

ABU SAYED'S DEATH IN POLICE FIRING

# Cops' FIR runs counter to known facts

Says the Rangpur student was killed in firing, throwing of bricks by protesters

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Video footage shows police shooting at Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed, who posed no physical threat to the law enforcers, during the quota reform protest near the campus on July 16. He died soon afterwards.

But contradicting what is evident, the First Information Report (FIR) filed by police says Sayed was not a victim of police firing.

"The protesters fired weapons and threw chunks of bricks from different directions, and at one stage, a student was seen falling to the ground," reads the report, adding that classmates took Sayed, 23, to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Sub-inspector Bibhuti Bhushan Roy, in-charge of the campus police camp, wrote the report.

In the FIR filed with Tajhat police station on July 16, the SI accused 2,000-3,000 unidentified people, including BNP and Jamaat-Shibir activists, of the killing.



When SI Bibhuti was contacted and asked about the footage, he said, "I have just filed the case. The officer carrying out the investigation will verify it."

In two video clips, verified by the Amnesty International, at least two police officers fired 12-gauge shotguns directly at him from across the street. Sayed clutched his chest on impact, and the officers fired at least two more times.

Amnesty International used satellite images to geolocate the positions of Sayed and the police officers and found that they were at a distance of about 15

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Holding her baby in her arms, Alo breaks down in tears in Old Dhaka's CMM court area yesterday as she waits to see her husband Rony Howlader. Police were to produce Rony, a pickup driver, before the court in a sabotage case. Alo is worried whether she would be able to secure bail for her husband, who was picked up from Badda on Thursday, as she cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Loss of so many lives very painful'

Says PM as she visits the injured at DMCH

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said appropriate punishment should be meted out for the recent violence across the country to stop the criminals from playing with the lives of the people.

"The situation is very painful. So many people have been killed and injured," she said in an emotion-choked voice while visiting the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the afternoon.

Hasina went to the hospital around 4:30pm to see the injured who came under attack during the recent violence. She visited the emergency unit of the DMCH and inquired about the health of the injured.

The premier reiterated her call to the people to find the culprits behind such heinous acts.

She said she never wanted to see anyone lose their dear ones.

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## QUOTA PROTEST DB picks up three organisers from hospital

Says they 'sought security' from cops



Nahid Islam, Asif Mahmud and Abu Baker Majumder  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday afternoon picked up Nahid Islam, Asif Mahmud and Abu Baker Majumder, three key organisers of the quota reform protests, from a city hospital where Nahid and Asif were undergoing treatment.

Junaed Alam Sharkey, additional deputy commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the three were taken into DB custody as they sought security.

"We will interrogate them about the incidents that took place in the last two days," he told The Daily Star around 12:15 today.

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## Over 5,500 held in one week

Arrestees include many BNP, Jamaat activists

STAR REPORT

At least 738 more people were arrested in the capital and several other districts in 36 hours till 6:00pm yesterday in connection with the recent violence across the country.

As of yesterday, over 5,522 people, including many BNP and Jamaat leaders, were held in different parts of the country over the last seven days.

So far, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested 2,357 people in 209 cases filed with different police stations over violence, vandalism, and arson at government establishments and other places, said sources in DMP.

Of them, 148 were held yesterday.

According to court documents, 211 people, including several BNP and Jamaat leaders, were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, in 67 cases yesterday.

A total of 4,784 people were arrested earlier in Dhaka and other districts.

Police held 324 people in 12 districts in 36 hours between 6:00am Thursday and 6:00pm yesterday.

Of them, 154 were arrested in Rajshahi, 64 in Narayanganj, 41 in Chattogram, 1 in Patuakhali, three in Gazipur, seven in Mymensingh, 15 in Kishoreganj, seven in Sylhet, eight in Bogura, two in Gaibandha, 15 in Savar, and seven in Manikganj.

As of Thursday, 173 cases were filed in 18 districts, including eight in Narayanganj and one in Chattogram. Nine of them were lodged on Thursday.

Rab yesterday morning said they arrested 266 people across the country, including 63 in Dhaka, in connection with the violence.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday sent former Ducus VP Nurul Haque Nur to jail after his five-day remand in a case lodged over vandalising and setting fire to Setu Bhaban on July 18.

In a press release yesterday, Gono Odhikar Parishad alleged that Nur, also the president of the organisation, was tortured during remand.

"When Nur was produced before the court, he could not walk properly. He limped towards the dock. He told his

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## BNP calls for 'national unity' with one-point demand

Urges democratic parties, social and cultural orgs to unite for ousting govt

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday called for national unity among all democratic political parties and socio-cultural organisations to press home a one-point demand - resignation of the government.

At this critical moment of the nation, the aim of the unity will be restoration of democracy and voting rights, Fakhru said in a statement sent to the media last night.

"We call for national unity among the parties and alliances involved in the simultaneous movement under BNP's leadership; left and right-wing political parties; Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamist political parties and organisations."

This announcement on national unity will expedite the movement for people's freedom, he said.

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## 'End crackdown, restore full access to internet'

UN experts urge Bangladesh govt

STAR REPORT

UN experts on Thursday called upon Bangladesh government to immediately ensure accountability for human rights violations, end the violent crackdown against protesters and political opponents, and to fully restore people's access to the internet and social media.

In a statement on the website of the Office of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the experts said, "We have been alarmed by the large number of unlawful killings, possible enforced disappearances, torture and the detention of thousands of people."

"We are deeply concerned by reports of targeted attacks, threats, intimidation and retaliation by the authorities and government-aligned groups against protest leaders, political activists, human rights defenders and journalists."

Citing local media in Bangladesh, the statement said at least 170 people, including police personnel, were confirmed dead in the violence centring the quota reform movement, with the actual death toll likely to be much higher. At least two journalists have been killed and several others injured. There are also

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inquires about the health of a youth during a visit to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. The young man sustained injuries during the recent violence in the country.

PHOTO: BSS

## BID FOR US PRESIDENT Barack, Michelle Obama endorse Kamala Harris

REUTERS

Former US president Barack Obama and his wife Michelle endorsed Kamala Harris' bid for president yesterday in a roughly one-minute long video that captured a private phone call between the couple and the current vice president.

"We called to say Michelle and I couldn't be prouder to endorse you and to do everything we can to get you through this election and into the Oval Office," Obama told Harris.

"I am proud of you. This is going to be historic," the former first lady told Harris. Talking into a cell phone and cracking a few smiles, Harris expressed her gratitude for the endorsement and their long friendship.

"Thank you both. It means so much. And we're gonna have some fun with this too," Harris said. The campaign said the video was the actual call, not a reenactment.

Harris' surprise bid against Republican rival Donald Trump continues to gain steam from supporters, donors and politicians less than a week after President Joe Biden bowed out of the race amid slumping poll numbers.

Obama, the first US Black president, remains one of the most popular figures

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## Take steps to restore people's faith in political system

ICG urges govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League government should take steps to restore people's confidence in the political system in Bangladesh after widespread violence rocked the country, said a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The ruling party's 15-year rule has made the country ripe for political upheaval, the ICG report added.

"It should lift martial law, restore internet access and ensure that those responsible for the killings during the protests are held accountable. It also needs to manage the peaceful reopening of universities and free the scores of students arrested over the last week," it said.

Pierre Prakash, programme director of the ICG Asia division, said the biggest challenge the Awami League government faces is how it handles the situation after the party's heavy-handed response to the protest.

"After fifteen years in office, Prime Minister Hasina is facing her most

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Some tamarix trees (jhou gachh) were uprooted during the erosion near the Laboni point of Cox's Bazar beach. The banks of Bay have recently been facing the impact of the rough seas. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

## 95 Libyans detained at suspected military camp

Say South African police

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa authorities rounded up 95 Libyans in a raid yesterday at a farm that appeared to have been converted into a military training base, police said.

The early morning raid was near the town of White River in the northeastern province of Mpumalanga, about 360 kilometres (220 miles) east of Johannesburg, they said.

"The place, which was initially designated as a training site, appears to have been converted into an illegal military training base," police said in a statement.

"The 95 individuals taken into custody are all Libyan nationals and are currently being questioned by the relevant authorities."

## BNP

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Fakhrul said that parties and organisations can express their willingness to join the call through issuing statements due to time constraints and difficulties in communications.

A joint statement, signed by all those who would express their willingness to join the call, will be issued soon, he said.

## Four more die

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Rampura Police Station.

Doctors of the forensic medicine department at DMCH conducted autopsies on the four bodies yesterday, said sources at the mortuary.

With these four deaths, at least 160 lives have been lost since July 16, when six people were killed in clashes between agitators on one side, and law enforcers, Border Guard Bangladesh, and ruling party activists on the other.

Thirty people died on July 18, 66 on July 19, 25 on July 20, 14 on July 21, six on July 22, three on July 23, four on July 24, and two on July 25.

The overall death toll from the violence may be higher, as The Daily Star could not reach many hospitals where dozens of critically injured patients were taken. Also, many families reportedly collected the bodies of their loved ones from the scene, and this newspaper could not contact those families.

The Daily Star's count of the victims is based solely on hospital sources.

## Barack, Michelle

FROM PAGE 1

in the Democratic party even after more than a decade has passed since he was last elected.

Obama has lent his support to Biden during big-money fundraisers, which were among some of the biggest blockbuster events of his campaign.

The endorsement could help activate and sustain energy and fundraising for Harris' campaign and it signals he is likely to get on the campaign trail for Harris once she is officially the presumptive nominee.

Obama initially withheld his endorsement even as Biden, his former vice president, anointed her as his heir apparent. Obama reportedly did not want to put his thumb on the scale as the party worked through the process of determining its nominee.

## Cops' FIR runs counter to known facts

FROM PAGE 1

metres during the shooting. Also, Sayed posed no apparent physical threat to the police, Amnesty International said in a statement on July 18, adding that the police's attack on Sayed was reckless and unprovoked.

Sayed's death certificate said he was "brought dead" to the hospital.

Tuhin Wadud, a teacher of the university who saw Sayed's body at the hospital, said there were shotgun pellet wounds all over the body.

Razibul Islam, head of the forensic medicine department at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said he died of internal haemorrhage caused by the pellets.

He said an autopsy report will be prepared soon but declined to give details.

