through scientific validation and recalibration.

Landslides should be categorised as major human-made disasters. Detailed scientific research should be conducted on each hill's geographical, geological, topographical, geotechnical, soil, and land use aspects in those hilly districts. Using scientific methods, landslide hazard and risk maps for each upazila should be prepared to identify risky hills and communities at risk of landslides. Also, an effective LEWS should be introduced by integrating all four major components – risk knowledge, forecasting systems, dissemination and communication, and preparedness and response capacities. This will enable people living in vulnerable areas to evacuate to safe places days in advance of a potential landslide disaster.

We also need to assess the economic and social status of those living on the hills, with regular surveys conducted to analyse their dynamic social vulnerability. Furthermore, high-risk hill dwelling populations in particular should be evacuated to shelters during the rainy season every year. Provisions for landslide shelters should be created, and vulnerable people should be given temporary residence there during periods of extreme rainfall. A comprehensive risk-sensitive land use plan should be produced and implemented for the hill districts in Chattogram, and the northeastern Sylhet region. The plan should include community-friendly anticipatory actions and a forecast-based financing mechanism, and promote nature-based solutions to tackle landslide disasters.

Finally, a permanent and high-level landslide task force should be formed under the leadership of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, involving all key stakeholders such as the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization, Geological Survey of Bangladesh, and other government, autonomous, non-government and intergovernmental organisations, community leaders, and the general public.

CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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- 1 Plotters' group
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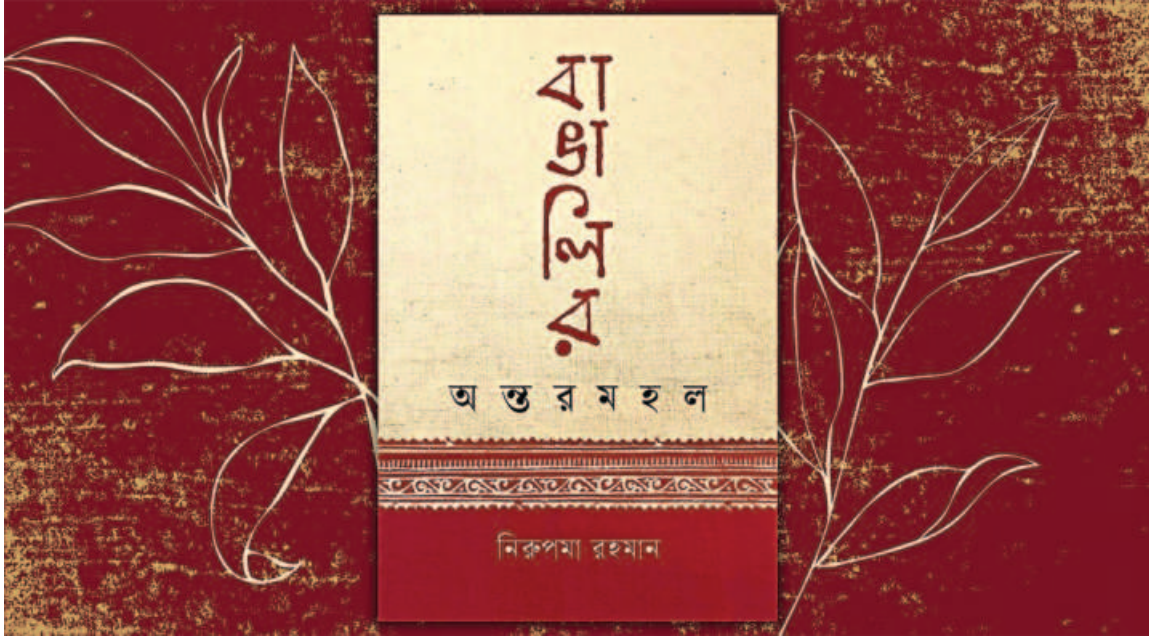
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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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ESSAY

A personal quest to explore the core essence of 'Bengaliness'



BOOK COVER DESIGN: SABYASACHI HAZRA; COLLAGE: MAISHA SYEDA

NIRA RAHMAN

As an academic, I find the discussions around positionality and intersectionality fascinating. I enjoy delving into questions around 'sense of self', how our identity is constructed, how language and culture shape our thoughts, learning styles and ability as well as how we interpret the world around us. These questions seem significant for my academic work around education design and developing pedagogical practices in higher education. While exploring and examining how diverse students and migrants represent their 'sense of self' in academic and social settings, I

started to ponder about my 'sense of self' and how other Bengalis around me represent their Bengali identity.

