



PHOTOS: COLLECTED; RAJIB RAIHAN; RASHED SHUMON

Defiant and fearless, quota reform protester Abu Sayed of Rangpur's Begum Rokeya University faces the police just moments before they shot him down in front of his university around 2:30pm, left. The capital's Science Lab area yesterday turned into a battlefield as BCL members and quota protesters were locked in clashes throughout the afternoon. The photo was taken around 4:00pm, top right. An alleged BCL activist shoots at student protesters with a shotgun in Chattogram city's Muradpur area around 4:45pm.

Bullets end life of family's brightest star

MD ABBAS and KONGKON KARMAKER

Abu Sayed, the youngest of nine siblings, was studying in the English department at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur.

Poverty forced his elder brothers and sisters to quit education, but they all chipped in to make sure Sayed continued his.

Sayed dreamt of joining the civil service, a job he believed would change his family's fate. So he joined the quota reform protest.

But police bullets cut his dream short yesterday.

His peers brought his bullet-hit body to Rangpur Medical College Hospital after a

clash between protesters and law enforcers, where doctors said Sayed was already dead. "Sayed was our only hope," his brother Ramjan told The Daily Star.

"We had big dreams for him, but all those dreams shattered today [yesterday]," he added.

Their father, Makbul Hossain, is ill and bedridden, and can hardly afford a treatment.

"We used whatever little we earned to support his education," Ramjan continued, "hoping that one day he would be successful and better days will come."



Abu Sayed

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Respect freedom fighters of every stripe Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said freedom fighters should always be accorded the highest respect irrespective of their political affiliations.

Handing over Prime Minister's Fellowship (PMF)-2024 to the recipients at a programme at her office, she said it should be always kept in mind that they are valiant freedom fighters.

"Abandoning their dreams, leaving behind

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6 killed as violence spreads

Fierce clashes break out in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rangpur between BCL, police and quota protesters; govt deploys BGB in 6 districts; all universities, colleges, secondary schools closed; univ students asked to vacate halls; Thursday's HSC exams suspended

STAR REPORT

In a major escalation of violence, at least six people, including three students, were killed and several hundred injured in clashes between quota protesters and Chhatra League activists and police across the country yesterday.

Three, including two students, were killed in clashes between the protesters and BCL men in Chattogram.

In the capital, two people died after being attacked in Dhaka College and Science Lab areas where protesters and Chhatra League activists fought pitched battles for over seven hours.

In Rangpur, a student of Begum Rokeya University was killed in police firing during a protest.

Incensed by Monday's BCL attacks on Dhaka University campus, the quota protests swelled yesterday with students from private universities and colleges joining.

Soon the violence spread nationwide. Clashes between BCL

The demonstrators announced a coffin procession and a gayebana janaza at Raju Bhashkarjo in Dhaka University at 2:00pm today.

The protesters set fire to the residence of vice-chancellor of Begum Rokeya University following the death of its student Abu Sayed in police firing.

In the face of a counterattack by protesters, 10 Chhatra League activists were injured in Chattogram. Two of them fell from a building trying to escape the attack.

men and police and students demanding reforms to the quota system were reported in Rajshahi, Bogura, Jhenidah, Cox's Bazar, Narsingdi, Sirajganj, Barishal, Kishoreganj, and Faridpur as well.

The government deployed

BGB in Dhaka, Chattogram, Bogura, Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Gazipur.

It closed secondary schools and colleges indefinitely and suspended the HSC exams scheduled for Thursday.

Late last night, the University Grants Commission citing an education ministry decision said all public and private universities and their affiliated colleges would be closed until further notice. It asked the students to vacate their dorms as well.

Hasnat Abdullah, one of the coordinators of the quota-reforms protests, said state-sponsored attacks were carried out against the protesters across the country.

Another coordinator, Asif Mahmud, announced that there would be a coffin procession and a gayebana janaza (funeral without the body) at Raju Bhashkarjo at 2:00pm today to pray for the salvation of those killed during the violence.

He urged all students to join.

Yesterday, they blocked key intersections in the capital, including Jatrabari, Science Lab, Pragati Sarani, Shantinagar, Badda, Motijheel Shapla Chattar, Tantibazar, Uttara,

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Govt moves SC to scrap HC verdict that reinstated quota system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the High Court judgement, which effectively reinstated quotas in government jobs.

The attorney general's office submitted the petition to the apex court seeking a "leave" to scrap the HC verdict.

In the petition, it has been argued that keeping provision of quotas in the public service is a policy decision of the government and the court cannot interfere with

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5 rights bodies slam attacks on quota protesters

114 eminent citizens demand justice

STAR REPORT

Several rights organisations yesterday issued statements condemning the attacks on quota reform protesters at Dhaka University and other campuses across the country.

The attacks resulted in the deaths of six people and injuries of hundreds of students over the past two days.

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Police raid BNP's Nayapaltan office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police raided the BNP's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital over the suspected involvement of party members in subversive activities.

A team led by DB chief Harun-or-Rashid launched the raid around midnight.

"We conducted the raid after two buses were set on fire in front of Jatiya Press Club," Harun told journalists at the spot.

Around 100 crude bombs, 500 sticks, and five to six bottles of

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GDP, per capita income to stay unchanged

Says finance ministry on adjustment of export data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's GDP and per capita income will stay the same after the reconciliation of export data as the two data points are calculated based on the actual export receipts registered by the central bank, says the finance ministry.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the government agency responsible for collecting statistics on demographics and the economy, uses the Bangladesh Bank's figures as export earnings, the ministry said in a statement yesterday.

"As a result, the apprehension the GDP and per capita income will also come down is not right," the statement said.

The statement comes after Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali held a meeting on Monday on the mismatch in export data. Ahasanul Islam Titu, the state minister for commerce, BB Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder

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BGP patrols the capital's Mirpur Quada yesterday afternoon after clashes broke out between quota protesters and Chhatra League activists in the Science Lab area. Inset, two buses were set on fire near the National Press Club in the capital by unidentified arsonists around 8:00pm.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star office will remain closed today on the occasion of Ashura. There will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. Visit our website for updates.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Stop this violence before more deaths

We protest mindless attacks on students

We are horrified by the atrocious violence carried out by the members of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) across campuses and on streets in Bangladesh over the past 48 hours in the name of teaching anti-quota dissenters a "lesson." Countless protesters have been injured in the attacks that show no signs of abating, and as of writing this editorial, at least six individuals have died during clashes. We urge the government to immediately stop this bloodbath before any more loss of lives and a complete breakdown of law and order.