Asked about the FIR, Deputy Commissioner (Crime) of Rangpur Metropolitan Police Abu Maruf Hossain said many non-students, including Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men, reportedly used firearms during the protests. The matter will be clear once the investigation concludes.

WHAT IS IN THE FOOTAGE?

Sayed had his arms wide open with a stick in his right hand. He appears to dodge a brick chip. Gunshots were heard. A man, possibly the one filming, shouted, "He got shot."

Sayed again stretched his arms, and

a second later, he took a few steps back and sat on the ground.

A man rushed to him and helped him stand up. There were blood stains on his neck, nose and other parts of the body.

Three more protesters then joined and carried him away.

Sayed's killing sparked widespread outrage, with many questioning the justification of police's use of lethal weapons on unarmed protesters.

In the following days, at least 156 people were killed and several thousand wounded in deadly clashes across the country.

The government enforced curfew to tackle the situation, and on July 23 issued a circular, taking merit-based recruitment in civil service to 93 percent from 44 percent. The remaining seven percent will be reserved.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, rights activist Nur Khan Liton said police's account in the FIR was unacceptable because the shooting took place in broad daylight and it was a cold-blooded killing.

He said police should warn first and then can only shoot aiming at the legs when they have no other option to protect lives, properties and firearms. "The problem is the government party men who get jobs in the police force do not care about the rule of law," he told

## 'End crackdown, restore full access to internet'

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disturbing reports of journalists being threatened by authorities for their news reporting.

"Prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations in line with internationally recognised standards must be carried out into all human rights violations."

Saying that the government has a history of broken promises with regards to human rights and that there is a lack of public trust in the judiciary, the experts urged the government to initiate a credible accountability process with the support of the UN. The experts offered their assistance in this regard.

"We call on the authorities to immediately release all peaceful protesters and ensure due process for those charged and prosecuted in connection with their role in the violence," they said.

Since the start of July, university students and job seekers have been protesting the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs, and demanding reforms to the system. On June 5, the High Court effectively reinstated the quota system by declaring illegal a 2018 government circular that abolished it.

The Supreme Court on July 10 issued a status quo on the HC verdict.

According to the statement on the OHCHR website, the violence centring the quota reform movement erupted on July 15, after "inflammatory public statements by Government officials and attacks by Government-aligned youth groups on the peaceful protesters. Law enforcement authorities reportedly rushed in to support government-aligned groups and used excessive force, including live bullets, against unarmed protesters."

It said some of the protesters retaliated, destroying and burning public property and vehicles.

Early on July 18, mobile data

was shut off and later that night, the entire country was plunged into digital darkness as broadband internet across the country became unavailable.

The government called a nationwide curfew on the night of July 19, and called in the army.

The statement said the army was given shoot-on-sight orders.

On July 21, the Supreme Court decided to keep seven percent government jobs reserved and open the rest to competition. On July 23, the government issued a circular taking merit-based recruitment in civil service to 93 percent from the previous 44 percent.

According to the OHCHR statement, the authorities in Bangladesh had shut down broadband and mobile internet, preventing access to websites, social media and web-based mobile phone communications.

However, the government and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) have said the internet shutdown occurred due to an attack on the data centres in the capital's Mohakhali. Broadband internet is slowly being restored since the evening of July 23, while mobile data is yet to be restored. Access to social media has been limited.

The experts said, "The government needs to fully restore the internet and access to social media immediately and ensure that local and foreign media are granted full access to report on the developments without being attacked, threatened or pressured."

"The state must uphold people's right to information. Total transparency and accuracy on the numbers of those detained, forcibly disappeared, killed or subjected to other human rights violations, as well as careful preservation of evidence is essential to ensuring accountability and restoring public trust."

They warned that while a recent

The Daily Star.

WHO SHOT HIM?

A source in the police said an officer named Yunus Ali fired a weapon at Sayed during a protest on July 16 without authorisation from higher officials. No details could be known.

DC Maruf said that no action has yet been taken against any policeman involved in the shooting.

He only mentioned that police used shotguns, adding that expert opinions would be sought, and actions would follow if rules were violated.

Meanwhile, a four-member committee, led by Additional Commissioner Saifuzzaman Faruki of Rangpur Metropolitan Police, has been formed to investigate the incident. The committee was asked to file its report in two weeks.

Sayed, the youngest of nine siblings, was a student of English. His grieving father and brother said he dreamt of joining the civil service and changing his family's fate.

A day before his death, he wrote on Facebook that he was ready to sacrifice his life for the cause.

His brother Ramzan said he tried to collect the autopsy report from the hospital on Thursday but was asked to obtain it from the court. The family has not filed any case.

[Kongkon Karmaker contributed to this report.]

## 'Loss of so many lives very painful'

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Hasina said her government has taken all necessary steps to improve the socio-economic condition of the people and ensure better life for them.

"My question is what they have gained from it [violence]. So many people have lost their lives, so many families have been affected."

The premier prayed for the salvation of the departed souls of the dead and wished quick recovery of the injured.

"We will do whatever is needed for the treatment of the injured. There is no lack of treatment," she said.

Hasina said physicians, the health minister, and the state minister for health have been visiting the injured and ensuring their proper treatment.

She said she would visit more hospitals to see the injured.

The premier said Jamaat-Shibir,

the BNP and Chhatra Dal have been carrying out destructive activities taking an advantage of the quota reform protests.

"They have no sense of humanity, no love and affection for the country, no sense of responsibility towards the country. They do not consider human beings as human beings."

Hasina asked the countrymen to be united against such heinous incidents.

"We have fulfilled all the demands [made by the students]. Then why more [movement]?" she said.

The PM thanked the physicians for giving treatment to the injured.

Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen, State Minister for Health Rokeya Sultana and local lawmaker AFM Bahauddin Nasim, among others, were present.

## DB picks up three organisers from hospital

FROM PAGE 1

In the evening yesterday, families of the three and hospital staffers said a group of people in plainclothes went to the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in the capital's Dhanmondi at 3:30pm and forcibly took them out to an undisclosed place.

The plainclothes men picked up Nahid from his cabin on the sixth floor of the hospital. They then went to Asif's cabin on the second floor. They also picked up Baker while he was bringing food for Asif.

They took away the mobile phones of Nahid, his sister Fatima Tasnim, Asif and Baker.

Fatima said her brother is not involved in any anti-government activities. "They are not affiliated with any political parties. We urge all to ensure our safety."

This is the second time the trio - all students of Dhaka University - have been picked up in just a week.

Nahid was picked up in the early hours of July 20 allegedly by law enforcers from a house in the capital's Sabujbagh. He alleged that he was tortured physically until he lost consciousness. When he gained consciousness, he found himself under a bridge in Purbachal. He went to his home by a CNG-run

auto rickshaw.

Both Asif and Bakar were picked up on July 19. The two wrote on Facebook that they were blindfolded and left in Hatirjheel and Dhanmondi areas on July 24. Neither of them mentioned who picked them up.

This paper could not reach the family members of the three early today for comments as their phones were switched off.

As per an earlier announcement, the coordinators of the anti quota protests were scheduled to brief the media about the overall situation at a press briefing in front of the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital yesterday evening.

Abdul Hannan Masud, coordinator of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement, told journalists that they would hold the briefing at 7:30pm.

Journalists from different media outlets waited at the hospital, but the coordinators did not appear until 8:30pm.

Contacted, Masud told The Daily Star at 8:35pm that they were under "huge pressure" and doubtful about holding the press briefing.

The anti-quota quota protesters could not hold the briefing as of 9:30pm.

## Over 5,500 held

FROM PAGE 1

wife and lawyer that he was tortured and beaten up during remand," said the release.

In another development, a Dhaka court yesterday sent six leaders of BNP and Jamaat, including BNP Publicity Affairs Secretary Sultan Salauddin Tuku, to jail, after completion of five-day remand in a case lodged over vandalising the BTV Bhaban in Rampura.

The five other accused are BNP leaders Qazi Sayedul Alam Babul, Aminul Haque, MA Salam, Mahmudus Salehin, and Jamaat Secretary General Miah Golam Parwar.

At a press briefing yesterday, Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (Detective Branch) of DMP, said they arrested six people, including Demra thana unit Chhatra Dal convener

## VANDALISM AT METRO STATION

### Journo, five others placed on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed six people, including a journalist, on a five-day remand for interrogation in connection with a case filed over the vandalism of the Kazipara Metro Station in the city's Mirpur.

The six are Hafiz Al Asad, Sanaul Haque Niru, Alamgir, Mohiuddin Ahmed Bhuiyan, Abdul Aziz Sultan, and Mayeen.

Hafiz, alias, Saeed Khan, is the organising secretary of a faction of the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ).

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Arobia Khanam passed the order after case investigating officer Asaduzzaman Munshi, an inspector of the Detective Branch (DB) of police, produced the arrestees before her court with a 10-day remand prayer.

The magistrate also rejected a bail petition filed for Saeed Khan, said a sub-inspector working in the court.

According to the case documents, some 5,000-6,000 people attacked the Kazipara Metro Rail Station in Mirpur between 4:30pm and 7:30pm on July 19.

Armed with local weapons, they broke into the Kazipara Metro Rail Station. They vandalised the station, looted valuable machinery and equipment, and torched the place, the investigator said in the police forwarding report submitted before the court.

According to the report, the damages to this metro rail station are estimated to be Tk 100 crore.



## 'We demand UN probe into the killings'

Say social and cultural orgs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting the deaths during the countrywide violence centring the recent quota reform protests, as well as false cases and indiscriminate arrests, cultural and social organisations yesterday demanded fair and impartial investigations under the United Nations.

Under the banner of "Protesting Cultural and Social Organisation", they organised a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club around 11:00am.

"No one can remain silent after seeing the number of deaths. When I close my eyes, I can see those bodies," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive at Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

"We witnessed the Joj Miah drama during the previous judicial probe. Therefore, we want fair and impartial investigations under the United Nations," she demanded.

Mentioning that critically injured people were rushed from hospital to hospital after sustaining injuries from police firing, she said, "The hospitals refused to provide them with treatment. We condemn such a health system."

She demanded the resignation of the ministers responsible for the killings, an end to "dirty politics" on campuses, and the immediate reopening of educational institutions after ensuring safety of the students.