I started questioning who or what is the 'Bengali', beyond our history, emotion, and heightened sense of self. What defines us? What are our defining moments? What makes us who we are? Realising 'Bangaliyana' is still at the very centre of my identity even after living away from Bangladesh for more than 20 years, I started to contemplate what is 'Bangaliyana' or what lies at the core of that 'Bengaliness'. Is it just a thousand years of our shared yet turbulent history? Or is it just our intense and melodramatic emotions?

Or is it our heightened sense of self and healthy(!) ego?

In my maiden literary work, *Bangalir Ontormohol*, published by Baatighar, I tried to find the answers to these and related questions. As a Bengali myself, I tried to interpret and examine the sense of 'Bengaliness' (Bangaliyana) in the 21st century context through the prism of philosophical, social, cultural, historic, linguistic, global perspectives Bengalis consciously (or unconsciously) define themselves by. In my book, I explore and explain the Bengali culture, language, community, attitudes and values in its entirety. What does it mean to be 'Bangali'? How do the actions and experiences of our ancestors inform our actions and experiences in the present? How does our language express and betray who we are? Through this book, I want to take my readers on a journey to explore, reflect, and contemplate our identity now, and what it means for our future.

What does the title *Bangalir Ontormohol* mean? The word Ontormohol was word-smithed and evolved from the word Ondormohol which means intimate and personal space of the house. So, if we consider the 'Bangali' sense of self (i.e. 'Bengaliness') as a whole domain, in this book I tried to capture the intricate, intimate, enchanting and exquisite aspects of 'Bengaliness'. This book, which is a compilation of 10 essays, explores with readers the core aspects of 'Bengaliness' that we proudly term as 'Bangaliyana'. I aim to take my readers for an exploration to the intimate and personal space of 'Bengaliness' through the different chapters of this book. Hence, the word Ondormohol

transformed to Ontormohol as Ontor, meaning 'heart', keeps the concept of core essence attached to the domain of 'Bengaliness'. The title brings a greater nuance using a rather unusual Bangla word to express the concept of inner space.

To define 'Bengaliness' or who we are in the 21st century, I tried to delve deep using my own positionality and intersectionality into language, culture, history, literature, philosophy, social mores and even the gastronomic tradition of the Bengalis. Bengalis in the 21st century who are now globalised claim to be internationalised, yet are in fact very traditional and conventional with their deep-rooted heightened sense of self. Hence, we are often confused and often mystified with our identity and positionality. It often seems from time to time, we are unable to define 'who we are' and 'what makes us "us"'. Through different chapters of the book, I used my own experiences and journey to define, explore, and analyse various perspectives and aspects around what it means to be a Bengali, in terms of both the singular and the community identity. I used common jargons, proverbs, and colloquial terminologies of Bangla as resources for social analysis to understand the psyche, disposition and socio-cultural inclination of the Bengalis of the 21st century.

This book also talks about the Bengali diaspora and their positionality and the construct of their intersectionality in their adopted homelands. It too included the discussion around the unique aspects of globalised Bengali identity and the juxtaposition of

deep-rooted Bengali identity with intersectionality of global citizenship. Using my personal anecdotes, I also showcase music as an innate component to describe and define the sense of self and intersectional identities of Bengali migrants. Bengali cuisine and delicacies being vital to any Bengali, in this book I included a chapter where the idea of 'Bengaliness' was portrayed through the enthusiasm and evolution around Bengali cuisine and gastronomy! I also dealt with the social constructs around gender and its contradictory nature around philosophical, spiritual beliefs with common social displays and actions in different chapters.

The various examples I used in each chapter to engage the reader in comprehending the sense of ever evolving 'Bengaliness' could be described as bewildering, ambiguous, or enigmatic. However, all of these contradictions, confusions and inconsistencies contribute to and encapsulate the resilient spirit and eternal core essence of 'Bengaliness': *Bangalir Ontormohol*.

Read an extended version of this article on [The Daily Star website](#) and on [Star Books & Literature's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages](#).

Dr Nira (Nirupoma) Rahman is an academic at the Arts Teaching Innovation in the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne. She also regularly writes for Australian and Bangladeshi (in both English and Bangla) media on various topics that connect her academic interests to her personal insights around culture, language and identity.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Professing criticism

'Midnight's Third Child' by Naeem Mohaiemen (Nokta & ULAB Press, 2023)

MINHAZ MUHAMMAD

The South African critic Derek Attridge champions the term 'affirmative criticism'. It is different from scholarship, which is often, but not limited to discovering the ideological faultline of a text / artwork, measuring the silences and the text's capacity to betray itself. It is also not what pervades in much of popular media—a run-down of different factoids that are inherent and obvious to the artwork, followed by a sweeping conclusion about the writer's judgment toward the work, or in other words, a quantification of value. Affective criticism is a different approach, where the scholarship is present, but it's rooted in admiration, the critic inhabiting the role of the lover of the work. It's a difficult position, one that is close to an activist rather than a critic (at least a traditionally defined one) with the negative connotations of the noun form of the word. But it seems appropriate, a fitting part for Naeem Mohaiemen, within the boundaries of his brilliant and luminous