On Tuesday, both protests and attacks escalated, spreading across the country. Along with public university students, students from some private universities and even schools and colleges too joined hands to protest BCL's attacks on the previous day. Science Lab in Dhaka turned into a warzone for most of the day, with chases and counter-chases between students and BCL leading to at least a hundred individuals getting injured. The situation in Rangpur and Chattogram were also very volatile, with clashes leading to at least one death in Rangpur and three in Chattogram. A number of students were also reportedly shot.

These attacks began on Monday when Dhaka University turned into a bloody battlefield for over five hours. According to media reports, BCL men, armed with sticks and rods, swooped upon students who had gathered to protest what they called a "disparaging comment" by the prime minister. Their brutality did not stop with injuring over 300 students, many of whom were women; they stormed into DMCH's emergency department in the evening and beat protesters again, causing unimaginable panic among critically ill patients who had come for emergency treatment. At midnight and early morning on Tuesday, they continued their mayhem across other campuses. During these clashes, lethal weapons including machete and petrol bombs were used.

It is unimaginable that such violence could take place with impunity, without any attempt by law enforcement agencies to stop them from happening—not even when it took place in the biggest public hospital in the country. Are we to assume that our law enforcers are helpless in the face of BCL's wrath, or that BCL is now an armed extension of the state machinery? Even if we assume that the protesters were in the wrong and needed to be apprehended, what legal or constitutional mandate does a student wing have to carry out such attacks? While the home minister had previously warned of police action against quota protesters if they crossed the line, he seems to now see no excesses in BCL's actions, which are directly undermining the role of his ministry and that of law enforcers. In fact, he has gone so far as to dismiss the ongoing violence as mere "difference of opinion" between opposing groups.

By allowing and enabling such attacks, the government is essentially pushing the protesters to a point of no return, which can have disastrous consequences for the country and its citizens. It must act as a government should—sensitive to citizens' needs and demands. It has to take stern action against those carrying out attacks against members of the public and making a mockery of the democratic and constitutional processes that we fought the Liberation War for.

The government should realise that the ongoing protests are more than just about quotas—they signify a deep sense of dissatisfaction among the youth about the way the country currently operates. The way out is to hear the students' concerns and engage them in dialogue, not to allow violence inflicted upon them, which can only exacerbate their frustrations against the status quo.

Out of control healthcare costs

A holistic approach needed to reduce out-of-pocket expenses

A research finding has confirmed our fear that many people are facing poverty because of high healthcare costs in Bangladesh. A study by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), according to this daily, showed that approximately 6.13 million people were pushed below the national poverty line in 2022 because of out-of-pocket health expenditures.

The findings also revealed that more than half the population faces financial difficulties while seeking medical services in hospitals and that a large portion of the healthcare cost is spent on medicines. This is no surprise since many people in Bangladesh visit a pharmacy for basic ailments and buy medicine based on the shopkeepers' recommendations instead of consulting physicians, who are often not available at primary healthcare centres in unions and upazilas. Even when doctors are available, the poor quality of services at health facilities and the high cost of private ones often discourage people from seeking professional help. There is also a tendency among health professionals to overprescribe drugs and write brand names of medicine in prescriptions as a favour to pharmaceutical representatives who shower doctors with incentives.

The most disheartening part is that while out-of-pocket health expenditure continues to rise for the public (from 68 percent in 2020 to 73 percent in 2021), a portion of the health sector allocation remains underutilised. Plus, a significant portion of the allocation is spent on the salaries and wages of staff and health professionals, which often do not benefit patients directly. Although the health minister hinted at introducing a government-based health insurance system, many other ills in this sector need to be fixed to reduce people's healthcare burden. First, our focus needs to shift from curative to preventive care. Then the shortage of doctors and other health professionals must be resolved by instituting proper incentives and monitoring systems at duty stations. Policies and regulations should be introduced and implemented strictly to prevent the over-prescription of drugs, unethical practices of pharmaceutical companies, and regulate fees at private healthcare facilities. Corruption and inefficiencies in health sector procurement processes must be checked. Besides, a well-developed patient referral system will also decrease costs, stopping people from unnecessarily visiting specialists and paying higher fees. Only an overhaul of the entire sector, not just ad hoc measures, can re-establish people's trust in the health sector and reduce healthcare costs.

Is political violence transforming Awami League?



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KAMAL AHMED

The images that surfaced on online news portals, including this newspaper and social media, showing helmet-wearing activists of Chhatra League attacking protesters, including girls, with various weapons and sticks to break student demonstrations at several universities are deeply depressing, outrageous, and deplorable.

These demonstrators were demanding reforms to the quota system in civil service recruitment, which was scrapped in 2018 following a similar protest but restored on June 5 following a judicial ruling. This ruling shocked many young people. The government's appeal against the ruling suggests it also wants a change in the outcome.

The latest wave of violence against the protesters follows a public pronouncement by the ruling party's general secretary, Obaidul Quader, that Chhatra League would teach a lesson to those who allegedly undermined the spirit of the war of independence. This allegation centres around distortions, selective quotations, miscommunications, and a lack of empathy and understanding. These unnecessary escalations involving party members punishing protesters must stop immediately, and the responsibility squarely falls on the leadership of the ruling party.

These latest developments add to the concerns over the increasing tendency towards intolerance and the preference for violent means to suppress any dissent, whether political or apolitical. The latest data on casualties of political violence in Bangladesh, despite their shortcomings in accuracy, clearly show that the ruling party, Awami League, has seemingly lost control over the organisation. Consequently, the party has turned into fertile ground for factionalism and turf wars. It must be acknowledged that there is no established institutional mechanism for monitoring political violence in Bangladesh, and some civil society organisations, mainly rights groups, compile data from media reports on violence without independent verification, and their choice of news outlets is not always consistent.

This perhaps explains why the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), in its latest report, stated that 91 people were killed in "political violence" in the first six months of this year, while Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), another rights group, reported 41 deaths during the same period due to political rivalry and clashes.

Deadly political violence is not



Activists of the ruling party swoop on student protesters on July 15, 2024.

PHOTO: STAR

rare in our political culture, where the winner-takes-all principle drives political activists to the extreme. In a democracy, a strong opposition acts as a powerful deterrent to deadly violence. But in the absence of an effective opposition, it is natural for the rulers to face opposition from within, leading to internecine conflict. The ASK data, too, cited elections that led to incidents of violence.

The HRSS report, published on July 7, stated that 91 people were killed in

parties. Allies of the ruling party, including the current parliamentary opposition Jatiya Party, also largely stayed away from upazila elections, leaving these elections as intra-party contests for the ruling Awami League.