Addressing the rally, Daily Samakal Advisory Editor Abu Sayeed Khan said the quota reform protest was a just one.

"But the government used force to suppress the

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Various cultural and social organisations form a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning, demanding fair and impartial investigations into the violence and killings centring the quota reform protests under the United Nations.

PHOTO: MD ABBAS



## Find the perpetrators of violence

Says PM after visiting BTV Bhaban

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged citizens to cooperate with the government to make sure the perpetrators of the recent mayhem are nabbed from every nook and corner of the country.

"I would like to call upon the country's people to find out who was involved in these destructions and cooperate to ensure their punishment," she said.

The premier made the call while visiting Bangladesh Television (BTV) Bhaban in the city's Rampura area to see the extent of damage after it

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## Lift curfew, withdraw army: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Termining the killing of student protesters by law enforcers

"mass murder", BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government has lost the moral right to rule.

He also called for withdrawal of the army and lifting of the curfew.

In a statement, he asked the government to release accurate statistics on the number of innocent individuals killed, maimed, and injured in recent days.

"It's never acceptable to use the army to suppress a justified movement of students and people. We demand the immediate withdrawal of the curfew and sending the armed forces back to the barracks," the BNP leader said.

Fakhrul said people need to know how much ammunition, tear gas, and sound grenades bought with the public money were used on students.

He warned that the government will one day be held accountable

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## Every death will be probed

Says Quader, blames BNP-Jamaat for violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Every death related to the violence centring quota reform protests

will undergo judicial investigation and trial, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"We don't want any untimely death. Every killing will be tried. Legal actions will be taken against those involved in the violence," Quader told a press conference in Dhaka.

He said all the demands of students have been accepted. He accused the opposition of exploiting the movement to overthrow Sheikh Hasina's government, saying, "Thousands of our leaders, activists, and police officers were attacked. Their intention was to overthrow Sheikh Hasina's government."

He linked the violence to historical betrayals, saying "The murderers of '71, the assassins

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# Anti-mosquito drives slow down due to unrest

Experts fear dengue cases may rise as a result

HELEMUL ALAM

Anti-mosquito drives have either remained completely suspended in some areas or been slowed down since the recent unrest in the country centring the quota reform protests.

This may result in a rapid increase in dengue cases, fear experts. They said if not addressed quickly, the situation may become alarming.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), dengue cases in July have nearly doubled from June, rising from 798 to 1,747.

The total number of cases until July 26 stands at 5,398, with 60.9 percent male and 39.1 percent female patients. The death toll has reached 51, with females accounting for 52.9 percent of the fatalities.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said while the reduced rainfall is somewhat positive, the anti-mosquito drives have become irregular, and in some instances, non-existent, due to the recent violence.

He said anti-mosquito drives should resume in all places as the upcoming days will be challenging due to the potential emergence of Den-2 variant.

Last year, the country faced approximately 3,21,179 dengue cases, primarily caused by the Den-2 variant.

Entomologist Kabirul Basar warned that dengue cases are expected to rise significantly next month due to the early July rains.

The slowdown in anti-mosquito activities has likely contributed to mosquito breeding, necessitating immediate action.

Public health expert Mushtaq Hossain emphasised the importance of proper solid waste management to combat Aedes mosquitoes.

He advocated for a nationwide cleaning drive to address dengue and other health issues, adding that dengue is no longer confined to urban areas.

Mushtaq stressed the



PHOTO: STAR

- ➔ Almost two times more dengue cases in July than June
- ➔ 798 cases in June; 1,747 in July
- ➔ 5,398 cases till July 26
- ➔ 60.9pc male patients; 39.1pc female patients
- ➔ So far, dengue claimed 51 lives this year
- ➔ Female patients accounted for 52.9pc of fatalities
- ➔ 3,21,179 dengue cases in 2023.

need for integrated efforts to control Aedes mosquitoes, with community engagement and government leadership.

He also called for a reformed healthcare management system to reduce dengue fatalities, proposing a three-tiered approach: primary, secondary, and

hospital care.

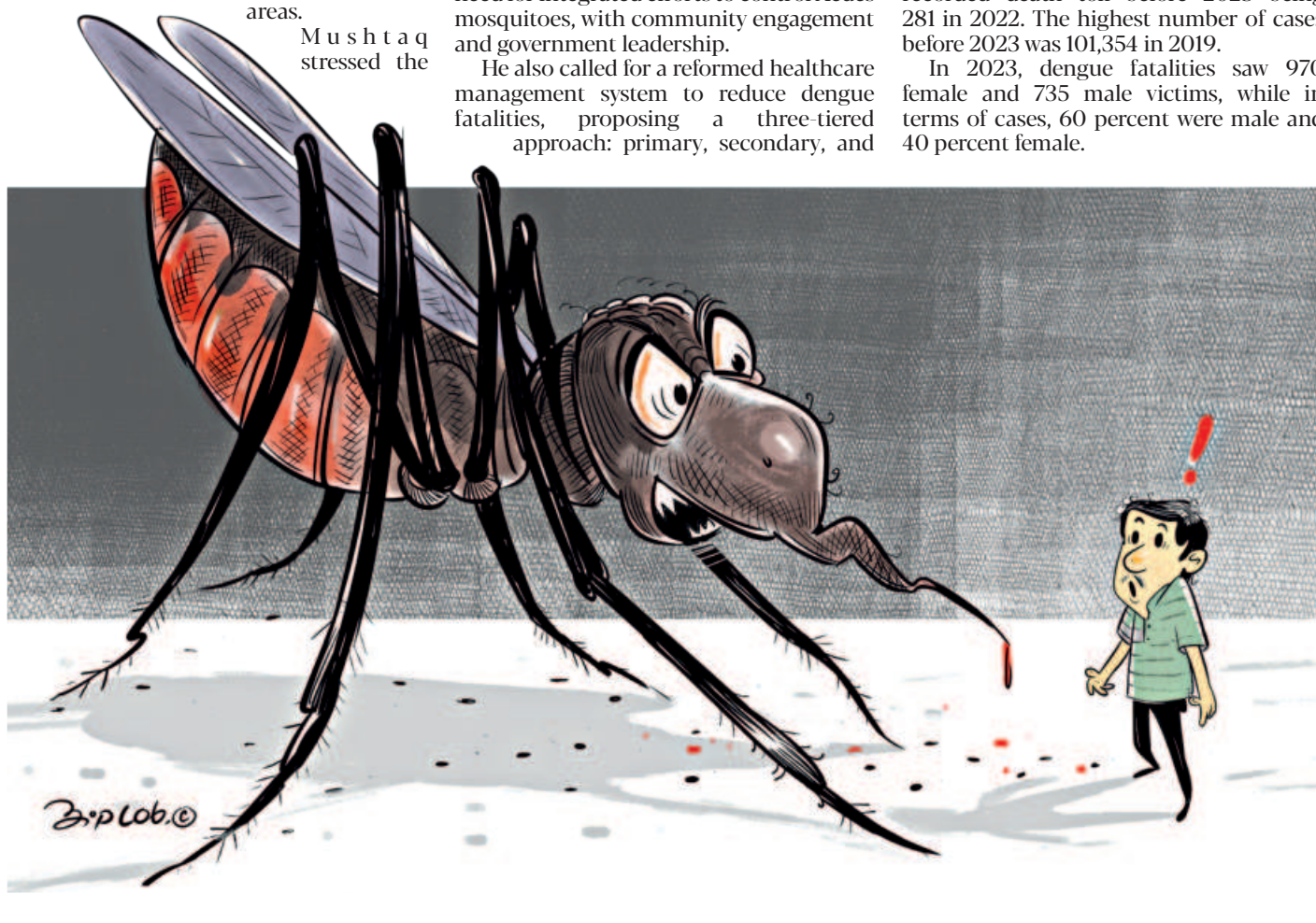
He explained that primary healthcare should involve local facilities in every city ward for early diagnosis and treatment, easing the burden on hospitals. Secondary healthcare should cater to at-risk patients, such as pregnant women, the elderly, and children, reducing the strain on major hospitals and critical care units.

Mushtaq said the lack of manpower, medicines, and diagnostic facilities at village and upazila levels hampers early detection and treatment of dengue.

The year 2023 was marked by the worst outbreak of dengue since the disease's first official appearance in 2000. As of December 31, 2023, DGHS reported 321,179 hospitalisations and 1,705 deaths due to the dengue outbreak.

In 2000, the nation experienced 93 deaths and 5,551 cases, with the highest recorded death toll before 2023 being 281 in 2022. The highest number of cases before 2023 was 101,354 in 2019.

In 2023, dengue fatalities saw 970 female and 735 male victims, while in terms of cases, 60 percent were male and 40 percent female.



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## 'Punish those involved with the killings'

Shujan calls for commission to probe each death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) yesterday demanded the formation of a commission comprising neutral persons and experts to investigate each killing during the countrywide violence centring the quota reform movement.

Shujan, a civil society platform, in a statement signed by its President M Hafizuddin Khan and Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, also demanded the punishment of those involved in these incidents.

"We are deeply concerned by the ongoing deadlock caused by the students' protest to reform the quota system. The number of deaths from violence is escalating daily... We believe

**It is unacceptable for any independent and democratic country to suffer such a loss of life in the pursuit of rights. We believe that every life is precious. These lives cannot be replaced.**

that these numerous deaths are attributable to provocative government statements, instigation by vested quarters, and the excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies," said the statement.

"It is unacceptable for any independent and democratic country to suffer such a loss of life in the pursuit of rights. We believe that every life is precious. These lives cannot be replaced," it added.

The organisation asserted that violence perpetrated in the name of a movement, as well as attacks, vandalism, and arson targeting government establishments, are completely unjustified.

It demanded that those responsible for damaging state property be brought to justice.

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## 'We condemn crackdown on student protesters'

Say Bangladeshi communication scholars in North America

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty academicians, under the banner of Bangladeshi Communication Scholars in North America (BCSNA), have expressed deep concern over the "government's crackdown on student protesters in Bangladesh".

In a statement yesterday, they expressed solidarity with students protesting against the discriminatory quota system in government jobs and demanded justice for the deaths of unarmed civilians.

They also called for a cessation of ongoing legal harassment.