BOOK COVER IMAGE: ALI MORSHED NOTON; DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

phrases, the strange time-untethered setting reminded me of the prose of Polish writer Bruno Schulz. Perhaps it's because I don't have the Bangla leaflet with me, and thus, I am not able to enter into the translation without any specific expectations. But in any case, it was far from being ineffective. The few pieces in that exhibition that had used English, Mohaiemen observed, did not retain "the frenzied energy, and density of reference". As it's clear from his own translation, it is perhaps less about the language itself—which comes off as spritely, dynamic and vital—and more about whom and how they're deploying it.

But even with his reservations, Mohaiemen remains a staunch admirer of all the works he discusses. With respect to Datta's, he goes as far as to suggest learning Bangla to enjoy the works in their full capacity. One might find this a bit inconsistent. Why is he advocating for Bangla, when he is writing in English? Maybe he is writing back to an international audience of Bangladeshi art, who, as he mentions, even now see the best of Bangladeshi art to be produced outside of it, in the diaspora. He is creating a necessary archive, establishing dialogue, much in the way of Attridge with his affirmative criticism. Sometimes, they are quite literal—the interviews with Shahidul Alam, Dhali Al Mamoon, for instance, and sometimes he achieves that obliquely—the two beautiful essays (and quite possibly the best among the ones that I have read on these works) on *Babu Bangladesh* and *In the Light of What We Know*. He remains optimistic, open to possibilities, sometimes inserting his wishes for these works. When he writes about the socialist realism strain in documentary photography, he never denigrates the work, even though some of the popular and award winning images are made and received with the impression that they are capable of actual changes, when they clearly aren't, and to an uninformed audience, issues such as queer love and climate resilience may end up being misrepresented and cause more harm than becoming a positive catalyst. In fact, he writes with astonishing clarity, but never definitively. Each essay / interview feels like an invitation to think with him. There's a lot to be gained, just from the sheer breadth of exploration, to someone with cursory knowledge of Bangladeshi art. But for the completely uninitiated? This is a well-rounded primary education.

Minhaz Muhammad is a contributor.

This is a useful framework in thinking about Mohaiemen's chief concerns: the historiography of Bangladeshi art, the hegemonic setting and control of narrative, the formation of an inclusive canon. He delineates two ways artists and cultural workers at large have typically conducted themselves, either moving closer to the axis of power or becoming productive antagonists.

essay collection, *Midnight's Third Child*.

The constellation of subjects that appear in this book are as much about many forms of art—cinema, visual art, and literature—as they are about their possible responses. To give a sense of the range of the essays, Mohaiemen writes on and about Joydeb Roaza, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mrinal Sen, Advertising Agencies, Tareq Masud, Shahidul Alam, Pathshala, Chobi Mela, Sarker Protick, Taslima Nasreen, Rubaiyat Hossain, Dhali Al Mamoon, Zia Haider

Rahman, Numair Chowdhury, and Tayeba Begum Lipi among others. Mohaiemen is an anthropologist, filmmaker, author, and Associate Professor of Visual Arts at Columbia University, New York.

In his introduction to the collection, Mohaiemen provides an account of the strange but amusing name of the book. *Midnight's Third Child* is a polite translation of a phrase that is frequently used by Bengalis: "Chagol'er tritiyo baccha lafay beshi" (the goat's third child jumps more). It suggests that the youngest need to strive more for sustenance. The assertion is that Bangladesh, in its long and shared history with India and Pakistan, was the last to gain independence, and its geographic and economic formations have made it such that the country needs to do more than its fair share to attract global attention. But the term is also employed as a cheeky metaphor, by riffing on Salman Rushdie's landmark postcolonial novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). Other than the obvious allusion, the title seems to echo a sentiment that is often attached with Rushdie's novel—the empire writes back.

This is a useful framework in thinking about Mohaiemen's chief concerns: the historiography of Bangladeshi art, the hegemonic setting and control of narrative, the formation of an inclusive canon. He delineates two ways artists and cultural workers at large have typically conducted themselves, either moving

closer to the axis of power or becoming productive antagonists. The subjects in his book have occupied the latter position. Although the book is written in English, he has plenty of doubt to dispense about the language, its usefulness, acceptance, and communicability when it comes to writing and creating art in Bangladesh.