It could be argued that the ruling party's decision to allow and, in some cases, encourage its members to run against its official nominees propelled intra-party rivalry. Many political observers had warned about this likelihood well before these

elections, and their reasoning cannot be dismissed outright.

However, looking at historical data of political violence over the last 10 years suggests a disturbing political transformation largely within the ruling party. For example, the number of casualties of political violence in 2022, compiled by ASK, shows that Awami League versus Awami League conflicts resulted in 12 deaths that year, compared to one death from violence between the Awami League and the BNP. According to a *Dhaka Tribune* report, an earlier publication by ASK compiling data over nearly five years (57 months) between January 2013 and September 2017 found that Awami League and its affiliate organisations had an average of 15 incidents of internal conflict per month, leading to the loss of three lives each month.

This situation raises the question of whether the current leadership of Awami League, on its 75th anniversary, will consider answering crucial questions about whether this transformation into violent politics will help or harm the party in the long run. Additionally, will they take urgent measures to stop further loss of lives among their members and political rivals?

A slogan lost in translation



Azmin Azran is digital features coordinator at The Daily Star.

AZMIN AZRAN

The course of the ongoing quota reform protests has taken a drastic turn over the last two days. On Tuesday, at least six individuals, mostly students, died during clashes between protesters and members of Bangladesh Chhatra League and the police—marking a further escalation from the previous day's events. Few would have imagined this scenario when students gathered in Dhaka University and other campuses on Sunday night.

For over two weeks prior to this, they had been boycotting classes and exams, and blockading key intersections in Dhaka and major highways in different places of the country with the demand to reform the quota system in civil service recruitment. But what made them flood campus streets on that night was a specific comment that touched a nerve for the wider student community. On Sunday, in response to a journalist's question during a press conference, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "Why do they [anti-quota protesters] have so much resentment towards the freedom fighters? If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don't get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of Razakars get the benefit?"

This questionable dichotomy is what lit the fuse, leading to students

exploding with renewed vigour. And among all the slogans heard across the DU campus that night, the one that seems to have had the most intense impact is the one that goes: "Tui ke? Ami ke? Razakar, Razakar! [Who are you? Who am I? Razakar, Razakar!]" There have been other, more explanatory variations of the slogan, but for whatever reason, those didn't get much coverage. The question is, what made these students—otherwise proud citizens of an independent Bangladesh, and carrying the legacy of our independence struggle—utter such incendiary slogans?

Grievances over the preferential quota system are nothing new; in fact, the way the protests have panned out this time are starkly reminiscent of what happened during the 2018 quota reform movement. Protests began at Shahbagh then as they did now, before spreading across the country. In 2018, like this time around, a senior member of the ruling party remarked in parliament, "Will the children and successors of those who risked their lives to fight for independence not get an opportunity? Will the children of Razakars get the chance? Will the quota for the freedom fighters be shrunk for them?"

Six years ago, students protested this particular line of reasoning—as they did on Sunday night. And the

reaction to it on both occasions was nothing short of extraordinary. That said, it is totally unfortunate that in a movement that concerns the wellbeing of general students in modern day Bangladesh, the word "Razakar" has occupied so much of the conversation. On principle, we must say we are against any identification—however unintended—with this term. Students, having been familiarised with the

After Sunday night, we have seen the ministers of road transport and bridges, education, and social welfare, and state ministers for ICT and information all come out with hardened words against the protesters. None of them seemed to have noticed that the protesters themselves offered further explanation of their mood by chanting, "Chaito gelam odhikar, hoye gelam Razakar [Demanded rights, only to become Razakar]."

history of our nation from a young age, should have known better than to use something that only invokes the hateful memories of the atrocities committed by Razakars in 1971.

But students say the slogan was lost in translation. Their use of the term, they say, was sarcastic and heavy with context. Take away that context, and you have a

totally different connotation. And this is what is happening at the moment. Unfortunately, despite the clarification from students, there has been little hint of reciprocity from those protesting the use of the word Razakar. Clearly, a mismatch exists between the protesting students and the powers that be. But what was stopping Bangladesh Chhatra League, a student party made up of students, from trying to understand the feelings of pain and anguish that led to such utterances? Why, instead of trying to impress upon them the inappropriateness of their slogan or supporting their just cause for quota reforms, did Chhatra League unleash violence on them?

After Sunday night, we have seen the ministers of road transport and bridges, education, and social welfare, and state ministers for ICT and information all come out with hardened words against the protesters. None of them seemed to have noticed that the protesters themselves offered further explanation of their mood by chanting, "Chaito gelam odhikar, hoye gelam Razakar [Demanded rights, only to become Razakar]". Instead of trying to engage with the students and bridge any gap in communication, the Awami League general secretary has instead called BCL to provide a "fitting reply".

We have seen the destructive nature of that reply over the past two days. Such violence and brutal attacks over a naive use of an objectionable slogan are hard to accept. We must remember that these students would never support anti-liberation ideals. Attempts could have been made to clear any confusion through amicable means. That would have been a much wiser way to deal with these realities instead of the violence that has ensued since.

How Trump's assassination attempt affects the US election



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SARZAH YEASMIN

Throughout history any attempted assassination has been memorialised, canonised and imprinted onto the public psyche. In many cases the act of assassination has been a turning point—from Benazir Bhutto, to Indira Gandhi to John F Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, all these world leaders have had an abrupt end to their flaring political careers, but are remembered more for their good than bad, regardless of which side of the political line the public of the day inclines. While many have come up with conspiracy theories after the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump in a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, Trump has received words of assurance, condolence and kindness across the board. The imagery of blood trickling down his face and fist up in the air is quite iconic and heroic—supporters who loved him love him more, and the ones who did not look at him are looking at him now.

This unprecedented event has not only pivoted attention away from major world issues, at least in the US, but it could also be a major turning point for the outcome of the current election. It has already charged the Republican Party, and it will continue to shape their strategy as they move forward with packaging their rhetoric. However, despite the fact that the attack could have been avoided with some form of gun control, the party's position on gun control and the Second Amendment will remain intact. Two of the most talked about US presidents in history, who were party favourites—Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan were also

Since the last week of June, Trump has held a lead in the national polls according to FiveThirtyEight; after the assassination, it has gone up by two percent over Biden, while Biden's national disapproval rating is on the rise.

survivors of assassination attempts and Trump has now joined that list. Though his felony cases did not really play a pivotal role in the public's decision to support or not support him, this incident takes away any clout from the hush money, falsification of business records, corrupt dealings and hearings might have had. Following the attack, a Florida judge dismissed the federal classified documents



Former President Donald Trump pumps his fist as he is rushed offstage following his assassination attempt at a rally on July 13, 2024 in Butler, Pennsylvania. PHOTO: AFP

case against Donald Trump on the grounds that the Department of Justice unlawfully appointed special counsel Jack Smith.

