

The South Asian Mail

Issue -02

Monday, 09 October, 2023

Web: thesouthasianmail.com

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Khaleda Zia's Health Crisis Amidst Political Turmoil in Bangladesh

Jubayer Sarkar: Bangladeshi opposition leader Khaleda Zia, a former three-time prime minister, faces a dire health crisis that could lead to her death if the government (See page 05)

A 14-Year-Old Boy Has Been Arrested by The NYPD For Allegedly Throwing a Brick at a Moving D-Train in Brooklyn

Sajid Simanta: According to the NYPD, a 14-year-old boy has been arrested in Bensonhurst for allegedly throwing a brick at a moving (See page 05)

Two Female American Climbers Tragically Lose Their Lives on Tibet Peak

SAM Desk: A second female American climber, who aspired to become the first American woman to conquer all the world's highest peaks, (See page 04)

Israel Launches Airstrikes on Gaza



Palestinians hurl stones at Israeli forces during a demonstration against Israeli bombardment of the Gaza strip, in the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday. — AFP photo

Tawhid Islam

Amidst the debris of destroyed city blocks in Gaza on Wednesday, Israeli soldiers discovered

more casualties, five days into the offensive against the Islamist militant group, Hamas.

The military stated that they found an alarming 1,200 bodies,

primarily unarmed civilians. Meanwhile, Gaza authorities reported over 1,000 fatalities due to Israel's intensive air and artillery bombardments (See page 02)

Times Square Witnesses a Substantial Gathering as Rival Protests Concerning The Conflict in Israel Draw in Hundreds

Labib Pranta: In Times Square on Sunday, the turmoil in the Middle East found its echo, as pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrators confronted each other in fervent protests.

The pro-Palestinian rally, held in the aftermath of a surprise attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians, garnered strong criticism from elected officials, including Governor Hochul, who decried the event as "repugnant and morally abhorrent."

Times Square was filled with hundreds of demonstrators on Sunday afternoon, expressing their solidarity (See page 02)



Photo Credit - Bryan R Smith/Getty Images

Times Square Witnesses

(Continued from page 1)

with the Palestinian cause. They chanted slogans like, "Resistance is justifiable when a people are under occupation!"

Anne Lamb, 68, remarked, "According to international law, the Palestinians have endured over 60 years of occupation, and they possess every right to defend themselves."

Dave Schmauch, aged 59, expressed, "There has been an injustice towards the Palestinian people. I don't condone terrorism or the harming of innocent individuals, but when I contemplate the enduring conditions that the people in Gaza have lived with for generations, I can't help but think I might react similarly because they have nothing left to lose."



Photo Credit - Bryan R Smith/Getty Images

The rally in Times Square appeared to create divisions among New York Democrats. Several politicians, including Bronx Representative Ritchie Torres, criticized the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America for organizing the demonstration so soon after Palestinian militants killed around 700 Israelis and took at least 150 others as hostages.

On Saturday, the congressman expressed his disapproval on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, stating, "The NYC-DSA is

planning to hold a rally ... glorifying the terrorism of Hamas as 'resistance.' Never mind the hundreds of Israeli civilians and children who have been murdered, wounded, abducted, and terrorized. Their lives mean nothing to the DSA. Nothing." He referred to the NYC-DSA as "an antisemitic stain on the soul of America's largest city."

The Israeli Consulate in New York organized its own rally on Sunday afternoon, held on E. 43rd St., just a stone's throw away from the pro-Palestinian demonstration, where the NYPD had erected barricades.

Orah Burack, 56, expressed her dismay, saying, "Kids, children, taken into Gaza, desecration of dead bodies in the streets — it's disgusting."

to potential trouble spots. He added, "Every citizen will receive the appropriate protection."

During the briefing, tensions briefly flared when Councilman Ari Kagan criticized the DSA for organizing the rally and called on his DSA-affiliated colleagues to condemn it, as reported by a source to the Daily News.

In response, Alexa Aviles, a Council member endorsed by DSA, pushed back, stating, "No one — including the DSA — is celebrating death," and she characterized Kagan's remarks as "irresponsible and disgusting," according to the source who was familiar with the call.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared the country to be formally at war, and Israel initiated counter-strikes in Palestinian territory, leading to the reported death of at least 300 people.

Israel Launches Airstrikes

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in the densely populated Palestinian region. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has described the recent aggression as "an attack whose brutality mirrors that of the Holocaust" in the midst of a significant military buildup around Gaza.

US President Joe Biden, in a show of support for its longstanding ally, Israel, has promised to supply additional weapons and military equipment. He expressed profound disgust at the "utter malevolence" of the large-scale civilian casualties since Hamas initiated its attacks last Saturday.

Amidst the heightened tensions, concerns grow in Israel over the safety of an estimated 150 hostages. These captives, primarily Israelis but also including international citizens and dual nationals, are currently under Hamas' control in Gaza.

In a dramatic turn, the militant faction announced the death of four hostages due to Israeli bombardments and issued a stark warning: further strikes on civilian areas without prior notice could lead to more hostage deaths.

The harrowing situation in Gaza has taken a turn for the worse, with over 1,000 structures razed by Israeli forces, pushing the region towards a humanitarian catastrophe. The entirety of Gaza, home to 2.3 million people, has been under siege, leading to critical shortages of essentials like water, food, and power. The United Nations reports that the conflict has displaced over 260,000 residents of Gaza. In light of the unfolding crisis, the European Union urged the creation of a 'humanitarian corridor' to facilitate safe passage for civilians. This would be the fifth such major conflict to afflict the territory in a decade and a half.

As the situation intensifies, Israel seems to be preparing for a potential ground assault on Gaza. Complicating matters, Israel has been subjected to rocket attacks not just from Gaza, but also from militant factions based in neighbouring countries, Lebanon and Syria, suggesting the threat of a broader regional conflict.

Amid the escalating conflict, Israel launched fresh strikes in southern Lebanon, a region under the control of Hezbollah, a known ally of Iran. US President Joe Biden, having already redirected an

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Photo Credit - Bryan R Smith/Getty Images

Not Everything Done Under The Table is Beneficial

The General Secretary of the Bangladesh Awami League Party and Minister of Bridges, Obaidul Quader, is often the subject of entertainment on social media. Many of his remarks go viral due to their humorous nature. Sometimes he seems to forget that he is the General Secretary of a political party like the Awami League. He seems to forget the power and respect associated with his position. As a result, many view his statements as light-hearted or for mere amusement. However, every word he says should be constructive, in the interest of the nation and politics. The way he flippantly addresses serious issues sometimes leads many, even within his own party, to label him as a "joker". Not only opposition supporters but also many within his own party are exasperated by his extravagant remarks.

On various occasions, Quader has made controversial comments or used specific words that have thrust him into the limelight. But this time, by uttering the words "under the table," he has showcased his lack of political wisdom and revealed his coarse taste. When asked about the meaning behind this phrase, he further confirmed his tastelessness by responding that the public likes the term "under the table." One must wonder, what message is he trying to convey to his successors? It's noteworthy that at a rally in Savar's Aminbazar, he mentioned, "Everything has been done under the table. We need Delhi's support. We have Delhi, and we are here. Sheikh Hasina has managed everything. There are no more concerns. The elections will be held in due time."

Everyone now wants to know, how can a government that claims to be elected do things "under the table"? It implies they must have committed some acts that needed to be concealed. When later asked to explain his statement, Quader took refuge in falsehood by suggesting he meant many things happen "behind the scenes."

Regardless of what Quader might claim, if they consider themselves an elected government and accountable to the public, they should abandon this strategy of doing things "under the table." To act covertly implies harboring ill-intentions against the populace. Thus, we believe that "not everything done under the table is beneficial."



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Essential Insights on Google's New Updates for Eco-Friendly Living



SCI-TECH Desk: Google has launched a series of updates aimed at assisting individuals and organizations in adopting more sustainable practices. The tech giant's ambitious initiative encompasses enhanced search results for electric vehicle (EV) shoppers, expanded AI tools for climate predictions, and several other green-focused features.

Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai highlighted the significance of addressing climate change as humanity's 'next big moonshot,' emphasising the need to answer substantial questions to mitigate its impact effectively.

EV search results

For individuals contemplating the switch to electric vehicles, Google's updated search results now include information on potential government incentives. This feature aids consumers in determining whether their desired vehicle qualifies for discounts. The improved search results are already live in the US, with plans to extend to France and Germany later this year.

EV owners will benefit from additional details about battery range, enabling them to customize routes based on elevation changes and speed limits. This feature, known as the battery range explorer, is set to launch in Europe early next year.

To address the challenge of accurately estimating battery range in EVs, Google is leveraging data from the Knowledge Graph and the EPA, offering users comprehensive and reliable information.

Cycling and transit enhancements

Google is collaborating with local governments to update cycling routes in Google Maps, including hundreds of kilometers of new bike lanes in collaboration with Transport for London. This aligns with Google's broader initiative to provide better multimodal directions, covering cycling, transit, and walking.

In aviation, Google's sustainable aviation project has expanded its partnership to include Eurocontrol, advising pilots on more sustainable flight routes to reduce contrails and emissions.

Project Green Light

Project Green Light, Google's AI-driven effort to make traffic lights more efficient, is expanding to over a dozen cities worldwide, including Rio de Janeiro, Manchester, Jakarta, and Budapest. The initiative aims to decrease carbon emissions associated with stop-and-go traffic by reducing stops at intersections.

Sustainable home improvements

Google now provides more information about sustainable energy devices when users search for appliances like heat pumps and air conditioning units. Search results include details on capabilities, energy efficiency, and government incentives. This information is sourced from reputable organisations like the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star and

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Israel Launches Airstrikes

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aircraft carrier battle group to the eastern Mediterranean, sternly warned all potential aggressors against Israel, emphasizing they should think twice before exploiting the current turmoil.

In what has been labeled as the most catastrophic attack on Israel in its 75 years of existence, an intelligence lapse allowed over 1,500 militants to infiltrate the Gaza security perimeter, launching a coordinated assault during the Jewish Sabbath. This resulted in Hamas insurgents spreading across towns, ruthlessly killing residents either hiding in their homes or attempting to protect their communities.

In a poignant address at the White House, Biden condemned the severe atrocities reported, including the slaying of whole families and assaults on women and children. Israeli forces have been proactive in response, having reclaimed numerous southern towns close to Gaza after intense urban warfare. The death toll, as reported by army spokesman Jonathan Conricus, has been distressingly high, with the majority being civilians.

As battles continue, Israel seems to be preparing for a prolonged conflict, having summoned a large number of reservists. Meanwhile, Gaza witnessed yet another day of heavy bombings, leading to significant civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. In the West Bank, solidarity protests for Gaza have intensified, resulting in additional fatalities. The situation in Israeli cities has become tense, with an apparent rift growing between Jews and Arab-Israelis.

With the Middle East on the brink of a larger conflict, global leaders and organizations are racing to broker peace and prevent further chaos. The EU and the US have reiterated their support for Israel's right to self-defense, while other nations, including Turkey, have criticized Israel's actions.

As diplomatic efforts continue, concerns are growing internationally, with various countries reporting their citizens as either deceased, abducted, or missing amid the ongoing hostilities. Pope Francis appealed for peace, emphasizing the dire circumstances faced by innocent Palestinians in Gaza.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s

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F. Kennedy Jr. on Monday as the veteran environmental lawyer and anti-vaccine activist embarked on an independent White House bid. This move has raised concerns on the right that Kennedy, formerly a Democrat, may siphon votes away from former President Donald Trump in the 2024 election.

Both the Republican National Committee and Trump's campaign criticized Kennedy's liberal background, while national Democrats remained silent. Kennedy, during a speech in Philadelphia, emphasized his departure from both major political parties.

