

							
HABIB UN NABI KHAN SOHEL Senior Joint Secretary General	SULTAN SALAHUDDIN TUKU Jubo Dal president	SYED MOAZZEM HOSSAIN ALAL Senior Joint Secretary General	RUHUL KABIR RIZVI Senior Joint Secretary General	SHAMSUR RAHMAN SHIMUL BISWAS BNP chairperson's former political secretary	MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR BNP Secretary General	MIRZA ABBAS Standing Committee Member	SHAHEED UDDIN CHOWDHURY ANNIE Publicity Secretary
450 cases	315 cases	250 cases	180 cases	150 cases	98 cases	85 cases	70 cases

## Families pushed to brink

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running from the lenders. **LOSS OF BUSINESS**  
Moksud faces 38 cases, and was on the run from 2009 to 2020.

"All the cases are fictitious. I have been relieved of 16 cases already as the witnesses and the plaintiffs failed to identify me in the court," he said.

A successful businessman in the pre-Awami League era, he is now counting losses as he cannot look after his business like before in fear of harassment.

The Daily Star has spoken to 20 BNP leaders and activists and their families in Dhaka and elsewhere, and like Moksud, each has a distressing story to tell.

Marzina Begum's husband Abdul Zabbar Hawlader, a Sramik Dal leader in the capital, died of cancer in 2021 without proper treatment.

But until 2009, they were a solvent middle-income family, having two passenger buses that ran on Gabtoli-Sadarghat route.

Zabbar, once a bus driver himself, had bought the buses with his savings and a bank loan. He also bought five decimals of land in Savar and built a seven-room tin-shed house there.

But after the AL came to power, cases were filed

against him one after another. He went into hiding to avoid arrest in the 29 cases he faced. His two buses, the main source of their income, were not allowed to hit the road.

"Having been abandoned for several years, the buses were almost beyond operation. We had to sell them as scraps for Tk 3.5 lakh," said Marzina, now struggling to survive with three daughters aged between 13 and 23, and a son aged nine.

To pay for the legal expenses and feed the family, Zabbar also had to sell his ancestral land in addition to the two buses and the house in Savar.

After Zabbar fell sick in 2020, Marzina borrowed heavily, nearly Tk 12 lakh, for his treatment although Zabbar eventually succumbed. Marzina says she now avoids meeting the creditors, most of them relatives.

"My husband died on October 11, 2021. Two years after his death, he was named as the second prime suspect in a case filed against 109 BNP men over vandalism inside Government Bangla College in Mirpur on July 18 this year.

Another dead man, Shafiqul Islam Suman, former vice-president of Bangla College unit

of Chhatra Dal, BNP's student wing, was also made an accused in this case, filed nine months after his death.

Complainant of the case Mohidur Rahman, a staff member of the college, told The Daily Star at the time that he only filed the case without naming anyone, and that police put the names.

Shiekh Aminul Bashar, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, said, "I don't know how he could say that. As a plaintiff, he signed the case statement after going through it."

**HIDING AWAY**  
Jubo Dal Convener Monir Hossain Hawlader, from Barishal's Gournadi upazila, and his family cannot go home for the last 19 months fearing arrest and attacks by Awami League activists.

Just days before the 2018 election, local Jubo League leaders and activists vandalised his shop, Hawlader Steel Works, at Torki Bandar, looted the cash box and machinery and forced him to close down the shop, he said.

"Although I suffered a loss of around Tk 2 lakh in the attack, I did not file a case against them fearing reprisals," said Monir, who faces seven cases.

Now out of business, he

runs the family with the money his son sends from a Middle Eastern country.

In 2021, police charged him with a murder that took place when he was in Chennai for treatment.

"Later, police submitted

DIVISION/ METROPOLITAN	NUMBER OF CASES	NUMBER OF ACCUSED
Rajshahi	11,461	7,63,565
Chattogram	13,482	3,72,635
Cumilla	6,265	1,15,199
Rangpur	9,704	3,81,471
Dhaka	15,079	6,61,553
Mymensingh	6,394	2,51,117
Barishal	8,662	3,03,521
Khulna	26,871	9,65,173
Sylhet	8,434	2,21,744
All Metropolitans	35,284	8,90,516
Total cases and accused	1,41,636	49,26,494
SOURCE: BNP		

a supplementary charge sheet dropping my name after I held a press conference and presented all documents related to my India visit," Monir added.

**A GOOD JOB LOST**  
Md Nowshad was an assistant plumber mechanic at Chattogram Wasa, where he joined in

2004.

Being a government employee, he thought his job was secure and that he would be able to give his two sons proper education. But a series of cases in 2015 have changed all that.

now freed on bail.