Since the last week of June, Trump has held a lead in the national polls according to FiveThirtyEight; after the assassination, it has gone up by two percent over Biden, while Biden's national disapproval rating is on the rise. The political ground has been made fertile for Project 2025—a \$22 million project led by the right-wing think tank, Heritage Foundation, with an autocratic bend that aims to realise staunch Christian nationalist principles, undermine separation of power, eliminate the department of education, curb climate change and civil liberties related regulations, push for significant cut to social security provisions and establish partisan leadership in major agencies. It is a presidential transition operation specifically

undecided voters are still undecided and will likely remain undecided and the ones who have decided not to pick the lesser of the two evils won't hit the polls. The Republican National Convention proved to show a Republican Party recharged with Trump's words minutes after surviving the attempt: "Fight, fight, fight." Security was ramped up for the convention so that the security failures were not repeated, although questions still remain both for the security apparatus and the public on how the shooter got so close and why there was a failure. The Justice Department under Attorney General Merrick Garland can be trusted to carry out a full-fledged impartial investigation, but the question persists if the same can be expected from the Justice Department under another Trump presidency. It is vital to save

What we are witnessing is a monumental loss of institutionalisation for the Republican Party, as its politics revolve around amplifying Trump, a move from defending conservative ideals which are fundamentally against debasing the branches of the government. The creation of the new party platform for the Republicans is a closed process, which is unlike other election cycles. As Biden attempts to try his chances by declaring he knows how to say the truth, in many ways, so does his opponent Trump is clearly adept at speaking his version of the truth.

While many of Biden's liberal and progressive voter bases are lacklustre—with much of the lethargy stemming from the US' role in the ongoing genocide in Gaza—Trump activists are on the move, and this shooting event has only added more fuel

to the movement. Trump has established, although mostly rhetorically, that he is the commander-in-chief who gets things done and he is the one who is taken seriously by the world leaders. The assassination attempt could legitimise Trump's rhetoric for swing voters. Regardless of the sound bites we must not forget what was actually accomplished during Trump's last term and the risks associated with the promises of Project 2025. From the cusp of misinformation, we slid into the labyrinth of fake news, alternate and multiple realities, loss of objectivity, immense push backs against reproductive rights, scandalous turnovers in the government.

The extent to which the public has been exposed to chaos has truly made them immune to the likes of such ruptures in US institutions which were meant to be trusted. The ultimate and the biggest numerical outcome of the Trump presidency was the number of Covid deaths and insensitivity at a time when the world needed to come together. Sure, there was some progress in foreign policy, but the magnitude of loss is much greater. And an important question needs to be considered: would the genocide of Palestinians by Israel stop if Trump takes office? That is a complicated question given that Trump courts evangelical Zionists who are quite influential in the broader national political landscape. He also called Biden a "bad Palestinian" denigrating an entire people and glossing over the constant trauma and brutality against humanity.

Technocracy of the Democratic Party may have made it a party of the elites, but the Republican Party is not quite the people's party and it hasn't been in a long time. People may rather prefer doctors to run a hospital versus a family who would run the healthcare establishment like a business. Trump is known to appoint his family members and loyalists in influential government posts, which reeks of corrupt "third world" family-run governments with compromised institutions. But whether American citizens will see that truth, and the problem with that, seems further away today than it was before the assassination attempt.

Joe Biden—whose candidacy was in doubt, with talks of his replacement dominating the headlines before Trump's assassination attempt—is now in a more precarious position. Biden is a leader who has delivered before, both on the goods and bads, but he has reached a ceiling with his support for the genocide—another political move to keep Israel sympathisers in the Democratic party's pocket. Pollsters can make sound predictions about the general election, but the future of both parties, particularly the Republican Party, looks bleak as its institutional rigour erodes and the party turns into a movement around one man and his family centered top-down leadership. The optics of the shooting event will only expedite that erosion. In this market place of democracy, we have only a few bad choices.

The most incredible election in French history



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ZAKI LAIDI

By calling a snap parliamentary election in the wake of his party's defeat in the June European Parliament election, French President Emmanuel Macron hoped to "clarify" the political situation for his own benefit. Clearly, he failed. The election produced no parliamentary majority, only a great deal more confusion. With many losers and very few winners, it is the most astonishing election in the country's modern history.

Among the many losers is National Rally (RN), the far-right party that clinched a decisive and shocking victory in the European elections just weeks earlier. Though RN has increased its seat count and emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly, it fell far short of expectations. The second round featured a powerful anti-RN mobilisation, as voters shifted tactically from the centre to the left, and from the right to the centre. Many French apparently concluded during the campaign that RN's candidates were ill prepared to hold power.

Most pundits had come to believe that the French electoral system's natural immunity against the far right no longer worked. But this election disproved that. Though the far-right is now the country's leading political force, it cannot do anything without allies, and it has none.

The second loser is Macron, whose party lost around 100 seats. Before the election, his Ensemble grouping could anchor a relative majority. Now, it is dwarfed by the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP), which won the most seats overall.

But while Macron probably will be forced to appoint a new prime minister from the left, the NFP remains around 100 seats short of



Supporters of French far-left opposition party gather to celebrate the results of the early French parliamentary elections in Paris, France, on July 7, 2024. PHOTO: REUTERS

an absolute majority. Moreover, it is a loose coalition whose members disagree on much and whose leader, Jean-Luc Melenchon of France Unbowed, has only one objective: to radicalise public debate and create the conditions for a face-off between him and RN's Marine Le Pen in the 2027 presidential

election. Thus, it is not necessarily in Melenchon's interest for a left-wing government (under a different figurehead) to succeed.

To benefit Melenchon personally, the NFP would need to be able to execute on its entire electoral programme; but that will never happen without an absolute majority. Moreover, the next government—whatever shape it takes—will soon have to answer to

differences with him, the arrangement paid off electorally. Of the 40 additional seats won by the left, all went to the Socialists and Greens, whereas France Unbowed made no new gains. One is reminded of the left-wing union that French President Francois Mitterrand led after his election in 1981: by forging an alliance with the Communists, he was in a better position to weaken them later. Looking ahead, the most likely scenario

Most pundits had come to believe that the French electoral system's natural immunity against the far-right no longer worked. But this election disproved that. Though the far-right is now the country's leading political force, it cannot do anything without allies, and it has none.

personalities will play a much larger role than labels like "left," "right," or "centre." As in every political system, some French politicians want to pursue stability and compromise, while others are bent on crushing perceived enemies.