"Voters should not be misled by those who claim conservative values," stated Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung, characterizing Kennedy's campaign as "merely a personal endeavor for a liberal Kennedy seeking to capitalize on his family's name."

This heated response underscores the uncer-

tainties surrounding Kennedy's anticipated independent candidacy and its potential impact on the 2024 race, which seems to be shaping up as a rematch between Trump and President Joe Biden, though the exact ramifications remain unclear.

The Unveiling of The 2023

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based in the United States received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their pivotal research that directly led to the development of the first mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. Hungarian-born Katalin Kariko and American Drew Weissman conducted groundbreaking mRNA modification research at the University of Pennsylvania, beginning in the late 1990s and publishing a key discovery in 2005. Their work enabled the creation of COVID-19 vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna.

Nobel Prize in Physics:

Pierre Agostini, Ferenc Krausz, and Anne L'Huillier were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics on Tuesday for conducting experiments that generated ultra-short pulses of light, measured in attoseconds (one-billionth of one-billionth of a second). Their research offers the potential to capture images from inside atoms and molecules. This breakthrough could lead to advancements such as the early detection of diseases like lung cancer by using light flashes to examine blood samples.

Nobel Prize in Chemistry:

On Wednesday, a trio received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their pioneering work in uncovering and synthesizing quantum dots, exceedingly tiny particles whose properties are governed by quantum phenomena. This innovation holds the promise of developing flexible electronics, miniature sensors, thinner solar cells, and secure encrypted quantum communication.

Nobel Prize Pre-Announcement:

In an unusual turn of events, Swedish media disclosed the laureates' names before the official prize announcements.

Nobel Prize in Literature:

On Thursday, the Nobel Prize in Literature was granted to Norwegian author and dramatist John Fosse, recognized by the Swedish Academy for his groundbreaking contributions to plays and prose, allowing expression of the ineffable. Fosse, aged 64, boasts a diverse body of work, comprising around 40 plays, novels, short stories, children's books, poetry, and essays, translated into about 50 languages.

Nobel Peace Prize:

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2023 was bestowed upon Iranian human rights activist Nasrin Sotoudeh Mohammadi, chosen from a pool of 351 nominees. Mohammadi, who endured multiple prison sentences over the past two decades, is celebrated for her unwavering advocacy for freedom and the rights of Iranian women. The chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, invoked the slogan closely associated with the women's movement in Iran, stating, "Woman, life, freedom."

Upcoming Nobel Prize Announcement:

The final Nobel Prize, the Nobel Prize in Economics, is set to be announced on Monday, completing this year's prestigious awards.

Shah Rukh Khan's Security

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increased to the Y+ category by the Maharashtra government after he complained about allegedly receiving death threats.

According to ANI news agency, Shah Rukh had given a written complaint to the state government saying that he had been receiving death threat calls after the release of his films Pathan and Jawan.

The Y+ category security cover comprises 11 security personnel, including six commandos, four police personnel, and a traffic clearance vehicle. The policemen would be stationed at Mannat, Shah Rukh's Mumbai home.

This comes months after security was increased around Mannat after protests against Shah Rukh. In August, there were protests against celebrities who endorsed online gaming apps. In March this year, two men broke into Mannat premises by scaling the outer wall. The Mumbai Police had then said that the men were apprehended by the security guards.

Shah Rukh was recently seen in Jawan which has already minted ₹1103.27 crore gross at the worldwide box office. Directed by Atlee, the movie released worldwide on September 7 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. The movie also features Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi with Deepika Padukone and Sanjay Dutt in special appearances.

Two Female American Climbers

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Photo Credit - Weng Huo/Reuters

has tragically been pronounced dead on a remote Tibetan summit, as confirmed by her family.

China has imposed a suspension on all activities at Shishapangma due to two avalanches that struck the mountain on Saturday, claiming the lives of American climber Anna Gutu and her Nepalese guide Mingmar Sherpa, as reported by Chinese state media.

On the same day when avalanches hit the slopes, fellow American climber Gina Marie Rzuicidlo and her Nepalese guide Tenjen Sherpa were declared missing, while more than 50 mountaineers and their guides were ascending the peak.

"The Rzuicidlo family wishes to convey that Chinese authorities have officially declared my sister Gina and her Sherpa, Tenjen Lama, as deceased," stated Christy Rzuicidlo in a Facebook post.

"The Chinese government has declined requests for a helicopter search from Nepal. We have been informed that the search for their bodies may recommence in the spring when weather conditions are more favorable."

Reuters' attempts to obtain comments from the Tibetan sports bureau and the U.S. Embassy in Beijing have not (See page 05)

Two Female American Climbers

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received immediate responses.

Both Rzuicidlo and Gutu were pursuing their individual climbs with their Sherpas in a quest to become the first American women to conquer all 14 peaks in the world that surpass 8,000 meters, or 26,246 feet, in elevation. Shishapangma was their final summit.

Tenjen Sherpa, who accompanied Rzuicidlo, had previously guided Norway's Kristin Harila in their ascent of K2 in Pakistan in July, marking the completion of all 14 of the world's tallest peaks above 8,000 meters in just 92 days, making them the world's fastest climbers to achieve this feat. Tenjen Sherpa and Kristin Harila also successfully summited Shishapangma in April.

In 2023, Chinese authorities lifted the three-year-long zero-Covid restrictions, allowing foreign climbing expeditions to enter Tibet. This change provided foreign mountaineers with the opportunity to summit Shishapangma, which is entirely located within China.

On the fateful Saturday, a total of 52 climbers, representing various countries, were making their push for the summit when the avalanches struck. These climbers hailed from the United States, Britain, Romania, Albania, Italy, Japan, and Pakistan.

Shishapangma is often considered one of the more manageable mountains among those exceeding 8,000 meters in height, earning it the moniker "eight-thousanders" in the mountaineering community.

As of now, there have been over 300 successful ascents of Shishapangma, with less than 10% of climbers who attempted the summit losing their lives, as estimated privately. This stands in stark contrast to Nepal's Annapurna I, one of the world's most treacherous peaks, which has a nearly 30% fatality rate.

Bangladesh Facing

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The revelation came from Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, during an event held in Dhaka. Despite the country's central bank reporting gross reserves of \$21.15 billion, the net reserves, after deducting various reserve liabilities like the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights allocation and others, are now hovering precariously below the \$18 billion mark.

This development has raised concerns about the nation's financial stability, as the ongoing reduction in reserves coupled with a weakening remittance inflow could potentially lead to volatility in the exchange rate and increased economic instability. Notably, Hussain's assessment doesn't depict a state of

panic yet, but it undeniably raises a flag regarding the country's economic trajectory.

"The country's reserves have not yet reached an alarming state, but it is concerning," Hussain remarked during a press conference, emphasizing that the trend over the past 24 months has seen a loss of \$1 billion in reserves every month. The decline in remittances, from an average of \$2 billion to \$1.5 billion per month, further compounds the issue.

Hussain attributed the situation to a combination of global factors and local economic policies. Globally, the surge in the price of the US dollar, increasing international commodity prices, and fluctuating interest rates have played their part. Additionally, domestic elements like price adjustments for oil and other oil-related products have heightened the economy's volatility.

To address the matter, Hussain recommends a consistently tight monetary policy, stressing that lower inflation isn't attainable through short-term measures, but rather, it requires a prolonged, tightened approach that can be dubbed "tighter for longer."

The looming economic challenges are indeed a matter of concern, both for the government and for citizens, and managing them effectively is crucial to maintaining financial stability in Bangladesh. In his speech at the conference, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Kumar Verma proposed a 765-kilovolt cross-border electricity connection between India and Bangladesh to improve the energy landscape in the region. The need for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries was also highlighted.

Addressing Corruption and Ensuring Favorable Taxation Environment

Humayun Rashid, the President of the International Business Forum of Bangladesh (IBFB), stressed the need for addressing corruption in the business sector. He asserted that tackling corruption is paramount in creating a conducive business environment that attracts domestic and foreign investors. The call for a favorable taxation environment to attract foreign investors and encourage them to retain profits within the country was also emphasized.

Rashid further highlighted the importance of establishing robust monitoring mechanisms to prevent corruption and ensure adherence to procurement rules and regulations. Independent audits to assess the effectiveness of public procurement practices were also recommended.

The economic challenges ahead require strategic planning, commitment to corruption eradication, and prudent financial management to ensure a stable and prosperous future for Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the nation's foreign exchange reserves are a pivotal component of its financial stability, and their decline could have far-reaching consequences. An insightful, forward-looking approach is essential to navigate these challenging times.



Life in the Balance

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continues to deny her permission to seek advanced medical treatment overseas, according to a panel of doctors. The 78-year-old leader, who has been effectively under house arrest due to corruption convictions, has been hospitalized in Dhaka since August for cirrhosis of the liver and other complex medical conditions.

A 15-member panel of physicians, including her personal doctors and senior medical staff at the Evercare Hospital, revealed that Zia's health situation is critical and she is at "high risk of death anytime." They emphasized the complexity of her medical condition and the urgent need for a liver transplant and a life-saving procedure called Transjugular Intrahepatic Portosystemic Shunt (TIPS), which cannot be performed in Bangladesh.

Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been demanding her access to overseas medical care, but the ruling Awami League, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has steadfastly rejected these requests. The political rivalry between Zia and Hasina has gripped Bangladesh for years, and it has escalated ahead of the upcoming general election, scheduled for December or January.

The BNP has called for a neutral caretaker government to oversee the election, but the Awami League has refused to step aside. The U.S. delegation representing the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, both government-funded organizations, arrived in Bangladesh to assess the pre-election conditions amid concerns about the country's ability to hold free and fair elections.

Zia's deteriorating health has garnered international attention, and critics argue that her imprisonment and denial of medical treatment are politically motivated. With her life hanging in the balance, the situation in Bangladesh remains tense, with mounting pressure on the government to address the medical needs of the opposition leader and ensure a fair electoral process.

A 14-Year-Old Boy

(Continued from page 1)

northbound D train, causing damage to its windows. The incident occurred near 62nd Street and New Utrecht Avenue on September 26. The brick damaged the window of the train operator's cabin, but fortunately, no injuries were reported. After throwing the brick, the boy and two other unidentified men fled the scene. The teenager has been charged with reckless endangerment and criminal mischief.

Experts stress need for political commitment to address issues

Poor Neglected in Edu. & Health



The Citizen's Platform for SDGs holds briefing on 'Citizen agenda for inclusive development and equity: education, health, climate change and social security' at BRAC Centre at Mohakhali in the capital on Wednesday. — photo New Age

SAM Desk: Disadvantaged and marginalised people are facing discrimination in the education and health sectors instead of getting improved services as per the Sustainable Development Goals, experts observed at a media briefing on Wednesday.

Citizen's Platform for SDGs, an advocacy group, organised the media briefing titled 'Citizen's Agenda Aiming Participatory Development and Impartiality: Education, Health, Climate Change, and Social Protection,' at the BRAC Centre in the capital.

Economists and researchers at the briefing also observed that lack of social protection and climate change affected these people mostly while emphasising political commitment and impartial development to address the issues.

Several experts linked to the Citizen's Platform visited different districts in 2022 and prepared 11 policy briefs on the perspective of marginalised people, which they said required urgent attention and immediate action. Campaign for Popular Education deputy director Md Mostafizur Rahaman said that despite the government's notable achievements in enrolment and gender parity in primary education, the high dropout rate and quality of education are still concerning.

'This is more relevant in the case of children from marginalised and disadvantaged groups,' he said, mentioning the children from

rural and remote communities, ethnic and religious minorities, low-income families, street children, child workers, children with disabilities, young and adolescent girls, and climate-affected children as most vulnerable.