BCSNA supports the student community's calls for broader political reforms and holding perpetrators accountable, the statement reads.

Although the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the students' demands, its implementation is pending. The protesters, who began their peaceful advocacy in mid-July, faced severe repression from the government, the platform said.

According to a BBC report, police responded with "shotgun fire, tear gas, and sound grenades," resulting in nearly 200 student deaths and thousands of injuries, they claimed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## Mahbubul Haque laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Renowned linguist Mahbubul Haque was laid to rest in the central graveyard of Chittagong University yesterday.



Before the burial, his body was taken to a mosque in the port city, where his namaz-e-janaza was held after the Juma prayers.

He was also given a "guard of honour" there, and then his body was taken to the university campus.

After the Asr prayers, another namaz-e-janaza was held at the university central mosque.

Earlier, a tribute programme was organised at Shilpakala Academy at 10:30am, where his body was kept till 12:00pm for people to pay their respects.

People from all walks of life, including educationists, writers, artists, journalists and political figures, paid their respects during the programme.

With the death of Mahbubul Haque, Bangladesh has lost a highly accomplished researcher, said speakers at the tribute programme.



Workers load bags of wheat onto a truck, hoping to get all of it stacked and ready to head to a warehouse in Barishal amid the curfew break yesterday afternoon. The photo was taken from Band Road.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## 'We will take steps against attackers, but won't harass students'

### Hasan Mahmud says govt has proof of Tarique's involvement

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said every incident of recent attacks and sabotage will be investigated to deliver justice but genuine students will not be harassed.

"Those who killed PS of Gazipur ex-mayor Jahangir and policeman in Dhaka, those who hanged their bodies, threw BCL activists from a six-storey building in Chattogram, and burned public and private properties will not be spared. I have seen the footage of vandalism and arson on the BTV building. Those who carried out these attacks will not be spared from legal action," he said.

Speaking at a discussion at Jatiya Press Club, the minister said many people were prosecuted after the sabotage in 2013-14, some escaped through the loopholes of the law. "That won't happen this time. Every attacker will be brought to justice," said Hasan Mahmud.

He said attacks on the state were ordered by BNP's Tarique Rahman, adding that a voice record of Tarique has come into the hands of the government. "If you carry out a big attack, get a big post. Break the curfew; if not, leave the post," the minister quoted Tarique as saying.

## We condemn Lift curfew, withdraw

FROM PAGE 3

The platform condemned the imposition of curfew and internet shutdowns—which they believe resulted in a total communication blackout.

BCSNA highlighted the historical significance of student movements in Bangladesh, noting students' role in the 1952 Language Movement and the 1971 War for Liberation.

The current protests continue this legacy, now focusing on broader issues of autocratic oppression, corruption, and social injustices, BCSNA said.

The BCSNA strongly criticised the government's handling of the protests and urged the international community to pressure the Bangladesh government to stop the violence. They called for the resignation of responsible officials and demanded justice for the student protesters.

The signatories include Anis Rahman, faculty at the department of communication in University of Washington; Khairul Islam, faculty at communication studies in State University of New York; Fahmidul Haq, faculty at BardNYC Bard College; Najila Farhat, PhD researcher/Graduate student at journalism department in University of Montana; and Priyanka Kundu, PhD researcher/Graduate student at Communication department in University of Illinois Chicago, among others.

As per the government's statistics, Fakhrul said at least 3,000 people were arrested in connection with the student movement.

He asked the government to resign immediately by handing over power to a non-partisan, neutral government to hold an impartial election and ensure the safety of people's lives and property.

He alleged that the AL regime has become desperate to arrest BNP leaders, activists and students by unleashing all the state forces and ruling

party cadres.

As per the government's statistics, Fakhrul said at least 3,000 people were arrested in connection with the student movement.

He said the opposition leaders are being produced before the court four to five days after being picked up and repressed, which is a gross violation of law and human rights.

Fakhrul also called for the withdrawal of the "false" cases filed against all the arrested opposition leaders and their immediate unconditional release.

## We demand

FROM PAGE 3

movement, resulting in numerous deaths. Even after such a large number of deaths, the government shows no regret," he added.

Expressing solidarity with the protests, BLAST Honorary Executive Director Barrister Sara Hossain said they are not getting the actual number of deaths.

"We have the right to know the actual number of deaths... Going through the government's statements, it seems they are more concerned about property than lives. Are properties more valuable than lives?" she added.

Dhaka University Professor Samina Lutfia said the country was now under "autocratic rule".

"Thousands of people were injured in firings of the law enforcement agencies. More than 200 were killed. The government must take responsibility for these killings," she said, demanding justice for the victims.

A total of 31 cultural and social organisations participated in the programme. In the gap between speeches, cultural organisations sang songs and recited poems protesting the killings.

PRAYER TIMING	
JULY 27	
Fazr	Zohr
4:20	12:45
Asr	Maghrib
5:00	6:50
Esha	JAMAAT
8:15	4:55
	1:15
	5:15
	6:55
	8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Every death will be

FROM PAGE 3

of August 21 are the same perpetrators even in 2024. They are BNP and Jamaat."

He said BNP and Jamaat do not trust the country or its people. "Now that their terrorist character has been exposed, they are seeking foreign intervention to escape responsibility."

The minister continued,

"The destructive actions carried out domestically and internationally under the guise of the movement will not be tolerated by the people. The situation in the country will return to normal soon."

Quader said the "radical lefts and foreign conspirators" are assisting the BNP-Jamaat axis.

## Punish those involved

FROM PAGE 3

The statement called for increased capacity and preparedness within relevant government institutions to safeguard the state's critical infrastructure.

The organisation urged the government to prevent future harassment of students related to this movement and to ensure the safety of students on university campuses.

## Fuel transport starts amid tight security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Four oil carrier wagons left Chattogram for Dhaka, Sylhet and Dohazari and Hathazari upazilas yesterday amid tight security. Two more are waiting at Patenga depot in Chattogram to leave for Rangpur and Sreemangal.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members escorted the fuel carrier trains from Chattogram.

According to the information of the control room of the railway transport department, a train with 24 oil carrier wagons left for Dhaka at around 5:30am on Friday. Besides, another train with 16 oil carrier wagons left for Sylhet at 6:30am.

Meanwhile, a train with 12 fuel carrier wagons left Chattogram for Dohazari Power Station at 10:00am, while another train with 12 fuel carrier wagons left Chattogram for Hathazari upazila at 11:00am.

A press release signed by Chattogram-8 BGB Commander Lt Col Shahed Minhaj Siddiqui informed that a platoon member of BGB was on security duty in each fuel carrier train.

## British MP Rupa Huq questions situation in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



Bangladesh-origin British MP Rupa Huq has raised a question in the UK parliament on the current situation in Bangladesh.

Addressing the parliament on Thursday, she wanted to know the UK government's stand on the Bangladesh situation from Leader of the House of Commons Lucy Powell, given the recent protests and violence centring quota in government jobs.

She said the deaths of students and protesters ran three figures. Due to the countrywide internet shutdown, she said they could not know much about what is going on in the country.

She sought an urgent government statement on UK's position about Bangladesh's situation saying, "We have a historic unique role in this situation."

In response, Lucy Powell said the UK is deeply concerned about the violence in Bangladesh in recent days and said the loss of life is unacceptable.

"The right to protest must be restored and access to the internet should also be restored. We urge all sides to have restraint in this regard," she said.

She said the foreign secretary and foreign office ministers would update the House.

## Find the perpetrators

FROM PAGE 3

came under attack during the recent violence.

She inspected different parts of the BTV Bhaban, which was set on fire by a mob during the student protests for reformation of the quota system in public service.

Hasina said BNP and Jamaat Shibir activists, gathering from across the country, carried out these attacks in the capital.

"They carried out these attacks using the anti-quota demonstration," she said.

State Minister

for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat and BTV senior officials including its Director General Md Jahangir Alam, briefed the prime minister about the damages of the state-owned television centre.

A video presentation was made highlighting the damages in the BTV Bhaban and BTV headquarters located on the same premises.

On Thursday, the prime minister visited the vandalised metro rail station at Mirpur 10.

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বসুন্ধরা এফ-ব্লক বার্নিং এভিনিউতে ১৮৫৩ বর্গফুটের দক্ষিণমুখী নির্মাণাধীন ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোমিসেস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬

### 32TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF MD. SALAHUDDIN FAROQUE



Today the 27th July is the 32th death anniversary of late **Md. Salahuddin Faroque** Managing Director of **Modhumita Group** and eldest son of late **Md. Sirajuddin** founder of Modhumita Group.

Though he is not in this world he lives in our hearts, in our minds and in our memory.

All friends relatives and well wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

All Members of Modhumita Family

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বসুন্ধরা এফ-ব্লক ১৫০০ বর্গফুটের শতভাগ রেডি ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোমিসেস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬

**ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়**  
লালমাটিয়া বি-ব্লক-এ ১৬০০ বর্গফুটের শতভাগ রেডি ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ফ্ল্যাট।  
ম্যাজিক প্রিক্স হোমিসেস লিমিটেড।  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬  
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭

### JOB ADVERTISEMENT

1. Requirement of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Sena Kalyan Edible Oil Industries with fol job description:

Designation and Job Location	Educational Requirements and Experience	Job Description	Salary & Facility
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sena Edible Oil Industries (SEO), Narayanganj	1. Post Graduate in Marketing/Management/ MBA (Post Graduate in Engineering will be considered as additional qualification.) 2. Minimum 15 years of Management and Operational experience in the field of edible oil manufacturing, general management experience in the areas of Sales, Business Development and Distribution Channel Management. 3. Minimum 5 years experience in Leadership/top management position dealing with general management, P&L, sales, business development, distribution channel management, plant operation and revenue management.	1. Responsible to develop strategic business plan and achieve the target set by the authority with the efficient performance of the team. 2. Monitoring and further development of plant operations and Channel Network in Bangladesh. 3. Providing timely and regular feedback to Board of Director/senior management regarding performance in all facilities. 4. Managing the cross functional teams of HR, Marketing, Sales & Distribution, Finance, SCM, IT and Corporate & Regulatory Compliance. 5. Successfully implementing SKS policy and develop growth strategy together with the board. 6. Closely monitoring the operating and financial results against plans and budgets. 7. Representing the SKS to major customers. 8. Managing an effective executive team.	Salary and other facilities may be decided with bilateral discussion

2. Interested candidates need to submit their updated resume along with recent passport size photograph to Sena Kalyan Sangstha (HR Division), SKS Tower (Level 10), 7 VIP Road, Mohakhali, Dhaka and [hrd@senakalyan.com](mailto:hrd@senakalyan.com) by 03 August 2024.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Cumilla Road Division, Cumilla.