Thus, the coming year will be marked by deep political uncertainty, which will not help France's economic outlook. No matter what, though, the next government must agree on the 2025 budget within the next few months.

Perhaps the new National Assembly will find some common ground on electoral reform. The current two-round procedure is suited for a bipolar political system, but this election provided further confirmation that French politics is now tripartite. Given the emergence of distinct left-wing, right-wing, and centrist blocs, the only solution is to introduce proportional representation, with each party establishing its level of support and then pursuing voluntary coalitions after the votes are counted. Within the left, for example, the Socialists would not have to tie themselves to France Unbowed to get elected, and they could form alliances with others—such as Macron's party—once in parliament.

France's fragmented politics are not so different from those of other European countries. But its political culture and institutions are unique in the degree to which they favour confrontation over coalition-building.

Will this election outcome spur French politicians to see things differently, or will everyone just keep behaving as they always have? In the latter scenario, RN need only bide its time, capitalise on the government's ineffectiveness, and sooner or later win everything.



Globally, the trend towards empathetic leadership is gaining momentum.

IMAGE: KOBU AGENCY/UNSPASH

The future of leadership is KINDNESS

In our personal lives, we strive for happiness, fulfilment, and love, actively avoiding toxic relationships. Yet, paradoxically, in the workplace, many still believe that power and toughness are the keys to success.

ZARIF FAIAZ

In recent years, the business world has seen a paradigm shift in the qualities we value in leaders. Long gone are the days when assertiveness and strength were seen as the sole indicators of effective leadership. Instead, a new wave of thinking, championed by figures like Jacinda Ardern, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, is advocating for kindness and empathy as core tenets of leadership. Ardern aptly put it, "We've placed over time so much emphasis on notions of assertiveness and strength that we have assumed it means you can't have those other qualities of kindness and empathy." This evolution in leadership ethos is not just a passing trend but a necessary transformation for the future.

The paradox of power and happiness

In our personal lives, we strive for happiness, fulfilment, and love, actively avoiding toxic relationships. Yet, paradoxically, in the workplace, many still believe that power and toughness are the keys to success. This dissonance is baffling. Why should our professional lives be any different from our personal lives when it comes to the qualities we value and the environments we create? It's time to debunk the myth that kindness and empathy are weaknesses in the corporate world.

The myth of niceness as weakness

There is no scientific basis for the belief that being nice, charismatic, or likeable makes one a pushover or unworthy of respect. This outdated thinking lacks evidence and ignores the numerous studies that highlight the benefits of supportive and empathetic leadership. For instance, a 2019 US study revealed that 57 per cent of employees quit their jobs because of their boss. Moreover, 14 per cent have left multiple jobs due to managerial issues, and an additional 32 per

cent have seriously considered leaving because of their managers. The evidence is clear: poor leadership, devoid of empathy and support, drives people away.

The science of supportive leadership

On the contrary, the science supports the benefits of kind leadership. Gallup's surveys of US workers consistently find that receiving compliments, recognition, and praise boosts self-esteem, improves self-evaluations, and triggers positive emotions. Similarly, a study by the American Psychological Association found that employees who feel supported by their supervisors are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. Google's data collection has reached similar conclusions: in the best teams, members listen to one another and show sensitivity to feelings and needs. This approach fosters a collaborative and innovative environment where employees feel valued and engaged.

Competitive advantage through empathy

In their book *CEO Excellence*, McKinsey noted that the most successful CEOs treat the "soft stuff"—talent, culture, and organisational design—with the same rigour as financial performance. These CEOs understand that getting the people aspect right is a source of competitive advantage. This insight is not just applicable globally but is highly relevant to the Bangladeshi corporate sector as well.

The Bangladeshi context

In Bangladesh, the corporate culture is gradually evolving. Historically, hierarchical and authoritarian leadership styles have dominated, often leading to high employee turnover and low morale. However, forward-thinking companies in Bangladesh are beginning to embrace a more compassionate approach to leadership. This shift is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity. As the local job market becomes more competitive, retaining top talent requires

more than just competitive salaries; it necessitates a supportive and empathetic work environment.

Global perspectives on employee satisfaction and leadership

Globally, the trend towards empathetic leadership is gaining momentum. According to a survey by Deloitte, 94 per cent of executives and 88 per cent of employees believe that a distinct corporate culture is important to a business's success. Moreover, a study by the Harvard Business Review found that leaders who project warmth are more effective than those who lead with toughness and power. This is supported by findings from the University of California, Berkeley, which suggest that compassionate leaders are more likely to be respected and followed.

The World Economic Forum has also highlighted the importance of empathy in leadership, noting that empathetic leaders can better connect with their employees, understand their needs, and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment. This is particularly crucial in today's diverse and dynamic work environments, where employees come from various backgrounds and have different needs and expectations.

The future of leadership

The future of leadership lies in kindness. As we move forward, it is imperative that we redefine what it means to be a leader. Empathy, kindness, and support are not just nice-to-have qualities but essential components of effective leadership. They create a positive work environment, reduce turnover, and drive organisational success. In Bangladesh, as in the rest of the world, businesses that embrace this new paradigm will not only survive but thrive in the competitive landscape. It's time to leave behind the old notions of power and toughness and pave the way for a kinder, more empathetic future in leadership.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Do what you can, with what you've got, where you are."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

What you should know about TSMC, Asia's most valuable company

AFP, Taipei

With a recent market valuation of over \$1 trillion, the Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturer TSMC has cemented itself as the most valuable company in Asia. This achievement takes place after a strong second-quarter revenue from the company. Experts believe the number will rise again soon due to the ongoing boom in AI chips' market demands. Meanwhile, here are five things you should know about this Taiwanese chip manufacturer.

How it began

MIT and Stanford graduate Morris Chang founded TSMC in 1987 after an extensive tech industry career in the United States. Taiwan's government was trying to set up a semiconductor industry that would compete with the countries, such as Japan, that led the sector at the time.

TSMC has become one of the world's most important companies in the nearly four decades since — a leader in producing the chips that help run everything from smartphones to advanced robots.

Chang, who was born in mainland China in 1931, retired from TSMC in 2018. He was revered in Taiwan by then and often described as the "godfather" of the island's chip industry. Taiwan awarded him one of its highest medals of honour in April.



IMAGE: ANN WANG/REUTERS

TSMC has become one of the world's most important companies in recent times.

AI boom

Thanks to the revolution in artificial intelligence sparked by the success of ChatGPT, TSMC has been riding a massive wave of demand for the advanced semiconductors needed to train and run AI apps. It works closely with AI leader Nvidia, which became the world's most valuable traded company in June with a market

capitalisation of around \$3.3 trillion.