He urged the government to continue efforts to reduce learning gaps, including conducting school-based assessments, implementing remedial plans and coaching support, providing psycho-social support, ensuring the quality of curricula, recruiting qualified teachers, introducing appropriate teaching methods and proper assessment tools, and initiating the reduction of inequalities.

'We need political commitment to address the existing problems in the sector,' Mostafizur said.

Bangladesh Health Watch advisor Yasmin H Ahmed said that despite significant progress in several areas, inequality was growing in the health sector.

'Any health-related issue hits a poor family four times more than a rich family,' she said, noting that 18 per cent of people in Bangladesh still live below the poverty line. She added that the government should make quality drugs affordable for all, take special measures for the healthcare needs of marginalised groups, strengthen institutes, and break the culture of nexus and corruption.

Recommendations also came to increase the budgetary allocations for these sectors.

East West University lecturer Estiaque Bari said that it was not possible for the government alone to tackle climate change-related effects, with Bangladesh being the 7th most climate-vulnerable country in the world.

He recommended the government implement all interventions mentioned in the National Adaptation Plan for 2023–50 and ensure that national five-year development plans were also aligned with those.

Professor M Abu Eusuf, from the development studies department at Dhaka University, said that social protection was a critical component of achieving the SDGs.

The disparity between rich and poor people is increasing day by day, he added.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said that currently, Bangladesh has two societies in one country for advanced and disadvantaged people, despite some visible progress.

'Without impartial development, genuine development is not possible,' he said, adding that an environment for democratic accountability to fulfil political promises in these regards was necessary.

Citizen's Platform's core group member and executive director of the Manusher Jonno Foundation, Shaheen Anam, chaired the event, which was moderated by CPD fellow professor Mustafizur Rahman.

Essential Insights on

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energy.gov in the US.

Urban planning

Google Earth is being updated to assist urban planners in incorporating solar energy into development plans, while the "cool roofs" tool, using AI and aerial imagery, expands to include more cities. These tools aim to optimize solar reflectivity and identify areas that most benefit from sustainable solutions.

Disaster warnings

As natural disasters intensify, Google is expanding its Flood Hub tool to the US and Canada, covering 800 riverside locations where around 12 million people reside. Google's real-time wildfire boundary maps are being updated in collaboration with the US Forest Service, incorporating machine

learning for more accurate fire spread modeling. The 'tree canopy' tool uses AI to help cities plan for tree coverage and is expanding to 2,000 additional cities globally to mitigate heat-related challenges.

AI's climate impact and future growth

Google emphasised its commitment to sustainability by addressing concerns about the climate impact of AI. Chief Sustainability Officer Kate Brandt highlighted efforts to use more efficient tensor processing units (TPUs) and redesign data centers for energy efficiency.

South Asia to Be

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Bangladesh's growth may slow to 5.6 percent, while projections for Pakistan's growth — only 1.7 percent — are below the rate of its population growth, the World Bank said. Sri

Lanka, whose economy collapsed last year, is recovering slowly from a severe recession, but the IMF last week held off from releasing a second tranche of a funding package after concluding that the country had failed to make enough progress in economic reforms. Another concern is the high level of government debt in South Asian countries. This could make it difficult for governments to respond to economic shocks or invest in public services. The region is also vulnerable to further shocks from natural disasters, which have become more frequent and intense due to climate change.

Despite the challenges, the World Bank report also identifies opportunities for growth in South Asia. The report recommends that governments in the region seize opportunities for energy transition. This could create jobs, reduce reliance on energy imports, and cut pollution levels.



Photo Credit - (AP Photo/Ivan Valencia)

New York City Mayor Concludes Latin America Visit

SAM Desk: New York City Mayor Eric Adams concluded his four-day journey to Latin America on Saturday with a passionate appeal for a "right to work" for migrants in the United States. He made this statement during his visit to Necocli, a town in northern Colombia, which serves as the starting point for thousands of migrants embarking on the treacherous journey through the roadless Darien jungle into Panama, en route to the United States.

Addressing the issue from a dock where migrants embark on boats for their journey through the jungle, Adams emphasized the need for regional cooperation in finding solutions to the immigration crisis affecting both the Americas and cities in the United States, including New York.

Mayor Adams also urged the U.S. government to create pathways that would enable migrants and asylum seekers to legally work within the United States.

"When you look at Colombia, they have really shown how to absorb individuals into their societies, and one of the most important ways to do it is to allow people to work," Mayor Adams told reporters in Necocli. "Nothing is more humane and, nothing is more American than your right to work, and we believe that is a right we should extend." New York City has faced challenges in providing emergency accommodations for tens of thousands of migrants who have arrived in the city this year. Mayor Adams, along with other city leaders, has been urging the federal government to expedite work authorizations for those already in the city.

An unusual rule dating back to the 1980s mandates that New York must offer shelter to anyone in need. Adams has expressed con-

cerns that the cost of supporting migrants could potentially reach \$12 billion in the next three years, and he has taken steps to challenge the statute that obliges the city to provide shelter to migrants.

During his whirlwind tour, the mayor also visited Ecuador and Mexico, where he toured migrant shelters and engaged with local legislators. During his visit to Mexico's Puebla state, Mayor Adams acknowledged that New York City has reached its capacity to accommodate migrants. He emphasized that while their compassion is limitless, their resources are not. The city aims to avoid placing people in crowded shelters and wants to ensure that migrants do not have the misconception that they will immediately secure employment upon arrival.

In Colombia, Adams clarified that his objective is not to dictate to migrants what they should do but rather to understand their motivations and work towards finding solutions to the immigration crisis. Colombia has received approximately 2.8 million migrants from Venezuela over the past seven years and has implemented measures to grant them 10-year residency permits, providing access to essential services like healthcare and education. However, many Venezuelan migrants continue to head to the United States due to difficulties in rebuilding their lives in Colombia and other South American countries still grappling with the economic aftermath of the pandemic.

According to Panama's National Immigration Service, over 200,000 Venezuelans have crossed the challenging Darien Gap this year on their journey to the United States. Many of these individuals are making their way for the second or even third time, having previ-

ously lived in South American countries like Colombia, Chile, and Peru.

This week, the Biden administration reached an agreement with Venezuela's socialist government to resume direct deportation flights to Venezuela, stipulating that Venezuelans who do not meet the criteria for asylum will be returned to their home country.

Despite the new policy, some Venezuelan migrants in Necocli expressed their determination to continue their trek towards the U.S. border. Miguel Ruben Camacaro, a Venezuelan migrant traveling with his two children and currently residing in a tent on Necocli's beach, stated, "Getting into the U.S. is also a matter of luck. We will chase the dream until there are no other options."

During a later press conference in Bogota, Mayor Adams emphasized the need for countries like Colombia to receive more support with programs that facilitate the integration of migrants, thereby dissuading people from embarking on the perilous journey northward. Mayor Adams characterized his visit as an eye-opening experience, expressing his sadness at witnessing numerous families with children living in tents on the beach in Necocli while they scraped together enough funds to embark on boats towards the Darien jungle.

He emphasized his desire to prevent a situation like what he witnessed on the Colombian beach from occurring on the streets of New York City. Mayor Adams conveyed the shared aspiration to assist as many people as possible and uphold the city's values as a hub for immigrants. However, he stressed the importance of stabilizing the current situation to effectively address the challenges posed by the influx of migrants.

Rookie NYPD Officer Suspended After Releasing Suspect in Hospital Mix-up



Jubayer Sarkar: A novice NYPD officer with just one year on the force has been suspended following a critical error in which he mistakenly allowed a suspect to walk free from Mount Sinai Hospital on the Upper East

Side. Darryl Stevens, 36, who had been arrested on petty larceny charges, was supposed to remain in custody for arraignment. However, a misunderstanding occurred when a doctor informed the officer of Stevens' dis-

charge, leading him to believe the suspect was released. The officer's suspension was confirmed by an NYPD spokesperson, and an internal review is underway. Stevens has since been apprehended.

Drivers Indicted for Racing-Related Crash that Killed Father of Six in NYC

SAM Desk: In a tragic incident on the Henry Hudson Parkway in New York City, two drivers were indicted for their alleged involvement in a deadly crash that took the life of 42-year-old Joel Quintana, a father of six children. Cary Brown, 29, and Marcos Vega-Pagan, 24, now face multiple charges, including manslaughter, assault, leaving the scene of an incident without reporting (causing death), and criminally negligent homicide.

The incident occurred on August 3 when Brown and Vega-Pagan were allegedly racing each other on the Henry Hudson Parkway near 145th Street. Vega-Pagan's BMW reportedly collided with Quintana, who was riding a motorcycle on his way to work, throwing him onto the road. Tragically, Quintana was then run over by Brown's vehicle. Both drivers allegedly fled the scene.

Furthermore, Vega-Pagan allegedly contacted his insurance provider the next day and provided a fabricated account of how his vehicle was damaged. He subsequently submitted a claim for over \$3,000, resulting in additional charges of insurance fraud and falsifying business records.

Brown, who was allegedly driving with a suspended license at the time of the crash, faces an additional charge of aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg expressed the tragic conse-



quences of reckless racing on public roadways, stating, "When our highways and streets turn into playgrounds for cars, it leads to tragedy." The indictment serves as a harsh reminder of the life-altering impact of such dangerous behavior on victims and their families.



Bangladesh Unable to Fulfill Two Conditions of the IMF Regarding Loans

SAM Desk: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has criticized the monetary policy of Bangladesh Bank, the country's central bank, for its failure to effectively control inflation. This evaluation comes as part of a review of the terms and conditions attached to a \$4.7 billion loan provided by the IMF to Bangladesh.

A delegation from the IMF, led by Rahul Anand, the IMF mission chief in Bangladesh, held a meeting with officials from the Bangladesh Bank on October 4th. During this meeting, the IMF delegation assessed the effectiveness of various measures implemented by the central bank.

One of the key concerns raised by the IMF was related to the exchange rate. The IMF pointed out that the Bangladesh Bank failed to adjust the exchange rate in line with the actual market situation. An exchange rate that is not properly aligned with market dynamics can contribute to inflationary pressures in the economy.

Additionally, the IMF criticized the central bank for not setting a sufficiently high lending rate. According to the Bangladesh Bank's policy, the lending rate is determined based on the six-month moving average rate of treasury bills (SMART) plus an additional 3%. With the SMART rate currently at 7.20%, the maximum lending rate charged by banks is 10.20%. However, the IMF suggested that the lending rate should have been raised by a higher amount to effectively control inflation

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and reduce the money supply.

This evaluation by the IMF raises concerns about the efficacy of Bangladesh Bank's monetary policy in managing key economic indicators, particularly inflation. Inflation can erode the purchasing power of a country's currency and impact the cost of living for its citizens. Therefore, the central bank's ability to control inflation is a crucial aspect of economic stability.

Bangladesh Bank officials explained to the IMF delegation why some conditions could

not be met. The central bank cited the challenges it faced in maintaining foreign exchange reserves at the levels required by the IMF. One of the conditions was to maintain net reserves of \$24.46 billion in June, \$25.30 billion in September, and \$26.80 billion in December. However, Bangladesh's net reserves currently stand below \$20 billion. While the Bangladesh Bank regularly informs the IMF about net reserves, these figures are significantly lower than the stipulated targets. In January of this year, the IMF approved a \$4.7 billion loan for Bangladesh, which was disbursed in two tranches. The IMF's review of the terms and conditions, along with the effectiveness of measures implemented, will play a crucial role in determining the release of the second tranche, scheduled for December.

To address the concerns raised by the IMF, the Bangladesh Bank plans to provide additional information on various aspects, including foreign exchange intervention, import restrictions, delays in export proceeds, concerns related to capital flight, financial sector performance, and regulatory measures.