In 2019, *Depart Magazine* slanted its door permanently following its 22nd issue. Its sizable archive is still online, easily accessible, and its print issues can be found occasionally in Dhaka's bookstores. *JAMNI*, another art magazine, quite possibly has folded its cover in recent times as well. The major similarity between these two magazines, other than their premature extinction, is the language they operated in: English. "Since the English language occupies a microscopic space, what is the impetus for having two English language art journals? What is their future?" Mohaiemen asks in an essay, originally published in 2017. The answer points to a grim reality. Unlike India, where English has been embraced by people from all walks of life (a broad generalization, I am aware), in Bangladesh, English, till this date, has remained as the language of the elite, or "Banani-bashi" as he sarcastically calls them in different parts of the book.

In a different essay, on a panel discussion at a group show, Mohaiemen finds himself at the center of a conversation about the proliferation of text in artworks. While

he's all for it, in the works of Razib Datta he observes the use of English to express different sentiments as "awkward and inert". Later on, when he's invited to Datta's group show, he notices even more text, but this time in Bangla. While in the past the English lended an "unintended, unproductive abstraction to the work", the utilization of Bangla had been "masterful". The witty and agile use of the language seemed to him from an earlier archaic spirit, and its boundary pushing, colloquial use in lieu of the more established literary form reminded Mohaiemen of chotis (smuts) and the little magazines of the country. Yet, reading his translation of a leaflet from the exhibition, I find it to be quite the opposite of his claim.

"That day was also another, like today. Rabindranath came to Iqbal Road at the invitation of Allama Iqbal. That day too was morning. After finishing a breakfast of naan-tehari-etc, Rabindranath went for a walk. He had not yet become a tagore. He was still on his own, where today there is Calcutta Herbal, and the air is filled with Hindi songs, Rabindranath found a stray clay pitcher. It was sealed at the top. Hiding his discovery under a long cloak, itself a gift from the great Iqbal, Rabindranath took refuge in a dark corner of Iqbal Road field. After saying his Indian prayers three times, he opened the pitcher and found inside a golden frog..."

The run-on sentences, repetition of

Rakib adds to injury woes

SPORTS REPORTER

Forward Rakib Hossain was the latest to join Bangladesh's mounting injury list after centre-back Tutul Hossain Badsha was all but ruled out of the SAFF Championship, scheduled to begin in India on June 21.

Defenders Tapu Barman, Badsha and Rimon Hossain had joined the preparation camp despite contending with injuries, but none of them could train with the ball on the third day of the camp at the Bashundhara Kings Arena. Tapu and Rimon were only seen stretching alongside their teammates.

"The physio and doctor are working with them. Tapu and Rimon have improved but Badsha is uncertain. The doctor advised him to not wear the boots for two weeks due to a fungal problem in both feet. Badsha is in a difficult position," assistant coach Hasan Al Mamun told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

"There was no problem found with Tapu's hamstring after the test but he needs to improve the strength in his hamstring. He is in recovery mode while Rimon has an ankle injury and is also recovering," Mamun added.

"They are experienced and vital players, so we cannot take any risk with them in the friendly matches against Cambodia. We are expecting both to recover fully before the start of the SAFF Championship."

Tapu and Badsha are proven and experienced defenders in the 30-member squad, which also includes two more stoppers: rookie Mehedi Hasan of Mohammedan and Tarique Raihan Kazi of Bashundhara Kings. Right back Bishwanath Ghosh has also been deployed in a more central role in the past.

"Rakib sustained a [hamstring] injury yesterday [Tuesday]. We will know more about his condition after tests," said the assistant coach, hoping that Rakib would also recover fully before the SAFF campaign.

"Rakib is a key player and is in our plans. There is no problem with the players in terms of fitness but we are wary of how soon they can recover from their injuries. It will be tough for Bangladesh to take part in the SAFF Championship without those experienced players."



Tariq Kazi jumps as Eleta Kingsley goes through the paces during a training session of the national football team at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday as the team continued their build-up for the upcoming SAFF Championship. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Asian Tour welcomes PGA-LIV merger

AFP, Singapore

The Asian Tour called it "a massive stride forward" for golf Wednesday after the PGA Tour announced a shock merger with the Saudi-backed LIV circuit, ending the sport's two-year civil war.

Tuesday's stunning announcement took many in the sport, including players, by surprise and means that all litigation between the feuding parties is over.

The Asian Tour said the agreement "validates" its decision last year to link up with LIV Golf, which made an initial commitment of more than \$200 million to the tour.

LIV is bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) and had sparked accusations of "sportswashing" -- using sport to deflect from the country's human rights record.

Separately, the PGA of Australia said it had held talks with the PGA Tour and DP World Tour -- formerly the European Tour -- overnight to "discuss the details of the agreement".