TSMC also supplies Nvidia competitors Qualcomm and AMD, among others, and such is the demand for its chips that production has been reportedly booked for years in advance. Arguably its best-known client is Apple, which relies on TSMC chips for the latest iPhones and MacBooks.

"We have established a research pipeline

for technology to enable leading-edge AI devices, circuits, and systems for decades to come," TSMC says on its website.

Fears about China

Taiwan is one of the most important links in the supply chain for semiconductors, the lifeblood of the modern global economy, and TSMC is its crown jewel. However, China claims the self-ruled island as its territory and has not ruled out the use of force to bring it under its control.

Beijing has ramped up pressure on Taipei in recent years, including with large-scale military drills, sparking worries in capitals and boardrooms around the world about its chip industry.

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told a Congressional hearing in May that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and seizure of TSMC would be "absolutely devastating." "Right now, the United States buys 92% of its leading-edge chips from TSMC in Taiwan," she said.

US, Japan expansion

TSMC has faced pressure to diversify away from Taiwan, where the bulk of its factories are based, to guard against any further escalation of the tussle between Washington and Beijing.

It is building two "fabs" — manufacturing plants — in the United States and announced plans for a third in April, bringing its total investment in the state of

Arizona to \$65 billion. But its US projects have faced obstacles in the past year, which the company attributed to a lack of human resources because making chips requires highly specialised skills.

TSMC also launched an \$8.6 billion plant in Japan this year — a coup for the country as it vies with the United States and Europe to woo top chip firms with huge subsidies. With "strong" Japanese government support, TSMC has announced a second factory to make more advanced chips. The firm is also planning a new factory in Germany — its first in Europe.

Quake threat

Geopolitics is not the only worry for TSMC and Taiwan's chip industry. The island is prone to natural disasters, too. It sits on the "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity along the Pacific Rim, and — much like neighbouring Japan — has a long history of catastrophic quakes.

TSMC was one of the firms that halted production because of a 7.4-magnitude earthquake in April this year, the most severe to hit Taiwan in decades. It told customers the impact of the quake was minimal.

TSMC has invested in several seismic resistance features at its facilities to reduce damage and casualties, including an earthquake early warning system, according to its website.



PHOTO: AFP/X

Thousands of fans joined street celebrations in Madrid after Euro 2024 champions Spain returned home to a royal welcome on Monday, having beaten England 2-1 in the final in Berlin on Sunday. After receptions with King Felipe VI and prime minister Pedro Sanchez, the record four-time Euro winners paraded through the capital city on an open-top bus as supporters gathered at Cibeles Square and lined the streets in anticipation of seeing their heroes and the coveted trophy. Meanwhile, similar scenes were witnessed at the Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires on Tuesday, as thousands of people gathered around the airport to receive the Argentina team that returned home to a heroes' welcome about 24 hours after they beat Colombia to win a record 16th Copa America title. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, winger Angel di Maria, who on Sunday played his last match with the Albiceleste, and the Argentine Football Association president Claudio Fabian Tapia posed with the trophy upon the team's arrival.

Spanish players dominate Euro team of the tournament

REUTERS

Spain midfielder Rodri and 17-year-old Lamine Yamal were among six Spain players named in UEFA's team of the tournament for Euro 2024 on Tuesday.

UEFA's technical observers chose a 4-3-3 formation, which was one of the most frequently used during the tournament, with defender Kyle Walker earning his second successive appearance in it. He was England's only player named in the team.

Spain defeated England 2-1 in the final for their fourth European Championship title.

The remainder of the team was: Mike Maignan (France); Manuel Akanji (Switzerland), William Saliba (France), Marc Cucurella (Spain); Daniel Olmo (Spain), Fabian Ruiz (Spain); Jamal Musiala (Germany), and Nico Williams (Spain).

UEFA's technical observer team was made up of 12 former players and current or former coaches.

Southgate: England's nearly man

AFP, London

Gareth Southgate leaves his job as the second most successful England manager in history but with a string of agonising near misses to his name.

Two days after the Three Lions came up just short yet again -- losing the Euro 2024 final to Spain -- the 53-year-old has stepped down, deciding it is time for a "new chapter".

The mild-mannered Southgate transformed England into a consistent force on the international stage after decades of under-achievement.

He also reshaped the team culture, breaking down barriers that had previously existed within the camp between players from rival clubs.

But he ultimately failed to end the nation's long wait for a major trophy dating back to Alf Ramsey's 1966 World Cup victory despite having a richly talented generation of players to work with.

Southgate took over with England at a low ebb after a series of humiliations on and off the pitch.

A woeful Euro 2016 exit against Iceland brought a suitably depressing end to Roy Hodgson's reign, while his successor, Sam Allardyce, lasted only 67 days and one match before being forced out after a newspaper sting.

Southgate, short of top-level managerial experience, gained credibility among previously sceptical fans with a surprise run to the 2018 World Cup semifinals in Russia.

He followed that impressive achievement by leading England to their first major final for 55 years at Euro 2021, where they lost on penalties to Italy.

England went out to eventual finalists France in the quarterfinals in Qatar in 2022 but there were still positive signs that this was a young and exciting team heading in the right direction.

Southgate's men were among the favourites to finally get over the line at Euro 2024 but it turned into a roller coaster of emotions for the manager, who went from having beer cups thrown at him to within touching distance of winning the cup in Berlin.

Despite England's success, criticism of his perceived lack of tactical nous and inflexibility has always simmered.

At Euro 2024 he was accused of being too cautious, of an unwillingness to allow his men to express themselves.

But he leaves an important legacy and a framework in place for a tilt at future honours.

The debate over Rishad's red-ball readiness

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

In Test cricket, the importance of having a skilled leg spinner cannot be overstated as they bring a unique variation and unpredictability that can turn the tide of a match, even when there is little assistance from the pitch.

Bangladesh, traditionally reliant on orthodox, finger spinners, saw the impact of leg spin with Rishad Hossain's stellar T20 World Cup performance in the USA and West Indies: the 22-year-old went on to pick 14 wickets, including two match-winning spells against Sri Lanka and the Netherlands.

However, as the team prepares for Test series against Pakistan and India, Rishad's readiness for the longer format has sparked a debate.

While all-format captain Najmul Hossain Shanto has reservations about his current Test credentials, chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu considers Rishad "a prospect for the longer version".

Moreover, the player himself has expressed his willingness to get integrated into the Tigers' Test setup.

Rishad has recently returned for individual practice in Mirpur after completing a two-week vacation following Bangladesh's World Cup campaign.