Overall, the IMF's assessment underscores the importance of effective monetary policy in managing economic stability and containing inflation, which is of paramount concern for Bangladesh's economy. The outcomes of these discussions will have implications for the country's financial and economic policies in the coming months.

Data Breach of Over Five Crore Voters

Government is Suspected to be Involved

Dhaka Office: In an era of growing cyber threats, Bangladesh faces formidable cyber-security challenges due to persistent data security weaknesses. The most recent breach exposed the sensitive personal information of individuals holding smart National Identity (NID) cards on a public Telegram channel. Although the NID database contains the personal data of over 120 million voters, 55 million have Smart NID cards. The Election Commission (EC), responsible for safeguarding the NID system, has distanced itself from the issue, attributing the data breach to one or more of the 174 institutions and organizations with access to the NID server. However, the EC's practice of sharing citizens' sensitive personal data with organizations lacking robust web security measures has led to these leaks.

This incident highlights concerns about the integrity of the EC, as it provides sensitive personal data to organizations with limited cybersecurity capabilities. It should have served as a wake-up call following a similar data breach earlier this year when the personal information of over 50 million Bangladeshi citizens was exposed on the website of the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration (BDRIS). In this recent case, an individual's complete profile could be accessed on the Telegram channel by providing only two inputs: the NID number and the date of birth.

The lack of punitive action against the BDRIS, despite being identified as the source



of data pilferage, raises concerns about accountability. In other countries, organizations responsible for such breaches face penalties, serving as a deterrent against negligence. However, in Bangladesh, these incidents are treated lightly, allowing organizations like the BDRIS to escape without consequence.

Data breaches expose citizens to identity theft and other criminal activities, as leaked data remains in the possession of nefarious entities. As the general election approaches, the leaked data could be exploited for identity theft, potentially affecting the election results.

Ensuring data security is crucial for national security, especially as critical and sensitive services continue to digitize.

To address these challenges, Bangladesh's Computer Incident Response Team and the cybercrime investigation team should be equipped with enhanced knowledge and tools to prevent future breaches. As the nation embraces digitalization and moves towards a smart future, the need for robust digital infrastructure to protect sensitive data becomes increasingly imperative.

South Asia to Be Fastest-Growing Region in 2023, Despite Challenges

Country fiscal year		Real GDP growth at constant market prices (percent)				Revision to forecast from April 2023	
						(percentage point)	
Calendar year basis		2022	2023(f)	2024(f)	2025(f)	2023(f)	2024(f)
South Asia region (excluding Afghanistan)		8.2	5.8	5.6	5.6	0.2	-0.3
Maldives	January to December	13.9	6.5	5.2	5.5	-0.1	-0.1
Sri Lanka	January to December	-7.8	-3.8	1.7	2.4	0.4	0.7
Fiscal year basis		21/22	22/23(e)	23/24(f)	24/25(f)	22/23(e)	23/24(f)
Bangladesh	July to June	7.1	6.0	5.6	5.8	0.8	-0.6
Bhutan	July to June	4.8	4.6	4.0	4.6	0.1	0.9
India	April to March	9.1	7.2	6.3	6.4	0.3	0.0
Nepal	mid-July to mid-July	5.6	1.9	3.9	5.0	-2.2	-1.0
Pakistan	July to June	6.1	-0.6	1.7	2.4	-1.0	-0.3

Photo Credit - World Bank

Labib Pranta: South Asia is expected to be the fastest-growing region in the world in 2023, with growth of 5.8 percent, according to the World Bank. However, the region's growth is not fast enough to meet its development goals, and that the growth is unevenly distributed.

India, which accounts for most of the regional economy, is set to remain robust with 6.3 percent growth in the 2023-24 fiscal year, while others like Maldives and Nepal are also expected to grow thanks to a rebound in tourism. But things are bleaker in other countries.

(See page 06)



China Targets 30pc Growth in Computing Power in Race Against US



SCI-TECH Desk: China aims to boost the country's aggregate computing power by more than 30 per cent by 2025, according to a plan released by authorities on Monday, as Beijing tightens its focus on supercomputing and artificial intelligence innovations, reports Reuters.

The plan comes amid rising competition between China and the US in many high-tech areas ranging from semiconductors and supercomputers to AI, including US export controls on chipmaking equipment.

The plan, released by six departments in Beijing including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), has set a target for China's total computing power to reach 300 EFLOPS by 2025. EFLOPS, equal to one quintillion floating-point operations per sec-

ond, measures a computer's speed.

The MIIT revealed in August that China's computing power has reached 197 EFLOPS this year, up from 180 EFLOPS in 2022. The ministry said it ranks China as second behind the United States, but did not elaborate on the scale of the US computing power it referenced.

As AI training requires a large amount of computation, the effort to expand the supply of computing power is increasingly becoming a focus for Beijing.

According to a blog post by Google last month, the world's top-tier generative AI models "will require tens of EFLOPs of AI supercomputing to maintain training times of several weeks or less".

According to the plan, China aims to build out

more data centres across the country to facilitate businesses' access to computing power. In order to meet the demands of the rapidly developing AI industry, Beijing also plans to improve computational infrastructure in western China.

Expansive but less populated provinces in China such as southwestern Guizhou have long been tasked to establish massive data centres to power the country's internet. For example, Apple has set up data centres in Guizhou with a local partner to serve its users in the country.

Another focus is to improve the speed and efficiency of the computation network. The plan said that transmission speeds between critical computing facilities must not allow a latency of more than 5 milliseconds.

Deadly Bus Crash in Oaxaca Claims 16 Lives, Mostly Migrant Victims from Venezuela and Haiti

SAM Desk: A devastating bus crash in the Mexican state of Oaxaca has left 16 people dead, as reported by local authorities. The majority of the victims were migrants, hailing from Venezuela and Haiti. Among the deceased, three children and two women lost their lives, while at least 27 others sustained injuries and were transported to nearby hospitals for treatment. The accident occurred on the winding Oaxaca-Cuacnopalan highway at 5 a.m. local time, and authorities are currently investigating its cause. This tragic incident comes shortly after the deaths of ten Cuban migrants, including a child, in another accident involving an overturned vehicle in southern Mexico. Venezuela and Haiti have become significant sources of migrants, driven by insecurity and economic crises in their home countries. The influx of migrants has posed challenges for both the US and Mexican governments, with calls for increased responsibility-sharing regarding individuals crossing Mexican territory. These events highlight the ongoing humanitarian crisis and displacement affecting millions of people from these na-



tions. In response, the US is shifting its deportation policy towards Venezuelans, while Haiti

awaits international assistance to address escalating violence and food insecurity.

China's Defense Minister's Disappearance Fuels Speculation and Concerns About Transparency

International Desk: China's Defense Minister, Gen. Li Shangfu, has been absent from public view for over a month, leading to speculation about his status and concerns over the leadership's transparency. When questioned about his whereabouts during a press briefing, the Defense Ministry spokesperson, Wu Qian, declined to comment and stated he was "not aware of the situation."

Li's disappearance follows a series of unexplained personnel changes within China's ruling Communist Party, raising questions about governance under leader Xi Jinping. The replacement of key military figures and senior officials has added to the uncertainty. Previous instances of senior Chinese officials disappearing from public view have later been revealed as part of the Communist Party's anti-corruption campaign. Such cases highlight the opaque nature of China's political system.

Reports suggest that Li may have been taken away by authorities for questioning, although



no official reason has been given for his investigation. Li, who was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2018 over China's purchase of Russian weapons, remains listed as China's defense minister and holds other prominent positions.

The disappearance of both Li and former Foreign Minister Qin Gang, who vanished for a month before being removed from his post,

has raised concerns about China's political landscape and the lack of transparency regarding leadership changes and investigations.

China has not issued any official explanation for these developments, leaving many questions unanswered and contributing to the growing scrutiny of the Chinese government's actions and motivations.



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Photo Credit - FOX 35 Orlando

Deceased Skydiver Discovered on The Front Yard of a Residence in Florida: Described as "The Worst I've Seen"

SAM Desk: Detectives are currently conducting an investigation following the discovery of a deceased skydiver in the front yard of a residence near an airpark in Florida, as reported by authorities on Saturday.

A man dressed in parachute attire and equipped with gear was found shortly before 12:30 p.m. on the lawn of a residence in Titusville, located approximately 50 miles east of Orlando, according to a statement from the police. The Titusville Fire Department arrived at the scene and confirmed the man's death.

The victim has been identified by police as 69-year-old Frederick C. Morello from Ormond Beach.

A neighbor's surveillance video captured the reflection of an SUV window, showing the skydiver descending before experiencing a hard landing on the lawn, as reported by CBS affiliate WKMG.

James Sconiers informed WKMG that the man landed in his front yard.

"I was asking the person that was laying on the ground, 'Hey man can you hear me, can you hear me?' But he did not answer," James Sconiers shared with the station.

Sconiers also expressed his concerns and questions about the incident, saying, "Look at the

video and look at what happened. Why did he fall so hard if all the safety mechanisms were in place? Something tells me there's a problem there."

Nicole Lacount told WKMG that upon hearing the sirens of a fire truck and ambulance, she went outside of her aunt's house and saw the parachutist on the ground.

"I work in the medical field. That's the worst

I've ever seen," Nicole Lacount shared with the station.

The Skydive Space Center, located just a few blocks away, had no comment when WKMG inquired about whether the parachutist came from their company.

Authorities have stated that the investigation into the incident is ongoing.





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Biden's Plan to Cut Sneaky Fees Delights Consumers

SAM Desk: In a bid to protect consumers from hidden and excessive fees, President Joe Biden unveiled a comprehensive set of measures, boasting over \$2 billion in anticipated savings and \$140 million in consumer refunds, attributed to the prior efforts of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Speaking in the idyllic surroundings of the Rose Garden, President Biden underscored the urgency of the issue, stating, "Folks are tired of being taken advantage of and played for suckers." He railed against what he termed "junk fees" – the sneaky, concealed charges surreptitiously woven into bills by companies, ultimately burdening American families with unexpected financial burdens. These stealthy fees, while seemingly insignificant on their own, can accumulate to hundreds of dollars, placing additional strain on already stretched family budgets. President Biden drew attention to the disparities in how these fees affect different income groups, emphasizing their significance to working-class families, a sentiment that mirrored his own upbringing. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) stepped into the fray with a proposed rule designed to prohibit businesses from imposing hidden or deceptive charges. This rule, if enacted, would require companies to be trans-

Speaking in the idyllic surroundings of the Rose Garden, President Biden underscored the urgency of the issue, stating, "Folks are tired of being taken advantage of and played for suckers." He railed against what he termed "junk fees" – the sneaky, concealed charges surreptitiously woven into bills by companies, ultimately burdening American families with unexpected financial burdens. These stealthy fees, while seemingly insignificant on their own, can accumulate to hundreds of dollars, placing additional strain on already stretched family budgets.

parent about their pricing, putting an end to unexpected service charges in various industries, from event ticketing to hotels, apartments, and car rentals. Though the rule does not cap the prices companies can charge, it obliges them to divulge the full cost upfront. In case of non-compliance, the FTC would be empowered to impose financial penalties, and wronged consumers would have avenues to secure refunds.

Simultaneously, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) moved to curtail the imposition of fees by major banks and credit unions for essential services like checking account balances and obtaining loan payoff information. Furthermore, the CFPB's proposed rule would require banks to facilitate secure data transmission to other companies, making it easier for customers to switch providers and forcing financial institutions to compete on the basis of transparent pricing and service quality.

President Biden decried these now-illegal bank and credit union fees as "outrageous" and pledged his commitment to eradicating them. He also issued a call to action, directing his administration to address the numerous other hidden fees lurking within the economy, amounting to tens of billions of dollars.