Can Mirpur track help pacers turn the tables?

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan named a 15-man squad for the one-off Test against Bangladesh, starting from June 14, and the biggest takeaway was the absence of key spin threat Rashid Khan, who was reportedly being rested.

The Afghan spin wizard had taken 11 wickets in two innings as Afghanistan dismantled Bangladesh's batting line-up in the only Test between the sides in Chattogram in 2019, thumping the hosts by 224 runs.

This time around, the Tigers' squad was shaped by picking five pacers, suggesting that Afghanistan's spin threat may be countered by pace-friendly wickets. But how much has Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla favoured pace over the years?

A look at the last 10 Tests in Mirpur, starting with a 20-run win against Australia, shows that stats heavily support the theory of spin-friendly Mirpur tracks. Spinners have taken 223 wickets compared to the 96 scalped by pacers. Approximately 70 per cent wickets in Mirpur have been claimed by spinners, which signals the dominance spin has held at Mirpur.

The last time Bangladesh played Afghanistan in a Test, the Tigers fielded four front-line spinners in Shakib Al Hasan, Tajjul Islam, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Nayeem Hasan. The selection choice with no front-line pacers in the playing eleven created a furore. This time

No Rashid for Afghanistan

Ace spinner Rashid Khan was the notable omission as Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) announced a 15-member squad for one-off Test against Bangladesh, starting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from June 14.

AFGHANISTAN SQUAD

Hashmatullah Shahidi (C), Rahmat Shah (VC), Afsar Zazai (WK), Ikram Alikhail (WK), Ibrahim Zadran, Abdul Malik, Baheer Shah, Nasir Jamal, Karim Janat, Zahir Khan, Izharulhaq Naweed, Hamza Hotak, Ibrahim Abdulrahimzai, Yamin Ahmadzai and Nijat Masoud.

picked three spinners along with three pacers but the pacers did not get enough help, with Ebadot Hossain's three for 37 the only example of pace leaving an impact. Will it create more controversy if pacers do not get what is being sought and results go against Bangladesh?

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged a workshop on Turf and Outfield Management at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, which ended yesterday. Ian Joseph, head of Turf Management of New Zealand Cricket was conducting the workshop and believed it was possible to create pace-friendly wickets here.

He felt it was a myth that pace-friendly wickets were not possible to achieve in the nation. "I think that's a bit of a myth. It's up to the skills of the curator to carefully manage the pitch and its preparation and to deliver a quality surface. There have been a number of games that had been played in Bangladesh where the pitches have played very well. I am confident that the pitches will only improve further with the curator training programme and by sharing our knowledge," Ian told reporters.

However, the stats still showed where pace and spin stand in terms of dominating proceedings.

Bangladesh's squad has already been shaped by a certain understanding that pace will hold value in the upcoming Test but if the surface is a true one at Mirpur, it is the batters who have to respond.

Bangladesh picked two spinners in Mehedi and Tajjul, with Shakib out injured for the series.

Bangladesh are likely to pick a pace-heavy attack given that only two specialist spinners are available. But what if the wicket behaves similarly to how it did during the last Test at Mirpur against Ireland in April this year?

In that instance, Bangladesh



Head leads Australia fightback

AFP, London

Travis Head scored an impressive half century as Australia reached 170-3 against India at tea on the opening day of the World Test Championship final at the Oval.

Australia struggled after losing the toss in bowler-friendly conditions but as the sun burst through the clouds in south London on Wednesday, the runs started to flow.

Middle-order batsman Head was 60 not out at the break and Steve Smith unbeaten on 33 -- the pair had added 94 runs after coming together at 76-3 soon after lunch.

India captain Rohit Sharma elected to bowl under overcast skies and on a green-tinged pitch that promised to assist a four-man pace attack.

The WTC remains the only major men's cricket trophy Australia have yet to win.

The fixture also marks the start of a packed schedule of six Tests in eight weeks for Australia, including a five-match Ashes series against England.



Messi moving to Miami?