Nowshad, a Jubo Dal leader in the port city's metropolitan unit, faces 48 cases.

He said the police filed the cases and submitted charge sheets in all these cases, and the court framed charges against him although he was not even aware of many of the incidents.

"I cannot even do a part-time job to support my family, as I have been going to the court almost every day for the last eight years for hearings," he told The Daily Star.

**GHOSTLY CASES**  
Official data on the number of cases filed against opposition party leaders and activists are not available.

According to BNP's case record preservation cell, 1,41,633 cases have been filed against 49,26,492 leaders and activists of BNP and its affiliated organisations since 2009 till September this year.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the data, but going by the BNP count, its leaders and activists were sued in 10,000 cases every year or in 27 cases every day since Awami League took office in 2009.

BNP leaders have termed many of the cases "ghostly," as dead people, migrant workers,

Hajji pilgrims, and people undergoing treatment abroad at the time of the alleged incidents have been charged.

On September 26, police filed a case under the Explosive Substances Act against Md Mahbulul Hoque Rubel, a three-time BNP lawmaker from Sherpur, and several others.

Two days later, on September 28, Mahbulul, who faces 25 cases, was coming to Dhaka to submit a bail petition to the High Court.

"That day, police filed another case against me and several other leaders and activists. I was on the way at the time that the police mentioned in the case as the time of occurrence," he told The Daily Star.

The local police defended the charges brought against the former lawmaker, saying his claim was not true.

The cases of Moksud, Zabbar, Monir, Mahbulul and many others are examples that police did not gather even the minimum information about the incident and the suspects before pressing charges.

Asked about the legality of such cases, Supreme Court lawyer and rights activist Jyotirmoy Barua said, "False cases are

essentially filed to harass people as there is no preventive measures in the legal system."

Referring to the loopholes in century-old criminal laws introduced during the British colonial rule, he said countries around the world have amended this deterministic law.

In the UK, for example, the Crown Prosecution System scrutinises each case before registering them, he said, adding, "The only cases the Crown Prosecution registers are the ones they are confident about winning as it involves public money."

The legal side apart, the cases of Moksud, Zabbar, Monir, Mahbulul and thousand others are also examples of how "politically motivated" cases can ruin families financially.

"It's a devastating situation. The families of our leaders and activists are facing extreme hardship to run their families. Many have lost their jobs and businesses. Some of them even pull rickshaws for a living," said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi who faces 180 cases himself.

(Additional reporting: FM Mizanur Rahman from Chattogram and Sushanta Ghosh from Barishal)

## Gaza death toll tops 5,000

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been wounded, the health ministry issued a statement saying "citizens are called upon to immediately go to hospitals and blood bank branches to donate blood".

Alarm has grown about the dire needs of the 2.4 million civilians trapped inside the 40 kilometre (25-mile) long coastal strip that was already blockaded and impoverished before the war.

Children killed in an Israeli air strike in the southern city of Khan Yunis were yesterday laid to rest in a makeshift grave, while in Rafah men were filling plastic jerrycans from containers with now scare safe drinking water.

US President Joe Biden brokered the passage of aid convoys

with Egyptian and Israeli leaders in talks last week -- but the United Nations estimates Gaza needs about 100 trucks of relief goods every day.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said Sunday's delivery of food, water and medical supplies was "another small glimmer of hope for the millions of people in dire need of humanitarian aid.

"But they need more, much more."

Israel has rejected the entry of fuel into Gaza, fearing Hamas could use it for weapons and explosives.

This has sparked warnings that soon Gaza's ambulances, hospital incubators for infants and water desalination plants will soon stop functioning.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A general view shows the site of Israeli strikes on houses in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

## 17 killed as trains collide in Bhairab

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screaming for help. We found one of my cousins dead. We thought my uncle, aunt, and the other cousin might have survived. We rushed to the upazila health complex and found their bodies.

"We got on the train together; we survived narrowly, but they are all gone," Opu told this newspaper at the Bhairab Upazila Health Complex.

Shobuj Shil and his wife Shanti Rani Shil were going to Narsingdi from Bhairab to celebrate Durga Puja with their only daughter who got married two weeks ago.

Shobuj, 48, did not survive.

"We were eagerly waiting to see my daughter and her in-laws. We got on the train and within a few minutes, my world turned upside down," Shanti Rani said.

Alyea Begum, of Sreenagar area in Kishoreganj, was wailing after seeing a photo of the body of her nephew, Rabbi, 25, on a display at the health complex.

Rabbi, the only son of her brother, was returning to Dhaka after visiting his ailing father. "We were looking for a bride for Rabbi. But everything is shattered now," she said.