On Tuesday, the player was seen honing both his batting and bowling skills at the National Cricket Academy, keeping an eye on the national team's next white-



ball assignment: against India in October, where they will play three T20Is after a two-match Test series.

Before the T20I series, Bangladesh will feature in Tests against hosts Pakistan, between August 21 to September 3. However, it seems the 22-year-old will have to sit idle during these four Tests as he is yet to be in consideration for Bangladesh in red-ball cricket despite having made his first-class debut in 2018.

The kind of spin Rishad produces can be an asset for the Bangladesh Test team, who have often found wanting in away series due to a lack of variety.

Although Bangladesh possess Test specialist spinners like Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, and Nayeem Hasan,

alongside their superstar all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, none provide the variation of a leggie.

However, asked about his stance regarding Rishad's inclusion in the Test fold, captain Shanto was skeptical.

"I think it would be better to ask this to the selectors, but from my experience, I don't think he [Rishad] is fully ready for red-ball cricket at the moment," Shanto said during yesterday's private programme at Pragati Sarani.

When this reporter contacted Rishad for his comments on playing Tests, he said that he has "no conditions" about playing any format.

"I'm currently preparing for white-ball games... Let's see how it [prospect of

playing Tests] turns out for me," Rishad told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the chief selector Lipu believes that Rishad can be counted on as a prospect in the Test fold, but it is dependent on many factors.

"Rishad has been in the pipeline for a long time. Regarding his inclusion in red-ball [format], we can't reach a conclusion by ourselves," said Lipu, who is in Chattogram to oversee the ongoing white-ball series between HP Unit and Bangladesh Tigers alongside one of his deputies, Abdur Razzak.

"Rishad is definitely a prospect for the longer version as well. But when we will give the exposure, only time can tell. The kind of caliber he possesses, he will definitely be in the plan.

"But a Test match is a different ball game, and it's a test for every bowler; it's not like T20. He needs to be competent for it. He is working on googlies and all other variations.

"We will definitely try to give him exposure, but we need the opinions of the captain and head coach as well," the chief selector concluded.

Having received a big round of applause from the country's cricketing fraternity for Rishad's selection in the World Cup squad, now it remains to be seen whether the selectors and team management opt for a similar bold move by having Rishad on board for the upcoming Test hurdles.

'My target is to qualify for the final round in Olympics'

Robiul Islam will become the ninth shooter from Bangladesh to compete in the Olympic Games through wild-card entries. The multiple-medal winner in junior and senior level, in both air rifle and air gun events, dreams of becoming the first shooter from the country to make it into the final round of the Olympics. The 25-year-old spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman regarding his preparation and ambition in an interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

DS: There were whispers that Shaira Arefin, who got an IOC scholarship, would receive the wild card for Paris Olympic but eventually you got it. What do you think was the reason behind this?

RI: I missed a quota by only 0.3 points in an event in Indonesia in January. I also produced good results in two other quota-place tournaments. I think the IOC considered these scores when considering awarding the wild card to Bangladesh.

DS: How has your preparation been for the Olympics?

RI: My 10m air rifle event is on 28 July and I have been preparing for a long time by setting a goal. The preparation got hampered a bit over the speculation regarding Shaira's wild card entry. But once I got the wild card, I started afresh with maximum motivation. Our coach has also intensified the training to make up for the lost

time. I have been practising 250 to 300 shots per day now, compared to 150 shots in the past.

DS: Since Barcelona Olympics in 1992, Bangladeshi rifle shooters have participated in every edition but there has been no remarkable performance. Will that be the case for you too?

RI: I never think that I will go there, participate and return home. I feel I am carrying Bangladesh on my shoulders; it is a matter of pride and I want to deliver for the nation. My target is to qualify for the final round.

DS: Bangladeshi shooters have never been able to convert practice scores into competition scores. What makes you confident about

qualifying for the final with a best score of 627?

RI: I recently scored 630.2 points in a competition in Dhaka. Besides, we recently visited Munch where I fine-tuned my rifle, tested the barrel and did some small things which help a shooter to increase his scores. I have also been doing yoga and meditation so that I can stay focused during the event.

DS: Where does Bangladesh shooting lag behind?

RI: We lag behind in many areas. If you compare, a total of 138 Indian shooters participated in a World Cup in Korea while there were only four from Bangladesh. We need to participate more in overseas tournaments to make a mark in big events.



PHOTO: REUTERS

'A dream come true'

AFP, Madrid



French superstar Kylian Mbappe was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player on Tuesday, telling 80,000 fans "my dream has come true".

The striker, who had completed his medical earlier on Tuesday morning, signed a five-year contract and was handed a No. 9 shirt by club president Florentino Perez.

"Wow," Mbappe said in Spanish to roars from a packed Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

"For years, I've dreamed of playing for Real Madrid and today my dream has come true," said the 25-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain player.

Even though the crowd was expected to be bigger than that 15 years ago when Cristiano Ronaldo was unveiled, the attendance remained somewhat similar.

AL, BCL men to take position at unit offices

To 'help' cops keep law and order

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League and its associate bodies will take positions at their respective unit offices across the country from early morning today and remain vigilant against blocking of roads and highways.

Sources say AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday gave the instruction as the quota reform movement turned violent yesterday, killing at least six people in Dhaka, Chattogram and Rangpur.

They say the party wants to face the student movement politically.

The ruling party's student wing Chhatra League has also been asked to take position at their respective units. BCL leaders were also instructed not to initiate any attacks, but resist if they come under attacks, according to the sources.

AL's Dhaka city's north and south units will take position at their ward offices from early morning. A section of

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A dockyard has been built occupying a part of the Buriganga in Keraniganj's Telghat area inside the demarcation pillar. The grabbers construct bulk carriers and repair launches at the dockyard. BIWTA often evicts the grabbers, but they soon return. The photo was taken yesterday.

Editors' Council calls for ensuring safety of journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over the attacks on journalists covering the quota protests, the Editors' Council yesterday called upon the government, student organisations, and law enforcers to ensure the safety of journalists.

Mentioning that at least 25 journalists were wounded in the attacks in different parts of the capital over the last two days, the council condemned such assaults on journalists on duty.

Several of them were undergoing treatment at hospitals.

Citing media reports, the statement, signed by the council's President Mahfuz Anam and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud, said eight journalists were injured at Jahangirnagar University on the night of July 15, six at Dhaka University, and nine others in Chattogram, Dinajpur, and Bogura during clashes yesterday.