REUTERS

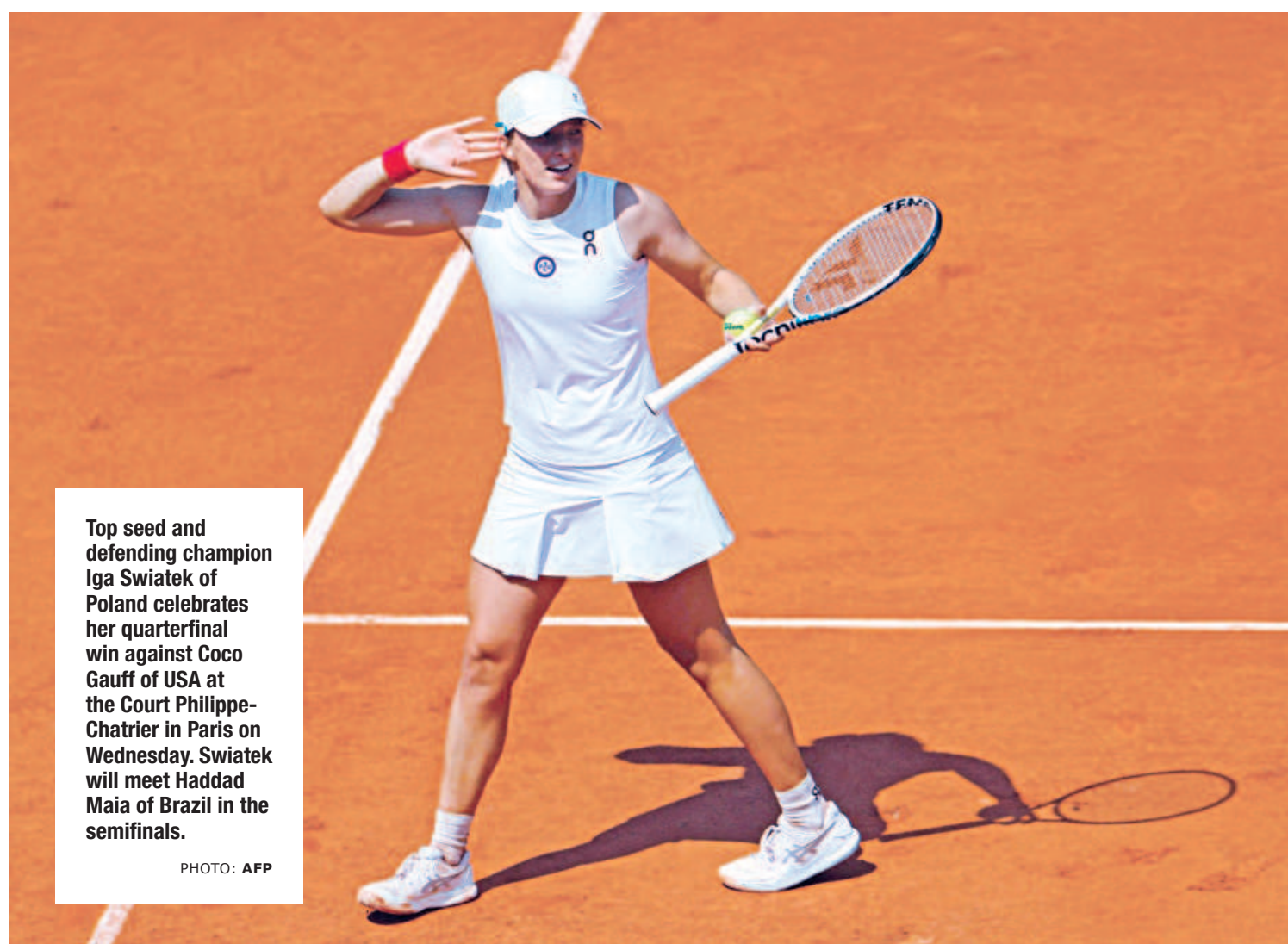
Lionel Messi will snub a lucrative contract in Saudi Arabia and move to Major League Soccer side Inter Miami as a free agent after parting ways with French champion Paris St Germain, the BBC reported on Wednesday.

Messi, who played his final game for PSG over the weekend, was also linked with a return to Barcelona but the Spanish club have had their hands tied due to LaLiga's financial fair play rules.

Should the deal with Miami go through, the 35-year-old Argentine will play outside Europe for the first time since he joined Barca's academy at the age of 13 and became the Spanish club's all-time record goalscorer with 672 goals.

Messi had wanted to go to a club where he could eventually have an ownership stake, a source with knowledge of the negotiations told Reuters this week. He also wanted to maximise his existing deal with Adidas and MLS's relationship with Apple.

MLS earns a flat fee of about \$200 million per year from Apple until it reach a certain threshold of subscriptions, after which point they will earn a share of the revenue from those subscriptions.



Top seed and defending champion Iga Swiatek of Poland celebrates her quarterfinal win against Coco Gauff of USA at the Court Philippe-Chatrier in Paris on Wednesday. Swiatek will meet Haddad Maia of Brazil in the semifinals.

PHOTO: AFP

Haddad Maia puts Brazil back on map

AFP, Paris

Beatriz Haddad Maia became the first Brazilian woman to reach a Grand Slam semi-final since 1968 on Wednesday when she came back from a set down to defeat Ons Jabeur at the French Open.