Family members and relatives also went to the spot to find their loved

ones. Many were in tears and wailing.

Akram Hossain, of Aganagar area in Bhairab, was looking for his brother at the scene. He said his brother was travelling to Dhaka on the train as he was supposed to go abroad.

"His phone is unreachable ... I can't find him anywhere," he said.

Shafiqul Hossain, of Bhairav, was looking for his grandmother.

"I came to see off my grandmother. She came to visit our home a few days ago. I was waiting at the station when I heard the bang. Now I can't find her. I don't know whether she is

## Bangladesh to get duty benefits

FROM PAGE 1  
members reaffirmed their commitment to helping smooth this process for graduating LDCs to prevent any loss of the economic growth and development momentum that had propelled them to graduation," said Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the director-general of the WTO.

This decision is a significant step towards addressing the particular challenges graduating LDCs face, and will help people from these countries tap into the opportunities that international trade brings, he added.

Bangladesh along with other LDCs, however, have been negotiating with developing and developed countries and different international organisations like the WTO for an extension of the trade benefits for six more years after graduation due to the economic hits taken for the pandemic and the Ukraine war.

At present, Bangladesh is a top user of duty benefits among the 48 LDCs, using up to 67 percent of the

trade privileges.

More than 73 percent of Bangladesh's exports are under trade benefits.

In 2017, the LDC Ministerial Declaration requested WTO Members to assist in meeting the challenges the LDCs are to face in the post-graduation phase. Following this, the LDC Group presented a formal proposal to the WTO in 2020.

From the initial stages of drafting, submitting and finalising this decision, the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in Geneva has been leading the LDC group throughout the complex and extensive process of generating traction and multilateral negotiation as the LDC focal point on graduation.

Discussions are currently going on in the LDC sub-committee for the extension of WTO's existing LDC-specific provisions after graduation. Members of the LDC group, including Bangladesh, are actively working towards a decision in this regard at the 13th Ministerial Conference.

## All or nothing for the Tigers

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Wankhede Stadium. Skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who is nursing a thigh injury, was showing signs of getting back to full fitness but pacer Taskin Ahmed will be unavailable for a second successive game due to pain on his right shoulder.

Injury apart, the Tigers are yet to perform as a unit -- a facet of their game which led them to a 21-run victory over South Africa in a high-scoring game at The Oval four years ago. In that game, Bangladesh posted an impressive 330, with Shakib and Mushfiqur Rahim hitting fifties and Mahmudullah providing a late flourish.

But in this World Cup in

India, the Tigers are yet to hit the 300-run mark, with their highest score being 256 against India, and that too after a flying start given by their openers.

Batting has been the biggest strength for the Tigers since the 2015 World Cup. But in this tournament, it is yet to click as a unit, primarily due to non-performance from the openers, and more pressingly, excessive experimentation from the team management.

The batting order has become a game of musical chairs with the players not sure at which position they would bat in the next game. The experiment has gone so far that an experienced and proven batter like

Mahmudullah was sent in to bat at number eight against India.

We are not sure what surprises the team management has up its sleeves for the South Africa game, but one can only expect some sanity against a team that has been in a marauding mood, smashing 300-plus totals in four of the five games.

The Proteas took holders England to the cleaners, plundering 399 in their last game. If that game is anything to go by, then it is a real concern for the Bangladesh bowling attack.

Moreover, the highest-ever score at the Wankhede Stadium belongs to South Africa as they smashed 438

off the last delivery.

Pakistan enjoyed a strong start with a 56-run stand before Azmatullah Omarzai dismissed Imam-ul-Haq for 17 in the 11th over.

Ahmad struck his first blow when he trapped Shafique for 58 in the 23rd over.

Shafique hit two sixes and five fours in his third half-century of the World Cup.

Ahmad then dismissed

for four against India in 2015. Players like Quinton de Kock, Aiden Markram, and a brute Heinrich Klaasen would certainly be licking their lips to revel on a historically batting-friendly venue.

It is an intimidating prospect for the Tigers. But with their openers finally hitting some sort of form against India, they can expect a repeat of 2019 provided that batting comes to the party as a unit and the blowing attack, which might see an additional spinner at the expense of a third pacer, get a good total to defend.

Otherwise, this might be the beginning of another World Cup disappointment for the Tigers.

Pakistan's top scorer in the World Cup, Mohammad Rizwan, caught sweeping in his next over to leave Pakistan on 120-3.

Azam also fell to Akhmed when the Pakistan skipper played a tennis like shot to a delivery that was seemingly out of his reach, ending up hitting it straight into the hands of Mohammad Nabi at extra cover.

Azam added 43 with Saud Shakeel who made 25.