Phone: 081-64725

e-mail: [ecom@rhd.gov.bd](mailto:ecom@rhd.gov.bd)

Memo No. 35.01.1933.410.07.001.24-4931

Date: 25.07.2024

### e-Tender Notice (Re-Tender)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal in Bangladesh (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following work mentioned in the table below:-

SL No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of Works	Tender Document last selling Date and Time	Tender Closing Date and Time	Tender Opening Date and Time
01	1004890, e-GP/CRD/ADP/EMRB/WP-02/2023-2024	Strengthening of Existing Pavement, Construction of new pavement, DBS Base course, DBS Wearing course, Rigid Pavement, Earth work in Road Embankment, Protective work by RCC Retaining Wall, Brick Toe wall, Cast-in-situ Palisading, C.C block with Geo textile, Brick "U"-Drain & Saucer Drain, Installation of Overhead Sign, Sign, Signal, Kilometer Post, Guide Post, Construction of Bus Bay, Reflecting Road Studs, Deliniator-Reflector and Road Marking work from 13th KM to 24th KM at (Ch: 12+000 to Ch: 24+000) of Eliotganj-Muradnagar-Ramchandrapur-Bancharampur (Z-1042) Road, Development Project Programme, under Road Division Cumilla during the year 2023-2024.	12-Aug-2024 16:00	13-Aug-2024 12:00	13-Aug-2024 12:00

(Suniti Chakma)  
ID No. 602147  
Executive Engineer, RHD  
Road Division, Cumilla.  
☎: 01730-782641



## Pakistan using 'proxy war' to stay relevant

Says Modi

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday that Pakistan is trying to stay relevant through "terrorism" and "proxy war" but its "unholy plans" will never succeed.

The nuclear armed neighbours share an uneasy relationship and India has, for decades, accused Pakistan of backing Islamist militants fighting its rule in Kashmir, the Himalayan region both claim in full but rule only in part.

Pakistan denies the accusations, saying it only provides diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiris seeking self-determination in the Muslim-majority region. Modi's comments came at an event to mark the 25th anniversary of India's short military conflict with Pakistan in Kargil.



Displaced Palestinians from the eastern part of Khan Yunis prepare to cook at a temporary camp set up on the grounds of a cemetery in the western part of the city, in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## IRAQ, SYRIA

### Rockets launched at bases hosting US troops

AFP, Baghdad

Several rockets were launched Thursday and yesterday against bases hosting troops from the US led anti-jihadist coalition in Iraq and Syria, security officials and a war monitor said.

Such attacks were frequent early in the war between Israel and Hamas Palestinian militants in Gaza but since then have largely halted.

"Four rockets fell in the vicinity" of Ain al-Assad base in Anbar province, an Iraqi security source said.

Another security official said an attack occurred with "a drone and three rockets" that fell close to the base perimeter.

A United States official said initial reports indicated that projectiles landed outside the base without causing injuries or damage to the base.

All sources spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

At least one rocket also fell near a base of the coalition in the Conoco gas field in Deir Ezzor province of eastern Syria, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor.

## WEEKS OF ISRAELI BOMBARDMENT

# Gaza civilians shelter in former prison

REUTERS, Gaza

After weeks of Israeli bombardment left them with nowhere else to go, hundreds of Palestinians have ended up in a former Gaza prison built to hold murderers and thieves.

Yasmeen al-Dardasi said she and her family passed wounded people they were unable to help as they evacuated from a district in the southern city of Khan Yunis towards its Central Correction and Rehabilitation Facility.

They spent a day under a tree before moving on to the former prison, where they now live in a prayer room. It offers protection



**Palestinians, many of whom have been displaced several times, say nowhere is free of Israeli bombardment.**

from the blistering sun, but not much else.

Dardasi's husband has a damaged kidney and just one lung, but no mattress or blanket. "We are not settled here either," said Dardasi, who like many Palestinians fears she will be uprooted once again.

Palestinians, many of whom have been displaced several times, say nowhere is free of Israeli bombardment, which has reduced much of Gaza to rubble.

An Israeli air strike killed at least 90 Palestinians in a designated humanitarian zone in the Al-Mawasi area on July 13, the territory's health ministry said, in an attack that Israel said targeted Hamas' elusive military chief Mohammed Deif.

On Thursday, Gaza's health ministry said Israeli military strikes on areas in eastern Khan Yunis had killed 14 people. Entire neighbourhoods have been flattened in one of the most densely populated places in the world, where poverty and unemployment have long been widespread.

According to the United Nations, nine in ten people across Gaza are now internally displaced. Israeli soldiers told Saria Abu Mustafa and her family that they should flee for safety as tanks were on their way, she said. The family

had no time to change so they left in their prayer clothes.

After sleeping outside on sandy ground, they too found refuge in the prison, among piles of rubble and gaping holes in buildings from the battles which were fought there. Inmates had been released long before Israel attacked.

"We didn't take anything with us. We came here on foot, with children walking with us," she said, adding that many of the women had five or six children with them and that water was hard to find.

She held her niece, who was born during the conflict, which has killed her father and brothers.

More than 39,000 Palestinians have been killed in the air and ground offensive, Palestinian health officials said.

Hana Al-Sayed Abu Mustafa arrived at the prison after being displaced six times.

## 'I will not be silent'

Says US VP Harris after tough talks with Netanyahu on Gaza ceasefire deal

REUTERS, Washington

US Vice President Kamala Harris pressured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday evening to help reach a Gaza ceasefire deal that would ease the suffering of Palestinian civilians, striking a tougher tone than President Joe Biden.

"It is time for this war to end," Harris said in a televised statement after she held face-to-face talks with Netanyahu.

Harris, the likely Democratic presidential nominee after Biden dropped out of the election race on Sunday, did not mince words about the humanitarian crisis gripping Gaza after nine months of Israeli offensive.

"We cannot allow ourselves to be numb to the suffering and I will not be silent," she said.

Harris' remarks were sharp and serious in tone and raised the question of whether she would be more aggressive in dealing with Netanyahu if elected president on November 5.

But analysts do not expect there would be a major shift in US policy toward Israel, Washington's closest ally in the Middle East.

## Regional security chiefs arrive in Myanmar for talks

AFP, Bangkok

National security chiefs from six South and Southeast Asian countries have arrived in Myanmar for regional talks, state media reported yesterday, in a rare visit for the isolated and embattled junta.

National security chiefs from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka arrived on Thursday, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

The six countries, plus Myanmar, make up the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) group, loosely focused on trade.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met BIMSTEC officials ahead of the talks which began yesterday. They discussed "peace and stability... cooperation among member states in drug eradication, combatting terrorism, anti-human trafficking," the newspaper said.

AFP has contacted the embassies of the six countries for comment.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power in 2021 and launched a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

It is now battling established ethnic minority armed groups and newer "People's Defence Forces" that are fighting its rule, and together have seized swathes of territory.

Rights groups accuse the military of massive human rights abuses as it struggles to crush its opponents.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

### China, Russia vow to counter 'extra-regional forces'

AFP, Vientiane

China and Russia's foreign ministers met their Southeast Asian counterparts yesterday after vowing to counter "extra-regional forces", a day before Washington's top diplomat was due to arrive.

Wang Yi and Sergei Lavrov were attending a three-day meeting of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) bloc in the Laos capital Vientiane.

Both held talks with counterparts from the bloc, while Wang also met with new British Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

On Thursday Wang and Lavrov agreed to work together in "countering any attempts by extra-regional forces to interfere in Southeast Asian affairs", according to Moscow's foreign ministry.

They also discussed implementing "a new security architecture" in Eurasia, Lavrov said in a statement, without elaborating.

According to a readout from Chinese state news agency Xinhua, Wang said Beijing was "ready to work with Russia to... firmly support each other, safeguard each other's core interests".

China is a close political and economic ally of Russia, and Nato members have branded Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Moscow's war in Ukraine.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to arrive in Vientiane this morning for talks with Asean foreign ministers.

Blinken has made Washington's alliances in Asia a top foreign policy priority, with the aim of "advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific -- a veiled way of criticizing China and its ambitions.



## OIL SPILL FROM TANKER

### Philippines races to avoid 'catastrophe'

AFP, Limay

The Philippine Coast Guard yesterday raced to offload 1.4 million litres of industrial fuel oil from a sunken tanker and prevent an "environmental catastrophe" in Manila Bay.

One crew member died when the MT Terra Nova sank in rough seas nearly seven kilometres (4.3 miles) off Limay municipality early Thursday after setting out for the central city of Iloilo.

An oil slick stretching several kilometres was detected in the waterway, which thousands of fishermen and tourism operators rely on for their livelihoods.

