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As a bus tries to navigate the flooded Dhanmondi-27 intersection, its wake nearly swamps a couple of rickshaws struggling to make headway. Heavy rain yesterday morning caused waterlogging in most city neighbourhoods. More photos on page 3. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Downpour drowns parts of Dhaka

Poor drainage exposed again, many neighbourhoods waterlogged all day

HELEMUL ALAM and MD ABBAS

Heavy rain flooded streets and homes across the capital yesterday morning and exposed Dhaka's poor drainage system yet again.

The downpour began in the early hours and continued till noon with brief pauses. The Met office recorded 130mm of rainfall in six hours from 6:00am. The rainwater did not recede from many places even in the evening.

People who went out of their homes on the weekend endured immense sufferings, as they had to wade through knee-to-waist-deep water to reach their destinations. Public transport was hard to come by.

Several vehicles broke down on the flooded streets, leading to traffic jams.

The rainwater went into underground parking spaces, reservoirs, and ground floors of many residential buildings. People were seen trying to pump out the water.

Water went into many shops and damaged stored goods.

"Come rain, come the same old sufferings. This has been going on for decades despite promises to solve the waterlogging problem

**The rainwater went into underground parking spaces, reservoirs, and ground floors of many residential buildings. People were seen trying to pump out the water.**

in the city," said a frustrated Sirajul Islam of West Rajabazar area.

"Even after a brief shower, the roads and alleys go under water. The rainwater even makes its way into our homes. We hear so much of development, but this problem persists. Our hardship seems never-ending."

Ain Uddin, who works for a firm, told The Daily Star that he had to change five vehicles to reach his office in Niketan from Kalabagan area.

"My CNG-run auto-rickshaw broke down

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Rains now more intense, in shorter spells

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

While Dhaka typically sees 373mm of rain throughout July, a heavy downpour yesterday morning delivered over a third of that amount in just six hours.

According to experts and meteorologists, the monsoon rainfall pattern is changing across the country, as evidenced by the shorter spells of intense downpours seen nowadays.

While there has been little change in the overall amount of rainfall, climate change is causing a decline in the number of rainy days, they added.

Md Bazlur Rashid, a meteorologist at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, said that incidents of extreme climatic events like longer heatwaves and more rainfall in shorter spells are becoming more common in Bangladesh.

"The total amount of rainfall has decreased about 3-5% in recent years but the frequency of extreme rainfall

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## QUOTA SYSTEM IN GOVT JOBS

# Reforms must be well thought out

Experts say 2018 quota abolishment done hurriedly

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR and BAHARAM KHAN

Any disproportionate quota system usually hurts a merit-based civil service, and any kind of decision to reform the system, in place since independence, should be well thought out, experts say.

The quota based system should not dominate the public administration at the expense of merit as the nation needs the right people in the right place, they add.

But, according to them, the government decision to hurriedly abolish the quota system in Class I and Class 2 jobs in 2018 following a student protest was not well thought out. In the current context, the existing quota system should be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated to avoid new complications.

"You need to keep the quota system for certain groups of people. But it needs to be evaluated from time to time. This is not happening in Bangladesh,"

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



"It is inappropriate that there will be an abnormal quota for a certain group. On the other hand, there is no scope for abolishing all kinds of quota in public service as the constitution favours the quota system."

FIROZ MIA  
Former bureaucrat

"After so many years of independence, it is not reasonable to keep quota of freedom fighters."

AHMEDUL HUQ  
CHOUDHURY  
Former PSC chairman

## ANTI-QUOTA MOVEMENT Protesters block roads, ignore warnings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The anti-quota protesters blocked the Shahbagh intersection yesterday, demanding reforms to the quota system in government jobs and protesting Thursday's police action on students outside Dhaka.

Similar programmes were also held in Cumilla, Chattogram, Rajshahi, and elsewhere as part of the scheduled nationwide rallies on campuses.

Around 5:00pm, several hundred DU students marched from the Central Library to the Shahbagh intersection, where they were later joined by Dhaka College students.

"During our movement, our brothers and sisters were attacked at various universities. Our movement is logical and democratic, but we still faced police action. We demand that the attackers be quickly identified and brought to justice," said Abu Sayeed, one of the key organisers of the anti-quota movement.

Protesters said a press conference would be held today around 6:30pm in front of DU Central Library to announce their next programme.

Also, a meeting of the organisers at different colleges and universities across the country will be held this morning to determine the next course of movement, said Abu Baker, another organiser of the movement.

After holding the short rally, protesters left Shahbagh around 6:00pm.

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## TIMELINE

**OCTOBER 4, 2018**  
Government scraps quota system for class-I and class-II jobs in civil service

**JUNE 5, 2024**  
High Court rules scrapping of freedom fighter quota illegal

**JUNE 9, 2024**  
Government appeals to the apex court

**JULY 1, 2024**  
Students, jobseekers start demonstrating against quota system

**JULY 4, 2024**  
SC upholds High Court verdict for the time being

SEE PAGE 2

## AL to go tough to quell infighting

35 killed in intra-party clashes during first 6 months of this year

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Over the first six months of this year, there were on average more than two incidents of infighting every day in Awami League. These conflicts accounted for 94 percent of the total 440 incidents of political violence during the same period.

Only two of those incidents of political violence occurred when the ruling party men clashed with the activists of its archrival BNP and main opposition Jatiya Party, according to statistics of Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid and rights organisation.

In the six months, 35 people were killed due to AL infighting, which is 85 percent of the 41 people killed in political violence.

The ASK data included incidents of violence centring the national, upazila, and union parishad polls.

Faruq Faisal, executive director of ASK, said most of the incidents of electoral violence took place between different AL factions as the party decided to allow its ranks to run to make the elections look

participatory amid boycott by major opposition political parties.

According to ASK, around 202 AL leaders, activists and supporters were killed in clashes over internal feuds in six years until May 2024.

This data clearly shows how the ruling party faced opposition from within in absence of activities of its political opponents.

"Awami League has become its own opponent as the major opposition parties are staying away from the polls and streets. The intra-party conflicts are happening mainly over establishing supremacy and gaining financial benefits," Faruq told The Daily Star.

He said conflicts within the AL's grassroots intensified following the party's decision to allow all its aspirants to run as independents in the January 7 parliamentary polls. The situation worsened following the upazila parishad elections.

On the sixth upazila parishad polls,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



With her fist held high, an anti-quota protester adds her voice to the chorus of hundreds chanting slogans during the hour-long demonstration at the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN





PHOTO: STAR

EVENING WALK AT CITY PARKS

# Where walking is more than just exercise!

RBR

A casual walk around a park in the evening has a charm of its own. Most Dhakaites pump up their feel-good endorphins and energy levels as early as possible and try to leave the evenings for social engagements. However, the city has its share of lazy walkers; people who love light summer breezes and would prefer strolls instead of hard exercise.

There is a pleasant feel to enjoying Dhaka at dusk when the sky is like orange marmalade. Summer sky in a country like ours is in one word: poetic! This is the time when white fluffy clouds with a ring of subdued sunlight around them float against the violet, burnt

orange, and golden hues of sundown. Godhuli, as twilight is romantically called in Bangla, is also the right time to take Instagramable photos.

Ramna Park, like many other parks in the city, has beautiful walking tracks as the entire park has recently gone through transformations. Arshan and Paula, a sporty mother-son duo, have chosen evening walks at Ramna as their time to bond. After work and school hours are done and dusted, they walk, stroll, and sit down on old benches and talk about their day.

Paula feels, "Arshan is a teenager and I think these are formative years, when the child needs you. Yes, they would rather be left alone but I want him to know I am there for him. I had to plan

a win-win situation for us to relax and unwind after a day's work.

"We are not regulars but we try to go as frequently as possible, even if I have to bribe him with a trip to a café!"

People enjoy walking as part of their exercise and healthy routine and then there are people for whom this is a way to unwind and connect with nature. For them, Ramna Park is like an oasis in Dhaka, offering ample fresh air, lush greenery, and a beautifully curated environment.

It is wonderful to see people forming groups and engaging in various activities, creating a vibrant community. Walking here is a truly enjoyable experience that allows one to find serenity at their own pace.

Mithila, 40, loves her evening walks. "For me, it is strictly me time," she says. "I soak in the serenity of the late afternoons, I love to hear the birds rushing home, I pick wild ferns from the sides of the pond, or I just sit and listen to my '80s pop music."

Like Thich Nhât Hạnh, the famous Vietnamese Buddhist monk, said we need to experience walking as a mindful practice. "When we walk like (we are rushing), we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the earth."

For me and thousands of people like me, evening walks are mindful walking, walking with love and compassion, and walking for healing.

## 5 more 'KNF operatives' sent to jail in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Five members of the Bawm community were sent to jail yesterday on suspicion of being members of the armed group Kuki Chin National Front (KNF).

They are Song Lian Bawm, 25, Lalhim Sang Bawm, 37, Lalchan Sang Bawm, 48, Lal Pian Sang Bawm, 36, and Lal Siam Thang Bawm, 38. All five are residents of Lairunpi Para in Bandarban's Ruma upazila.

They were arrested on Thursday during an ongoing joint forces operation against the KNF.

Later, they were presented in court on charges related to the bank robbery and arms theft that took place in Ruma. Subsequently, Bandarban Chief Judicial Magistrate Mohammad Nazmul Hossain sent them to jail, said Court Sub-Inspector Priyal Palit.

As part of the ongoing joint forces operation, law enforcement has arrested and jailed a total of 116 people suspected of collaborating with the KNF militants who carried out bank robberies, assaults, and looted weapons and money from police and Ansar forces in Ruma and Thanchi between April 2 and 3.

A total of 22 cases were filed over these incidents -- 14 at Ruma Police Station, four at Thanchi Police Station, one at Bandarban Sadar Police Station, and three at Rowanghari Police Station.

## 3 killed in road crashes

BSS, Jashore

Three people were killed and nine others injured in two separate road crashes in Jashore's Bagherpara upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Mohammad Siddique Sheikh, 50, of South Srirampur village of the upazila, Sabuj Hossain, 42, of Rajabari village of Nandail upazila in Mymensingh, and Tarek Sardar, 35, of Baga village under Keshabpur upazila of Jashore.

Mritunjoy Biswas, officer-in-charge of Tularampur Highway Police Station, said the collision occurred in Dakshin Srirampur area around 7:30am, when a Jashore-bound truck hit five people on the side of the Jashore-Narail road before plunging into a ditch.

Siddique died on the spot and four others were injured. The injured were taken to Jashore General Hospital, he said.

Meanwhile, in another accident, Sabuj Hossain died on the spot and six others were injured when two pickups collided head-on in Karimpur area of the upazila on Jashore-Narail road around 11:30am.

Of the injured, four were taken to Jashore General Hospital and two others to Narail Sadar Hospital, where Tarek Sardar died while undergoing treatment, the OC added.

## Reforms must be well thought out

FROM PAGE 1

Firoz Mia, who retired as an additional secretary of public administration ministry, told The Daily Star.

"It is inappropriate that there will be an abnormal quota for a certain group. On the other hand, there is no scope for abolishing all kinds of quota in public service as the constitution favours the quota system," said Firoz, who also authored several books on public administration.

"The way the government abolished the quota system for government officials from Grade 1 to Grade 13 [in 2018] was not appropriate at all. Almost every country in the world has a quota system in government jobs for disadvantaged groups."

In Bangladesh, the quota system was introduced through an executive order in 1972 and was amended several times. From 1972 to 1976, 20 percent of the government officials were recruited based on merit, and the rest was quota-based. Merit-based recruitment was increased to 40 percent in 1976 which continued until 1985, when it was increased to 45 percent.

In 2012, one percent quota was introduced for persons with disability, reducing the merit-based recruitment to 44 percent.

In 2018, the government issued a circular abolishing the quota system for Class 1 and Class 2 jobs, in the wake of a massive protest by students, who wanted a reform and not an abolition.

Until then, 56 percent of government jobs had been reserved for candidates from various quotas. Of this, 30 percent were for freedom fighters' families, 10 percent for women, 10 percent for people from underdeveloped districts, 5 percent for members of indigenous communities, and 1 percent for persons with disabilities.

In 1996, as the numbers of those claiming freedom fighters' quota positions started to dwindle, the government extended the quota to children of freedom fighters. In 2009, it was further expanded to include the

grandchildren of freedom fighters.

The ongoing quota reform movement began after the High Court on June 5, 2024, ruled that the 2018 government circular abolishing the quota system was illegal, effectively reinstating the quota system. The government appealed the decision, and the Appellate Division has issued a status quo on the HC order.

After the HC order, students took to the streets again, waging large-scale protests across the country, demanding a reform of the quota system.

### TIMELINE

**JULY 7, 2024**  
Protesters launch "Bangla Blockade"

**JULY 9, 2024**  
Two DU students file petition seeking stay order on HC verdict

**JULY 10, 2024**  
SC orders status quo on the issue for four weeks

"I cannot say why the government took such a decision [to abolish the quota system], because almost every country has a quota system. It was not a well-thought-out decision," AT Ahmedul Huq Choudhury, a former PSC chairman, told this newspaper.

India has a quota system for public service and they call it "reservations system," under which 15 percent of the government jobs are reserved for Scheduled Castes, 7.5 percent for Scheduled Tribes and 27 percent for Other Backward Classes, and 10 percent for Economically Weaker Sections.

Nepal reserves 45 percent civil service seats for women, along with indigenous community, Madhesi,

Dalit, persons with disability and people from underdeveloped areas.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka also have reserved positions in government jobs for women, ethnic minorities, and individuals from different regions.

The government should decide on the percentage of the quota upon analysis of the data, but women, ethnic minority groups and persons with disability should be included in the quota system, said Ahmedul Huq.

"After so many years of independence, it is not reasonable to keep quota of freedom fighters. But if the government feels it necessary, there may be a small quota for the freedom fighters but it should be only for the freedom fighters' families that are in a bad condition," he said.

Public administration researcher and former secretary AKM Abdul Awal Mazumder is in favour of abolishing the quota system, except for persons with disability.

"However, the government can have a detailed evaluation before taking a decision in this regard so that it can place its argument to support the decision," he told The Daily Star.

Supreme Court lawyer and constitutional expert Arif Khan said the government can restore reasonable quotas for women, persons with disability, ethnic groups and freedom fighters any time if it wants.

"But now that the matter is before court, the solution will come in line with the instructions given by the court. However, there is no legal obstacles for the government to make a decision from time to time on the issue because the government has to take decisions at different times to carry out executive activities," he told this newspaper.

Talking about the students' demand for quota system reform, Public Administration Minister Farhad Hossain said, "If the matter was solely in the hands of the government, we could have considered their demand.

"As it is now a matter pending before the court, steps will have to be taken as per the instructions of the court and we are waiting for that."

law and order would not be tolerated. "There is an obligation to obey the order of the court. If anyone tries to break the law... it will not be tolerated," the commissioner said.

The protesting students had announced that they would press on with their demonstrations until the government forms a commission to reform the quota system and the parliament passes a law in this regard.

## Rains now more intense, in shorter spells

FROM PAGE 1

In shorter periods has increased," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

A study titled "Changing Climate of Bangladesh: Trends and Changes Detected in Weather Observations from 1980 to 2023 in Bangladesh" found that the average rainfall during this period has not changed, but the number of rainy days decreased in Dhaka.

"In Dhaka, the average precipitation in the 1980-2020 period did not change significantly in any season. However, there is some evidence of a decrease of around 2.7 days per decade in the number of rainy days in the monsoon season," the study states.

Daily extreme precipitation events will likely intensify by about 7 percent for every 1°C increase in average global temperature, according to the latest

## Downpour drowns

FROM PAGE 1

twice, and I had to walk for half an hour in knee deep water. I spent around three hours to reach work. It usually takes around 40 minutes."

City planners say it is the inadequate drainage system, not the rain, that floods streets of the capital. Besides, encroachment of canals and a lack of cleaning of drains are among the key reasons for Dhaka streets getting waterlogged, they said.

"Even just after 55 to 60 millimetres of rainfall, Dhaka city's drainage system cannot drain out the water quickly...," Akter Mahmud, member of advisory council of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), told this newspaper.

The surface drains on the sides of roads are clogged by waste in many cases, he said.

Usually, the rainwater in the city flows into the rivers surrounding the capital via canals. If the rain continues for a few more days, the water level of four rivers will rise, obstructing the natural flow of water into the rivers, he said.

Rainwater also cannot reach the retention ponds in Goranchatbari, Kallyanpur, and Dholaihal through canals due to encroachment and clogging of the canals at different points, Akter added.

There are two more water retention ponds on the eastern side of the capital beside the Balu river, the government will have to preserve those by connecting them with canals, he said.

Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon, former BIP president, said after taking the ownership of the canals from Wasa four years ago, the city corporations are yet to recover the canals from encroachers.

For example, he said, Kalunagar canal, a vital channel to remove water from Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh areas, is still not fully functional as the 2.4km canal is blocked by two housing projects.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report.

"As the world is getting warmer, it is impacting the weather pattern. Now both evaporation rate and atmospheric moisture holding capacity are increasing and that's why we see more rainfall in shorter periods," Prof AKM Saiful Islam, one of the lead authors of the IPCC report.

Experts said incidents of extreme rainfall are being observed more frequently in many parts of the world, especially in the climate-vulnerable countries and Bangladesh is a prime example.

"In addition to this, there is another pattern of the monsoon being delayed, as reflected by the decline in the average amount of rainfall in June and July," said Abdul Mannan, a former BMD meteorologist.

## Downpour drowns

The condition of Shyampur, Manda, and Jirani canals is almost similar. So, the rainwater of nearby areas cannot be drained out. Some canals at Satarkul are also blocked due to construction of roads, he added.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of BIP, pointed the finger at the unregulated development.

"We have lost canals to development in various areas of the city."

**SUFFERINGS**  
"We are facing the consequences of unplanned development. We are paying taxes, but the government is not improving the drainage system, resulting in the untold sufferings of people like us," said Rafiq Mia, a resident of Green Road.