World number 14 Haddad Maia came through 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 and will face top-ranked defending champion Iga Swiatek in Saturday's championship match.

The 27-year-old left-hander follows in the footsteps of seven-time major winner Maria Bueno who was the last Brazilian woman in the semi-finals of a major at the US Open 55 years ago.

"Ons is not easy to play against, you have to be patient but I believed in my body and tried to keep my rhythm," said Haddad Maia.

Taskin eager to play in overseas leagues

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh speedster Taskin Ahmed on Wednesday said that he is eager to play in different leagues around the world after the Bangladesh Cricket Board decided not to release him to play for English County side Yorkshire.

Taskin, who is recovering from a side strain injury, is eyeing to feature in Bangladesh's one-off Test against Afghanistan starting on June 14.

"Every player wants to play leagues worldwide but we also need to think about national commitments since I play all three formats for Bangladesh. But yes it feels bad if I am not able to go in my free time. Sometimes it feels bad not to play leagues worldwide and I am eager to play international leagues for my personal achievements in future," Taskin told the reporters in Dhaka on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old confirmed on Wednesday that he got an offer to play for Yorkshire but revealed that upon discussion with him, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and the board decided not to let him go.

"I got a proposal from Yorkshire and they wanted me to play for a long season. I have talked to the coach and the board. After considering everything, they decided not to release me for the longer version games. As a player, it feels good to know that the board has plans for me for the future," he said.



High inflation, energy crisis to slow growth

Says WB in its latest flagship publication

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Elevated inflation, policy uncertainty, and weakening external demand are expected to slow growth in Bangladesh this fiscal year, said the World Bank in a report recently.

Growth is expected to be 5.2 percent, down from 7.1 percent registered in the previous fiscal year, said the major global lender in the latest edition of its flagship publication Global Economic Prospects Gains, which was unveiled on Tuesday.

This is the same projection made by the WB earlier in January and April, making Bangladesh the third-fastest growing economy in South Asia. The region includes Afghanistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

Bangladesh's growth this fiscal year would also be below the South Asian average of 5.9 percent.

The 5.2 percent growth projection is similar to the ones made by the Asian Development Bank (5.3 percent) and the International Monetary Fund (5.5 percent).

However, the government maintains that growth would at least be 6.03 percent in this fiscal year which wraps up at the end of the month.

The reason for the slower growth is import restrictions imposed to safeguard a fast-depleting dollar stockpile. This has caused an energy crisis and fuelled inflation, which averaged 8.95 percent in the first 11 months of this fiscal year. In May, inflation hit an 11-year high of 9.94 percent.

"In Bangladesh, continued import suppression measures and energy shortages have weighed on both industrial production and the services

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Siraj Noor, father of Sourav Mia, crying in front of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday. Sourav and 13 other construction workers were killed in a head-on collision between a truck and a pickup in Sylhet yesterday morning. Inset, the two vehicles lie overturned on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Dakshin Surma's Kutubpur. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

PARTS OF DHAKA CITY Now water crisis heaps misery upon residents

STAR REPORT

An acute crisis of water has gripped some parts of the capital, causing unbearable sufferings to the residents already enduring hours of power cuts amid the heatwave.

The mercury went past 38 degrees Celsius yesterday in Dhaka. Atiqua Roma, a resident of Uttara sector 3, said, "There was no water for almost 36 hours. Today [Wednesday] we got some water for only about an hour."

She contacted the Wasa and requested a tank of water on Monday night.

"They told me I was 72nd on the list and asked me to wait. We're still waiting for the water tank."

Roma has been drinking bottled water and bringing water from her relatives' houses.

People in different parts of Mirpur, Badda, Banasree, Basabo, Maniknagar, Doyaganj, Kajlarpur, Adabar, Shyamoli, Jurain, Matuail, Konapara and Dogair have been facing water crisis in recent days.

Khaleda Parveen, a resident of Merul Badda, said she had faced a water crisis for the first time last week since she moved into the area three and a half years ago.

"We have not been able to cook. We had to buy breakfast and lunch, and may have to buy dinner as well."

Dhaka Wasa Deputy Managing Director AKM Shahid Uddin told The Daily Star that they could not operate all the water pumps because of

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"We have not been able to cook. We had to buy breakfast and lunch, and may have to buy dinner as well."

Khaleda Parveen of Merul Badda

14 workers die as pickup, truck collide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Fourteen construction workers were killed after the pickup they were travelling on collided with a truck on the Dhaka Sylhet highway in Kutubpur area of Sylhet's Dakshin Surma early yesterday.