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Shakib and Mehidy Ensure a Successful Beginning for Bangladesh



Sports Desk: Mehidy Hasan Miraz displayed an outstanding all-round performance with figures of 3-25 with the ball and contributing 57 runs with the bat. Shakib al Hasan also chipped in with 3-30, and Najmul Shanto played a crucial innings of 58* in Bangladesh's successful pursuit against Afghanistan in Dharamsala, marking an impressive start to their 2023 ODI World Cup campaign.

Miraz, in partnership with Shakib, caused significant trouble for Afghanistan, limiting them to a mere 156 runs on a sluggish wicket. Later, Miraz played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's chase, rescuing them from a precarious position of 27/2 with a crucial 97-run partnership for the third wicket.

Bangladesh's openers capitalized on Afghanistan's struggles with the new ball, setting a solid foundation for the innings. However, a miscommunication led to the run-out of Tanzid Hasan due to a sharp direct hit from Najibullah. Additionally, Fazalhaq Farooqi dismissed Litton Das, leaving Bangladesh at 27/2 within the first seven overs.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz received two reprieves early in his innings, and he gradually accelerated, helping Bangladesh recover from their initial setbacks. He partnered with Shanto to rebuild the chase effectively. The duo adeptly rotated the strike against Rashid Khan, pre-

venting him from settling in, despite Mohammad Nabi delivering a few economical overs at the start of his spell. Miraz consistently found the boundaries to keep the scoreboard ticking, taking Bangladesh past the 100-run mark and achieving his own half-century off 58 balls in the 23rd over.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz managed to overturn an LBW decision against him with the help of a review, but he later fell for 57 to an incredible one-handed catch by Rahmat Shah at mid-off. However, Najmul Shanto continued to bat steadily and guided Bangladesh to victory in the 35th over, completing his fifty in 80 balls. In the earlier part of the day, Afghanistan capitalized on the initial struggles of the Bangladesh pacers but couldn't sustain their momentum after a solid start by the openers. They were eventually bowled out for just 156 runs. Afghanistan's downfall began when the spinners came into play, and they collapsed dramatically within 38 overs. This collapse, from a comfortable 112/2 at one point, was largely due to poor shot selection. With the pace bowlers unable to make breakthroughs, the Bangladesh captain, Shakib Al Hasan, introduced himself into the attack in the eighth over and had an immediate impact. He induced a top-edged slog sweep from Ibrahim Zadran, who had been batting fluently, leading to his dismissal. Spin from both ends helped

contain the flow of runs, and Shakib struck again in his opening spell to dismiss Rahmat Shah in a similar manner. While Rahmanullah Gurbaz found some relief by hitting a boundary off Shoriful Islam, Afghanistan's skipper, Hashmatullah Shahidi, struggled during his brief stay, particularly against Mehidy Hasan Miraz. Shahidi managed just 3 runs off the 22 balls he faced from the offspinner before attempting to take on Mehidy and losing his wicket after a slow 18 off 38 deliveries. Afghanistan's collapse, losing 4 wickets for just 14 runs, occurred within the space of 32 balls. Gurbaz missed out on a half-century by just three runs as he was deceived by a slower ball from Mustafizur Rahman, resulting in a slice to deep cover. Shakib returned to pick up his third wicket by dismantling Najibullah Zadran's leg stump. Taskin Ahmed then got the better of Mohammed Nabi for the fourth time in 42 balls in ODIs. Azmatullah Omarzai contributed with three boundaries in the next two overs, taking Afghanistan to 150, but Mehidy broke through Rashid Khan's defenses at the other end to extinguish any hopes of a late recovery. Mehidy claimed his third wicket when he bowled out Mujeeb, who attempted an ill-timed slog off a full delivery. Shoriful Islam finished the job for Bangladesh with two wickets, making the target relatively easy to chase for their first points.

Bangladesh Fights Valiantly but Falls Short in Face of England's Dominance in Dharamsala Clash



Sports Desk: In a thrilling One Day International (ODI) cricket match, England secured a commanding 137-run victory over Bangladesh in Dharamsala, largely thanks to David Malan's outstanding performance with the bat and Reece Topley's excellent bowling display.

Malan, who has been in remarkable form, notched up his fourth ODI century of the year, scoring 140 runs. He formed a crucial 151-run partnership with Joe Root, who contributed 82 runs to the total. England had a strong start with a 115-run opening stand between Malan and Jonny Bairstow (52).

Despite some effective spin bowling from Bangladesh, Malan and Root managed to maintain a healthy scoring rate, with Malan switching gears after reaching his century. However, as the death overs approached, Bangladesh made a commendable comeback, with Shoriful Islam and Mahedi Hasan picking up crucial wickets.

England finished their innings at 364/9, but



David Malan

the regular loss of wickets in the final overs hindered their chances of a typical late-innings surge.

In response, Bangladesh faced an uphill battle from the start of their innings, as Reece Topley wreaked havoc with the new ball. He claimed three quick wickets, dismissing left-handers Tanzid Hasan, Najmul Shanto, and Shakib Al Hasan.

Despite a valiant effort from Litton Das, who scored 76 runs, and a fifty from Mushfiqur Rahim, Bangladesh couldn't sustain partnerships. Topley continued to trouble the Bangladeshi batsmen, finishing with impressive figures of 4-43. Ultimately, Bangladesh managed to score 227 all out in 48.2 overs, falling short by a significant margin.

This victory for England showcased their strong batting performance and disciplined bowling, while Bangladesh struggled to find consistency in their chase, leading to a comprehensive win for England.

OTT Stars Await Their Crowning Moment

The Best Actors in OTT Awards Ceremony



Entertainment Desk: The Blender's Choice-The Daily Star OTT and Digital Content Awards, now in its second edition, is set to honor outstanding talents in the realm of Over-The-Top (OTT) content for the year 2022. Among the highly competitive categories, the Best Actor (both male and female) stands out.

The voting period, closing on September 14, saw enthusiastic participation from audiences and fans, who were tasked with selecting the standout performers from a stellar lineup of nominees.

Notable male nominees include Afran Nisho, recognized for his exceptional roles in "Redrum" and "Kaiser," and Chanchal Chowdhury, last year's winner, whose stellar performance in "Karagar" earned him a second consecutive nomination.

The talented female nominees, including Mehabien Chowdhury, Nazia Haque Orsha, Shobnom Bubly, and Tasnia Farin, have all delivered powerful performances that left a lasting impact on audiences.

The awards ceremony, scheduled for October 21, will unveil the Best Actor and Best Actress award, highlighting their significant contributions to the thriving OTT industry in Bangladesh.

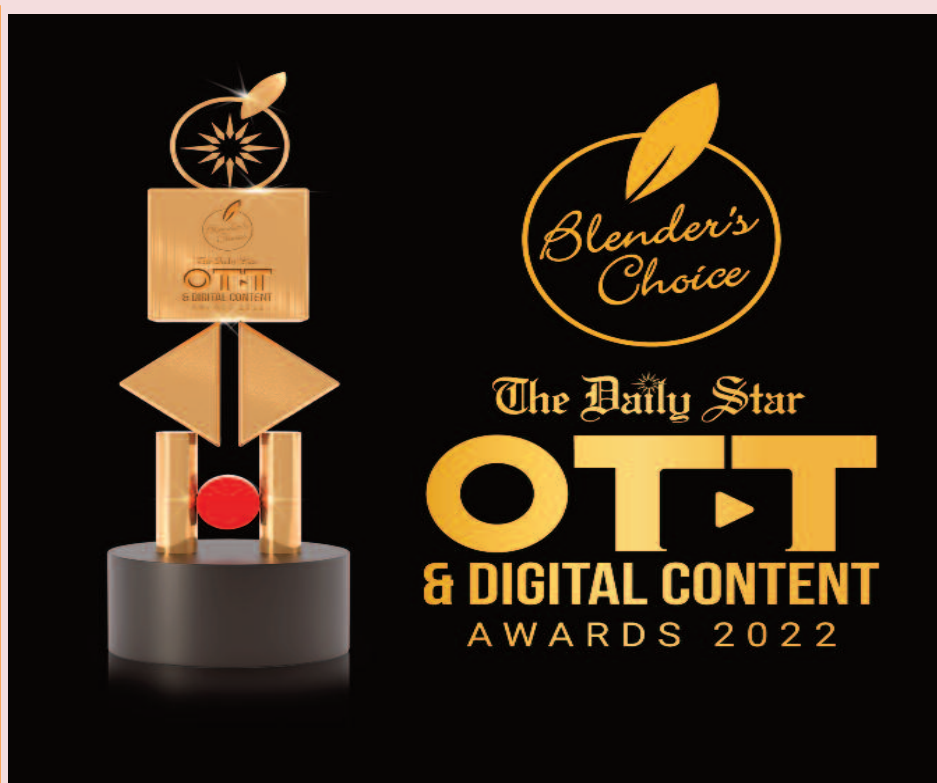




Photo Credit: Stephen Yung/ NY Post

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle Addressing Youth Mental Health in Exclusive NYC Event

SAM Desk: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are set to headline a critical conference in the heart of New York City, focusing on the profound impact of the internet and social media on the mental health of today's youth. This significant event, convened on World Mental Health Day, will see the royal couple engage in a thought-provoking panel discussion alongside Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, expertly moderated by NBC host Carson Daly, who has candidly shared his own battles with anxiety.

Organized under the auspices of the Archewell Foundation, the duo's philanthropic endeavor, this gathering is an integral part of the second annual mental health awareness festival hosted by the non-profit organization Project Healthy Minds. Across the pond, Prince Harry's brother, Prince William, and his wife, Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, have similarly lent their voices to a separate forum in the United Kingdom, illuminating the



pressing issues surrounding mental health in young people.

Notably, during their recent public appearance in the bustling streets of Manhattan, Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, brought attention to the perilous encounters they faced with paparazzi, labeling

one particular incident as a "near catastrophic car chase." The ensuing controversy prompted New York City Mayor Eric Adams to denounce the actions of the relentless paparazzi, branding their pursuit as "reckless and irresponsible."

South Asian Leaders Unite to Propel the Advancement of Girls' Rights



Photo Credit: UNICEF/UN0491406/Vishwanathan

SAM Desk: Government officials, parliamentarians, adolescent girls, women, and girl-led civil society organizations representing eight countries gathered in a concerted effort to advance the rights of adolescent girls in South Asia.

In a two-day regional consultation masterminded by UNICEF, held in Kathmandu from October 9-10, delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka pledged a collective commitment to give priority to policies, actions, and financial investments aimed at empowering adolescent girls. Responding to the impassioned calls for change from these young women, the assembly also devised a strategic blueprint to harness the enormous potential of millions of adolescent girls across South Asia by making a substantial investment in their future.

Sanjay Wijesekera, UNICEF's Regional Director for South Asia, emphasized, "In South Asia, far too many young girls are confronted with the daunting challenges of forced marriages, educational discontinuation, and various forms of abuse. Yet, amidst these adversities, I consistently encounter girls who exude resilience, determination, and innovative problem-solving." He further underscored their resounding

message for equality and opportunity, stating, "Their message is unambiguous: South Asia's girls demand equal opportunities, and they demand them now. As a collective, it is our duty to ensure that no girl in this region is left behind. The evidence is unequivocal - when we invest in girls, we uplift entire nations."

Despite being home to one-third of the global adolescent girl population, a staggering 170 million in total, South Asia has historically undervalued their potential. Astonishingly, one in every five girls faces undernourishment, over half grapple with anemia, and a mere 36 percent successfully complete their secondary education.

Compounding these challenges, South Asia accounts for nearly half of the world's child brides, with approximately one-third of adolescent girls throughout the region lacking access to education, employment, or vocational training. This is further exacerbated by factors such as climate change and conflicts.