Almost the entire Green Road and its adjoining areas like Kathalbagan, Free School Street, Bhutergoli, and Kalabagan went under knee-to-waist-deep water.

Rafiq Miah, a microbus driver, said his vehicle broke down near New Market on a waterlogged street, and he was stranded there for over two hours.

"I don't know what the government and city corporations have been doing over the years...," he said.

Meanwhile, many took to social media to let people know about their ordeals and express anger. They shared photos and videos.

Streets near Fakirapool; Nayapaltan; Baitul Mukarram; Shantinagar; Arambagh; Pragati Sarani; New Market; Dayaganj intersection; Sayedabad Bus Terminal; Toyenbee Circular Road; Elephant Road; Matsya Bhaban; Dhanmondi; Karwan Bazar; Farmgate; Bijay Sarani; and East Rajabazar were inundated.

People in Old Dhaka had a terrible day. Areas including Nazirabazar, Kazi Alauddin Road, Nimali, Tantibazar, Bangshal, and Nawabpur Road went under knee-deep water.

Another study, "Spatio-temporal patterns of rainfall variability in Bangladesh" published in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Global Warming, found a substantial decline in the rainfall in Bangladesh.

It said that the rainfall during monsoon seasons lasting from June to September contributed around 80 percent of the total rainfall.

The study also found that the southeastern region received the highest amount of rainfall, especially the unusually high amount observed in the monsoon seasons of 2014 and 2020. The eastern region received the second-highest amount of rainfall. The northwestern region experiences the lowest amount of rainfall, while the central region receives below-average rainfall.

## Russia hikes taxes to help fund Ukraine offensive

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday signed off on a package of tax rises worth almost \$30 billion, tapping workers and companies to contribute funds for his Ukraine offensive.

Moscow's spending has outrun revenue by tens of billions of dollars since it ordered troops into Ukraine in February 2022, helping the economy defy expectations of a deep recession but also pushing it into rare budget deficits.

Russia ran a budget deficit of around 3.2 trillion rubles (\$36 billion) in 2023, equivalent to two percent of GDP.

Putin yesterday signed into law a set of amendments to Russia's tax code that includes increases on income taxes for high earners and corporate taxes paid by businesses in a bid to help plug the fiscal hole.

They were passed by Russia's rubber-stamp parliament earlier this week.

"The changes are aimed at building a fair and balanced tax system," Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said when the proposed changes were laid out in May.

He said the extra funds would bolster Russia's "economic well-being" and go towards a series of public investment projects.

The tax hikes -- which are being presented domestically as "systemic reforms" -- will raise around 2.6 trillion rubles (\$29 billion) in 2025 when they come into force, the finance ministry estimates.

## Protesters block roads, ignore warnings

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Law Minister Anisul Huq said he believes students, who have presented their views on the issue of quotas in government jobs, will accept the Supreme Court's directive and return home.

He also warned that the government would be forced to take action otherwise.

"It's the government's responsibility

to look after the people's lives and properties. If anyone causes any serious disruption, the government will take action according to the law," the minister said while speaking to journalists at Akhaura Railway Station in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

In another development, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Habibur Rahman said yesterday that any attempts to disrupt





## CITY DROWNS IN DOWNPOUR

Dhaka dwellers woke up to waterlogged roads yesterday morning amid heavy rainfall. Multiple areas, including many thoroughfares, were inundated while pedestrians had to wade through knee-deep water in many places. According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, a total of 130-millimetre rainfall occurred in the six hours from 6:00am to noon. Commuters who mostly left home for their workplace to provide emergency services and to go to kitchen markets suffered on the roads due to ankle- to knee-deep water and transport crisis. Although traffic was light on a Friday morning, those who ventured out with their cars had to manoeuvre through waterlogged streets. People were seen pulling their vehicles on the submerged roads as those broke down due to the waterlogging. Many shops and houses in different areas were submerged too. The photos were taken in Dhanmondi, Moghbazar, Malibagh, Dhaka University, Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Mirpur and Arambagh areas.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, ANISUR RAHMAN, PALASH KHAN



PHOTO: COLLECTED



The Daily Star  
**STELLAR  
WOMEN  
SEASON 2**

### CALL FOR REGISTRATIONS / NOMINATIONS

The Stellar Women initiative aims to recognise twelve (12) extraordinary women throughout the year (From July '24 to June '25) for playing a vital role in their distinguished fields. Their work must have made positive contributions towards the development of society & the nation.

Inviting nominations/ registrations in the following categories:

<b>Art &amp; Culture</b> (31 <sup>st</sup> July '24)	<b>Sportswoman</b> (31 <sup>st</sup> August '24)	<b>Bank &amp; Financial Institute</b> (30 <sup>th</sup> September '24)
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## Govt sinking Bangladesh on all fronts

### Says BNP leader Amir Khosru

UNB, Dhaka

Slamming the government for waterlogging in different areas of Dhaka caused by heavy rainfall yesterday morning, BNP senior leader Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said Bangladesh is sinking in all directions due to the misrule and politics of the Awami League regime.

Speaking at a discussion, the BNP leader said Dhaka is experiencing waterlogging because capable and meritorious individuals are not allowed to participate in the planning and execution phases necessary to address this issue.

"If the administration is run by partisan people, then not just Dhaka, the entire country will sink," he said.

Ganatantra Mancha arranged the discussion at the Jatiya Press Club, marking the founding anniversary of the platform.



Away from the worries and woes of the city, this dragonfly rests on a blade of grass. The photo was taken near the Shayestabad area of Barishal Sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Port Road now a death trap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The Port Road under Ward 10 of Barishal City Corporation has turned into a death trap, leading to several accidents in recent times.

Even though located in the city's most important commercial area, the road has been in a dilapidated state over the last four years without any step from the authorities concerned to repair it.

"The biggest hilsa wholesale trading centre in the country's southern region is at Port Road. Its sorry state is affecting our business in numerous ways," said Habib, a hilsa trader.

Ganesh Dutta, a wholesale fruit trader, echoed him. Visiting the road recently, this correspondent saw goods-laden trucks stuck in knee-deep mud in the Launch Ghat area along a 404-metre stretch of the road from Piyanjipatti Junction.

The situation exacerbates during the monsoon. Traders said easybikes and rickshaws often get overturned on this road, causing injuries to passengers.

The road does not fall under the jurisdiction of the BCC as it is located within the Barishal River Port area, therefore the task of the road's repair and maintenance lies with the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, said Abul Bashar, executive engineer of BCC.

Contacted, Md Asaduzzaman, sub assistant engineer of BIWTA, said he had sent a proposal for the road's renovation work in last May to the headquarters, but they have not received any instructions yet.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Guava, hog plum growers fear poor harvest

Locals blame unfavourable weather, cyclone Remal



KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Growers of guava and hog plum in Pirojpur and Jhalakathi districts are worried over a possible poor production due to unfavourable weather and the aftermath of cyclone Remal.

In fact, the harvest of seasonal guava in the region has been delayed by a month already.

Guava is commercially cultivated in Pirojpur's Nesarabad and Jhalakathi's Sadar upazilas, while hog plum is grown in all upazilas in the two districts. These two fruits are main cash crops for growers in Nesarabad and Jhalakathi Sadar.

"High temperature during flowering time this year hampered production of both seasonal fruits. Then Remal caused further damage to the trees and buds. The fruits did not grow well due to a lack of rain," said Sunil Biswas, a cultivator from Adamkathi village in Nesarabad.

"Guava harvesting is expected to begin in full swing within two weeks and will continue for a couple of months. This year, however, the harvest has been delayed due to the inclement weather condition," he added.

Wholesale buyers from across the country collect guava from Nesarabad and Jhalakathi Sadar and then transport the fruits by trucks, said guava growers. Hundreds of large hog plum trees with fruits and buds were uprooted in the two districts as Remal lashed the southern coastal belt on May 26.

Birendranath, a hog plum grower, said, "It takes at least five years for a hog plum tree to become productive, and it will produce fruit continuously for over 20 years. Many trees got uprooted in the cyclone. It will not only lower the output this year but also in future, as it will take years for new trees to

become productive."

Swapan Halder, another cultivator, echoed him.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, guava has been cultivated in 846 hectares of land in Pirojpur and 320 hectares in Jhalakathi Sadar.

Also, hog plum has been cultivated on 507 hectares of land in Pirojpur and 140 hectares in Jhalakathi Sadar.

Contacted, Chapal Krishna Nath, upazila agriculture officer in Nesarabad, confirmed a month's delay in guava harvesting. "Normally, guava harvest begins by mid-June every year. This year, it got delayed considerably and will begin mid-July," he said.

Ali Ahmad, upazila agriculture officer in Jhalakathi Sadar, said that the production of guava and hog plum in his upazila will be lower this year due to unfavourable weather and the impact of the cyclone.

## 'Rohingyas need more int'l support'

IFRC president says Bangladesh must take steps to adapt to climate change

MAMUNUR RASHID

There is a need for sustained international attention and support for the Rohingyas until a solution is reached to get the displaced people back to a safe country, said Kate Forbes, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

"Yes, we want them [Rohingyas] to continue living in a safe space in the future. But that's not going to be today, not going to be next week, it won't even be next month," she told The Daily Star in a recent interview.

"In the meantime, we, the humanitarian sector, the IFRC and other large players, have an obligation to tell the story that is still here. The needs still exist."

Kate Forbes came on a five-day visit to Bangladesh on June 2. She visited the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and travelled to Koyra upazila, which was affected by cyclone Remal.

The IFRC president met with key government officials, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud, to discuss the impacts of climate change and strategies for managing disasters and pandemics.

About her visit to the Rohingya camps, Kate said the Bangladesh government and the people deserve praise for providing a safe space for these displaced individuals.

She said she discussed with government officials as well as ambassadors about the increased conflict within the Rohingya camp and a solution to that.

Speaking about climate change, strengths and weaknesses of Bangladesh's disaster management strategies, the IFRC president said,

"One of the main issues here is the lack of innovation. In the past, inadequate forecasting has led to the loss of thousands of lives because people were unaware that a cyclone was approaching. They had almost no knowledge about it."

"We understand that as climate change intensifies, the severity of disasters here is also increasing. Therefore, we need to be prepared, alert the people, and help them adapt to these changes. We must raise awareness among a larger number of people and support those who are at risk so they can develop their plans to tackle these disasters effectively."

She said that Bangladesh's present disaster management system is blunt and emphasised the need for more proactive measures.

Calling upon Bangladesh to adapt the strategies that many parts of the world have made, she said, "We need to look at how we manage rainfalls so that we don't lose our topsoil, and can still plant trees and crops."

It's also crucial to start conversations in schools about the impacts of climate change and how it affects us, she added. "At an individual level, we each have a responsibility in this effort," she said.

Speaking about future activities of the Red Crescent Society in Bangladesh, Kate said they can train more volunteers and engage more people so that they can make a difference.

## Man stabbed to death in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

A 50-year-old man was stabbed to death by unidentified miscreants in Kadamtali area of Dhaka on Thursday night, said police.

Deceased Md Mahbub Alam was a resident of Dakshin Dhania area.

The victim's brother Rafiqul Alam said miscreants stabbed Mahbub in an alley around 10:15pm.

Hearing screams, locals took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where physicians declared him dead around 11:00pm, he said.

The hospital's police outpost in-charge Md Bachchu Mia said the body was kept at the morgue.

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**As flood worsens, food crisis**

FROM PAGE 5

The local authorities are working to provide continuous support to the flood-affected people in the district. However, it has become apparent that the relief assistance for the people has been much less than required.

Meanwhile, the

Brahmaputra was still flowing 31cm above danger level yesterday noon while water levels of the Dudhkumar and Dharla rivers went below danger level by 8cm and 5cm respectively, according to BWDB sources in Kurigram.

"Many schools are now closed due to flooding. The affected students will be enlisted once the schools reopen. New books and study materials will be provided to the students who lost those in floodwater," said Nibez Uddin Sarkar, district primary education officer in Kurigram.

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# Abandoned hostels, unbound sufferings

4 residential halls of Khulna Polytechnic Institute lie unused for 15yrs

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

An eerie silence prevails on the once bustling campus of Khulna Polytechnic Institute as its four dormitories have been lying abandoned for 15 years.

On February 8, 2009, the authorities of the institution announced its closure as well as of the dormitories after students, agitated over their demand for cancellation of exam, clashed with police.

While the institution resumed its academic activities later on, the hostels remained padlocked with electricity lines disconnected. The institute's authorities later in 2017 even sent an application to the divisional commissioner to declare the four buildings abandoned.

As such, hundreds of students of the institution have been suffering immensely over the years to manage their accommodation outside the campus.

Meanwhile, the abandoned hostels — three for male students with 441 seats and one for female students with 60 seats — have been gradually becoming dilapidated over the years due to a lack of maintenance.

After nightfall, the dark corridors of the dormitories become dens of addicts.

At present, around 4,000 students are studying in nine departments of Khulna Polytechnic Institute, established in 1963



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



on around 29 acres of land in Khalishpur area of the city.

With no residential facilities available any more, these students are compelled to rent houses or mess in neighbouring areas, spending much more than they had to. Alongside this, they are bearing numerous problems, including harassment of female students outside the campus.

"I am burdened with a monthly cost of accommodation, meal and other expenses totalling Tk 7,000-7,500, which I can barely afford. The situation is the same for most students. If the hostels

were opened, it would have benefitted hundreds of students like me," said Sujan Biswas, a second-year student of electronics department from Bagerhat, who lives in a mess with 14 other students.

A female student wishing anonymity said, "Our plight is even more concerning. We often face security threats, harassment and stalking on our way to and from rented accommodations."

Aris Mahmud Nabab, a student of 2018-19 session and also general secretary of Bangladesh Technical Students Council, said they had written to the teachers on numerous occasions requesting for opening the halls, but there has been no response so far.

"Over 1,100 students get admitted to this institution every year but around 150

to 200 students leave for elsewhere being unable to bear the expenses of studying here while renting accommodation outside the campus," he said.

Some teachers and former students of the institute said the halls were earlier controlled by ruling party-backed student leaders and hence a lot of troubles were created on the campus. As such, no one is in favour of opening the halls.

Contacted, Animesh Paul, principal of the institute, said considering the plight of female students, a hostel with 500 seats will be constructed for them, while a 10-storey academic building will be built in place of the existing four dormitories, along with an 8-foot-high boundary wall around the campus to prevent trespassing.

## MIRANZILLA COLONY Protect harijans, stop eviction

Hindu Parishad urges PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding the protection of minorities and protesting the attack on Miranzilla Harijan colony, Bangladesh Hindu Parishad held a protest rally in Dhaka yesterday.

The programme took place in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club around 11:00am, where speakers strongly condemned the attack carried out by a local councillor on the harijan community, situated in the city's Bangshal, on July 10.

They also sought the intervention of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resolve the issue surrounding their eviction.

Sajan Kumar Mishra, spokesperson of the organisation, said, "There is a place for Rohingyas in this country. But it is a matter of regret that people of the harijan community, who have worked to keep this city clean for 400 years, are being evicted."

This is very unfortunate in the independent Bangladesh, he said.

Advocate Sumon Kumar Roy, general secretary of Hindu Parishad, said, "No one has been arrested yet for carrying out such a heinous attack on the harijan community in broad daylight. On the contrary, cases have been filed against the harijans." He alleged that the Hindu communities are deprived of justice now.

"Their value increases only when elections come. The Hindu community is now aware of politics and their rights; they can no longer be used as a vote bank in the coming days," he said, adding that they will give a befitting reply to these injustices by exercising their franchise in the future.



## Woman's body found in maize field

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police recovered the throat-slit body of a woman from a maize field at Haluapara in Kishoreganj's Katiadi upazila yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Smriti Akter, 22.

Smriti — who got married to Amin Bhuiyan, an expatriate in Qatar, five years ago — used to live at her father's house in Haluapara area, said Mohamamd Daud, officer-in-charge of Katiadi Police Station.

He said they are investigating the incident.

Police sent the body to a local hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the official.



While rain brought misery to the lives of adults across Khulna, these children found joy as they splashed around in the knee-deep water. Over the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, Khulna experienced 89mm of rain, with 55mm taking place between 6:00am and 9:00am. The photo was taken in front of the Metro Police Line School in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## As flood worsens, food crisis mounts

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Hundreds of families in Kurigram's shoal areas have been facing untold sufferings amid deteriorating flood situation.

In Uttar Ramana village within Brahmaputra's shoal under Chilmari upazila, all 240 families were compelled to leave their homes, submerged under floodwaters, with their belongings and domestic animals to shelter on an embankment of Bangladesh Water Development Board since July 2.

Inadequate relief assistance means many families are grappling with an acute crisis of food. The children and elderly among them have been suffering the most. Many school-goers have been unable to study, having lost their books and study materials in floodwater.

"Since the flood began, my father

has been unable to find work, so we don't have enough food. We are mainly surviving on dry food like puffed rice, that too barely for one meal a day. I can't study either as my books and study materials were lost," said Rumana Akhter, 11.

Nirab Islam, 8, and Khushi Akhter, 11, echoed her.

"We are grappling with food shortage. I have no work now due to the flood situation. I can't afford to buy food, and kerosene oil or candles. We are spending our nights inside this polythene-wrapped shanty amid darkness, with floodwater raging around us," said Khushi's father Faridul Islam.

The scenario is same for 350 shoal villages under nine upazilas in the district.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Damaged roads disrupt connectivity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The ongoing flood in Sirajganj district left at least three roads badly damaged in Shahzadpur upazila in the past one week, disrupting road communication.

In Chithulia area of Kayampur union under the upazila, around 30-metre stretch of a concrete road was washed away in flood within a day on July 3, affecting around 10,000 residents of nine villages.

A portion of a similar concrete road and an earthen road in Talgachhi area were also damaged.

Contacted, Md Saiful Islam, executive engineer of LGED in Sirajganj, said, "In the present flood situation, it is not feasible to repair the roads properly. Once floodwater recedes, we will assess the extent of damage to the roads and repair those properly to restore smooth road communication."

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SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Due to inadequate relief assistance, many families are grappling with an acute food crisis. The children and elderly among them have been suffering the most.