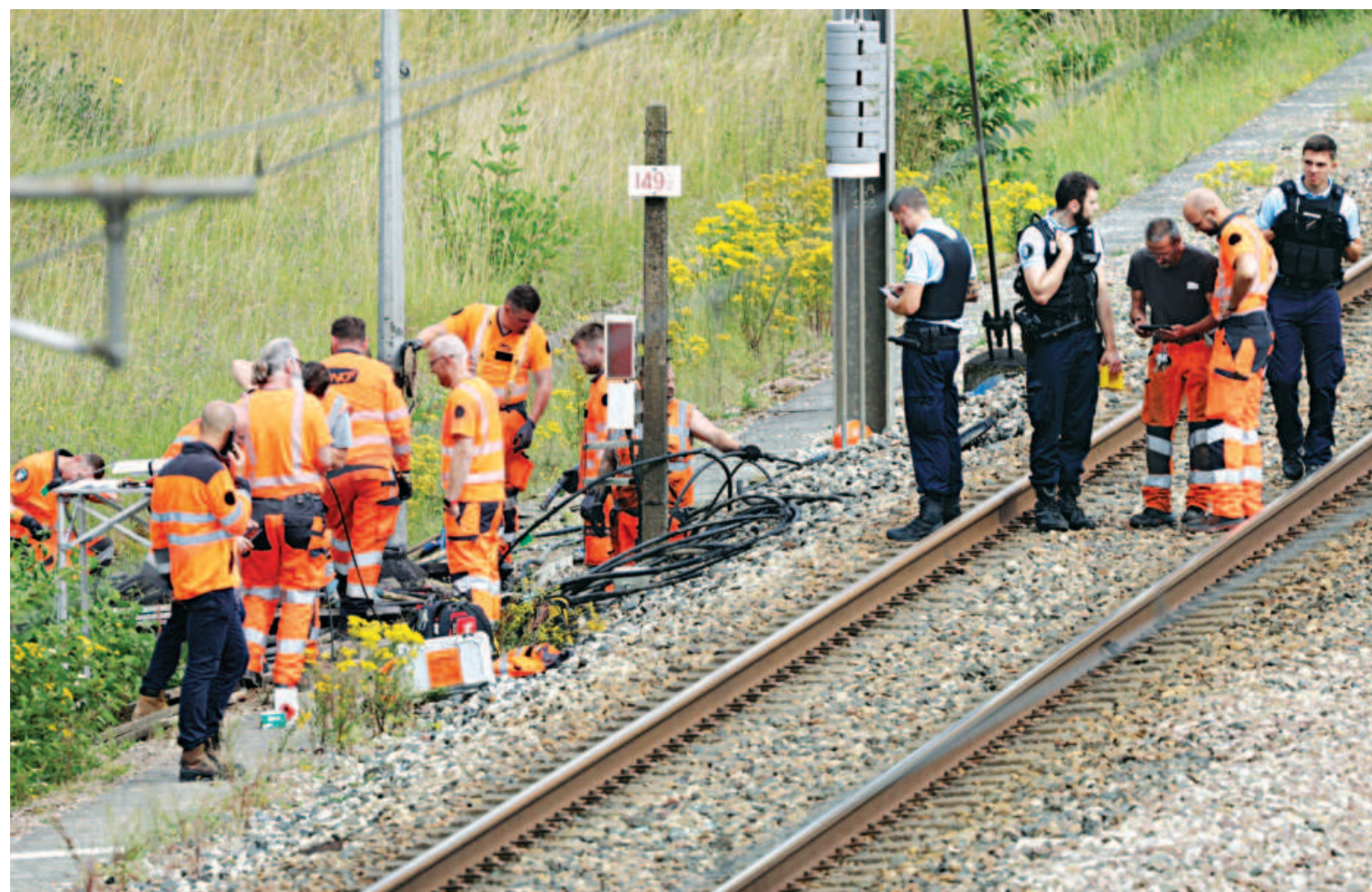
Coast guard spokesman Rear Admiral Armando Balilo said yesterday the spill was "minimal" and that it appeared to be diesel fuel used to power the tanker and not the industrial fuel oil cargo. "No oil has been leaking from the tank itself, so we're racing against time to siphon the oil so we can avoid the environmental catastrophe," Balilo said.

The coast guard has set a target of seven days to offload the cargo and prevent what Balilo warned would be the worst oil spill in Philippine history if it were to leak.

AFP journalists at the Port of Limay in Bataan province watched coast guard personnel load oil dispersant and a suction skimmer onto a boat to be used against the slick.

Balilo said oil spill containment booms had also been deployed in preparation "for the worst case scenario" of the industrial fuel oil leaking before it could be offloaded. Once the weather improved, coast guard divers would inspect the position of the tanker so the "siphoning operation" could get under way, he said.

The coast guard met with representatives of the MT Terra Nova's owner and a contracted salvage company yesterday to discuss the timeline.



SNCF employees and French gendarmes inspect the scene of a suspected attack on the high-speed railway network at Croiselles, northern France yesterday. French security forces are hunting people behind arson attacks that hobbled the country's high-speed rail network hours before the Olympic Games opening ceremony. PHOTO: AFP

## Plan to tax super-rich divides at G20 meet in Rio

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil's vision for a global deal to tax the ultra-rich sparked divisions Thursday at a meeting of G20 finance ministers in Rio de Janeiro, where the US dismissed the need for an international accord on the matter.

The initiative, discussed at an afternoon meeting, is a key priority for Brazil's leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who this year heads the G20 grouping of the world's major economies, the European Union and the African Union.

Even before talks began, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen dampened the mood by saying there was no need for a global agreement on taxing billionaires.

"Tax policy is very difficult to coordinate globally," she told journalists. "We think that all countries should make sure that their taxation systems are fair and progressive."



## Television thrives amidst internet outage CAN IT KEEP ITS VIEWERS?

**“After almost five years, our family came together to watch television during the internet outage. It was fun, and reminded us of the old times when we used to watch cable TV together,” said Parul, who works as a nurse at a private hospital.**

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

This sentiment resonated across the country as people left their mobile phones to watch their TV screens for a change.

My brain, accustomed to surfing the internet all day, found peace in switching channels with my trusty old friend, the remote control. After watching piles of excruciating news about the rampage and ruins of our country, I found an escape in funny serials and old Bangla movies on TV.

Amid the chaos, I found solace in Deepto TV's popular drama *Bokulpur* and Gaan Bangla's musical programme *Wind of Change*. Then it struck me—what had happened to television? Why did it lose its charm? Will it be able to sustain the sudden rise in TV ratings with quality content?

Curious, I asked my Gen-Z cousin for her



ILLUSTRATION: DOWEL BISWAS

Sales and Marketing at Channel i.

Alfred Kokhon, head of programs at NTV, shared a similar sentiment. He stated, “We have both television and an OTT platform. However, we always air the latest episodes first on our channel. But since the audience has options, viewership gets distributed. When there was no online option, everything was centralised on TV. If television starts producing quality content that caters to our local audiences' tastes, viewers will surely watch it.”

To be fair, television channels could not have predicted the situation and instantly formulated a plan to keep its sudden viewership. “We are going through a crisis period right now, and sticking with scheduled content for the time being. However, we are hopeful that once we get through this, we will come up with ideas to draw audiences back to television,” said Ibn Hasan.

While the internet was down, TV ratings skyrocketed. Most TV channels have confirmed that their ratings have doubled, although they couldn't provide actual figures as data couldn't be gathered physically. How did they assume their content was reaching the audience? The answer lies in the constant stream of advertisement breaks.

“The viewership of our series is also increasing. Many people are watching our series *Ghorer Shotru Bivishon* and *Jonakir Alo*. Increased viewership means more advertisements for NTV. With online platforms still temporarily off, people are turning to television. When sponsors are eager to place ads on our content, it confirms that viewers are watching it more,” said Alfred Kokhon.

While other channels are airing old series and reruns of previous episodes, Deepto TV is committed to highlighting new episodes for their viewers.

“We could have showcased repeats of old episodes of our popular series, but we didn't. We don't want to bank episodes; instead, we aim to show fresh episodes to our viewers. If we run out of episodes, we have decided to ensure pick-and-drop service for our artistes so that they can film safely. This initiative is our effort to retain our audience. We are confident that this approach will help retain a small percentage of our viewers,” said COO Subarna Parvin of Deepto TV.

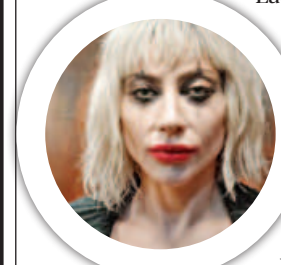
Deepto TV, known for its series-based content, saw a significant increase in viewership during the internet outage. Their dramas “Mashrafe Junior,” “Bokulpur,” and “Dena Pawna” have a massive fanbase that grew even larger during this period.

Recently, Channel i's tele-fiction “Tithidor” has been praised for raising awareness about depression in adults. The channel also enjoys a dedicated fanbase with its “Punorjonmo” series. Ibn Hasan Khan of Channel i is confident that the popularity of television will sustain in the long run against OTT platforms.

“Although the popularity of this medium is increasing, it still hasn't fully taken away the charm of television. The reason is that only a certain sector of people is connected to digital media, while a large number of people still watch television. Television still has a significant scope to attract an audience by offering good content,” added Ibn Hasan.

While it's true that the popularity of OTT

## Lady Gaga alters breathing technique to sing in ‘Joker 2’



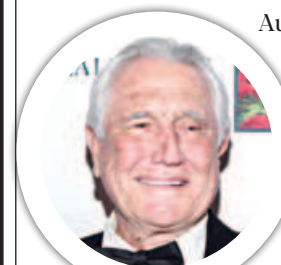
Lady Gaga is all set to feature a different vocal style, for her rendition of the DC character Harley “Lee” Quinn in the Todd Phillips directorial film *Joker: Folie à Deux*, also starring Joaquin Phoenix.

The Grammy and Oscar-winning artiste told Empire magazine that her portrayal of the iconic character from *Batman: The Animated Series* will showcase a new talent in the musical.

She explained, “I focused intensely on changing my usual breathing techniques to sing in a way that comes from Lee, rather than from the artiste people know me as.”

“There are quite a few off-key moments in my singing as Lee because she wouldn't know that as a classically trained vocalist, I control my breathing to stay on pitch and maintain rhythm. For Lee, I let go of these technical elements, setting aside my training to fully embrace the character.”

## ‘James Bond’ star George Lazenby announces retirement



Australian actor George Lazenby, renowned for his portrayal of James Bond in the 1969 classic *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, has officially retired from acting. Lazenby shared his decision on the social media platform X, as reported by Variety.

“This hasn't been an easy decision, but it's time to announce my retirement from work. Therefore, I won't be doing any more acting or making public appearances, doing any more interviews, or signing any more autographs as of today,” Lazenby posted.

The actor expressed heartfelt gratitude to his fans for their unwavering support over the years. Lazenby's tenure as the world's most famous secret agent was the shortest, starring in only one *James Bond* film. Despite this, his role left a lasting impression on the franchise.

Beyond *James Bond*, Lazenby appeared in other notable projects, such as *The Man from Hong Kong* (1975) and *Never Too Young to Die* (1986).