UNICEF's objective is to reach 25 million girls by 2025. However, to achieve this goal, policymakers and partners in South Asia must make even more substantial commitments. To accelerate this change, participants at the consultation collectively agreed to:

Unlock the potential of adolescent girls through substantial investments that uphold their rights and well-being.

Encourage governments, private sector entities, and philanthropic organizations to make equitable, tailored, and meaningful investments to enable adolescent girls to realize their full potential.

Champion and celebrate girls' leadership, with South Asian governments and other stakeholders placing girls' rights at the core of their policies and actions.

UNICEF's Investment Case for Girls provides compelling evidence that with adequate investments in health and nutrition, the world has the potential to save over 12 million lives, prevent more than 30 million unwanted pregnancies, and significantly reduce maternal and newborn mortality and injuries.

Sanjay Wijesekera concluded, "No nation can progress if half of its population is left behind. Bold investments are imperative to ensure that every girl in South Asia can complete her education, access quality health services, and live a life free from violence. By empowering a girl to take control of her life, we are not merely empowering an individual but an entire community."



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Price Caps on Essential Commodities Prove Ineffective



COMMODITIES	GOVT-FIXED RETAIL PRICE	PRICES (yesterday)
Potato (per kg)	Tk 35-36	Tk 42-55
Onion (per kg)	Tk 64-65	Tk 75-100
Egg (per piece)	Tk 12	Tk 12.5-14

SOURCE: DIFFERENT KITCHEN MARKETS

SAM Desk: The government's recent attempts to enforce price caps on essential food items like onions and potatoes have faced a multitude of challenges, ultimately failing to provide relief to consumers already grappling with the escalating cost of living. For over a month, these price ceilings have gone unenforced, leading to continued financial strain on low-income individuals.

Consumer advocates and economists argue that these price caps can only be effective if they are complemented by increased supply to meet demand. Retailers insist that they cannot sell at the mandated prices, as they procure these items from wholesalers at rates that exceed the government's set limits. Meanwhile, wholesalers contend that they cannot reduce prices since the rates at the source re-

main high.

The government had initially set the retail prices for these essential items at rates lower than what was prevalent in the market. For example, on the day of the government's announcement, an egg was selling for Tk 13.25, potatoes ranged from Tk 42-55 per kg, and local onions were at Tk 70-80 a kg. However, these price caps have not been adhered to, with recent market visits revealing that prices often exceed the government's limits.

Market participants argue that unless the supply is increased, these price caps will have a limited impact. They emphasize that prices are dictated by market dynamics, and without a corresponding rise in supply, they are unlikely to drop significantly. The enforcement of price caps has not been facilitated by in-

creased supply.

Experts suggest that instead of price controls, the government should focus on addressing supply chain inefficiencies and promoting competition in the market. They argue that market policing alone is not an effective strategy and recommend the establishment of a formal supply chain system, given that the informal one currently lacks regulation.

The failure to effectively control essential food prices has left many consumers disheartened, with costs remaining high for the past eight to nine months. There is a growing call for a more comprehensive and practical approach to addressing these challenges, one that recognizes the complexities of the market and prioritizes the interests of consumers.

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British Foreign Minister Seeks Shelter During Israel Visit Amid Hamas Attacks

SAM Desk: British Foreign Minister James Cleverly sought shelter as sirens sounded during his visit to Israel, a video shared on social media by the Israeli Foreign Ministry depicted.

Amid his visit to Israel, where he aimed to demonstrate solidarity following attacks by the Palestinian militant group Hamas, Cleverly was captured running into a building in Ofakim, a location in southern Israel. The sirens, alerting to incoming Hamas rocket fire, blared in the background.

In response to the experience, Cleverly remarked on social media, "Today I've seen a glimpse of what millions experience every day. The threat of Hamas rockets lingers over every Israeli man, woman, and child." He further added, "This is why we are standing shoulder to shoulder with Israel."

A spokesperson from the British Foreign Office revealed that Cleverly had met survivors of the attacks and held discussions with senior Israeli leaders, reinforcing Britain's support for Israel's right to self-defense. The talks encompassed the ongoing security, military, and diplomatic cooperation between the United Kingdom and Israel.

As part of his visit, Cleverly explored Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and southern Israel, as noted by the Foreign Office. Britain, in alignment with its Western allies, has consistently voiced support for Israel and condemned the attacks initiated by Hamas.

Earlier, the BBC reported that 17 British nationals, including children, had been reported as deceased or missing in Israel.



Tragedy Strikes in Mahabaleshwar: Fatal Selfie Attempt Claims Young Pune Woman's Life

SAM Desk: In a tragic incident at Mahabaleshwar's Needle Hole Point, a 23-year-old Pune woman, Ankita Shiraskar, lost her life while attempting to take a selfie. Ankita, visiting the scenic hill station with her husband, ventured beyond a retaining wall to capture a captivating selfie with a waterfall backdrop. Tragically, her quest for the perfect shot ended in disaster as she lost her balance and fell 350 feet. Rescuers spent two grueling hours navigating treacherous terrain to retrieve her body. This incident serves as a poignant reminder of the risks associated with the pursuit of idealized selfies in picturesque locations. Mahabaleshwar, renowned for its natural beauty, often attracts visitors eager to document their experiences. However, this allure can lead to tragic outcomes, as Ankita's case tragically illustrates.

Local authorities are investigating the circumstances of the incident. The grieving family and witnesses are left with a reminder of the importance of safety during photo endeavors. Ankita's loss underscores the fragility of life in the era of the selfie.



Photo Credit: Lokmat Times

Illegal Organ Harvesting Ring Unearthed in Pakistan: Eight Arrested

SAM Desk: In a shocking revelation, authorities in eastern Pakistan have dismantled a clandestine organ harvesting ring, resulting in the arrest of eight individuals. These suspects stand accused of engaging in the illicit surgical removal of kidneys from hundreds of unwitting patients to meet the demand of affluent individuals in need of transplants.

The alleged mastermind of this nefarious operation, known as "Dr. Fawad," has purportedly conducted a staggering 328 kidney removal surgeries. These vital organs were then sold to clients for substantial sums, reaching up to 10 million Pakistani rupees (\$34,000) each. Mohsin Naqvi, the chief minister of Pakistan's Punjab province, disclosed these startling details on Monday.

What sets this operation apart is its audacious execution. "Dr. Fawad" allegedly collaborated with an unnamed car mechanic, who administered anesthesia during the procedures. Patients were lured from hospitals to undergo these surgeries discreetly in various locations, including Taxila, Lahore, and even Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

The gang found a haven for their activities in Kashmir due to the absence of stringent regulations regarding kidney transplants. The dearth of oversight allowed them to carry out these operations with relative ease, Naqvi explained.

While the investigation is ongoing, authorities have so far confirmed three fatalities linked to these illegal kidney removals. However, the actual tally is expected to be higher. "There must be more operations that must



(Government of Punjab/X)

have been carried out, the number is the only ones we've confirmed," the chief minister remarked.

"Dr. Fawad" had a history of arrests, having been apprehended five times previously, only to be released on each occasion and resume his illicit activities. Shockingly, some victims were entirely unaware that their kidneys had been removed.

The investigation was initiated when a man approached the authorities, revealing how he was convinced by one of the gang members to seek private medical treatment. When he later sought medical assistance from another doctor, he was informed that he no longer possessed a kidney.

Naqvi emphasized the need to strengthen the country's cyber laws to prohibit online advertisements for such illegal kidney transplants, working closely with the Inspector General of Police of Punjab. He underscored the government's commitment to tracking down other similar criminal networks.

Pakistan criminalized the commercial trade of human organs in 2007, and a reinforced law in 2010 rendered organ harvesting and trafficking punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a 1 million rupee (\$3,400) fine. However, illegal kidney transplants have re-emerged in recent years, highlighting the ongoing challenges in curbing this disturbing practice.



ERHUI1979/GETTY IMAGES

Americans' Earnings Decline Across 17 States Amid Economic Uncertainty

SAM Desk: Americans find themselves growing increasingly pessimistic about the state of the economy and their own financial well-being. In a recent CBS News poll, more than half of respondents voiced difficulties in managing their expenses. This prevailing pessimism can be attributed to a combination of factors, with inflation eroding the purchasing power of incomes and median household earnings witnessing a decline in 17 U.S. states, as per Census data. The states where households experienced economic setbacks predominantly reside in the Midwest and Northeast, encompassing pivotal swing states like Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. While incomes remained statistically stagnant in 29 states, only five states observed measurable improvements in household incomes, according to the latest data furnished by the U.S. Census Bureau.

This localized perspective on economic data potentially offers insights into why many Americans harbor doubts about the overall health of the economy, which, by several indicators, appears robust with a low unemployment rate. However, the most direct barometer of economic well-being – personal earnings – continues to lag. In 2022, the U.S. median household income diminished by 2.3% to \$74,580, marking the third consecu-

tive year of income decline.

Households grapple with not only high inflation but also the conclusion of pandemic-related financial assistance programs, including federal stimulus checks and the expanded Child Tax Credit. This has left many grappling with a sense of financial insecurity, as inflation, although receding, remains at elevated levels.

Jesse Wheeler, a senior economist at Morning Consult, points to a complex interplay of factors affecting consumer sentiment. Years of inflation, coupled with concerns about a looming recession and stock market volatility, have collectively contributed to the prevailing economic gloom. Wheeler emphasizes that rebuilding consumer confidence takes time, even when the economy is in better shape than during the onset of the pandemic.

Economic challenges are particularly pronounced in the Midwest and Northeast due to a confluence of factors, such as the impact of inflation on purchasing power, the composition of the labor force, and demographics. For instance, senior citizens, living on fixed incomes, are particularly susceptible to the ravages of inflation. While Social Security benefits are adjusted annually for inflation, critics argue that these adjustments fall short of keeping pace with rising living costs.

Last year, the poverty rate among people over 65 surged to 14.1%, marking a significant increase from the previous year. This trend is pronounced in states where household incomes experienced a decline, many of which have older populations compared to the national average. New Hampshire, which witnessed the most substantial drop in median household income, has around 20% of its residents aged over 65, compared to the national average of 17%.

Though consumer sentiment continues to reflect widespread unease, state-level sentiment trends display some correlations with median household income data, although the correspondence is not direct. Several states that saw increases in real median incomes, such as Delaware, Alabama, Alaska, and Utah, experienced only minor declines in consumer confidence. Alaska, the sole state to record a surge in consumer sentiment, also reported the second-highest gain in household income last year.

The prospect of improved household incomes in 2023 is feasible, primarily due to wage growth finally outpacing inflation. Nevertheless, Jesse Wheeler acknowledges that higher interest rates and the resumption of student loan repayments could potentially strain budgets for many households.



U.S. Secretary of State Heads to Israel Amid Middle East Crisis

SAM Desk: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken embarked on a Middle East mission to Israel, striving to avert a broader conflict following an attack and hostage situation involving Palestinian Hamas militants and an Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip.

In a gesture of unwavering support for America's closest Middle East ally, Blinken was scheduled to hold discussions with senior Israeli officials, potentially including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with the aim of bolstering military cooperation.

"I'm going with a very simple and clear message... that the United States has Israel's back," Blinken stated to reporters as he prepared to depart for Israel.

His mission includes working with regional U.S. allies to secure the release of over 100 individuals believed to be held captive by Hamas, including some American citizens. Blinken's departure coincided with the formation of an emergency unity government in Israel, although the U.S. State Department offered no immediate comment on the matter. Hamas militants carried out a rampage through Israeli towns over the weekend, resulting in the loss of 1,200 lives and the capture of numerous hostages taken to Gaza.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken embarked on a Middle East mission to Israel, striving to avert a broader conflict following an attack and hostage situation involving Palestinian Hamas militants and an Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip.