PHOTO: STAR

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## PAK PARLIAMENT Ex-PM Imran Khan's party wins reserved seats

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday ruled that jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party was eligible for over 20 extra reserved seats in parliament, ramping up pressure on the country's weak coalition government.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party candidates contested the February 8 election as independents after it was barred from the polls. They won the most seats but the election commission said independents were ineligible for the grant of 70 reserved seats, meant for political parties only.

The commission had ordered the reserved seats instead to be distributed among other parties, mostly to those in the ruling coalition.

"As a political party, the PTI is entitled to its reserved seats," said Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa while



Rescuers search for survivors in the Trishuli River following a landslide in Simaltar, Nepal yesterday. At least 63 people were missing after the landslide triggered by heavy monsoon rains swept two buses off a highway and into the river, authorities said.



reading out the order, which was supported by eight judges and opposed by five of the 13-member full court bench.

The granting of 23 reserved seats does not affect the parliamentary majority of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's coalition government.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told reporters after the decision.

The ruling coalition still has well over 200 members of the 336-member lower house of parliament. Khan's party strength stood at 84 before the decision, and is expected to rise to over 100.

Under Pakistan's election rules, parties are allocated 70 reserved seats - 60 for women, 10 for non-Muslims - in proportion to the number of seats they win. This completes the National Assembly's total strength of 336 seats.

## Tax billionaires more

India's opposition Congress asks Modi in a bid to generate funds for stretched public services like education, health

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's main opposition Congress party yesterday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose an additional tax on the country's billionaires to generate funds for stretched public services like education and health.

The annual budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23 at a time of deepening income inequality and high unemployment despite India's world-beating economic growth of nearly 8 percent and booming stock markets.

Jairam Ramesh, senior Congress party leader, said in a post on X that a 2 percent tax on the wealth of India's estimated 167 billionaires could raise as much as 1.5 trillion rupees (\$18 billion) or about 0.5 percent of gross domestic product.

"This could pay for schools, hospitals, renewable energy, and many more essential investments," he said, urging the

government to tax the super-rich more.

Wealth concentrated in the hands of the richest 1 percent of India's population is at its greatest level for six decades and its percentage share of national income exceeds that of countries including Brazil and the US research group the World

**Jairam Ramesh, senior Congress party leader, said that a 2 percent tax on wealth of estimated 167 billionaires could raise as much as 1.5 trillion rupees.**

Inequality Lab reported earlier this year.

Opposition parties are pressing the government to take steps to increase spending on welfare programmes after Modi lost his majority in parliament and had to rely on coalition allies to return to

office for the third time.

Government officials earlier ruled out the possibility of taxing the wealth of the ultra-rich, arguing it could encourage them to move to low-tax countries.

Congress also asked Modi to clarify what would be India's position at the G20 meeting in Brazil later this month on the issue of supporting a global tax on billionaires, a proposal pushed by Brazil, which holds the G20 presidency this year.

Brazil's proposal, crafted by French economist Gabriel Zucman from the independent EU Tax Observatory, calls for an annual 2 percent levy on fortunes exceeding \$1 billion, which could raise up to \$250 billion annually from about 3,000 individuals.

Government sources said yesterday India plans to overhaul more than 200 state-run firms to make them more profitable, signalling a departure from Modi's aggressive privatisation programme that has struggled to take off.

## Kejriwal gets interim bail in graft case

But he stays in jail due to his arrest in another case

REUTERS, New Delhi



India's Supreme Court yesterday granted interim bail to opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case, but he will stay in jail due to his arrest in another case.

Kejriwal was arrested in March by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), India's financial crime-fighting agency, over alleged corruption in the city's alcohol sales policy.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a former anti-corruption crusader, Kejriwal, 55, denies any wrongdoing and calls the case politically motivated. His lawyers had challenged his arrest in the top court, which referred the matter to a larger bench while giving him temporary relief. "Given that right to life and liberty is sacrosanct, and Arvind Kejriwal has suffered incarceration for over 90 days... we direct that Arvind Kejriwal will be released on interim bail," Justice Sanjiv Khanna said.

## India announces 'Murder of the Constitution Day' remembrance

AFP, New Delhi

India said yesterday it would hold an annual "Murder of the Constitution Day" from next year, commemorating a dark historical chapter tied to the family of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief political rival.

June 25, 2025 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, when then-premier Indira Gandhi suspended the constitution in response to a court ruling that threatened her hold on power.

The following months saw thousands of activists jailed, press freedoms suspended and an abusive compulsory sterilisation campaign that forced millions of men to receive vasectomies in an abortive population control effort.

Modi said on social media platform X that the new day of remembrance would "serve as a reminder of what happens when the Constitution of India was trampled over." "It is also a day to pay homage to each and every person who suffered due to the excesses of the Emergency."

## Rohingya repatriation looking like pipe dream

FROM PAGE 12

Over the last several years, the Myanmar army violated airspace and bullets landed on Bangladesh territory, leaving people injured. Bangladesh repeatedly protested the incidents.

Bangladesh's physical relation with Myanmar is through Rakhine state, and that configuration is now changing with the non-state actors controlling this border, said Sakhawat, also a former election commissioner.

"Clearly, there is a huge security threat... the options for Bangladesh are limited."

If the Myanmar junta counterattacks the AA, the situation will only worsen at the border, Sakhawat said. "What would happen if the Arakan Army crosses the border to Bangladesh while fighting? Will Bangladesh take their side?"

As the Myanmar military has conscripted Rohingyas into the force, the AA's position is against them. So, there is a risk of Rohingya-AA direct confrontation, he said.

Another side-effect of the fighting is that drug smuggling through the Bangladesh-Myanmar border may be rampant as the warring forces often make money out of drug sales, Sakhawat added.

Subsequently, Bangladesh must send security reinforcements along the 271 km-long land and maritime border, according to experts.

"We are absolutely troubled by the conflicts and their implications on Bangladesh," said an official of the foreign ministry.

The Myanmar authorities have

been warned not to make Bangladesh a casualty of their fighting. "We have beefed up border security measures so that Rohingyas cannot enter our territory," he added.

Bangladesh will not be able to shoot the Rohingyas if they forcefully enter Bangladesh en masse, said Munshi Faiz Ahmad, a former ambassador.

Before that happens, Bangladesh needs to take serious diplomatic initiatives so the Rohingyas can stay in Rakhine, maybe in camps, under international supervision.

He suggested Bangladesh raise its voice at the UN and hold dialogues with the US, India and China regarding the matter.

"We cannot be burdened again and again by the Rohingya crisis created by Myanmar," said Ahmad, also a former chairman of the Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies.

The UN Security should seriously consider deploying UN peacekeepers in Rakhine to maintain peace, said Shahab Enam Khan, a professor of international relations at Jahangirnagar University.

"International law is not only applicable to Bangladesh. Bangladesh has limits too. How long can the people of Bangladesh take responsibility for the Rohingyas?"

Bangladesh can support developing a humanitarian corridor, allowing international aid agencies to reach food and other emergency supplies to Rakhine State for the displaced Rohingyas, he added.

Sakhawat suggested that it would be best if the UN could arrange places

within Rakhine where the Rohingyas can take shelter.

"The UN can make a global call on this instead of pushing Bangladesh to take the responsibility," he said.

There are about one million Rohingyas in the camps in Cox's Bazar, with yearly births of 30,000.

Rohingya repatriation could not be possible, even under a tripartite initiative led by China, as Rohingyas were not convinced by the guarantee of safety and citizenship in Rakhine.

The NUG, the Myanmar government in exile since 2021, had pledged citizenship and recognition of Rohingyas as an ethnic group of Myanmar. However, analysts expect the AA to have stronger autonomy even if Myanmar becomes a federal democracy.

Also, the AA thinks Rohingyas are outsiders, so it will be difficult to continue repatriation efforts if the AA controls the Rakhine state.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said repatriation of the Rohingyas under the present conditions in Rakhine is not possible in the near future. However, the government will continue to engage the international community in Rohingya repatriation.

Until then, the burden on Bangladesh is getting heavier, with funding for Rohingyas on the wane.

As much as \$852 million is needed for the upkeep of Rohingyas in the camps in 2024. So far, less than 30 percent of the sum has come through.

"It is important for Bangladesh to establish contacts with the Arakan Army, even if informally. If they control Rakhine, there will be no alternatives to establishing relations with them," Ahmad said.

## Nepal PM Dahal loses confidence vote

FROM PAGE 12

Dahal, 69, was forced to either resign or prove his majority in parliament after his largest ally, the liberal Communist Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, led by Oli, withdrew support last week.

Oli, who has been prime minister twice before, struck a deal with the centrist Nepali Congress (NC) at the end of June, securing enough seats for a majority, meaning he is poised to govern, but no date has been set for the new government to take office.

Dahal, a former Maoist rebel chief, needed at least 138 votes in his

favour in the 275-member house to retain power. A total of 63 of the 258 lawmakers present in the chambers voted for him, 194 voted against, and one abstained.

"The confidence vote sought by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been rejected," Parliament Speaker Dev Raj Ghimire declared after the ballots were counted.

In his third term as prime minister, which began in December 2022, Dahal changed his main coalition partner three times and had to seek a vote of confidence five times, including the one he lost yesterday.

"The new coalition was necessitated by a need for political stability," UML lawmaker Yogesh Bhattarai said.

In a speech ahead of yesterday's vote, Dahal said Oli's coalition of the two biggest political parties was against democratic practice.

UML is the largest party in parliament and NC is the second largest.

"I am concerned this might lead to regression and authoritarianism," said Dahal, whose Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) is the third largest party.

## Biden faces more calls to quit race

FROM PAGE 12

want someone else, that's the democratic process," Biden said, before shifting to the stage whisper he often uses for emphasis to add, "It's not gonna happen."

Biden perhaps did not reassure those who were spooked by his poor presidential debate performance against Trump on June 27.

At one point, he referred to his vice president, Kamala Harris, as "Vice President Trump." That came just hours after he introduced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as "President Putin" at the Nato summit, drawing gasps from those in the room.

## AL to go tough to quell infighting

FROM PAGE 1

civil society platform Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) on July 4 said AL grassroots leaders have become further apart as several party men ran for chairman in almost all upazilas. It said the situation may get worse.

Asked about the reasons behind the intra-party feuds, several senior AL leaders blamed party leaders' desperation for winning polls, establishing supremacy, securing party posts, and rivalries between party lawmakers, local leaders, independent MPs and the newly elected upazila chairmen.

They said internal feuds have caused the organisation to reach a point where some leaders cannot even tolerate their party colleagues.

The senior leaders said the AL high-ups are trying to restore discipline, but it might be tough.

Infighting within the ruling party became so grave that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had to ask the home minister to ensure arrests of all those linked to clashes and killings within the AL.

In a meeting on July 8, AL leaders and several ministers said that intra-party conflicts have become the party's main cause for concern.

Sources said the ruling party is going to take some drastic measures. The AL organising secretaries have been asked to identify the party units that have internal feuds and those responsible, and report to the AL high command.

Top AL leaders will tour different districts, hold talks with the leaders

Biden occasionally garbled his responses at the news conference, yet he also delivered detailed assessments of global issues, including Ukraine's war with Russia and the Israel's offensive in Gaza, that served as a reminder of his decades of experience on the world stage.

Some Democrats were not reassured.

"We must put forward the strongest candidate possible to confront the threat posed by Trump's promised MAGA authoritarianism. I no longer believe that is Joe Biden," said Representative Jim Himes of Connecticut, who called on the

president to end his campaign after the news conference.

A senior campaign official who spoke on condition of anonymity called the performance the "worst of all worlds. Not good. But not bad enough to make him change his mind... It'll give some enough cover to back him publicly, only to say he's not up for it privately."

On the other hand, Democratic fundraiser Dmitri Melhorn said other donors told him they saw a strong performance from the president. "This is the person who can beat Trump. The mistakes are baked in and the upside is strong," he told Reuters.

of the troubled units and summon leaders to Dhaka, if required, to end the disputes. If necessary, the party will take organisational actions against errant grassroots leaders, the sources added.

AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said intra-party conflicts within a big party like AL are "quite normal".

"But we will not spare anyone if party discipline is violated. We will do everything needed to restore discipline in the party," he told The Daily Star.

Conflicts within the AL became a common occurrence as different factions clashed over establishing political dominance, rivalries, taking control of illegal sand business, controlling bus and autorickshaw stands, business establishments, land, and party offices.

Rabiul Islam, 42, chairman of Sarapur Union Parishad under Khulna's Dumuria upazila and also a local AL leader, was shot dead on July 6.

Rabiul's wife Shayla Erin filed a case with Dumuria Police Station saying her husband might have been killed over political rivalry.

Police arrested local AL leader Asgar Bishwas in the case. Asgar ran for Dumuria upazila chairman and Rabiul reportedly took a stance against Asgar.

On July 7, HM Suman Haldar, chairman of Panchgaon Union Parishad under Munshiganj's Tongbari upazila and also a local AL leader, was shot dead due to a rivalry over the election to a school

managing committee.

Police arrested three people in connection with the murder. The three are involved in AL.

On June 22, at least 30 people were injured in a clash between two AL factions in Rajshahi's Bagha upazila. Of the injured, Ashrafat Islam Babul, upazila AL general secretary, died of his wounds on June 26.

Police arrested Bagha municipality Mayor Akkas Ali, also a district AL leader, in connection with the murder.

A recent report by Bangla daily Prothom Alo said clashes between AL or pro-AL men left 51 people dead in Bogura over the last 15 years.

The report cited establishing dominance, rivalries over securing party posts, control over narcotics trade, control over establishments, extortion in the transport sector, and control over sand trade as the reasons behind the clashes.

A top Bogura AL leader said, "No visible steps are taken to end the longstanding intra-party feuds."

He said grassroots leaders and activists used to maintain close contact with their respective unit leaders and also follow their instructions because their recommendations were necessary for them to win party tickets for local government polls.

"But as Awami League decided not to field party candidates in the local government polls, party men who ran as independents created their own groups of supporters. This ultimately weakened the chain of command," he observed.



## In Russia, Biden's verbal slip draws mockery

REUTERS, Moscow

Joe Biden has shown he is "a pro-Russian candidate being controlled by the Kremlin," Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman joked yesterday, after the US president misspoke and introduced Ukraine's leader as "President Putin" before correcting himself.

Video of the gaffe at a Nato summit in Washington on Thursday featured prominently on news bulletins in Russia.

Biden mixing up the names of his Republican rival Donald Trump with that of Kamala Harris, his vice president, was also given coverage.

Olga Skabeyeva, a pro-Kremlin TV commentator, posted a clip of Biden's Putin name fumble on her social media feed with a crying with laughter emoji.

"The show from Joe goes on!" she wrote separately beneath footage of Trump/Harris name mix-up.



Palestinians gather as they inspect the damages after Israeli forces withdrew from a part of Gaza City, following a ground operation in Gaza City yesterday. The civil defence agency said that about 40 bodies had been found in an initial search of two Gaza City districts. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Iran demands US pay \$6.8bn for sanctions impact

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian court has ordered the United States to pay almost \$6.8 billion in damages for the effect of sanctions on patients with a rare skin disease.

The International Court in Tehran ordered its foe the United States to pay \$6.785 billion to patients with epidermolysis bullosa, a disorder that causes the skin to blister easily, the judiciary's Mizan Online website said on Thursday.

Then-president Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the US from a nuclear accord between Iran and several global powers. He reimposed economic sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement.

Washington's measures "deprived these patients of medicines and ointments", leading to "the death of about 20 people", it said.

The trial began in November 2021, when 295 complainants, including patients, took 30 American officials to court for "having participated in the establishment of the sanctions," Mizan added.

They filed the case after United Nations experts in October 2021 cited the impact of the US measures on epidermolysis bullosa patients as an example of "over-compliance with sanctions".

## FAMINE IN GAZA

# Displaced Palestinians turn to leaves to survive

REUTERS, Gaza

Struggling through rubble and buildings shattered by Gaza's offensive, Ahmed Al-Shanbari and three of his sons risk their lives to pick mulberry leaves to eat, a scene being played out across the enclave as Palestinians face a hunger crisis.

"It is scary to walk when the bombing is still happening," said Al-Shanbari, who like many Gazans risks Israeli bombardment in the search for food.

Ahmed's wife Fatima cleans the leaves and boils them over a makeshift stove. "Nothing in it is tolerable, neither its taste nor its



**More than 495,000 people are facing the most severe level of food insecurity, says UN-backed global monitor**

colour," she said. Fatima stuffs the leaves with rice and spices, hoping to get her children to tolerate the sour taste. Yet the bitterness remains.

The mulberry leaves are animal's food, she says. "But what can we do?"

The al-Shanbari family of eight struggles to survive, like many Palestinians in Gaza, where 2.3 million people live in one of the world's most densely populated

places facing shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel.

"Ever since the offensive started, we did not taste anything, we're living on the few things we find," said Fatima.

In a July 9 statement, a group of independent human rights experts mandated by the United Nations said that famine has spread throughout the enclave. Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva said the statement amounted to "misinformation".

"Israel has continuously scaled up its coordination and assistance in the delivery of humanitarian aid across the Gaza Strip, recently connecting its power line to the Gaza water desalination plant," it added.

According to Gaza's health authorities, at least 33 children have died of malnutrition, mostly

in northern areas which had until recently faced the brunt of the Israeli military campaign.

Gaza remains at high risk of famine as the offensive continues and aid access is restricted, said a UN-backed global monitor called the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), last month.

More than 495,000 people are facing the most severe, or "catastrophic", level of food insecurity, the IPC said.

Their statement, signed by experts including the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, condemned "Israel's intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people".

Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva said the statement amounted to "misinformation".

## Nigeria school collapse kills several students Others trapped

AFP, Jos

A school in central Nigeria collapsed yesterday, killing several students and trapping others who were heard crying for help under the rubble, a rescue agency and witnesses said.

Mechanical diggers tried to rescue victims while parents desperately looked for their children at the Saint Academy in Jos North district of Plateau State after the building fell in on students taking their exams, an AFP correspondent at the site said.