The crash around 5:45am also left 12 injured who were receiving treatment at the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The construction workers were on their way to Sylhet's Osmaninagar upazila's Goalabazar when the potato-laden truck crashed into the pickup. The pickup then flipped over.

Survivor Rabiul Islam said, "A truck coming from the opposite direction veered into our lane and collided with the pickup carrying us. My uncle died on the spot. Luckily, my father and I survived."

At the Sylhet hospital, Amina Begum was crying in front of the body of her son Sourav Mia, 27.

"He came to Sylhet all of on sudden a week ago and started working as a construction worker without informing us. We even arranged his marriage back home but now he is no more."

Sabera Begum lost her husband Eklim Mia, 55. "I have nothing more left to live for," she said as her brother was trying to comfort her.

The cousin of deceased Dulal Mia, 25, said, "Dulal's brother Helal died in a boat crash in Sunamganj's Chhatak upazila around three months ago. Dulal married his brother's widow two weeks ago and now he is dead too."

The other deceased are Rashid Mia, 50, Md Saheed Noor, 50, Badsha, 22, Meher, 25, Harich Mia, 65, Sijil Mia, 55, Sadhu Mia, 40, Aolad Hossain, 50, Shaheen Mia, 40, Aolad Mia, 50, and Amina Begum, 45.

Of the deceased, seven were from Derai upazila of Sunamganj, five were from the district's Shantiganj upazila, and two others were from Habiganj and Netrakona.

2 more die of dengue 147 new cases reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least two dengue patients died while 147 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new deaths, the total number of deaths this year reached 19, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the cases, the total number of dengue cases rose to 2,720.

Among the patients, 723 are from outside Dhaka. Some 480 of them are currently undergoing treatment.

A total of 2,221 dengue patients were discharged from hospitals after being treated, of which 650 were from outside Dhaka.

The number of dengue deaths was 281 last year while the number of cases was 62,382.

Dengue infections are spreading rapidly, with the number of patients increasing fivefold in the first five months of this year compared to the same period last year.

Prehistoric cave paintings found in Spain using drones

CNN ONLINE

Archaeologists in Spain have discovered prehistoric paintings in hard-to-reach caves in the east of the country using drone technology.

The use of drones allowed researchers to quickly gather evidence of

previously unseen cave paintings dating from 5,000-

7,500 years ago, according to a statement from the team at the University of Alicante, Spain.

The archaeologists' findings were published in the Spanish scientific journal *Lucentum* last

month.

The project allowed easier inspection of areas which could otherwise only be reached by "opening complex access routes climbing," reads the statement.

The team said they found their first results within just a few days of flying drones in a quarry in the Penaguila municipality in Alicante.

"This area is well known for housing numerous groups with prehistoric art," said lead author Francisco Javier Molina Hernández, an archaeologist at the University of Alicante, in the statement.



Two die of diarrhoea in Rangamati 50 fall ill in Sajek

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two indigenous persons died of diarrhoea and at least 50 others were suffering from the disease at Sajek union in Rangamati's Baghaichhari yesterday.

The dead are Gabti Bala Tripura, 50, and Darung Tripura, 60, said Ban Behari Chakma, member of Sajek Union Parishad.

Some 20 people are suffering from the disease at Longthian Para and 30 others at nearby villages, he added.

There has been an outbreak of diarrhoea in Longthian Para, Arun Para, Kaija Para, Raina Para and Sealdah areas of the union since last week, he further said.

Locals doctors are treating the patients as there is no hospital or community clinic in the area.

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Sixty-eight-year-old Abul Hossain, who has been fixing broken fans since 1976, is doing a brisk trade for the last few days as more people are getting broken fans repaired amid the sweltering heat. The photo was taken in the Zindabazar area of Sylhet city yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Blinken in Riyadh after Iran-Saudi détente

Attends GCC ministerial meeting

AFP, Riyadh

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Gulf Arab officials in Saudi Arabia yesterday at a time of rapidly shifting alliances following the oil-rich kingdom's rapprochement with Iran.

Blinken attended a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministerial meeting in the capital Riyadh that kicked off shortly after he met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

The two countries "resolved to continue to work together to counter terrorism, to support efforts to bring about a lasting peace in Yemen, and to promote stability, security, de-escalation, and integration in the region," the US State Department said.

"The two sides pledged to continue their strong cooperation to end the fighting in Sudan," it added in a statement.

The meetings came a day after Blinken flew into Jeddah and held talks with Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman, in which he raised human rights issues.

Relations between Washington and Riyadh, decades-old allies, have been strained in recent times mainly over human rights and oil, after US pleas for help in bringing down skyrocketing prices last year were dismissed.

The three-day visit is Blinken's first since the kingdom restored diplomatic ties with Iran, which the West

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