At least 22 Americans perished during these attacks, Blinken confirmed, with the possibility of an increased count. U.S. officials are collaborating with their Israeli counterparts to ascertain the fate of additional U.S. citizens who remain unaccounted for.

In retaliation, Israel launched airstrikes that have claimed the lives of more than 1,100 individuals, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The Israeli military reported the killing of at least 1,000 Palestinian gunmen who in-

filtrated from Gaza.

Asked if Washington had urged Israel to exercise restraint given expectations of a ground operation in Gaza, Blinken affirmed that Israel adheres to international law and takes precautions to minimize civilian casualties.

"One word: Don't," President Biden emphasized in his response to the Hamas attack, reiterating U.S. support for Israel while implicitly cautioning Iran and Iran-backed groups against exploiting the situation.

The trip announcement did not specify a visit to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which has been included in previous trips to the region. In the past, Blinken visited the West Bank, which is governed by the Palestinian Authority led by President Mahmoud Abbas.

Israel has intensified its blockade in Gaza, which has been under siege since Hamas took control in 2007, vowing to escalate further with a potential ground offensive.

Safe passage for civilians from Gaza is another crucial topic of discussion for Blinken during his trip. Washington is engaging in talks with Israel and Egypt on this matter, as well as encouraging regional countries with influence over Hamas to help mitigate the conflict's escalation.

"This Is Not Normal"

The Perilous State of US Politics

Jim Watson/Getty



SAM Desk: Cass R. Sunstein's book titled "This Is Not Normal" takes center stage in assessing the tumultuous state of US politics. The book's cover, printed with an upside-down title, symbolizes distress or great danger, akin to a flag signal. Sunstein, a legal scholar and pioneer in behavioral economics, underscores the dynamic nature of what is considered normal, which can evolve with the shifting political and cultural context. Despite the current threats, he emphasizes that democracy, with its focus on the equal dignity of individuals, remains the best form of government.

The political landscape during the Republican primary debates provides an apt illustration of the abnormality in contemporary American politics. The initially perceived "normal" primary process soon gave way to chaotic and bizarre moments, marked by mentions of "Donald Duck," "sleeping with a teacher," and costly curtains. Several concerning factors contributed to this sense of abnormality: Former President Donald Trump's continued dominance in the Republican race despite facing four indictments and a judge's declaration of fraud liability.

The initiation of a Trump-backed House Republican inquiry into impeaching President Joe Biden without clear evidence of wrongdoing.

A retiring Joint Chiefs chairman accused of treason by Trump, who boldly asserts, "We don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator."



The political landscape during the Republican primary debates provides an apt illustration of the abnormality in contemporary American politics. The initially perceived "normal" primary process soon gave way to chaotic and bizarre moments, marked by mentions of "Donald Duck," "sleeping with a teacher," and costly curtains. Several concerning factors contributed to this sense of abnormality:

Former President Donald Trump's continued dominance in the Republican race despite facing four indictments and a judge's declaration of fraud liability.

A president who becomes the first in history to join striking workers on a picket line while in office.

The government narrowly avoided a shutdown, with federal agencies funded for a lim-

ited period while aid to Ukraine remains in jeopardy. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's move to secure votes from Democrats to pass the measure may cost him his position, as some far-right party members were willing to risk a shutdown.

In summary, the current state of US politics presents an unprecedented scenario in the nation's 247-year history. Rep. Mike Lawler, a Republican from New York, described the actions of some party members as a "clown show," highlighting their resistance to the realities of divided government and their inclination to prioritize online contributions and base mobilization over cooperation and governance.

A potential mid-November government shutdown would adversely affect over 3 million federal workers, including active-duty troops. However, members of Congress, who are failing in their budget-making responsibilities, would continue to receive their paychecks, raising concerns of hypocrisy among politicians advocating for cutbacks and sacrifices without personally adhering to such measures.

The current state of US politics, marked by disarray and irregularity, is far from what Americans have considered "normal" throughout the nation's history. Sunstein's book serves as a reflection of these challenging times and a reminder of the importance of preserving democracy's principles in the face of adversity.

Report: Increased Activity at Nuclear Test Sites Raises Concerns



SCI-Tech Desk: Satellite images obtained by CNN have revealed recent expansions and increased activity at nuclear test sites in Russia, China, and the United States. These developments, while not indicative of an imminent nuclear test, have raised concerns about the possibility of nuclear testing resuming. This comes at a time when tensions between the three major nuclear powers have reached their highest levels in decades.

Russian Nuclear Test Site in Novaya Zemlya
In Russia, the Novaya Zemlya test site in the Arctic Ocean archipelago has seen extensive construction over the past few years. The site, which was first used for nuclear tests in 1955, had been dormant since 1990 when the last underground explosion occurred. Recent satellite images show the construction of new facilities, roads, and tunnels, suggesting preparations for potential nuclear tests. The test site is now operational year-round, indicating Russia's readiness for nuclear testing.

Chinese Nuclear Test Site in Lop Nur

In China, the nuclear test site in Lop Nur, located in the sparsely populated western region, has also shown increased activity. A new underground tunnel has been excavated in recent years, and fresh roads have been

constructed. Satellite images reveal the expansion of tunnels and the construction of a new storage area. The vast size of the Chinese test site and the visible activity in satellite imagery have raised concerns about China's nuclear intentions.

US Nuclear Test Site in Nevada

In the United States, the Nevada desert's nuclear test site has undergone changes as well. Satellite images show new tunnels, storage facilities, and an increase in vehicle traffic in and out of the site. These developments suggest that the US, like Russia and China, is modernizing its nuclear infrastructure and preparing for possible nuclear tests.

Implications and Concerns

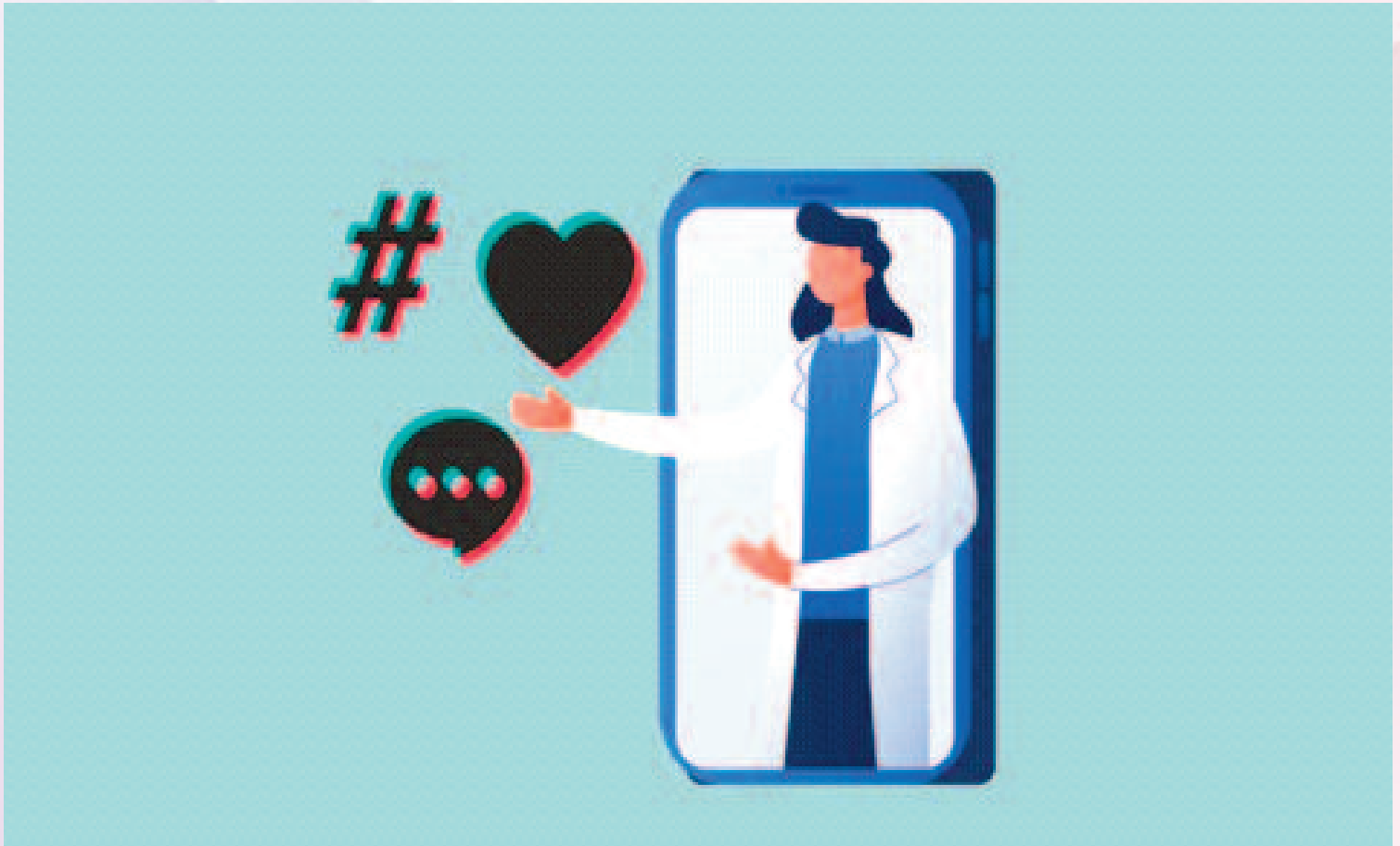
The increased activity at these nuclear test sites has sparked concerns among experts in the field of nonproliferation studies. While there is no direct evidence that these countries are planning imminent nuclear tests, the expansion of facilities and infrastructure is seen as a troubling trend. It not only risks sparking an arms race between the United States, Russia, and China but also diverts vast resources into nuclear preparations that do not enhance global security.

The international community is particularly

concerned about the increased risks in the current geopolitical climate, with a deepening mistrust among these major nuclear powers. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has set its Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it has been to a global catastrophe since its inception in 1947. The war in Ukraine, which was triggered by Russia's invasion, has been cited as a significant factor contributing to the world's precarious state. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has urged key countries to ratify the international treaty that bans nuclear experiments, emphasizing the need to reduce global mistrust. Nuclear experts have highlighted that these developments are occurring against a backdrop of evolving military capabilities and increasing tensions between major powers.

While experts acknowledge that an actual nuclear conflict is not imminent, the increased activities at these test sites raise concerns about the prospects for peace, disarmament, and international security. The global community is closely monitoring the situation, with a focus on diplomatic efforts to prevent the resumption of nuclear testing.

TikTok Launches Month-Long Mental Health Awareness Campaign for World Mental Health Day



SAM Desk: To mark World Mental Health Day on October 10th, TikTok has launched a month-long campaign aimed at raising awareness about mental health and combatting stigmas surrounding it. The platform is committed to promoting mental health awareness and has donated \$250,000 to the Rare Impact Fund, an initiative addressing mental health and self-acceptance issues. TikTok sponsored the fund's debut benefit on October 4th to raise funds for organizations focusing on mental health education and services for young people.

In Bangladesh, TikTok is collaborating with local creators and organizations to amplify its mental health awareness initiatives. The platform's wellness hub features videos and playlists from experts, providing a resource for users to engage with and support their mental well-being. Collaborations include partnerships with local influencers like Jubaer, Nanjiba, and Saif Sarwar, as well as renowned organizations such as BRAC and UNICEF South Asia.

TikTok is encouraging Bangladeshi users to share their personal well-being stories using hashtags like #MentalHealth and #SelfCare. Throughout October, TikTok is promoting the #MentalHealthAwareness: Better Together campaign to its global user base, emphasizing the importance of collective efforts to raise awareness and promote mental health.