"I entered the class not more than five minutes, when I heard a sound, and the next thing is I found myself here," Wulliya Ibrahim, one of the injured students told AFP with his mother at his hospital bedside.

"We are many in the class, we are writing our exams."

The National Emergency Management Agency said the two-storey building housing Saint Academy collapsed killing "several students" without giving details.

"NEMA and other critical stakeholders are presently carrying out Search and Rescue operations," it said.

## Musk's X 'deceives' users with blue checks: EU

AFP, Brussels

Tech billionaire Elon Musk's X platform is misleading users with its blue checkmarks for certified accounts, and is also violating EU content rules, Brussels said yesterday, in a finding that could lead to hefty fines.

EU regulators are unhappy with the blue badge system under Musk's ownership since anyone can now obtain it with a premium subscription, whereas before it was reserved for verified accounts including leaders, companies and journalists, after approval.

The formal warning against X is the first under the Digital Services Act (DSA), a sweeping law that forces digital companies do more to police content online. It follows a probe launched in December 2023.

X becomes the third company in as many weeks to face the European Union's wrath for violating landmark new rules, after Brussels warned Apple and Meta to change their ways or risk massive fines – for breaches of a second law known as the Digital Markets Act (DMA).

Musk has overhauled the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, including changing its name, since purchasing it in October 2022.

But his plans for X have put him at odds with Brussels since the EU wants big tech to do more to protect users online and increase competition in the digital sphere. Now the European Commission has told X of its preliminary view that it is "in breach of" the DSA, arguing that the social network "deceives" users with its new blue badge rules.

## Ukraine downs 5 missiles, 11 drones launched by Russia

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian air force said yesterday it shot down all five Kh-101 cruise missiles and 11 out of 19 drones launched by Russia.

Russia's main target was the town of Starokostiantyniv, an important Ukrainian air base and a frequent target of Moscow's strikes, the air force said in a statement.

Ukrainian air force shot down 11 drones over six Ukrainian regions and did not have the location of the remaining eight drones launched in the attack.

"It is likely that the enemy is using imitators of attack drones to overload air defense. There was no information on casualties or damage," the air force said.

The governors of some of the targeted regions, including Sumy, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi, and Mykolaiv, reported no damage or casualties in their morning statements.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday that Russia does not rule out any scenarios regarding the possible resumption of the now-defunct Black Sea grain deal.

On Thursday, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, speaking after a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, said they had discussed navigational security in the Black Sea, including the grain deal.

Russia allowed the Turkish- and United Nations brokered deal, which for a year facilitated Russian and Ukrainian agricultural exports via the Black Sea, to expire in July 2023.



## Pakistan's first breast milk bank opposed by clerics

AFP, Karachi

A hospital that launched the first breast milk bank for premature babies in Pakistan is negotiating for it to be reopened after clerics deemed it un-Islamic, doctors and the national Islamic council said yesterday.

The milk bank in the megacity of Karachi received religious approval in December from a provincial Islamic seminary, but that approval was withdrawn almost as soon as the facility opened in June, forcing it to shut.

"Breast milk is the only way to improve the chances of the survival of premature babies," said Jamal Raza, a doctor and the executive director of the Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology hospital, where the bank was set up.

"People have no idea what this is about. Only premature babies were going to be given this milk," Raza added.

The facility was intended to help premature babies survive in a country where the neonatal mortality rate is 39 deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the UN children's agency – one of the highest in South Asia.

A religious edict, or fatwa, approving the facility was issued in December 2023 by Jamia Darul Uloom, an Islamic advisory body in the province.

However, the government's national Council of Islamic Ideology later questioned whether it risked breaking Islamic codes on kinship, which dictate that husband and wife cannot be breastfed by the same woman.

"The child's family must know who the donors are to not complicate the issue of future marriages between such families," the head of research at the council, Inamullah, who goes by one name, told AFP.



Relatives of construction workers comfort each other as rescuers work at the site of a collapsed scaffolding accident in the Malley suburb of Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday. At least three people were killed and eight injured when the scaffolding collapsed off a 19-storey building under construction in Lausanne, police said. PHOTO: AFP

## MIGRANT CRISIS

### Four drowned trying to cross Channel

Says French police

AFP, Lille

Four migrants drowned in the Channel overnight off France's northern coast while trying to cross to Britain, French maritime police said yesterday.

A navy patrol boat went to the site off of Boulogne-sur-Mer after being alerted that several migrants had fallen into the sea, maritime police told AFP.

Four bodies were pulled from the water, but people were also rescued, the police added.

The UK's new interior minister Yvette Cooper described the deaths as "truly awful".

"Criminal gangs are making vast profit from putting lives at risk," she wrote on X.

"We are accelerating action with international partners to pursue & bring down dangerous smuggler gangs," she added.



# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## State enterprises must answer for losses

### Projected fivefold rise in losses demands proper response

We are alarmed to learn of a projection that state-owned enterprises could end up counting nearly a fivefold increase in losses in FY2024-25 compared to the previous year, as their expenses are likely to far exceed their earnings. This is according to a monitoring cell of the Finance Division that conducted a budgetary analysis of 50 enterprises across seven sectors. Their total loss for FY2025 could be Tk 28,047.97 crore—up from the Tk 5,989.87 crore loss incurred in FY2024—indicating a deeply concerning trend.

The projection, made by a government body no less, is yet another indictment of the widespread corruption and mismanagement besieging government institutions, including state-owned enterprises. Not too long ago, we had a similar indictment when the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG) revealed massive financial irregularities in many of these institutions. Their spiralling losses, despite many enjoying monopolistic advantages as service providers, raise questions not only about how they would have fared in a competitive market environment, but also regarding the government's austerity measures, which should have stemmed the tide of rising expenses in them. Evidently, things are as bad as depicted in media reports, and they are now set to get worse.

This is not to say that all government enterprises are underperforming. In fact, according to the monitoring cell, most are making a profit. But the overall picture is marred by the staggering losses of 13 of the enterprises—projected to be Tk 36,144.93 crore in total—significantly eating away at the achievements of the rest. Some of them are well-known for their serial underperformance. Top among them is the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPPDB), contributing the largest anticipated loss with Tk 18,103.60 crore, thereby justifying the prediction of two Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) experts, made in a column published in this daily last year, that it was turning into a "white elephant." Another familiar contributor of losses is the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), where the level of irregularities is so massive that it even stunned a parliamentary committee.

We, therefore, demand a thorough review of why these 13 entities are floundering. We can no longer ignore their persistent losses, or that of other state institutions regularly flagged for irregularities. Any intervention must aim to rid them not only of corruption, but also the cycle of poor planning and inefficiencies that have long gone unpunished. The present economic crisis will be harder to overcome with these albatrosses hung around our neck.

## Will the 'big fish' finally be caught?

### Identify those who supplied and bought the leaked PSC exam questions

For years, we have urged the authorities to investigate the issue of PSC question paper leaks seriously beyond just perfunctory arrests of a few culprits. Thirty incidents of question paper leaks and a decade later, our law enforcement agencies seem to be finally conducting a thorough investigation to find all those involved at various stages of the process. According to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the syndicate of Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC) officials and employees was involved in leaking questions of at least 30 recruitment tests. The investigators have also listed the names of at least 24 officials currently working in different government departments, including the cadre service, who were involved in the racket, based on confessions of those arrested. The CID has hinted of involvement of some "big fish."

We are glad that these names are finally coming out, but given the way the investigations into question paper leaks have played out over the last decade, we have every reason to worry that those in the highest echelons of power will eventually get away. The CID has made arrests on multiple occasions before; how is it that they failed to unearth the major ring that has apparently been in operation since 2002? How did transactions worth crores of taka in the banks of syndicate members go unnoticed for so long? A few of those arrested now have been found to be involved in similar leaks before; why were they allowed to get away with not even a slap on their wrists? It's worth asking if law enforcement members themselves were previously involved in coverups in light of the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators so far. Law enforcement agencies must rise to the occasion to unmask the masterminds and their collaborators, no matter their identity.

It is also time we made public the names of those who got the jobs in much sought-after government positions by buying leaked question papers. How can we expect them to serve the country over their own greed if their entry into the profession is marked by such dishonesty? Corruption is now so ingrained into our system that perhaps we no longer even know or care to know the difference between right and wrong. But to stop this country from falling into a deeper abyss, we must do more than arrest a few individuals—we need to weed out the corrupt at every stage of government service.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### Theresa May becomes second woman PM of UK

On this day in 2016, Theresa May, then leader of the Conservative Party, became the second woman prime minister of the United Kingdom, replacing David Cameron, who resigned after the country voted to leave the European Union (EU).

# Why are highly educated people choosing blue-collar jobs abroad?



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

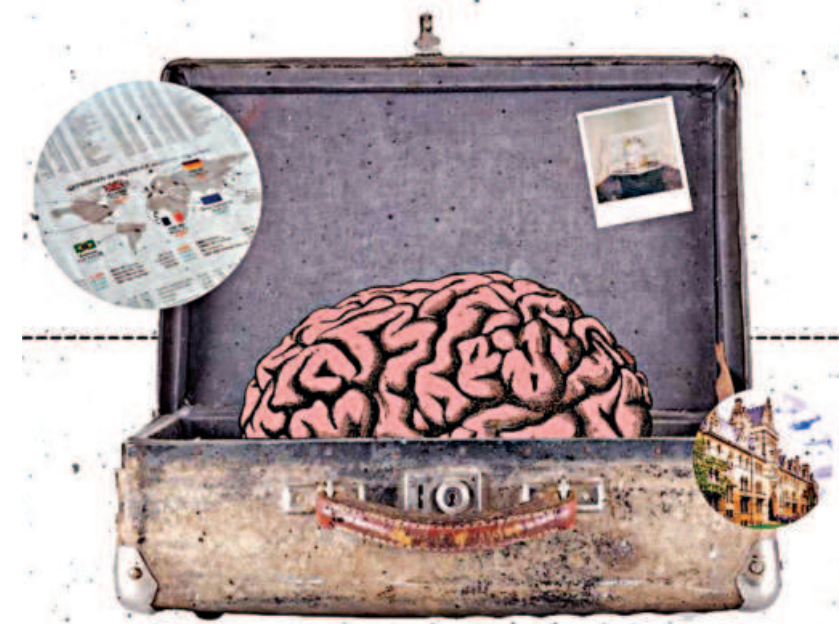
SHAMSAD MORTUZA

According to the records of a government-initiated overseas recruitment app, Ami Probashi, 50,000 registered applicants for blue-collar jobs such as labourers, drivers, and cleaners hold graduate and postgraduate degrees. More than three-fourths of the 2,477 PhD holders have also listed menial jobs as their options to leave the country. This trend is not just a statistical oddity, but a clear sign of deep-seated issues within our local job market and the broader socioeconomic context. The interest in low-skilled jobs in conventional migrant destinations (e.g., the Middle East, Malaysia, Europe, and North America) demands closer scrutiny.

It is common for expatriates to engage in odd jobs while they are studying or use them as a toehold for better alternatives. However, accepting (read: expecting) jobs that fall short of their academic qualifications and expertise, especially in such large quantities, is concerning. Think of the social cost. In an ideal situation, when highly educated individuals leave their home country to take up low-skilled jobs abroad, that country loses out on the potential contributions they could make to different professional fields.

These individuals, from an opportunity cost perspective, forgo the possibility of securing high-paying, high-status jobs that align with their qualifications. Instead, they are more focused on their immediate need for improved living conditions and economic stability by choosing menial jobs. The opportunity cost is not just personal; it is national. This brain drain stunts the country's growth and exacerbates the lack of qualified experts in critical industries. One might counter-argue that in a country with high unemployment, at least these individuals would become "remittance warriors" and foray into our national development.

As the world gets flat, Thomas



FILE VISUAL: ZARIF FAIZ

Friedman argues, the draw from a better economy is natural. According to him, globalisation has levelled the playing field and given everyone everywhere equal opportunities. Friedman has been proven wrong. The migration of highly educated individuals from poorer countries to take on low-skilled jobs in wealthier countries highlights the persistent inequalities and barriers that exist. It reveals that the world is far from flat. Just as the caste system once maintained social hierarchy, the rich world still relies on the poor to perform their "dirty" jobs. A software designer receives a higher royalty for their innovation compared to workers in a manufacturing plant.

Seeing our PhD holders choose menial jobs over research and innovation highlights a flaw in our educational policy. Why can't we engage our graduates with the highest achievements in a productive manner and employ them in the upper echelon?

Does it mean our degrees don't matter, at least in many OECD countries?

The more scandals we stir up, the more questionable the reputation of our degrees will become. If a premier institution admits a high-profile candidate for a PhD because of his professional influence and grants him a degree based on a 90-page report, it's inevitable that questions will arise.

security nets, and ensuring the quality and relevance of higher education. And this is precisely why public university teachers are boycotting the Prottoy scheme under the universal pension system. You cannot expect a university teacher with the best possible academic credentials to start a career with a Tk 22,000 basic salary and then have Tk 5,000 taka from their salary deducted for a future pension scheme. Even a private-sector driver with a Class 8 certificate earns more than a university teacher today.

Social security has become non-existent. The lack of safety nets became obvious during the pandemic. Most of us struggle to live hand-to-mouth. We do not have any mechanism to cope with emergencies. In contrast, wealthier countries often provide robust social security systems, making them attractive destinations for migrants seeking a more secure and predictable life. The colleague I mentioned was pleased that his professional sacrifice could ensure better schooling and healthcare for his family members. At least he was making an honest living. He did not pay millions to question leakers or corrupt bosses in order to get a job. He did not become a civil servant thinking of his job as a milking machine that would churn his initial investments into "mast bhari cheese."

Other contributing factors that cause people to opt for lesser options abroad include frustrations over opportunities and appreciation, the desire to join family members abroad, or the desire to escape political and social instability at home. A country that treats a film extra or a below-par player with more importance than a scientist, innovator or researcher is likely to lose its talents for sure. Whatever the motivation, the broader implication is clear: our current system is failing to harness the potential of our educated workforce.

The trend of highly educated individuals opting for blue-collar jobs abroad is a wake-up call for policymakers and stakeholders in the country. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in our education system, labour market policies, and social security frameworks. We must create an environment where our brightest minds can thrive and contribute to the nation's development, rather than seeking solace in menial jobs abroad.

# Let's end the 'princessification' of girls and 'machofication' of boys



Laila Khondkar is an international development worker.

LAILA KHONDKAR

A recent advertisement by an English medium school in Dhaka caught my attention: two boys are seen learning mathematics and robotics, while a girl is seen playing the violin. To me, it was a glaring example of gender stereotypes. After all, one might get the impression from the ad that music is for girls and mathematics and robotics are for boys only. Gender stereotypes are preconceived notions about the characteristics and roles of men and women in society. Those who subscribe to those notions believe, for instance, that men excel in engineering while teaching is better suited for women. However, the reality is that, given the right environment, both men and women can succeed in any profession.

A 2020 report on the impact of gender stereotypes during early childhood by the Fawcett Society of the UK, titled "Unlimited Potential," analyses how gender stereotypes limit children's lives, diminish girls' self-esteem, create reading skill gaps among boys, and influence their future career choices. The study observed children aged 0-7 years, a crucial period when they begin to understand their place in the world.

Due to gender stereotypes, girls as young as six years old avoid subjects that require them to be "really, really, smart." About 36 percent of girls aged 7-10 years believe that their appearance is their most important trait. This leads to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. The pressure on boys

to be breadwinners and handle any situation with stoicism contributes to higher suicide rates among men. The findings of this report are relevant to most countries, including Bangladesh.

Significant research highlights that challenging these stereotypes in early childhood can be a powerful tool in reducing violence against women and girls. Yet, we have seen a troubling rise in gender-coded products targeting boys and girls. Pink for girls and blue for boys may seem harmless, but the underlying messages are not innocent. Children's dreams are shaped by what they read, see and hear, as well as the toys they play with. Media, including newspapers, television, movies and advertisements, often portray women as weak and dependent, focused on grooming and household chores, and performing caregiving roles. Men are depicted as strong, responsible, and professionally successful. In traditional fairy tales, girl characters are weak, in most cases "rescued" by princes.

A stark division is evident in the toys available to children. Girls are seldom given opportunities to play with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) toys. Boys' toys rarely focus on nurturing or caring attributes, which reinforces a lack of emotional expressiveness. These experiences have lasting impacts, which limit children's future career paths and personal development.

Parents and guardians often assign different tasks to boys and

girls. The emphasis on raising girls as "princesses" and telling boys that "boys don't cry" is still prevalent in many families. Parents hold different expectations regarding what boys and girls can achieve. Research shows that parents' ideas about their children's abilities are formed as early as at the age of 11 months. Among other things, this affects children's play. For example, as

**Children are born with immense potential. Isn't it a tremendous waste of human capacity to confine them to limited roles? Parents and guardians must carefully choose books, toys, films, and other materials for children to avoid giving them anything that conveys the stereotypes.**

girls get older, they participate less in sports; and as a result, their skills in it also decline.

Social norms about what girls and boys should or should not do influence parents and teachers, which in turn affects young people's decisions regarding studies and working lives. Traditional beliefs discourage girls from studying STEM subjects and pursuing related professions. Men face resistance if they want to choose professions that require caregiving. Men and women are not able to realise their potential when they feel obliged to conform with gender stereotypes, which is a loss for the entire society.

There should be government directives in Bangladesh to ensure that the media does not promote gender stereotypes, and there should

be initiatives to enhance teachers' skills to make them aware of the stereotypes and help them address them through teaching methods. Manufacturers and advertisers must avoid stereotyped schemes in product design and packaging. The messages coded in advertising through gendered imagery and themes must be critically examined and restructured.

The change has already begun. Books and films featuring female characters as brave and in leading roles are being produced, and there is a trend of rewriting old fairy tales. These new narratives present women as ambitious, confident, and engaged in leadership, acting as friends and comrades to men. We need many more such stories that challenge gender stereotypes.