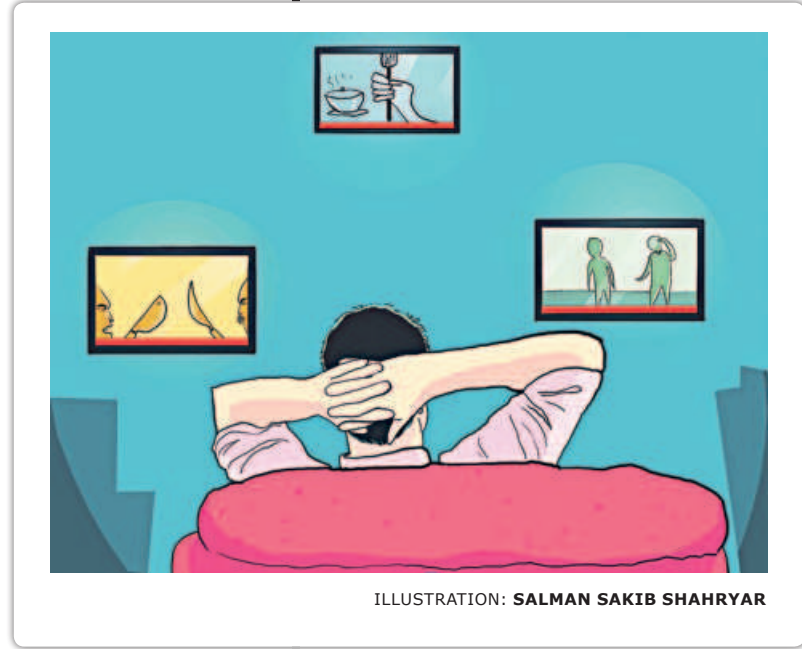


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

take on television content. “I think I'm going to lose my mind if I have to stay without the internet. I can't stand those cringe Bangla movies and slapstick comedies anymore,” said Zaira.

“Television channel owners should have considered people's tastes and taken digital media as a strong competitor to produce quality programmes. Unfortunately, they failed to meet expectations, leading to a decline in viewership,” said Ibn Hasan Khan, director of

# NEWS

## Humanity suffers

FROM PAGE 12  
The disease is climate inaction,” he stressed, calling in particular on G20 countries to take action.

While 2023 was the hottest year on record, and 2024 could set a new record, temperatures well above 40C (104F) are increasingly common.

In the space of a year, the 50C threshold has even been exceeded in at least 10 places, from Death Valley in the United States (53.9C on July 7) to Agadir in Morocco, and also in China and India.

The intense heat, often less visible than other devastating impacts of climate change such as storms or floods, is nonetheless more deadly.

This “silent killer” is responsible for around 489,000 deaths per year

between 2000 and 2019, compared with 16,000 deaths per year from cyclones, according to the UN's “Call to Action” document published on Thursday.

Extremely high temperatures also have an economic impact, with the UN estimating economic losses from heat stress at work will reach \$2.4 trillion in 2030.

According to a report by the International Labor Organization published on Thursday, more than 70 percent of workers were exposed to excessive heat in 2020, 8.8 percent more than in 2000.

“The good news is that we can save lives and we can limit its impact,” Guterres said Thursday.

The UN has called for the world

community to first act to protect “the most vulnerable” — including young children, the elderly and also humanity's poorest.

In this context, early warning systems should include extreme heat, warning populations of the arrival of heat waves and informing them of the precautions to take, the document says.

The call to action also recommends an “increase (to) equitable access to and scale up (of) low-carbon cooling.”

This would involve investing in passive cooling systems — which include climate-sensitive urban design measures, reflective surfaces and natural cooling systems — and the phase-out of climate-warming gases that are used in many cooling systems.

## ‘Sabotage’ hits French trains

FROM PAGE 12  
suspicions fell on leftist militants or environmental activists, but they said there was not yet any evidence.

The Paris prosecutor's office said the probe would be overseen by its organised crime office, with the anti-terrorist sub-directorate (SDAT), a branch of the judicial police that typically monitors hard-left, extreme-right and radical environmental groups, coordinating investigations.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal declined to speculate about the possibility of such groups being behind the sabotage.

“What we know, what we see, is that this operation was prepared, coordinated, that nerve centres were targeted, which shows a certain knowledge of the network to know where to strike,” he said.

The coordinated strikes on the rail network will feed into a sense of apprehension ahead of the Olympics opening ceremony in the heart of Paris later on Friday. Operations at the Basel-Mulhouse airport on France's border with Switzerland were briefly suspended due to a bomb alert.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said he

had full confidence in the French authorities.

“I don't have concerns,” he told reporters at the Olympic Village.

More than 300,000 spectators are expected to line the banks of the River Seine when the athletes parade through the heart of Paris on a flotilla of barges and riverboats, part of an extravagant show that will be watched by billions.

France has deployed 45,000 police, 10,000 soldiers and 2,000 private security agents to secure the Games' opening ceremony. Snipers will be on rooftops, and drones in the air.

But while the capital is locked down for the opening ceremony, security elsewhere in the country is lighter.

The TGV high-speed rail attacks left hundreds of thousands of people stranded at stations.

Eurostar's high-speed services linking London and Paris were forced onto slower lines while Germany's Deutsche Bahn warned of disruption to long-distance services.

The SNCF urged all travelers to postpone their journeys. Repairs were underway but traffic would be severely disrupted until at least the end of the weekend.

At the Gare de L'Est, Xavier Hiegel,

39, said he was just trying to get home for the weekend and could not believe that people would want to harm the Olympics.

“The Games bring jobs so this really is nonsense. I hope the people responsible will be found and punished,” he said.

The attacks hit signalling installations on the Atlantic, Northern and Eastern high-speed lines with fires set off by explosive devices, the SNCF said.

SNCF chief Jean-Pierre Farandou said some 800,000 customers had been impacted ahead of a busy weekend for French holidaymakers. Thousands of rail staff had been deployed to repair the damage.

“This attack is not a coincidence, it's an effort to destabilise France,” Valerie Pécresse, president of the Paris region, told reporters.

Paris 2024 said it was working closely with the SNCF to assess the situation. The attacks will make it tougher for people travelling to Paris from other areas of France.

“It's a disaster,” said Parisian Brigitte Dupont. “Today is the opening of the Olympic Games, a huge event that was supposed to be magnificent, and this is spoiling people's joy.”

## Investigate killings of 3 journos

FROM PAGE 12  
It said Bangladesh authorities imposed an internet shutdown and severely disrupted mobile data services on July 18. Broadband internet was partially restored in limited areas on Tuesday evening, but mobile services and social media remained blocked as of July 26.

CPJ also said it has confirmed attacks on 14 journalists and was

continuing to investigate reports that dozens more have been assaulted either by police, protesters, or supporters of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Of the 14, several required hospital treatment for injuries, including head wounds, it added.

Referring to various sources, including media reports, CPJ said Mehedi, a reporter for Dhaka Times,

was fatally shot on July 18 while covering clashes in Jatrabari. Hossain, a correspondent for Daily Bhorer Awaj newspaper, was also killed on July 18 while reporting in Gazipur. Turab, a reporter for the Daily Jalalabad and Daily Naya Diganta, was killed when police allegedly fired on a procession of the BNP in northeast Sylhet city on July 19.

## Take steps to restore people's faith

FROM PAGE 2  
serious crisis yet,” said the Brussels-based global think tank.

The report details the origin of the quota reforms protest, corruption in the job sector, lack of political freedom and the authorities' heavy-handed approach to protesters.

“The Awami League government has the coercive tools to hold onto power and the past week's events have shown that it is willing to go to great lengths to crush challenges to its authority,” it said.

“But if it survives through brute force alone, its legitimacy will be greatly diminished, particularly among the students who led the demonstrations.”

Bangladesh risks losing RMG orders to competitors elsewhere in the region due to political instability, said Pierre Prakash, adding that the impact

of the protests will place further stress on the country's ailing economy.

Once the immediate crisis is resolved, the government should assume the hard work of political reform, the ICG said.

“It should take steps to restore the multi-party system that it has undermined over the past fifteen years. The Awami League's dominance of the political landscape has helped create the conditions for a popular upheaval,” it said.

It also suggested dialogues with opposition groups, including the BNP.

The report suggested that a unity government or even a new national election are potential means of helping restore confidence in the political system.

“State and party leaders should encourage the emergence of new political forces that could channel

the demands of younger generations; many in the student movement see the current opposition as little better than the Awami League.”

“The rise of anti-quota protests has illustrated just how fragile one-party rule is in Bangladesh.”

Prakash said foreign partners should urge the government to restore respect for civil rights immediately and pursue talks with those leading the anti-quota movement.

India, a staunch supporter of Hasina's government, should also use its leverage to help Bangladesh back on a path to stability by restoring multi-party democracy, good governance and respect for civil rights, ICG said.

“Doubling down on authoritarian methods to quell demonstrations without serious efforts at dialogue and political reform is unlikely to bring more than temporary calm,” it added.

## Wave of Israeli strikes hit

FROM PAGE 12  
cannot continue,” it said.

Iran's government said yesterday the recent meeting of Hamas and Fatah in the Chinese capital is a valuable step in the direction of national reconciliation for Palestine, reports Al Jazeera Online.

Nasser Kanaani, the foreign ministry spokesperson, said on X that the Iranian government backs the Palestinian groups “in confronting the occupation of the apartheid regime of Israel and their collective movement in the direction of exercising the fundamental right to self-determination.”

Peace Now Israel, a group pushing for a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said since the

offensive on Gaza began, Israel has established at least “25 outposts, most of them agricultural outposts”, in the occupied West Bank.

“The cabinet approved the establishment of five new settlements: Eyvatar, Givat Assaf, Sde Ephraim, Adorayim, and Nachal Haletz, all illegal outposts intended to become official settlements,” the report said.

In the eastern area of Nablus, north of the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces detained seven Palestinians during a raid, according to the Wafa news agency.

Palestinian security and local sources told Wafa that several Israeli military vehicles stormed the area with tear gas and stun grenades near the Askar refugee camp.

## 20 students sued for attack on police

FROM PAGE 12  
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, also the case's investigating officer, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to recent statements by some government high-ups, students would not be harassed for participating in the quota reform protests unless they were involved in attacks on government establishments.