The American Red Cross Declares National Blood Shortage



Paul Bersebach/MediaNews Group/

Health Desk: The American Red Cross recently sounded the alarm, declaring a national blood shortage in the United States. The organization reported that the nation's blood supply has fallen to "critically low levels," and it is urging high schools to reinstate blood drives. Blood shortages have a profound impact on the healthcare system and the lives of countless patients, particularly those in need of emergency blood transfusions, individuals undergoing surgeries, and those battling illnesses like cancer or sickle cell disease.

As of late, there has been a significant decline in blood donations, with a nearly 25% reduction observed since early August. While some reduction in donations during the summer and holiday seasons is not unusual, various factors have converged to exacerbate the current crisis. The American Red Cross attributes part of the decline to a series of climate-driven disasters that forced the cancellation of several blood drives. The unpredictable weather patterns and resulting disasters have disrupted the collection process and distribution of blood products, putting additional pressure on the healthcare system. Furthermore, the busy travel season has strained the blood supply as more people are on the move.

One crucial factor contributing to the current blood shortage is the decline in blood drives hosted at educational facilities, especially high schools and colleges. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 25% of blood donations collected by the Red Cross came from school-based blood drives. These drives were instrumental in ensuring a consistent flow of blood donations, as they encouraged young donors, including students ages 16 to 23, to participate. However, due to the pandemic, these educational institutions reduced or suspended their blood drive activ-

ities. The pandemic substantially impacted the American Red Cross, causing the percentage of donations from school blood drives to drop to as low as 10%. While it has since rebounded to around 20%, this still represents a significant loss of donors.

Other prominent blood donation organizations have experienced similar trends. For instance, New York Blood Center Enterprises reported a 50% decline in youth donors since the pandemic began. They have been actively trying to encourage high schools to resume hosting blood drives to restore the youth donor base. It's evident that school-based blood drives play a crucial role in maintaining a stable blood supply.

Blood Centers of America, another major blood donation organization, has been facing challenges in maintaining its supply. One of the concerning trends they have noticed is a decline in donors under 30 years old. Over the past decade, the organization has seen a 47% reduction in donors under 30. The majority of blood donors are older adults, with over 45% of blood donations coming from donors over 50. The diminishing number of younger donors is a cause for concern, and organizations are focusing on long-term sustainability to ensure an adequate blood supply for the future.

The impact of the blood shortage goes beyond the collection process and the statistics. It poses a direct threat to the medical care of patients who may urgently require blood transfusions. Those with conditions like sickle cell disease or cancer rely on regular blood transfusions to manage their conditions. A shortage of blood supply jeopardizes their treatment, increasing the risk to their health and well-being.

The American Red Cross has been making ef-

forts to encourage young donors to step forward and help mitigate the blood shortage. People as young as 16 can donate blood, with the permission of a parent or guardian in certain states. The involvement of young donors is essential for the stability of the nation's blood supply. It's a call to action for high schools and colleges to reinstate their blood drives, as well as an opportunity for young individuals to contribute to the health and well-being of their communities.

The Mount Academy, a high school just north of Poughkeepsie, New York, provides a noteworthy example of the positive impact young donors can have. Students organized a blood drive in honor of a classmate with sickle cell disease, raising awareness and contributing to the blood supply. The success of the drive, which collected donations from over 80 people, including students, faculty, and staff, demonstrates the difference young donors can make. Students like Maria Gonzalez and Kai Meier, who donated blood for the first time at the drive, expressed their enthusiasm for participating and supporting a worthy cause.

The American Red Cross, alongside other organizations, is advocating for the resumption of school-based blood drives. Their goal is to not only address the immediate blood shortage but to build a sustainable foundation for the future. Young donors play a vital role in this mission, offering hope to patients in need of life-saving blood transfusions. Ultimately, restoring the nation's blood supply hinges on the collaboration of educational institutions, donors of all ages, and the broader community. Together, they can ensure that the healthcare system has the necessary resources to provide for patients and meet the continuous demand for blood transfusions.

Aaron Rodgers Challenges Travis Kelce to Covid Vaccine Debate

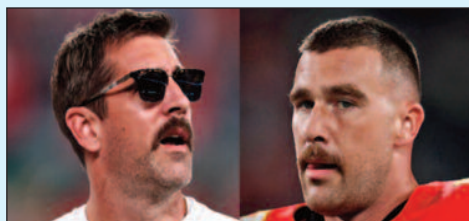
Health Desk: Aaron Rodgers, the sidelined quarterback of the New York Jets, has thrown down the gauntlet to Kansas City Chiefs' star tight end Travis Kelce, challenging him to a debate on the efficacy of Covid vaccines.

This showdown between two football celebrities began with Rodgers poking fun at Kelce for his association with pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, where he's participated in a campaign advocating for flu shots and Covid vaccinations, both of which have been proven to be safe and effective.

In a playful jab, Rodgers dubbed Kelce "Mr. Pfizer," although some fans swiftly reminded Rodgers that he plays for the Jets, which is owned by Woody Johnson of Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical fame, leading to a tongue-in-cheek exchange.

"I made a tiny little joke about a guy shilling for a potentially ... corrupt company, and everybody kind of loses their minds," Rodgers remarked during his weekly check-in on "The Pat McAfee Show."

Without naming Kelce directly, it was clear that Rodgers had the Chiefs player in mind as



Dustin Satloff / Getty Images

he continued, "Mr. Pfizer said he didn't think he would be in a vax war with me. This ain't a war, homie. This is just a conversation. But if you want to have some sort of duel, debate, have me on the podcast, come on the show, let us have a conversation."

Rodgers even added a humorous reference to proxy fighters akin to the film "John Wick: Chapter 4," suggesting an intellectual clash involving himself, independent presidential candidate and anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and a figure like Dr. Tony Fauci. In 2021, Rodgers attracted attention for misleading statements regarding his Covid-19 vaccination status, leading many to believe he was vaccinated when he was not. Instead, he

disclosed that he had taken ivermectin, a drug primarily used on livestock and endorsed by podcaster Joe Rogan.

It is crucial to note that both Covid and flu shots have been overwhelmingly proven to be safe and effective by health authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC recommends an annual flu shot for everyone aged six months and older, preferably in October as flu cases typically surge during this period. Additionally, individuals over six months old who haven't received a Covid vaccine within the last two months are advised to get a Covid booster this fall.

In the midst of this vaccine debate, Kelce, known for his advocacy of vaccinations, continues to be in the spotlight due to his public association with pop icon Taylor Swift. Her attendance at his Chiefs games has generated substantial attention, introducing many Swift fans to football for the first time. This association has also subjected Kelce and Swift to conservative criticism, particularly as Swift has actively encouraged her young fans to register to vote in past years.

Dengue Outbreak Claims Over 1,000 Lives in Bangladesh Amid Climate Crisis

Health Desk: Bangladesh is grappling with its worst dengue outbreak on record, with over 1,000 people succumbing to the mosquito-borne disease, according to official data. This surge is partly attributed to the impact of the climate crisis, which is resulting in rising temperatures and the spread of dengue into regions beyond densely populated urban centers.

Since January, 1,017 people have lost their lives to dengue, including more than 100 children, with infections surpassing 208,000, as reported by the Bangladesh Directorate General of Health Services. Although dengue is endemic in Bangladesh, with cases typically peaking during the monsoon season from July to September, this year witnessed a much earlier surge, commencing in late April.

The prolonged monsoon season with warmer temperatures, combined with irregular, heavy rainfall, has created ideal breeding conditions for the Aedes mosquito, the dengue carrier, as noted by scientists. The influx of patients has overwhelmed the country's healthcare system, leading to bed and staff shortages in hospitals. The fatality rate from this outbreak is nearly four times higher than the previous year, with 281 deaths recorded. September alone reported over 79,600 cases and 396 fatalities, according to Bangladesh health authorities.



There is growing concern that the outbreak might extend into the cooler months. Last year, dengue cases peaked in October, with most deaths occurring in November.

Dengue is a viral infection causing symptoms like severe headaches, muscle and joint pains, fever, and, in severe cases, internal bleeding and death. It is transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, and there is no specific treatment for the disease.

Although dengue is also known as breakbone fever and is endemic in over 100 countries, its impact is rapidly expanding due to the climate crisis. Outbreaks, which were previously confined to densely populated urban centers, have now spread to every district across Bangladesh, even rural areas.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is

supporting the Bangladeshi government's efforts to combat the outbreak, focusing on strengthening surveillance, lab capacity, clinical management, vector control, risk communication, and community engagement.

Health experts are urging Bangladesh to prioritize dengue prevention measures, including early detection and access to proper healthcare services, given that repeat dengue infections can be more severe and even fatal.

This dengue outbreak in Bangladesh reflects a global trend as mosquito-borne diseases, including dengue, Zika, chikungunya, and yellow fever, are expected to spread further due to the climate crisis. Dengue has also severely impacted South America, particularly in Peru, while cases have been on the rise in Florida and several Asian countries. As the climate crisis intensifies, the burden of these diseases is expected to increase in more and more countries.

WHO's alert and response director, Abdi Mahamud, has highlighted these outbreaks as early warning signs of the climate crisis, emphasizing that "more and more countries" are grappling with the heavy burden of these diseases.



Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour" Concert Film Set to Shatter Box Office Records

Entertainment Desk: In a dazzling display of pop star prowess, Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour" concert film is poised to make cinematic history, with early projections suggesting it could amass a staggering \$100 million at the domestic box office. But the final weekend numbers are expected to surpass even this remarkable figure.

The film, a cinematic embodiment of Taylor Swift's record-breaking three-hour stadium tour, is anticipated to rake in a sum nearing \$125 million from approximately 3,850 theaters across North America. Beyond its domestic dominance, "Eras Tour" is set to captivate international audiences as well, with an estimated \$30 million to \$50 million anticipated from 4,150 venues in more than 90 countries. This totals a global opening ranging between \$150 million to \$175 million, a remarkable achievement not just for a concert film but for any non-franchise movie or sequel in today's cinematic landscape. It is slated to be the sole film in October to cross the coveted triple-digit mark for its domestic debut, a distinction that has only been achieved six times this year.

Unlike typical nationwide releases, which often commence on Thursday afternoons, "Eras Tour" will make its grand entrance on Friday the 13th, a date of significance for the superstar. The film's ticket pricing, rich with numerical symbolism, is also unique, with fees set at \$19.89 for adults and \$13.13 for children and seniors. Although these prices exceed the national average ticket cost, fervent Swifties have shown no hesitation, propelling the film's advance ticket sales to over \$100 million globally by last Thursday, encompassing both domestic and international markets. This remarkable feat cements "Eras Tour" as the highest-grossing concert film in history, surpassing the previous record holder, 2011's "Justin Bieber: Never Say Never" (\$99 million). Throughout its theatrical run, "Eras Tour" is anticipated to secure a spot among the top 10 highest-grossing films of the year. It has the potential to outshine cinematic giants such as "Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One" (\$174 million), "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" (\$174 million), and "Fast X" (\$145 million), despite having fewer showtimes. After the opening weekend, the film will be screened exclusively on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, a strategy aimed at creating a vibrant, packed-house experience.

The monumental success of "Eras Tour" serves as a significant boost for theaters, which have faced challenges due to the postponement of major releases during the recent actors' strike. Cory Jacobson, owner of Phoenix Theatres, acknowledges the extraordinary impact of the film, stating, "These ticket sales rival a major movie. Nobody has ever seen this come out of a concert film. It's an unexpected bolstering of theatrical revenue that we need." Taylor Swift's "Eras Tour" is not just breaking records; it's transforming the cinematic landscape itself.



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