Children are born with immense potential. Isn't it a tremendous waste of human capacity to confine them to limited roles? Parents and guardians must carefully choose books, toys, films, and other materials for children to avoid giving them anything that conveys the stereotypes. If parents equally share household and external responsibilities, children will follow and in the process develop positive notions about the roles of men and women. Teachers should also encourage boys and girls to believe in their abilities. Our goal should be to provide the entire range of experiences and options to all children. We must end the "princessification" of girls and the "machofication" of boys.

Boys and girls should have opportunities to study any subject and choose any profession to realise their dreams. To create this environment, the government, parents, teachers, social workers, writers, artists, media workers, all have to step up and carry out their responsibilities. The foundation for a society based on equality has to be built during childhood.



# The nine lives of a corrupt public servant



OF MAGIC & MADNESS

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**BADIUZZAMAN BAY**

Cometh the hour, cometh Obaidul Quader. Part of the charm of the Awami League's long-running general secretary is that he always seems to deliver the most poetic lines about his opponents, even if they aren't entirely original. So recently, after a barrage of high-profile scandals rocked the administration, he set out to outline the government's strategy to curb corruption, using a reference that would seem strange to many: *khela hobe*. Yes, that all-fair-in-love-and-war inspired mantra that guided Awami League's ruthless campaign against its rivals prior to the 2024 election.

"The game is on again [*Abaro khela hobe*]," Quader declared while addressing a party gathering. "It's on against corruption, plundering, and money laundering. Bangladesh must be rid of corruption." This is not the first time he used a sporting reference to attack corruption. The question is: how does the administration plan to play this game? Will it be like how it played last time, through force and coercion? Or does it have any special plan we are not privy to yet? Details are scarce at this point. So far, beyond rote reiterations of its "zero tolerance" commitment, occasional disciplinary spectacles that hardly qualify as punishment, and lengthy proceedings that may kick the judicial can down the road indefinitely, the administration has betrayed little awareness that it is no longer enough to go after a few rotten apples—it must go after the very system that enables corruption.

We can talk about how corruption

**We can talk about how corruption has spread its tentacles in every sector, from banking to health to energy to transport to construction to civil aviation. We can talk about how nothing moves without bribery. But for a fuller grasp of how it all works and where it all originates from, we must examine civil service—the system governing public officials—which seems designed from start to finish to foster a partisan and corrupt bureaucracy.**

has spread its tentacles in every sector, from banking to health to energy to transport to construction to civil aviation. We can talk about how nothing moves without bribery. But for a fuller grasp of how it all works and where it all originates from, we must examine civil service—the system governing public officials—which seems designed from start to finish to foster a partisan and corrupt bureaucracy. But since we are into references, let me use one that aptly portrays the seamless progression of public servants through this system: the cat with nine lives.

The general idea behind this myth is to celebrate cats' natural suppleness and swiftness allowing them to get out of potentially fatal situations. Now, think of the nine lives granted to cats as the nine or so lifelines or stages through which state

officials are supported, sometimes starting even before recruitment and continuing well into retirement. Think of how they are favoured or shielded at every turn. And ask yourself if so many of them turning out to be corrupt or compromised is a coincidence.

Let's delve into these hypothetical lifelines in a public servant's career:

## Corruption at pre-recruitment stage

The whole process of corruption in the civil service starts with the cultivation of the idea that government jobs are superior to all others. Power, prestige, money, and job security—nothing beats this lucrative offering, with the private sector proving to be a poor substitute. Hence the mad race for all recruitment tests held under public authorities. Hence the demand for leaked question papers and all those supplying them, even from within the PSC. Hence the metamorphosis of public universities into BCS factories, and their libraries into BCS workshops. Hence the debate on extending the age limit for government jobs to 35 years.

I can go on and on, but you get the message: that the unhealthy competition in civil service recruitment and the lack of private sector alternatives have created an atmosphere that breeds and feeds off desperation. This is where future officials get their first lesson: that corruption can give you an edge over the teeming thousands. So you see some candidates spending lakhs for that golden goose of a

and benefits, with a side dish of opportunities for corruption. It's no wonder why certain departments and postings are so highly sought after, or why so many medical and engineering graduates are lining up for BCS general cadre, forgoing once-cherished careers in specialised fields. State officials are granted powers and privileges, sometimes even undesired promotions, that come with little scrutiny or accountability. Further relaxations of rules governing their activities are on the cards.

For example, the public administration ministry is reportedly set to allow public servants to engage in stock market trading, reversing a prohibition in the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979. If it comes to pass, they will be able to buy or sell shares legally. Why is this problematic? Recall that Matiur Rahman, a top NBR official now under investigation for corruption, allegedly made a fortune through stock market investments, using

where the accused, despite being found guilty of corruption, continue to be in service as they have been spared harsher departmental actions and even legal consequences. What message does it send to the wider public servant community? This policy of leniency provides a safety net for dishonest officials and contrasts sharply with the government's zero tolerance stance on corruption.

## Lack of accountability for failures and inefficiencies

Another lifeline extended to government officials is through a collusive arrangement in which departments, and relevant officials, responsible for certain failures are seldom held accountable. You often see people die or suffer terribly because of accidents, disasters, and crimes that can be linked to the mismanagement, negligence or inefficiencies of certain government departments. Yet rarely, if ever, is a higher-up punished or even

provided by the system, has again come to light following a series of financial scandals reported by the media. Beside the power they hold, some even post-retirement, what these revelations show is how rampant corruption has been. With so many present and former officials facing court proceedings, there is still a palpable sense that we are only scratching the surface. The iceberg still lies beneath it. Such massive presence not only indicates the normalisation of corruption, but also serves as a boost to the corrupt-minded.

## Undeserved rewards and honours

Another lifeline or boost granted to the corrupt is the possibility of getting state rewards and recognition, so long as they are connected to the powers that be. The case of former IGP Benazir Ahmed, who was given state honours despite his controversial record, exemplifies this trend. But we are only getting to

have the government's support. And they usually do—unless, suddenly and quite inexplicably for the public, they don't.

## Retirement benefits

This is another stage where the corrupt win big. Even if it comes to all employees regardless of how ethical they have been during their tenure, it adds to the overall appeal of civil service for the corrupt-minded. Being able to reach the finish line unpunished, and bow out with a fat pension that the majority of the population cannot even think of, is indeed a motivation. A lot can be said about the ongoing debate on the new universal pension scheme—with different, discriminatory hierarchies for government officials and others in the public sector—but that's for another day.

## Post-retirement support and opportunities

The last lifeline may come in several forms, including one recently shown by the Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) that extended unquestioning support to Benazir Ahmed as it lambasted the media for its coverage and even seemingly made threatening overtures. The message that other professional bodies likely got from its public statement is that they have a duty to protect their members regardless of whether they are in service or not. General members of police forces, which usually are among the groups most talked about in any discussion on human rights, should be particularly happy for the active role being played by the BPSA to represent them in public forums, but corrupt police officers will take note, too.

But what adds more to the destabilising appeal of civil service in Bangladesh has to do with the enduring influence of partisan loyalty. Loyal retiring top officials may not only see their tenure extended, but also secure cushy positions in some statutory bodies. Some may even transition into active politics, perpetuating the cycle of patronage.

In the end, I must say my analysis is based on the worst-case scenarios and corrupt trends reported in the media, and is in no way a denigration of honest officials who I would like to believe are as many in number as their dishonest counterparts, if not more. But despite the latter's unchecked activities and collusion with unscrupulous entities across all sectors, the government has waxed lyrical at best, like Obaidul Quader did, or totally ignored it at worst. It only shows how entrenched corruption is. To the government, any loss of image or public resources owing to corruption seems to be an acceptable one so long as it has a pliant bureaucracy doing its bidding.

Since independence, at least 16 commissions and committees have recommended reforms to create an efficient, merit-based civil administration, but those have been largely ignored. It is not difficult to understand the reluctance of bureaucratic and political leaders. For civil servants, especially those in high-ranking positions, reforms that promote efficiency, meritocracy and accountability represent a threat to their influence, benefits and promotional prospects. Political leaders also do not want to embrace change as it is easier to maintain control over a weak bureaucracy. But without taking on the system, and the many layers through which it sustains itself, corruption can never be tackled.



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

insider information, both of which are illegal. Many government employees are similarly engaged in stock trading and have demonstrated their willingness to exploit privileged access for financial gain. So, legalising it may open a Pandora's box of unethical practices. Or, think of the proposal to relax another provision in the service rules requiring officials to submit wealth statements every five years, removing an important layer of scrutiny that already stands significantly diluted.

## Relaxed penalties for corruption

Those who are honest have nothing to fear from punishment. But when penalties are reduced by relaxing anti-graft rules, it benefits only the corrupt, and this is what the administration has done on a number of occasions. For example, in 2018, an amendment to the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules (1985) introduced "reprimand" as a penalty for proven corruption, besides other penalties. You often hear of salary reduction, or "closing," or demotion, or transfer—so often the penalties of choice—which does feel like a slap on the wrist given the gravity of some of the crimes, thus further encouraging corruption.

Over the years, we have seen how such anti-graft regulations have been relaxed. In any sector other than public, the punishment for proven corruption would be instant termination. A recent editorial by this daily recounts three incidents

subjected to a reprimand. There is a tendency to let them off the hook during interdepartmental inquiries.

The case of a former deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, who reportedly got his name removed from a list of accused for misappropriation of funds with the help of several court officials, including a former judge, shows to what extent power can be abused to both commit crimes and protect criminals—both being the same person in this case. But he wasn't acting alone, neither do corrupt or compromised or inefficient officials, as they protect each other. And more often than not, the system allows it. We may recall how the attorney general himself told the apex court a few years ago that the parliament had passed the Government Service Act, 2018 to protect public servants, considering them a "different class of people." The same act had mandated law enforcers to seek "permission" for arresting public servants in criminal cases before the court, in August 2022, scrapped the relevant provision. But this culture of impunity has reached such a state that top officials are often seen directly flouting court directives, with no consequences faced.

## Endless opportunities for corruption

The extent to which government officers and even low-level operatives can exploit their positions to engage in corruption, taking advantage of the protection and lack of oversight

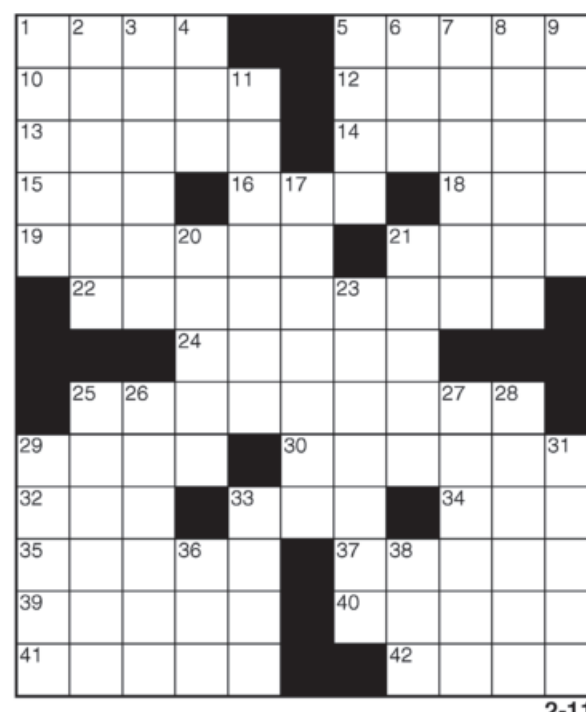
know about it now, post-retirement, which raises the question: how many such cases have there been? What really influences the decision to recognise state officers? Their service record, or political connection? Or is it their strategic importance to the government? Whatever it is, honesty is certainly not among the criteria. The implication of handing what serves as a symbolic victory to a potentially corrupt person—and all the way in which they can further shield themselves or advance their careers using such honours—cannot be stressed enough. Over the years, we have also seen how once-revered state awards for writers have been made objects of ridicule because of overzealous bureaucrats lobbying for their own candidature, and they sometimes got their way.

## Culture of no resignation

Scandal hit top officials, politicians, MPs, vice-chancellors or anyone like them rarely, if ever, resign in Bangladesh, even amid public protests. A common refrain among those under pressure to step down from their positions is that they will only do so if directed by the prime minister, indicating a culture where political loyalty supersedes accountability. Their connection and conviction further undermine what few accountability mechanisms we have left, however fragile. But this culture of no resignation does give the corrupt a boost, heightening their sense of inviolability so long as they

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                   |                            |                         |                    |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>     | 24 Worship site            | 42 Galoots              | Monopoly           |
| 1 Homer's son     | 25 Track athletes          | <b>DOWN</b>             | 20 Lewis's partner |
| 5 More polite     | 29 Bill                    | 1 Trouble               | 21 Floppy top      |
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| 12 Bowl           | 32 Writer Beattie          | 3 Total at the register | 25 Madrid Mrs.     |
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## YETERSDAY'S ANSWERS

P	A	B	L	O		R	E	B	A	R
A	T	E	I	N		A	D	E	L	E
T	H	R	E	E		T	I	R	E	S
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R	A	S	P	S		R	O	S	E	S

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PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

# Students and quota holders say REFORM IS NECESSARY

The quota system must be executed in a way that upholds fairness, inclusivity, and equity

**A person who has been deprived of benefits can relate to the hardships faced by minorities. To discuss issues like land possession, evictions, and the dearth of quality teachers and educational institutions, we need representation.**

AZRA HUMAYRA

The year 2018 saw a surge in student protests that resonated across the country. It began with the demand for quota reform, and, in the following months, the Road Safety Movement took place. The year was full of potential, as the wind of change appeared to sweep across the nation. Students, with their youthful zeal, flooded the streets, their voices echoing the plea for justice and reform. However, their hard work proved to be futile. Our roads, despite the safety movement, are still unsafe. And the quota system, which was abolished, not reformed, was re-established earlier this year.

On October 3, 2018, the Bangladeshi government abolished the quota system for government job recruitment in grades nine through thirteen. On January 20, 2020, the Ministry of Public Administration authorised a proposal to eliminate quotas on direct appointments to eighth grade or above positions in government employment. The Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPS) agreed to follow these changes in their recruitment procedures.

However, on June 5, 2024, the High Court ruled that the cancellation of the quota system, including the 30 percent quota for freedom fighters in government jobs, was illegal. This ruling was upheld by the Supreme Court's Appellate Division on July 4, 2024, reinstating the quota system for these posts.

Since the beginning of July, students at several public universities, such as Dhaka University (DU), Jahangirnagar

University (JU), and Jagannath University (JnU), have staged large-scale protests calling for the overturning of the High Court's ruling to reinstate the 30 percent quota for the descendants of freedom fighters in government employment. Their protests have been anything but discreet; they have orchestrated roadblocks, held impassioned rallies, and leveraged the power of social media to broadcast their grievances to a wider audience.

The question that arises in this storm of discontent is what the students who had quota privileges think about the system. Are they silently wrestling with a sense of loss, or do they perceive the movement as a necessary stride towards a more egalitarian society?

Around 56 per cent of government employment is earmarked for candidates from various quotas. 30 percent went to the children and grandchildren of Freedom Fighters, 10 percent to women, 10 percent to district-based allotments, five percent to members of indigenous communities, and one percent to people with physical disabilities.

Waseka Rahman\*, a fourth-year DU student, says, "There is no logic behind the current system. If 56 percent of seats are allocated by quotas, aren't we doing a disservice to the majority of those who do not have them? Intellect should be a top priority. Why should the grandchildren of liberation fighters enjoy quota privileges? There should be no discrimination in government job applications. The quota ratio should be justifiable."

After seeing how the freedom fighter quota affects other students, students who leveraged it during the admissions

period are now speaking out against it. "I used the freedom fighter quota, but I didn't know any better at the time. I decided to seize the chance while I could. I still did not get to study the subject I wanted. If I had the chance today, I would not deprive someone of a well-deserved opportunity," Waseka adds.

Upon talking to Abrar Ahmed\*, another student who utilised the freedom fighter quota and who has now graduated from the Department of Economics at DU, he states, "It is extremely important to change the quota system now because the predetermined percentage is not even filled." This demonstrates how demoralising the current quota system is for the students who cannot utilise it.

Talking to another student who chose not to use the indigenous quota during the admissions season gives a different perspective on this debate. Hritu Roy, a fourth-year student majoring in International Relations at DU, says, "Being in Dhaka since childhood, I am privileged compared to most people in my (Chakma) community. Even though there is a quota facility during university admission, I did not use it, and I think people like me who had a privileged upbringing should not use quota."

While the movement may be perceived as students advocating for the entire abolishment of the quota system, that is not the case. At its core, the protests are aimed at reforming the current system while keeping fair allocations.

Khingmokay Marma, majoring in Mass Communication and Journalism at DU, speaks about the need for indigenous quotas. She says, "We

need indigenous quotas because we are lagging behind. If someone from an indigenous community gets a government job in a higher position with the help of quota, the person may represent their community, encouraging others to come forward for higher education. This also helps guide the future generation. Since the abolishment of the quota system in 2018, there has been no indigenous BCS cadre except a few, due to which many are losing interest in higher education. I have heard such things myself: What will happen after studying so far? There is no possibility of becoming a BCS cadre; it is better to get a job after HSC."

Khingmokay emphasises how the empowerment of one indigenous individual could cause a ripple effect; she says, "When someone is in a good position, they are better able to comprehend community issues and communicate them to decision-makers. A person who has been deprived of benefits can relate to the hardships faced by minorities. To discuss issues like land possession, evictions, and the dearth of quality teachers and educational institutions, we need representation. So, I believe a five percent quota for indigenous people is fair."

Hritu Roy shares the same sentiment; she states, "In higher education, it is important to have minimum quota facilities only for minorities and check whether the right people are availing of them. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in most government jobs, there is a huge disparity in the recruitment of indigenous people. Hence, it is necessary to ensure transparency in recruitment based on merit, along with

the elimination of the quota system. Otherwise, citizens will be deprived of their fair rights."

Conversations with the interviewees reveal a unanimous call for reformation. Among the protestors is Waseka Rahman, who emphatically supports the movement, stating, "Quotas for indigenous populations, the physically impaired, and women should be maintained."