The injured include Mehdi Mamun of Daily Bonik Barta, Abdur Rahman Sarjil of Dainik Bangla, Jobayer Ahmed of Bangladesh Today, Mushfiqur Rizwan of Somoyer Alo, Hasibur Rahman of bdnews24.com, Wajhhetul Islam of Daily Janakantha, Arifuzzaman Ujjal of Daily

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Punctuality of Biman found wanting

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman is lagging far behind the international standard for on-time performance for its flights, an indication of the continued operational inefficiency of the national flag carrier.

The on-time performance of airlines is the percentage of flights that arrive or depart within 15 minutes of the scheduled time. Globally, airlines target 80 percent and above.

Some 69.37 percent of Biman's flights between July last year and June this year departed on time, according to the flag carrier's own data. During that period, 66 percent of the flights arrived on time.

Biman's poorest on-time performance for international departures from Dhaka was recorded in December last year, 47.25 percent. Its best was in March, 72.24 percent.

Many airlines have embedded on-time performance as a key performance indicator as delays affect productivity and cost airlines thousands of dollars every year.

"It means flights spend longer on taxiways burning fuel unnecessarily -- it means passengers miss connections and get upset," said ATM Nazrul Islam, an aviation expert.

The knock-on effects of the disruptions to onward travel are far-reaching, he said.

In Europe, where passengers are entitled to compensation for late flights, there is a direct cost associated with poor on-time performance.

In 2023, Biman failed to make it to the list of the top 20 most punctual airlines in the Asia-Pacific region.

Biman has identified at least 20 reasons for the flight delays, including the non-availability of adequate number of check-in counters, delays in allocating gates, and assigning a gate to multiple flights.

Many airlines have embedded on-time performance as a key performance indicator as delays affect productivity and cost airlines thousands of dollars every year.

Space constraints at airports also make it difficult to load baggage containers onto aircraft.

The other reasons include the breakdown of carousels, bad weather, and delays in cabin cleaning.

Biman admitted that passengers become displeased due to flight delays, documents show.

The newly-appointed Biman Managing Director and CEO Zahidul Islam Bhuiyan said maintaining on-time performance is one of his main challenges.

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Mobile internet sluggish at campuses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students on many university campuses experienced issues accessing mobile internet last night.

The issue was first reported in the evening, hours after the day's violence surrounding the quota reform protests.

Meanwhile, BTRC officials could not be reached over the phone for comments in this regard.

Ashrefa, a student at Dhaka University and a resident of Shamsun Nahar Hall, said, "We started getting poor mobile network coverage on campus in the afternoon, with the internet speed slowing down in the evening."

"As a result, my parents couldn't reach me after repeated attempts, causing them to worry about my safety."

Several more Dhaka University students, as well as those at Rajshahi University and Jahangirnagar University,

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Israeli forces battle Hamas across Gaza

57 Palestinians killed in bombardments in southern, central areas of enclave

AGENCIES

Israeli forces battled Hamas-led fighters in several areas across Gaza yesterday, while Palestinian health officials said at least 57 people were killed in Israeli bombardments in southern and central areas of the enclave.

In Rafah, a southern border city where Israeli forces have been operating since May, five Palestinians were killed in an air strike on a house, while in nearby Khan Younis, a man, his wife and two children were killed, they said.

An Israeli airstrike on a car killed at least 17 Palestinians and wounded 26 others in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, the officials said.

In the historic Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, at least four Palestinians were killed in separate shelling and aerial strikes in central Gaza, medics said. An Israeli airstrike killed four in Sheikh Zayed in northern Gaza, they said.

Hours later, an Israeli air strike on

a school in the Nuseirat camp killed 16 people and wounded many others, health officials said.

The Israeli military said troops continued "intelligence-based" activities in Rafah, killing many Palestinian gunmen over the past 24 hours. It said air strikes had targeted Hamas fighters, tunnels, and other military infrastructure.

It added that the Israeli air force had struck around 40 targets across the enclave.

The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said in separate statements their fighters attacked Israeli forces in several locations with anti-tank rockets and mortar fire.

More than 38,713 Palestinians have been killed and 89,166 have been injured in the Israeli military offensive in Gaza since October 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Efforts mediated by Egypt and Qatar to end the conflict and release the hostages, as well as Palestinians in

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Govt cancels Tk 5cr fund for 10 Minute School

CEO's Facebook post backing quota reform appears to be the reason

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Startup Bangladesh, the government's venture capital fund, yesterday pulled back its proposed investment of Tk 5 crore in 10 Minute School (IOMS), Bangladesh's largest edtech platform.

No official explanation was given by Startup Bangladesh for withdrawing its planned investment in the edtech start-up announced in October last year.

However, the move comes after Ayman Sadiq, the co-founder and chief executive officer of IOMS, made a Facebook post supporting the ongoing student movement for reforming the quota system for government jobs.

"We want quota reform. Merit should be the biggest quota. #QuotaMovement," Sadiq, also a media personality, posted on his

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Ashura today

BSS, Dhaka

Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain Ibn Ali (RA), the grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), will be observed in the country today with due religious solemnity.

Today is the 10th day of the month of Muharram in Hijri calendar-1446. This day is well-known as Ashura.

It is regarded as the day of Karbala, a "mourning and heartbreaking event", which has a special religious significance for the Muslim community across the globe.

Muslims across the world recall the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) along with his family members and 72 followers, who embraced martyrdom in 680 AD in the desert of Karbala on the banks of the Euphrates river in Iraq while fighting for truth and justice against the Yazid forces.

Their self-sacrifice at Karbala Maidan to uphold the great ideals of Islam,

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A portion of Jurain road near the Dhaka-Mawa expressway is occupied by makeshift shops, parked vehicles and discarded equipment, obstructing pedestrians. But the authorities seem to have turned a blind eye. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Biden defends 'mental acuity' Says 'bullseye' remark about Trump a mistake

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden defended both his "mental acuity" and his rhetoric about Donald Trump Monday, in a second TV interview aimed at ending calls for him to quit his re-election bid following a disastrous debate.

The 81-year-old delivered an often combative defence of his mental and physical fitness for office during the one-on-one with broadcaster NBC, which nevertheless featured some of the word salads that have worried Democrats.

"I'm old," Biden told host Lester Holt in the interview at the White House. "But I'm only three years older than Trump, number one. And number two, my mental acuity has been pretty damn good."

He added: "I understand why people say, 'God, he's 81 years old. Whoa. What's he gonna be when he's 83 years old, 84 years?' It's a legitimate question to ask."

Biden's interview was the latest attempt by the White House to assuage growing fears over the Democrat's age and mental state following the dismal debate performance on June 27.

The sit-down was announced last week, before the assassination attempt on Republican candidate Donald Trump on Saturday -- which inevitably became a key subject of the interview.