The students' demands centre around ensuring that the quota system is restructured to benefit those who genuinely need support, such as marginalised communities. They argue against a system that perpetuates injustice and discrimination, advocating for a fairer approach that aligns with the principles of equity and social justice. The underlying sentiment is clear: while reform is necessary, it must be executed in a way that upholds fairness and inclusivity.

In this crucible of student activism, we are reminded of the essence of democracy: an ever-changing debate that must be responsive to its people's needs and ambitions. The students' demands for reform are more than just calls for policy changes; they are also fundamental statements of democratic values, challenging us to envisage a system in which inclusion, equity, and merit may coexist peacefully.

\*Names have been changed upon request

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# On female friendships and the value of community

SILWAT QUADER

Individualism is a term often ascribed to Western culture. In such societies, individuals prioritise self-identity – ensuring that their personal needs are met before those of the group. The Western world has adapted well to these principles and has continued to instil such values for generations.

This is in direct contrast to the values that we inherit where individuals are expected to prioritise the welfare of the community. Such an altruistic approach to life fosters a sense of collective empathy and deep companionship, which has traditionally been a key aspect of our culture. One of the most prominent ways this feature has been realised is through friendship between women, evident in folktales, music, and art. Evolving from early relationships with cousins, neighbours, and friends which later solidify into stronger bonds of sisterhood, women play essential roles in each other's lives.

All throughout history, women have relied on each other – going as far as to trust each other with their children.

While it would be wrong to claim that mutual support to such an extent was entirely absent in Western cultures, it was nonetheless, not as common.

In recent times though, there has been a noticeable shift among women as they have started to move away from focusing solely on individualistic practices. Rather, there is a growing inclination towards collectivism, particularly evident in how women are establishing and fostering stronger connections within their female social circles. In adopting collectivism, some have sought to address the negative impacts of extreme individualism, such as the absence of emotional support during difficult times, which has resulted in recognising the values of collectivism.

Women are cultivating deeper and more meaningful relationships to find emotional nourishment and a sense of acceptance. Feminist movements and mental health campaigns are also emphasising the significance of collective empowerment as well as unity and strong emotional support systems in overcoming challenges. While the negative impacts of hyper-independence have become more prevalent,



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

women hailing from communities whose practices revolve around collectivism, are adopting some values of individualism. After all, self-sufficiency and independence

are indeed admirable, and vital survival skills for all. Every woman should possess independence and self-sufficiency to lead life on her terms.

However, being independent does differ from being an individualist. But why do we appear to prefer individualism? Why do we insist on blending our altruism with individualistic ideas to the point that key features of the former get dimmer down the line?

Instead of opting for one over the other, we can blend both these approaches. Exploring both collectivism and individualism, and not overindulging in either one, provides a healthy balance especially when this exchange of cultural practices is voluntary and not imposed. When it is imposed on us, we get pulled into this whirlwind of individualistic principles, unconsciously forcing us to isolate ourselves from our community. Therefore, cherishing the practices that are more closely intertwined with our roots while embracing the empowering aspects of individualism, helps maintain network of support system that are vital to our well-being.

Silwat Quader is a student of Economics at North South University.





## England great Anderson's one final flourish

- Anderson finished his Test career with 704 wickets in 188 matches at an average of 25.45. He completed 32 five-wicket hauls and picked up 10 wickets in a match on three occasions.
- The 41-year-old is the third-highest all-time wicket-taker in Tests after Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and Shane Warne (708).
- In terms of Tests played, Anderson is only second to Sachin Tendulkar, who played 200.
- Anderson has taken 123 wickets at Lord's. Only Muralitharan, with 166 at the Sinhalese Sports Club Cricket Ground in Colombo, registered more at a particular venue in Tests.
- Anderson holds the record for most caught behind by a wicketkeeper (198) and outfield catches (468) off a bowler in Test cricket.

### AGENCIES

James Anderson signed off from international cricket with his 704th and final wicket on Friday, ending a glittering 21-year career during England's emphatic win over West Indies and prompting tributes from teammates and fellow greats.

The seamer, aged 41 years and 348 days, had Joshua Da Silva caught behind on his final day of Test cricket as England won the game by an innings and 114 runs inside three days. He spurned a golden opportunity to make it 705 wickets, shelling a simple catch from Gudakesh Motie, and smiled ruefully at the miss.

It was the only negative for Anderson on a day in which he demonstrated his

skill one final time for an appreciative Lord's crowd, repeatedly beating the outside edge with seam and swing.

Anderson, who finished with match figures of 4-58, said he would miss competing at the highest level, adding that there was "no better feeling" than winning a Test match.

Asked what he was going to do next, Anderson — who is joining the England coaching set-up — added: "I've not really thought that far ahead."

"I'm going to stick around with these guys for the rest of the summer, try and help the bowling group out as much as I can and we'll see where life takes us after that."

England captain Ben Stokes described Anderson as "an incredible inspiration

for so many people" while West Indies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite said he was a "legend of the game", but understandably would not miss facing him.

India great Sachin Tendulkar said on X: "It has been a joy to watch you bowl — with that action, speed, accuracy, swing and fitness. You've inspired generations with your game."

Anderson has certainly earned a rest, having sent down his 40,000th delivery in Test cricket late on day two, more than any other seam bowler and putting him fourth on the all-time list.

Anderson bowed out with a remarkable 704 wickets from 188 Tests. Only spinners Shane Warne (708 Test wickets) and Muttiah Muralitharan (800) have enjoyed more bowling

success at this level, with India batting hero Sachin Tendulkar (200 matches) the lone cricketer to have played more Tests than Anderson.

"It's been quite an amazing week," Anderson said. "I've been overwhelmed with the reaction of the crowd and everyone around the ground, and the lads as well. I'm just proud of what I've achieved."

"Obviously this morning was quite emotional with the two teams lined up, and the reaction from the crowd was pretty special. I'm still trying to hold them (tears) back now but I think I am just really proud," added Anderson after ending his Test career where it started — with a debut against Zimbabwe at Lord's in 2003.

## Olmo focused on winning trophy, not Golden Boot

AFP, Donaueschingen

Spain playmaker Dani Olmo is vying for the Euro 2024 golden boot with England's Harry Kane, but said Friday he doesn't care about winning it as long as his team lifts the trophy.

Olmo and Kane are tied on three goals with four other players and if either score in the final on Sunday in Berlin they will likely claim the prize.

However, with Spain angling for a record fourth European Championship, Olmo said the team's target was far more important than his own individual glory.

"It's an extra motivation, if there's even room for that, but look, as long as we win, I don't care if I score or if (Spain goalkeeper) Unai Simon does," Olmo told reporters. "I don't care at all, the important thing is winning the game, but I always have the objective of helping to chip in."

Olmo has also created two goals for his teammates but unlike in the past when that was used as a tie-breaker, the award will be shared by any players joint-top of the charts.

The RB Leipzig midfielder did not start the tournament as part of Spain coach Luis de la Fuente's first choice side but made a strong impact off the bench.

Olmo replaced the injured Pedri in the quarterfinal win over hosts Germany, scoring and setting up the winner for Mikel Merino.

The midfielder also struck against France in the semifinal and has scored in all three knock-out rounds Spain have played.

"In this tournament I feel very good, in a great moment of form, so I have to keep taking advantage of it," continued the 26-year-old.

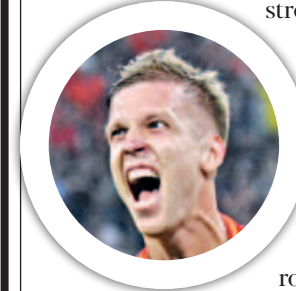
"It's true (Kane and I) are tied, but there are other players too who have helped us get here, with goals and good play."

"Speaking of goals, Fabian (Ruiz) has two goals, Alvaro (Morata) has one — if he scores a hat-trick then he will win it, and we'd be just as happy — it doesn't matter who scores, the main thing is the team." Olmo scored a hat-trick for Leipzig as they beat Bayern Munich 3-0 in the German Supercup final on Kane's debut for the Bavarian giants last August.

The England captain has still not won a trophy in his career at club or international level, finishing a runner-up with England in the Euro 2020 final.

Kane, 30, has struggled for form and peak fitness at the Euros despite managing three goals. "Of course it would be a dream to score a hat-trick (again) and win it," added Olmo.

"But I repeat, the goal is just to win it."



## Intensity of training broke me down to tears: Samiul

**Samiul Islam Rafi is the ninth male swimmer from Bangladesh to receive a wild card entry to the Olympic Games and is among the five athletes who will represent the country in the forthcoming Paris Games, starting on July 26. The Bangladesh Navy athlete, who holds three national records in backstroke events, has been training in Thailand under a World Aquatics Federation scholarship ahead of the Games. The 19-year-old recently spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman about his preparation, expectations and many other related matters. Here are the excerpts:**

**The Daily Star (DS):** How is your training going on for the Paris Olympics?

**Samiul Islam Rafi (SI):** I joined the training camp in Thailand in last December. It started in September but I could not join at that time due to last year's Asian Games. I have been training with some 32 swimmers from as many countries and nine of them including me have got the opportunity to take part in the Paris Olympics through a wild card. Right now, I am in recovery ahead of the Games.

**DS:** How did you feel when you learnt you will compete in the Olympics?

**SI:** Actually, I was uncertain about getting a wild card. I was working hard to improve my performance in Thailand. When I became the best swimmer at the National Swimming Championship last year, I grew in confidence because if I could earn more FINA points (points assigned to swimmers by World Aquatics), I might get the wild card. You could say that luck was on my side as I earned 686 FINA points after doing better in the 100m freestyle event in Thailand and that helped me get the wild card entry.

**DS:** Bangladesh swimmers have always just made up the numbers in the Olympics. Will the Paris Olympics be the same?

**SI:** The swimmers from China, the USA, Australia and other countries who win Olympic medals start swimming at the age of six. Swimmers, aged 20 or above in Bangladesh, can't match the timings of 12-year-old swimmers from those countries. I have been given an opportunity to compete in the Olympics and I want to use this platform to improve myself and deliver something good in the South Asian Games.

**DS:** Backstroke events are your favourite but you will have to compete in the 100m freestyle event in Paris...

**SI:** I have become what I am now through backstroke events. But I also compete in the 100m freestyle event. From last February, I have been training under a Russian coach in Thailand and have improved my timing by three seconds. I produced my best timing of 53.12 seconds in the Thailand open in April last.

**DS:** What are you hoping to achieve in the Olympics?

**SI:** I know it is quite tough for me to qualify for the semifinals. Usually you need a timing of 47 seconds or better to progress but right now I am far off. I think one day I can achieve a timing of 49 seconds if I continue receiving high quality training. I am hoping to bring my timing down to 52 seconds in Paris. I have been working really hard in Thailand, sometimes I have even broken down in tears from the intensity of training. If I can clock less than 52 seconds, all the pain will be worth it.

**DS:** What is the difference between training in Thailand and Bangladesh?

**SI:** There is a gulf of difference. The training environment, facilities, schedule and diet are different. For instance, in Bangladesh our training schedule is — training, breakfast, rest period, then more training, lunch and then rest in the afternoon. But in Thailand, it's breakfast first, then stretching, warm up in pool, training, gym, lunch, sleep, stretching and training. In Bangladesh, we swim nearly 10km per day but over there I swam nearly 20km every day.



**Lautaro Martinez, who leads the race for Golden Boot in Copa America 2024 with four goals in five matches, looked sharp and focused during Argentina's training session ahead of Monday's final against Colombia at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, Florida.**

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

## Paolini's first or Krejcikova's second?

AFP, London

Italy's Jasmine Paolini has set her sights on capping a "crazy" run to Saturday's Wimbledon final against Barbora Krejcikova by winning a maiden Grand Slam title. Meanwhile, Krejcikova will be hoping to win a second Grand Slam final of her career after winning the French Open in 2021.

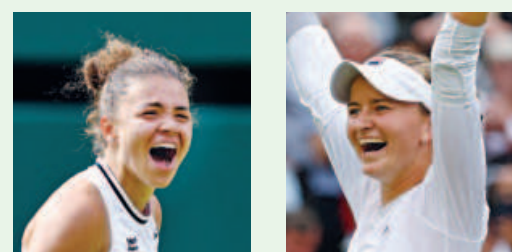
Paolini survived the longest women's singles semifinal in Wimbledon history to beat Donna Vekic 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (10/8) after two hours and 51 minutes of Centre Court drama on Thursday.

The 28-year-old is the first Italian woman to reach the final of the grass-court Grand Slam.

She will face Czech 31st seed Krejcikova, who enjoyed a shock 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over 2022 champion Elena Rybakina in the other semifinal.

It is an astonishing achievement for Paolini, who had not won a Tour-level match on grass until 15 days ago in Eastbourne, and lost in the first round on her previous three visits to Wimbledon.

But 2024 has been a breakthrough campaign for Paolini, who reached her



Jasmine Paolini is a win away from delivering Italy its first Wimbledon champion.

Paolini is the first Italian woman in the Open Era to reach the final at two different Grand Slam events, having finished as runner-up to Iga Swiatek on the red clay at Roland Garros last month.

Either Paolini or Krejcikova will become the sixth woman in the Open Era to win Wimbledon after turning 28, joining Ann Jones (1969), Virginia Wade (1977), Jana Novotna (1998), Marion Bartoli (2013) and Angelique Kerber 2018.

Barbora Krejcikova will be eying to become the sixth Czech woman to win Wimbledon.

Krejcikova will be playing in the second Grand Slam final of her career after winning the French Open in 2021.

maiden Grand Slam final at the French Open before losing to world number one Iga Swiatek.

"Two Grand Slam finals in a row was crazy to believe, no?" said Paolini.

Paolini is also the first woman to reach back-to-back Roland Garros and Wimbledon finals since Serena Williams in 2016.

The final is just the second time Krejcikova and Paolini have met and their showdown will be a world away from their first encounter.

The pair squared off in the first round of qualifying for the Australian Open in 2018, with Krejcikova claiming a straight sets victory.

"It was a very long time ago, it's been a great journey for both of us to reach the Wimbledon final," said Krejcikova, who will be playing her second Grand Slam final.

Krejcikova had struggled with a back injury and illness this year, winning just three singles matches in the five months before finding her form in remarkable style at Wimbledon.

The 28-year-old shocked 11th seed Danielle Collins in the fourth round, former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko in the quarterfinals and Rybakina in the last four.





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## Three killed as auto-rickshaw, truck collide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three people, including two of a family, were killed as a truck and a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on in Chattogram's Patiya upazila early yesterday.

The victims were Rumi Akter, 30, her five-year-old nephew Fahim, of the upazila, and auto-rickshaw driver Anwar Hossain, 51, of Boalkhali upazila, said Jasim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Patiya Police Station.

The incident took place around 12:10am in Pachuria Military Pool area when the Patiya bound auto-rickshaw collided head-on with the truck heading for Boalkhali, he said.

Driver and two passengers of the auto-rickshaw were critically injured, said the OC, adding that they were declared dead after being taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the auto-rickshaw, but the trucker managed to flee with the truck, said the OC, adding, "We are conducting drives to nab the trucker."

Filing of a case was underway, said the police official.



Palestinians mourn over the body of their relative killed in the Israeli bombardment in western Gaza City's Al-Sinaa neighbourhood yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## Biden faces more calls to quit race

### Donors to hold roughly \$90m in pledges if he remains on ticket

REUTERS, Washington

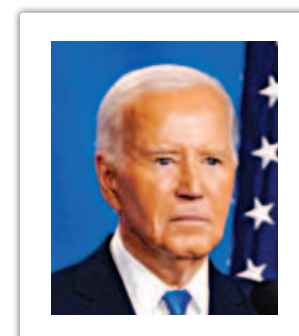
President Joe Biden faced more calls from fellow Democrats to abandon his re-election bid yesterday, following a news conference in which he delivered nuanced responses but occasionally stumbled over his words.

It was unclear whether Biden's performance would convince doubters in his party that he is their best bet to defeat Republican Donald Trump in the November 5 election and serve another four-year term in the White House.

At least 17 congressional Democrats so far have called for him to drop out and allow the party to pick another standard-bearer, including some who announced their positions after the Nato news conference on Thursday night.

The New York Times reported that unnamed donors have told a pro-Biden Super PAC that roughly \$90 million in pledges will remain on hold as long as he remains in the race.

But Biden made clear that he did not plan to step aside. "If I show up at the convention and everybody says they



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Ambanis hire over 100 pvt planes for wedding



REUTERS, Mumbai

The wedding of the billionaire Mukesh Ambani's youngest son Anant Ambani, 29, and his long-time girlfriend Radhika Merchant, 29, is expected to require the use of more than 100 private planes, including three Falcon 2000 jets, to transport wedding guests, among whom are celebrities in the worlds of entertainment, politics, and business.

Rajan Mehra, chief executive of Club One Air, said the Ambanis have hired three of his company's Falcon-2000 jets to ferry wedding guests and expects 100 plus private planes to be used for the events.

"The guests are coming from all over and each aircraft will make multiple trips across the country," he said.

The wedding is the culmination of lavish celebrations throughout the year and according to police, has been deemed a "public event" due to the presence of international and Indian household names.

The couple tied the knot yesterday.

## Rohingya repatriation looking like pipe dream

Experts say fighting in Myanmar complicating efforts for their return

PORIMOL PALMA

The issue of Rohingya repatriation is getting more complicated for Bangladesh with the rebel armed group Arakan Army (AA) controlling most of the bordering Rakhine state.

Intensified fighting between the Myanmar junta and AA has also created a serious security threat along the 271-km Bangladesh-Myanmar border, said international relations analysts.

This also puts Bangladesh in an awkward position in terms of diplomatic relations with Myanmar if the AA takes full control of Rakhine.

"Myanmar has virtually no central control over the border with Bangladesh as the Arakan Army controls the majority of it. Thus, our physical border security is already shaky," said M Sakhawat Hussain, a senior fellow at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance at North South University.

As of now, Bangladesh maintains a diplomatic relationship with Myanmar's military, which took control of the country through a coup in February 2021.

"The question arising now is with whom should Bangladesh communicate when it comes to border security? Is it the Myanmar

military or Arakan Army?" said Sakhawat, a retired brigadier general.

Analysts say Bangladesh's relations with Myanmar have remained fraught because of repeated influx of the Rohingya since the 1980s. It deteriorated following the influx of about 7.5 lakh Rohingya in 2017.

**"The question arising now is with whom should Bangladesh communicate when it comes to border security? Is it the Myanmar military or Arakan Army?"**

M SAKHAWAT HUSSAIN  
A senior fellow at NSU's South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance

Meanwhile, after the military coup in 2021, the Peoples Defence Force, the armed wing of the National Unity Government (NUG) and other ethnic rebel groups across Myanmar, have taken control of the majority of the country.

Since November last year, the AA captured 10 key towns -- nine in Rakhine and one in adjacent Chin state -- according to a report of the International Crisis Group.

On May 18, AA captured Buthidaung town and seized much of Maungdaw in the Rohingya-majority region. In so doing, the AA now has control over most of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly Rohingya in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships, were displaced following the looting and burning of Rohingya homes in Buthidaung and surrounding villages.

According to the UN, about 4,000 Rohingya took shelter near the Naf river close to the Bangladesh border about a month ago. It also called on Bangladesh and other states to provide shelter to those seeking it.

The fighting also forced nearly 800 members of Myanmar's Border Guard Police, military and their family members to take shelter in Bangladesh in recent months. They were later repatriated.

In early June, bullets were fired from Myanmar at boats on the Naf river, which caused some 10,000 Bangladeshis to be stranded on the St Martin's Island.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Israeli forces pull back from parts of Gaza City

### Leave behind dozens of bodies, wrecked homes

AGENCIES

Israeli forces pulled back from parts of Gaza City overnight, after a fierce, week-long offensive that met with Hamas resistance, leaving dozens of dead and wrecked homes and roads in the Palestinian enclave's biggest urban area, rescuers said yesterday.

The offensive, 10 months into Israel's campaign to eliminate Hamas, took place as US-backed mediators sought to finalise a peace deal that would free remaining hostages.

The Gaza Civil Emergency Service said teams had collected around 60 bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces over the past week from the area of Tel Al-Hawa and the edges of the Sabra neighbourhood in Gaza City.

Both residents and rescue teams cautioned that while tanks withdrew from some areas, Israeli snipers and tanks continued to control high ground at some locations, and warned residents against trying to return to their homes in those areas.

"There are bodies scattered in the streets, dismembered bodies, there are bodies of entire families, there are also bodies inside a home of an entire family that was completely burned," Gaza Strip Civil Defense spokesperson Mahmoud Basal said in comments carried by media in Hamas-run Gaza.

- Israeli snipers, tanks continue to control high grounds
- Hamas accuses Israel of stalling peace talks
- Gaza death toll tops 38,400

## NEPAL LANDSLIDE

### 63 missing as 2 buses swept away

AFP, Kathmandu

At least 63 people were missing in Nepal after a landslide triggered by heavy monsoon rains swept two buses off a highway and into a swollen river, authorities said yesterday.

Dozens of search and rescue personnel were combing the site for survivors of the accident in the central district of Chitwan, district official Khimananda Bhusal told AFP.

Bhusal said that the buses were carrying at least 66 people between them but three passengers had been able to escape before they crashed into the Trishuli river and were now being treated in hospital.

"We are not sure of the total number because the buses could have picked up others on the road," he said. "The river has swollen and no one else has been found yet."

The accident took place along the Narayanghat-Mugling highway, around 100 kilometres (60 miles) west of the capital Kathmandu early yesterday at 3:30 am local time.

One bus was heading from the capital Kathmandu to Gaur in Rautahat district in southern Nepal and the other was en route to Kathmandu from southern Birgunj.

A driver was killed in a separate accident on the same road after a boulder hit his bus. He died as he was being treated at a hospital.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal expressed sadness over the accident in a post on social media platform X.



A large tree fell on the Satmasjid Road in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday after a spell of torrential rain in the morning, disrupting traffic. The photo was taken at 3:00pm. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Nepal PM Dahal loses confidence vote



REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal is set for a new coalition government led by politician K P Sharma Oli after the more radical Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal lost a parliamentary vote of confidence yesterday, ending a tumultuous 20-month tenure.

Nepal has been politically unstable since it abolished a 239-year-old monarchy in 2008. Oli's new government will be the 14th since then.

Its politics are closely monitored by its two big neighbours China and India, who have invested heavily in the Himalayan country as they jostle for influence.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1





Dhanmondi these days is a cacophony of people, traffic, events, vendors, schools, hospitals, restaurants, and construction sites. It has transitioned more into a commercial centre than a residential area.

# EVOLVING IDENTITY

## The changing face of Dhanmondi



Older residents can recall the single-unit houses (some of which remain) and the wide roads that marked the area. In those glory days, this place had a certain quietness, something that is still widely missed.

**MANNAN MASHHUR ZARIF**

The place has a chequered history. Compared to other areas of the city, Dhanmondi still retains its residential character to some extent, despite being home to commercial enterprises, educational institutes, restaurants, hospitals, diagnostic centres, and rising apartments.

Many older residents of the locality feel that the flavour of the neighbourhood is lost; the newer residents are divided – some still consider Dhanmondi an attractive place to live, while others find it just like any other place in Dhaka, a space devoid of characteristics that make a residential area feel like home.

**The beginning...**

In his book, *Dacca: History and Romance in Place Names*, Azimushan Haider mentions the origins of the name – Dhanmondi.

He states, "It derives its name presumably not from the fact that paddy once used to grow at what now is a posh residential area, but more likely because there used to be a Haat (impromptu market) of paddy (and other cereals) brought from rural areas."

People are well aware of this connection that led to the naming of the place, however, it is a lesser-known fact that the place was a part of Dhaka even in the Mughal era. Dhanmondi Eidgah on road 6/A is a reminder of that glorious past.

Established in 1640 CE by Mir Abul Qasim, during the reign of Subahdar Shah Shuja, son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, it is one of the oldest Mughal establishments in the city.

After the Partition of 1947, Dhaka once again became a capital and there was a need for a new, upscale

neighbourhood. The government of hitherto East Pakistan took the initiative to acquire 400 acres of agricultural land, levelled them and allotted plots to notable citizens including ministers, government officials, public leaders, professionals, and businessmen.

The price at that time was a mindboggling Tk 5,000 per bigha!

**Dhaka's upscale locality**

"I grew up in Dhanmondi in the early 1980s and used to live in a cherished two-storied house of my maternal grandfather, built in the late 60s. Although I was young, I can still recollect the cosy porch and the front yard where he lovingly cultured roses and grew dahlias. Those were truly wonderful days. However, the house has since been torn down to make room for an apartment complex that now accommodates future generations," said Atif Adnan, a businessman in his mid-40s.

Older residents can recall the single-unit houses (some of which remain) and the wide roads that marked the area. In those glory days, this place had a certain quietness, something that is still widely missed.

What made the locality even more appealing was the presence of the lake – remnants of what was once a flowing waterway. In the distant past, it was an abandoned channel of the Karwan Bazar Nadi that flowed to the Turag river.

The lake was a tranquil, secure, and pristine spot. The rivers have changed their course, but the waterbody remains an oasis amid the urban landscape, a silent reminder of a memorable past. It still serves as a recreational hub and a picturesque setting for morning walks and leisurely boat rides.

As Adnan fondly recalls, "We used to sit on the banks of the lake, while my grandfather – a seasoned angler – would use pieces of worms as bait for

the fish. We would rejoice at the sight of him making a catch! Weekends were spent with family by the lake. There used to be boats which would take us on leisurely tours around the lake while my grandfather focused on his fishing."

**The changing scenes**

Tahmina Hossain, 63, is a homemaker and has been living in the area since the early 1990s. She is a first-hand witness to the apartment culture that many claim ruined the

spaces for schools, banks, and offices.

"After the pandemic, renovation of the roads has made noticeable improvements. The revival of the lake has added to that. But it also brings in a lot of visitors to the place, which creates heavy commotion during holidays," said Hossain.

"The place has transitioned more into a commercial centre than a residential area. Almost every local and international brand now has showrooms here, catering to

rampant commercialisation of the place is hampering the residential nature of Dhanmondi. She points out some of the aspects that were once the highlight of this locality.

In recent times, the diminishing greenery is one of the most talked about aspects of life here. The felling of the trees in Saat Masjid Road has been a stark reminder for everyone in Dhaka, that we are losing an essential aspect of life in this city.

Tahmina Hossain also says, "Despite Dhanmondi's reputation for cricket, football clubs and their sporting activities, there is a notable absence of designated playgrounds for children to play in."

Those who were fortunate, even as non-residents, have memories of the quietness of the place and the wide roads that would serve the people living there. The single plots have now turned into multi-storied apartments and the paved streets are no longer wide enough to support the influx of current inhabitants of the locality.

What was a boon in the past has now turned into a curse for the area. Easy access to good schools, hospitals, and diagnostic centres are now the very establishments crippling the residential nature of the area.

As Dhanmondi continues to evolve, the echoes of its storied past mingle with the realities of its present. Posts on social media by former residents and random citizens of Dhaka illustrate the bygone days. The pictures give a vibe of the warmth and camaraderie of life in the area. How will one see Dhanmondi in the near future? Chances are just like many other areas of the older part of the town, Dhanmondi will soon lose its place as one of the most liveable areas in Dhaka. And that should be our alarm to wake up!



Gone are the quaint houses with trees in the yard. Children no longer ride their bicycles or play cricket or badminton on the streets during the weekend.

"residential nature" of the place.

"We moved to a flat from our home in Shantinagar, hoping for better living conditions, and in the last 30 years or so, have witnessed numerous changes in the area – both good and bad!" she said.

"There has been an alarming increase in traffic congestion. On weekdays, the whole area comes to a standstill once the school hours end. Street looks like a parking lot on weekdays!"

Residents like Tahmina Hossain feel that the inner roads are congested with parked cars due to the lack of designated parking

the convenience of the residents. And what should I say of the mushrooming growth of eateries? Sometimes, it feels like utter chaos!" she added.

Sharifuddin, who recently moved here, said, "Despite all the negativities, Dhanmondi remains one of the most secure areas in the city. Yes, it is chaotic, but the easy access to schools and nearby offices still makes it a good place to live, only if one could reduce the high cost of living that comes with staying here."

**What the future holds**

Tahmina Hossain believes that the



What makes Dhanmondi even more appealing is the presence of the lake – remnants of what was once a flowing waterway. The lake is a tranquil, secure, and pristine spot. The waterbody remains an oasis amid the urban landscape, a silent reminder of a memorable past.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



CREATIVE NONFICTION

# PeaceCity alley

**We couldn't take home any of the money we saved, though. In shipment cartons, with the clothes came very unwelcome "guests" and infested the homes of the residents of Shantinagar Goli. We spent hundreds weekly on insect repellent. As no spray could fully eliminate the unceasing, cyclic shipments of cockroach, we shared our homes with the survivors amongst them.**

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

*The Notorious Loverboy, Slum Boy and Millionaire's Daughter, My Bride or My Mother, My Mother's Body in a Wedding Saree, The World is but a Slave to Money:* ranging from melodramatic, to very questionable, to staunch philosophical critiques of capitalism, we could never guess what new film title and its vibrant, maximalist collage-style poster would greet us as our silver Toyota Corolla would swerve into a narrow alleyway and stop in front of a wholesale clothing market. We were home from school.

The entryway to Shantinagar Goli, on which my childhood home stood, was sandwiched between two of these wholesale clothing markets. On top of Gazi Bhaban market stood a 15-floor apartment building, and on Pallwel Supermarket stood Jonaki Cinema Hall, boasting the aforementioned posters on its facade. We rented a 2450 sq feet flat on the 14th floor for 20,000 taka per month from the Gazis. The Gazis were an influential old Dhaka family. According to urban legend, their forefathers had fought off tigers with their bare hands from the land where Gazi Bhaban stood.

I spent my days after school longing for the weekend, when a parent could accompany me outside. No little girl was allowed to go out into these streets unaccompanied. Past midnight on Fridays, we heard sports cars speed out of Shantinagar Goli, the children of the Gazis going out for the night. My parents pursed their lips. Preparations for the Friday prayer started early: road swept clean, open drains closed with lids (which would be stolen by the end of the day), cinema hall posters covered with black fabric, and a long roll of white fabric covering the length of the road; the goli was transformed into a communal prayer space. The mosque was on the main road, and by the time one o'clock struck, all the alleyways in the neighbourhood were filled with panjabi and tupi-clad men arranged in uniform rows, ready for the weekly Jummah Namaz. The story of this street is the story of its coexisting duality.

A good couple of hours post prayer, when the crowds were cleared and the prayer mat rolled up, I clutched Ammu's hand as we swerved and swivelled through the swarming crowds on Shantinagar Goli. Back to back and wall to wall, we passed more apartment buildings; several "Ma groceries"; "Ma's Salon"; a small beauty parlour; a dentist's office; and a tandoori chicken shop where the nice uncle (but a wifebeater behind closed doors) rhythmically rolled out dough, aggressively stuffed it with potatoes, and directly dropped it into bubbling oil, frying endless samosas under open air. Throughout the length of the goli, bundles of electrical wires, tangled and bulging, hazardingly hung roughly 12 inches above our heads. As we walked, questions regarding Baba's health and my school were yelled at Ammu from all around, everyone addressing her as bhabi, and Ammu cordially yelled back her answers. In Shantinagar Goli, people from all walks of life and socio-economic backgrounds shared its constricted space. The story of Shantinagar Goli is the story of flourishing in its unprecedented collaboration.

Finally, at the far end of the street, we approached the hawkers selling second hand books from wicker baskets—Bangla ones for 20 to 40 taka each, but open to haggling, and the second-hand, locally pirated English books for 100 taka each, fixed price. The hawker uncles demonstrated a metaphor for our society. We valued a language that was once imposed on us in return for the riches of our motherland over the language steeped in the history

of our land and our roots. Roughly three kilometres from Shantinagar Goli, students at the University of Dhaka had given their lives during the Language Movement of 1952, for Bangla to be restored as the state language of then East Pakistan. At 10, I lamented what had caused us to lose that glorious sense of pride in who we are and what is ours. The story of this street is the story of its subtle betrayals.

On very special occasions—Eid, birthdays, and the good report card days—we entered a three-storey high-end bookstore selling imported, brand-new English books, starting from 800 taka each. The aforementioned hawker uncles sat at the foot of this building. At this store, I would only buy a book I wouldn't find on the baskets outside.

We shopped for our clothes during Eid from the malls beneath our home, feeling very proud of ourselves when friends and family bought less nice clothing for over three times the price from elsewhere. Owing to the malls in our area



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

being wholesale, we could buy directly from the supplier before they supplied to retailers all over Dhaka. The story of this street is the story of its intricate economic choices.

We couldn't take home any of the money we saved, though. In shipment cartons, with the clothes came very unwelcome "guests" and infested the homes of the residents of Shantinagar Goli. We spent hundreds weekly on insect repellent. As no spray could fully eliminate the unceasing, cyclic shipments of cockroach, we shared our homes with the survivors amongst them. One day, at six months old, as I sat on the kitchen floor while Ammu cooked, I grabbed a scuttling object from the floor with lightning speed. The story of this street is the story of how my first solid food was a cockroach.

The name Shantinagar Goli is ironic, as cockroaches were the least of the sources of o shanti at Shantinagar Goli. The goli opened into a road on which administrative offices of the Bangladesh National Party stood. BNP was then the only surviving opposition to the Awami League, which has been the ruling party of Bangladesh since 2009. Periodically, BNP would call for strike action. By virtue of its location at the eye of the storm, for the children of Shantinagar Goli, such an announcement meant no school. Party workers would gather before the offices hoisting placards. The police would charge at them with batons and tear gas; the Party workers would return the favour and

set fire to many rickshaws, a few buses, and a couple of private cars. The more an uninvolved civilian had to lose from the violence for the sake of it, the higher their chances of being affected would be.

In my naive selfishness of childhood, I would scan the rolling news updates beneath Ammu's nightly soaps, anticipating a leisurely day at home under my parents' protective watch, and rejoice at news of imminent strike days. The story of this street is a story of deriving joy from the most contradictory of sources.

One time, it rained sugar on Shantinagar Goli. But it only fell on me. Aunty on the Other Side of The Street was making a rich payesh, spiced with cardamom, cinnamon sticks, and grated coconut. Rice in the milk boiling on her stove, she realised she was out of sugar. Aunty on This Side of The Street took the only natural course of action, tying a half kg bag of sugar to the end of a pole and extending it towards Aunty on the Other Side of The Street

through her kitchen window. Except that a pack of crows attacked the foreign object in the sky, and I was blessed with Divine Sugar.

Where we now live, we get missing ingredients promptly home delivered to cook piping hot meals that lack the warmth of community spirit. The people of Shantinagar Goli kept no score of the ingredients, acts of service, and cooked dishes they shared. The story of this street is the story of its unchecked generosity.

Every year, it became increasingly unfashionable to live in South Dhaka. Businesses and schools shifted to the suburbs, like the localities of North Dhaka, and many families with young children, including mine, went with. I feel that if I were born and raised in these parts, I'd always have playgrounds, better schools, and cockroach-free homes, but never really feel the essence of being a Dhaka-ite and a Bangladeshi. Nor would I be bi-desi, and live somewhere in between. I'd complain about the country, its traffic and its bureaucracy—as I still do now—but I never would have lived a life so aligned with my country's beating heart. In one of the most densely populated golis of the world's sixth most populous city, the story of this street is the story of my gratitude.

Amrin Tasnim Rafa is a former Sub editor at the Campus, Star Youth, and Rising Stars pages of The Daily Star and a soon-to-be freshman at Kenyon College.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

## Lone house around the bend

**Your grief rusts the ancient pipes, and rotting awnings over cracked windows. It flows through your bowels and seeps out onto the pavement. Every day, there's a puddle forming by the time the sun hangs low on the horizon.**

WASIMA AZIZ

Your grief rots the decades old paint and the lakhri no one bothered to replace. Even across the road, it reeks of death.

Perhaps you hold onto memories of the old, when wives wept as one, and men went to war for the country, to war against themselves. Perhaps the rot pervading in their slurred words and heavy breathing never quite left your walls, no matter the layers of paint or mildew.

Take care, old friend. There was a time when your rooms echoed with the laughter of children, as the smell of khichuri wafted through your halls. When, after all the children were put to bed, mothers, fathers, uncles and aunts sat around that ancient dinner table; the mirth in that room more than made up for the kids' going to bed. Those children dreamt dreams of you and are dreaming still.

Wasima Aziz is an amateur writer living in Chattogram, who recently finished her HSC exams.



POETRY

## The three day wake

IFFAT NAWAZ

You must bury yourself  
Every three days'  
She said,  
'Corpses are of  
No use  
They Will  
Rot you instead.'  
'You can burn  
Also, if you wish  
Or immerse your  
Dead selves in water  
If you so please.'  
Then she walked away  
And became ordinary  
While I pulled out  
My shoes,  
To head to the river  
Where wet soil  
Had already dug up  
Burial beds  
With invisible tombstones  
And a torn noose.  
The trees were  
Speaking differently  
After the rain,  
I heard them exchange  
Something about

Someone's futile burden  
Of shame.  
They said the  
Tug of war between  
Orthodox and non  
Is pointless and mundane.  
'Keep walking'  
The leaves motioned,  
'Stop eavesdropping  
Be touched by everything  
But remain uninfluenced.'  
I don't know what that  
meant  
Plants were too cryptic at  
times.  
I half slid down  
A muddy slope  
To watch the river  
And its ripples  
They taught me  
The day's rhythm  
I stalled a bit  
Then brought out  
My dead selves  
Tied neatly with  
Jute ribbons.  
I leaned in close  
To grieve my deaths'  
Gains and losses,  
With short eulogies

I closed them  
Into the mouths of  
Earth's tiny crevasses.  
In the spaces  
Where the deads  
Had resided,  
Two centimetres  
Below my skin,  
Grass and moss  
Rushingly filled in.  
My breaths  
Were now wildflowers  
My toes were  
Dew rinsed.  
For I fear fire,  
I contemplated  
The next dead's  
Ritual,  
The trees commanded  
To pause a bit  
Before killing  
What's not old.  
With a new face  
I walk back  
To a home  
That isn't mine  
A thousand deaths  
Have passed  
And a thousand deaths  
Wait in line.

Every three days  
I will look for a grave  
Between olive trees  
And green vines  
I will be born again  
And yet again  
Till this voice  
Becomes a  
Silent wind's  
Dutiful chime.  
While my  
Heart mourns  
To rejoice  
A deathless  
Self's shine.

Iffat Nawaz is a Bangladeshi-American writer based in Pondicherry, India. Her first novel Shurjo's Clan was published by Penguin India (Vintage) in 2022, and was shortlisted for the Best First Book Award by Tata Lit Live/Mumbai Literature Festival in 2023.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA



# A jack of all trades An exclusive with Parambrata Chattopadhyay

**“In the traditional context, I haven't been in such a project that is 'larger than life' in a typical notion, but my role in 'Hercules' can be considered close to it. Also, in the last half an hour of 'Chotushkone', the role becomes as such! In fact, my character in 'Ajob Karkhana', at some point, can also be perceived to be one of such roles.**

SHARMIN JOYA

“Music has been a major part of my life since childhood,” shared Parambrata Chattopadhyay over the phone, as if he were going through his meteoric career in his own mind. Hailing from West Bengal, his charm worked magic in Bollywood as well. As we moved on with the conversation, he reflected upon his musical journey, whilst talking about the roles that are larger than life, and his recently released Bangladeshi film.

His fourth Bangladeshi featurette, the government funded film *Ajob Karkhana*, directed by Shabnam Ferdousi, hit theatres yesterday countrywide. The musical film has given Parambrata a unique experience as a musician himself. The director was looking for someone as her film's lead (Rajeeb), who is in his 40s and can fluently play an electric guitar. “My immediate response after listening to the story was, it is absolutely my story!”

The actor was quick to dive into nostalgia. “Beginning with Rabindranath Tagore, I immersed myself in music, and during my teenage years, I rebelled against other genres and indulged in Western music, particularly English songs. In my mid-20s, my musical taste took another turn, drawing me more towards my own roots – returning to Tagore, to getting introduced to modern Bangla songs, while simultaneously delving into

Earlier, he was featured in *Bhuban Majhi*, directed by Fakhru Arefeen Khan, *Voyongkor Sundor* by Animesh Aich, and *Saturday Afternoon* by Mostofa Sarwar Farooki.

Farooki's film was unfortunately halted by the censor board, but later it was released on the OTT platform Sony LIV. “Every country, society, and region have their own reality and the administration has to keep those realities in mind. We must respect that. Being a part of the film, I definitely wanted the Bangladeshi audience to watch it. However, there must be some specific reason behind not permitting the film's release and I don't have the right to make any remarks on their decision. Even in India, there were many projects which faced similar troubles. I don't want any outsider to comment on that, so I won't make any remarks either.”

Parambrata added that after it began streaming in Sony LIV, he received numerous phone calls and messages, appreciating his work. “I believe the film has already reached its audience.”

During his visit to Dhaka, Param celebrated his birthday and met the press many times, where a common question he had to encounter was regarding Shakib Khan and *Toofan*'s release. Did it make him uncomfortable at any point?

“Absolutely not! I am elated and proud of the success of the film and those associated with the production are close to my heart. I am affiliated with SVF for my next two projects with them, and I believe we will have a collaboration with Chorki as well. I have also known Alpha-i for a long time. Apart from all these, I worked for Hoichoi as well for the next season of

our acclaimed series *Parnashavarir Shaap*, which is coming soon.”

To the actor, the roles that are larger than life depend on the extent of the project itself, also the perspective of how one sees it. “If you look from an American perspective, it will be different from the European perspective. In the traditional context, I haven't been in such a project that is 'larger than life' in a typical notion, but my role in *Hercules* can be considered close to it. Also, in the last half an hour of *Chotushkone*, the role becomes as such! In fact, my character in *Ajob Karkhana*, at some point, can also be perceived to be one of such roles, as it tells the story of a person who is on a journey of reaching towards his soul.”

Since Parambrata had to catch a train in a few minutes, the conversation needed to be concluded. Being an actor, director and musician, he has gained a lot of popularity. However, when asked to his director self – what can make the collaborative productions between both Bengals more effective and more viable for both industries? – he replied, “The bureaucracy and the administrative procedures should be laxer from both sides. Also, the people who are involved in the project need to be equally invested.”

Parambrata bid me farewell, sharing that he would be returning Dhaka soon by the end of this month, after completing his pending works in the USA and Mumbai.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



Parambrata as Rajeeb in 'Ajob Karkhana'.

classical.” The talented artiste feels that the experience of working in *Ajob Karkhana* enriched his soul. “I used to look for the research works done on folk musicians and music genres and at that time, I didn't have the real experience of witnessing them performing live, which I had during the shoot. It seemed surreal to me when listening to Jari, Ghatu or Baul songs (in front of Lalon Shah's shrine) in a rustic atmosphere with thousands of people.”

## TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
Srikanth



Amazon Prime  
My Lady Jane



Bongo  
Ladies & Gentlemen



Hoichoi  
Pariah



Disney plus  
Descendants: The Rise of Red



## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



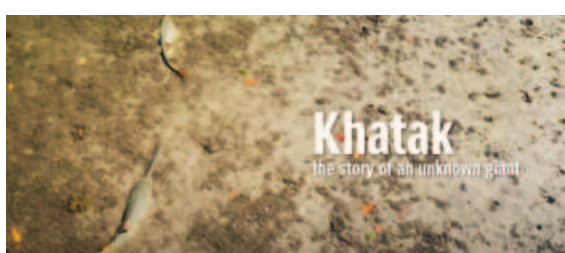
Play 'Tiner Tolowar'  
July 17 | 7pm

Bangladesh Mahila Samity, Bailey Road



Photo Fest Asia 2024  
July 18-20 | 10am-10pm

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Screening & Exhibition:  
'Khatak' & 'Rays of Hope'

July 18 | 4pm

British Council Bangladesh

## WHAT'S PLAYING Strange Fruit



*Strange Fruit*, performed by Billie Holiday, stands as a groundbreaking and haunting protest song that redefined the intersection of music and social commentary.

Holiday's restrained yet powerful delivery transforms Abel Meeropol's poignant lyrics into a chilling indictment of racism and lynching in America. The song's stark imagery and Holiday's emotive vocals create an unforgettable listening experience that forces the audience to confront the brutal reality of discrimination.

The track defies easy musical categorisation and has slipped between the cracks of academic study. It is too artsy to be folk music, too explicitly political and polemical to be jazz. Surely no song in American history has ever been so guaranteed to silence an audience or to generate such discomfort.

## WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

### SHARVARI WAGH

Sharvari Wagh, the *Munja* actress, can be termed as the latest sensation with her captivating performance and scintillating dance moves in the film and its item song *Taras*.

The talented actress has also landed a remarkable opportunity to star alongside Alia Bhatt in YRF Spy Universe's first female-led film, *Alpha*.

Recently, Sharvari shared a stunning picture of herself wearing a golden-olive satin skirt paired with an olive-green sequined top. She complemented her look with moderately natural makeup, featuring brown smoky eyes and nude lipstick to complete the ensemble.



## 1-MINUTE REVIEW



## 'SRI CAN!' The Srikanth Bolla journey

*Srikanth*, directed by Tushar Hiranandani, portrays the exceptional life of Indian industrialist Srikanth Bolla, a visually challenged self-made entrepreneur. Born to parents, who considered burying him alive as a newborn, his story is a testament to resilience and success.

Stricken and wrought with hardships and obstacles strewn his way, Srikanth (Rajkumar Rao) proves his mettle time and again. As he grows, he displays remarkable intelligence, solving equations verbally, finishing exams ahead of peers, and defeating sighted opponents in chess.

When barred from studying science in

Higher Secondary, he legally challenges the Indian education system and wins. He, however, abandons his dreams of additionally pursuing cricket, having earned a scholarship from MIT.

The film tries to break from the typical biopic format. In the second half, Srikanth's power-hungry behaviour and use of his disability for gain are briefly explored but quickly resolved. The story then reverts to evoking admiration for the protagonist.

Rajkumar Rao skillfully portrays a visually impaired character, supported ably by actors like Jyothika and Sharad Kelkar.





PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Local pharma lights up hope in cancer treatment

**Bangladesh has achieved tremendous improvement in cancer treatment and anti-cancer drug manufacturing, said Golam Mohiuddin Faruque, president of Bangladesh Cancer Society**

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The pharmaceutical sector of Bangladesh has achieved many milestones over the past 14 years. Not only do local companies now meet 90 percent of the country's demand for medicines, but the products are also exported to around 150 countries, fetching hundreds of millions of dollars.

However, among the most significant strides the sector has made is its advancement in the manufacture of life-saving cancer medication.

In the last 14 years, pharmaceutical companies like Beacon, Eskayef, Renata, Incepta, Healthcare, and Techno Pharma produced more than 110 varieties of oncological drugs.

Around 17 local companies are manufacturing anti-cancer drug products. Thanks to their bold initiatives, patients in Bangladesh can now access cancer drugs at affordable prices, which have brought down the cost of treatment.

Monjurul Alam, chief executive officer of Beacon Medicare, said the prices of such drugs in Europe and the US are beyond the purchasing capacity of many patients.

cost of medicines. Today, it not only meets domestic consumption but also serves as an exporter in the global market.

"This achievement was made possible by the dedication of local pharmaceutical companies and the trust placed by doctors and patients in local products," Alam said.

According to manufacturers, local companies produce around 99 percent of oncology drugs, yet some patients still resort to imported drugs or unofficial imports.

Recently, pharmaceutical companies have been affected immensely due to the supply chain disruptions and the dollar crisis against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. The situation is improving following the collaborative efforts of the government and drug manufacturers.

It provides medicines worth Tk 3 crore to poor patients annually.

Beacon plans to establish a second oncology plant to meet the increasing global demand for cancer drugs. The company is also considering setting up a palliative care centre to alleviate the suffering of patients.

A relative newcomer to the scene is Eskayef Oncology, which commenced its journey in



"There is a scarcity of life-saving drugs worldwide. When the drugs are available, they are usually beyond the reach of common people. To this end, we have established a facility within our company to serve global patients," he said.

Before 2009, there was scepticism regarding Beacon's ability to manufacture sophisticated cancer drugs. However, the plant has become successful, and patients can buy life-saving drugs at reasonable prices.

Claiming that Beacon pioneered the manufacturing of cancer drugs in Bangladesh, he said it now meets around half of the local demand for cancer drugs.

Before 2010, Bangladesh relied entirely on imports for oncology drugs. This means only patients from financially solvent families could afford cancer treatment due to the exorbitant

2018. However, the company, which boasts advanced technologies, has expanded its footprint beyond Bangladesh in no time.

It is one of the few Asian companies to have secured approval from the European Union Good Manufacturing Practice (EU GMP) to produce anti-cancer medicines. This is recognised by 27 nations of the EU and is considered a passport for entry into the global market.

"This recognition facilitated the entry of our drugs into the EU market and various other countries," said Mohammad Mujahidul Islam, executive director (marketing and sales) of Eskayef.

Eskayef is currently exporting products to over 60 countries.

"Thanks to modern technologies, facilities,

and unwavering dedication, Eskayef Oncology is committed to delivering affordable and globally standard anti-cancer products to patients both at home and abroad," he said.

Prof Golam Mohiuddin Faruque, president of the Bangladesh Cancer Society, said Bangladesh has achieved tremendous improvement in cancer treatment and anti-cancer drug manufacturing.

Bangladesh exported cancer drugs worth Tk 1,000 crore in 2023. The amount was around Tk 500 crore in 2019. Local sales of cancer drugs have reached Tk 800 crore to Tk 1,000 crore as demand is increasing by an average of 15 percent each year, according to the manufacturers.

Prof SM Abdur Rahman, chairman of the pharmacy department at the University of Dhaka, said Bangladesh's pharmaceutical companies have set up world-class manufacturing plants equipped with sophisticated machinery, enabling them to produce top-class drugs.

He thinks there is no doubt that Bangladesh's oncology products will dominate the world market, meeting global standards, quality, and cost-effectiveness.

There are areas of concern.

After 2026, when Bangladesh graduates from the group of least-developed countries, local pharmaceutical companies will have to follow patent guidelines while manufacturing drugs, including oncology products. If medicines are produced following the patent rights, the drugs will be costlier in the local market.

To avert the situation, Bangladesh initially tried to extend its Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver by six to nine years and then up to January 1, 2033. However, at the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva in June 2022, global leaders did not extend the TRIPS deadline for graduating LDCs.

Under the current agreement, drug makers in LDCs can produce any generic medicine without having to follow patent guidelines until January 1, 2033. But the benefit is not applicable to graduating LDCs such as Bangladesh.

Beacon's Alam, however, said it would be applicable for only new molecules, which comprise few drugs. "So, the pharmaceuticals sector will not face significant challenges after graduation."

## Full-fledged cancer treatment facilities need of the hour

JAGARAN CHAKMA

High-quality cancer drugs are produced in Bangladesh. Oncologists and physicians are also available. However, the country is lagging in putting in place an adequate number of full-fledged facilities to treat patients suffering from such diseases.

The missing link exists although cancer patients are on the rise in Bangladesh in line with global trends and hospitals and clinics have flourished.

Cancer is already a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020, or nearly one in six deaths. The most common cancers are breast, lung, colon, rectum and prostate cancers, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Cancer cases are expected to rise 77 percent by the middle of the century, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a specialised branch of the WHO, said in February, highlighting the growing burden of the disease.

There are predicted to be more than 35 million cancer cases during 2050, up from the estimated 20 million in 2022, the agency said.

The increase reflects both population ageing and growth, as well as changes to people's exposure to risk factors. Tobacco, alcohol and obesity are key factors, along with air pollution.

Currently, Bangladesh has 13 lakh to 15 lakh cancer patients, while around two lakh new patients are diagnosed with the diseases each year, figures from the National Center for Biotechnology Information showed.

There are around 240 oncologists in Bangladesh. Treatment is available in 19 hospitals, and 465 beds have been set aside for chemotherapy at the oncology and radiotherapy departments.

"There is no shortage of oncology surgeons or specialists in Bangladesh," said Prof Golam Mohiuddin Faruque, president of the Bangladesh Cancer Society.

Besides, locally manufactured generic versions of oncology drugs are similar to the products made by multinational companies in terms of quality.

"However, there is a lack of radiation therapy facilities at hospitals as it is very expensive," he said, adding that it costs around Tk 40 crore to set up such units.

Currently, 40 radiotherapy facilities, including those at government hospitals, are available against the need for 300, Faruque said. Private hospitals treat 67 percent of cancer patients while the rest receive services from state-run hospitals.

According to Faruque, patients could see an oncologist for only Tk 10 at a government hospital or for Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,500 at a private hospital.

Drugs have also become easily available during the last decade as pharmaceutical companies have taken initiatives to manufacture oncology products. "As a result, the cost of treatment has come down by two-thirds during the decade," Faruque said.

Since the number of cancer patients is rising, the government is building treatment facilities in eight divisional hospitals, which may be commissioned next year.

Training general physicians on cancer warning signs and setting up early detection centres at medical colleges and the district level are underway. Piloting of cervical cancer vaccination has recently been completed.

The International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr), BRAC, Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Bangladesh Cancer Society, ASHIC Foundation, Amader Gram, AK Khan Healthcare Trust, and Chattogram-based Cancer Support Society (Cansup) run programmes for early detection.

Bangladesh has agreed to reduce premature mortality from cancer as part of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Industry people say improving the cancer treatment scenario overnight is not an easy task. However, policymakers should show their interest in expanding the facilities and pushing the agenda forward since cancer diseases have huge health and financial impacts.