This year's quota protests started on July 1 and were held peacefully till July 15, when Chhatra League activists attacked quota protesters on the Dhaka University campus. The attack led to fierce clashes on the campus, leaving scores injured — mostly protesters, including female students.



# Is Islamic finance facing headwinds?

**Islamic finance began its journey in the country in the early 1980s and evolved into a significant sector within Bangladesh's financial landscape due to the Islamic perspective of risk sharing and ethical investment.**

AM JAHID and MD MEHEDI HASAN

Rabiul Islam, a practising Muslim who works at a private organisation, refrained from conventional banking services for many years as both paying and receiving interest are against his religious principles.

Although he had to maintain a mandatory salary account with a private bank, he did not utilise additional services like loans.

Out of concern about where to safekeep his savings around 10 years ago, he sought advice from an Islamic scholar or Imam and opened an account with Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd (IBBL).

"I opened the account after getting assurances that all banking activities through Islamic finance are conducted in accordance with religious principles," he explained.

Like Islam, millions of Bangladeshi Muslims have turned to Islamic finance, regardless of financial literacy, boosting its popularity.

Islamic finance began its journey in the country in the early 1980s and evolved into a significant sector within Bangladesh's financial landscape due to the Islamic perspective of risk sharing and ethical investment.

IBBL, the first Islamic bank of the country, was formed in 1983. It offered products like profit-sharing investment accounts (Mudharabah) and financing facilities (Musharakah).

By the early 2000s, IBBL's success had paved the way for the formation of other Islamic banks like Al-Arafah Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, and Shahjalal Islami Bank.

"Most Bangladeshis are religious. Even those who do not practise actively want to adhere to Islamic principles. Islamic banks are capitalising on this sentiment," said Mohammed Nurul

Including those two, there are 10 full-fledged Islamic banks in the country. The others are IBBL, Shahjalal Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Al-Arafah Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank and ICB Islamic Bank.

These banks have around 1,700 branches in the country.

However, the central bank has been selective in approving the introduction of Islamic financing windows in most conventional banks.

Besides, many commercial banks have introduced Islamic windows and branches. This has enabled them to reach customers who otherwise wouldn't have availed their services.

A total of 15 commercial banks have opened 30 Islamic banking branches while 16 banks are running 624 Islamic banking windows to provide services.

Also, some non bank financial institutions and insurance companies are also providing Islamic finance services like Islamic bonds (sukuk), Islamic insurance (takaful), and Islamic microfinance.

Sukuk has become an alternative avenue for raising funds for infrastructure and development projects, while takaful offers a Shariah-compliant insurance solution to individuals and businesses.

Islamic microfinance institutions have played a crucial role in providing financial services to the unbanked



central bank is mandatory in order to bring discipline to the sector.

Recently, Fitch Ratings said that Bangladesh's Islamic banking sector was still being affected by a liquidity shortage as it is more vulnerable than the conventional banking sector.

The American credit rating agency added that Bangladesh's Islamic banking sector has been stagnant for the past two years despite having a sizable market share.

The liquidity crisis has been so severe that the ICB Islamic Bank, one of the affected banks, recently failed to repay depositors' money.

Excess liquidity in the sector plummeted to Tk 1,518 crore at the end of March this year, a 91.3 percent drop compared to September of 2022.

Amin accused those who were involved in loans irregularities and scams of forming Islamic banks

according to industry insiders.

Besides, except for a set of guidelines issued by the central bank, there is no specific law or policy framework for the Islamic finance sector in Bangladesh despite the fact that countries with dedicated frameworks have seen the sector grow substantially.

The central bank recently revised its Shariah banking guideline, but is yet to publish it.

Mustafa K Mujeri, a former chief economist of the central bank, recently told The Daily Star that simply revising the guidelines would not be enough. Strict action must be taken in case of violations, he said.

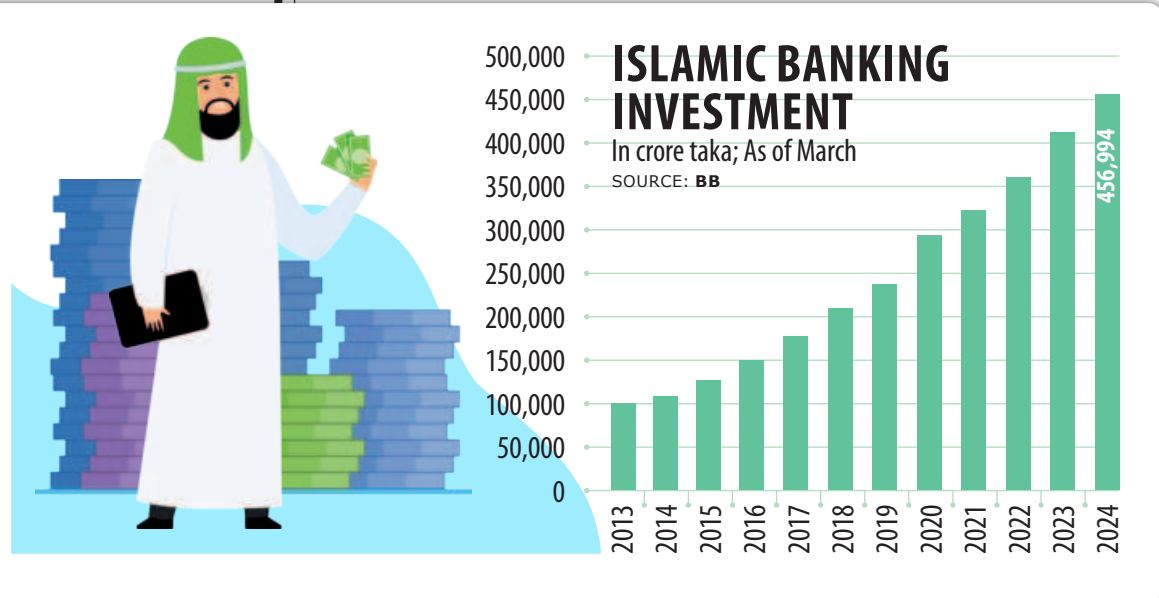
Mujeri, also an executive director

## WAY FORWARD

Good governance and accountability are key to navigating the current crisis and ensuring sustainable growth, according to experts.

This requires the implementation of internal controls, independent audits, and transparent reporting mechanisms as well as strengthening the role and independence of Shariah boards in overseeing compliance with Islamic principles.

The central bank should review some Shariah-based banks and, if needed, the board of directors of those banks should be reformed, Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.



**Islamic microfinance institutions have played a crucial role in providing financial services to the unbanked and underbanked population, contributing to financial inclusion and poverty alleviation. The wide adoption of Islamic banking has contributed to phenomenal growth and expansion in the sector until 2022.**

Amin, a former chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh.

The seasoned banker said many people prefer interest-free banking because of religious beliefs.

Another reason for the popularity of Islamic banks is the favourable policy support extended to them from the Bangladesh Bank, which has made the sector more profitable than the conventional banks.

The Islamic finance sector enjoys a lower statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) and higher investment-deposit ratio (IDR) than conventional banks. The SLR is the minimum percentage of deposits that a commercial bank has to maintain in the form of liquid cash, gold or other securities.

As per the central bank rules, traditional banks must maintain 13 percent of their deposits as SLR while Islamic banks must maintain only 5.5 percent, a major regulatory benefit that means Islamic banks have more investible funds than commercial banks.

At the same time, conventional banks have to maintain an ADR (advance to deposit ratio) of 87 percent while Shariah-based banks have to maintain 92 percent.

This means conventional banks can lend Tk 87 against a deposit of Tk 100, while Shariah-based banks can lend Tk 92 against the same.

Amin, also a former managing director of Meghna Bank, said investors and shareholders are very eager to form Shariah-based banks due to such regulatory benefits.

Industry insiders added that the beneficial policy support motivated a growing number of commercial banks to turn into Islamic banks.

For instance, Standard Bank and NRB Global Bank, both commercial banks, transformed into Shariah-based lenders in 2021.

and underbanked population, contributing to financial inclusion and poverty alleviation.

The wide adoption of Islamic banking has contributed to phenomenal growth and expansion in the sector until 2022.

At the end of September 2022, total deposits in this system reached Tk 421,375 crore and investment stood at Tk 386,221 crore. Besides, the IDR stood at 0.92 while excess liquidity reached Tk 17,525 crore.

However, total deposits at the Islamic banking industry rose to Tk 439,465 crore till March of this year and total investment stood at Tk 456,994 crore, as per the latest data from the central bank.

As of 2023, Islamic banking assets accounted for over 25 percent of the overall banking sector's assets in Bangladesh.

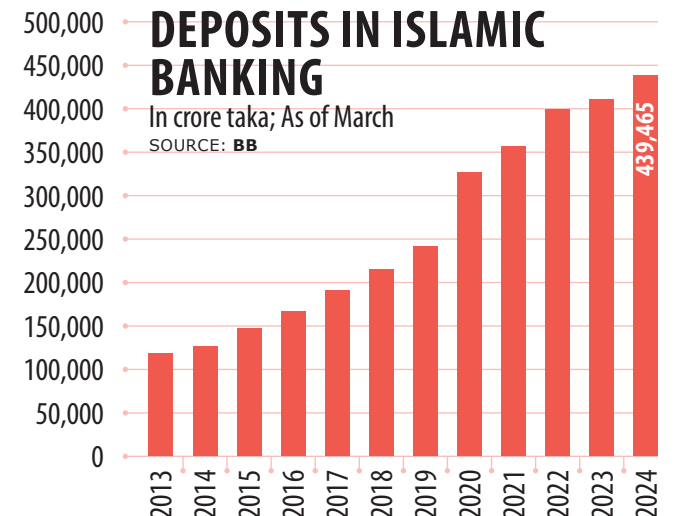
## RECENT CRISIS

However, despite the impressive growth and potential, the sector has been facing a significant crisis since the middle of 2022 due to loan irregularities, scams and a lack of good governance in some Shariah-based banks.

At the end of 2022, the Islamic banking sector faced some headwinds as the asset quality of a dozen Shariah-based banks deteriorated and a number of loan irregularities came to light, impacting the growth and liquidity indicators of the sector.

The deposit growth of Islamic banks dropped to 2.9 percent year-on-year in 2022 from 20.1 percent a year ago, according to the central bank's Financial Stability Report 2022.

Presently, six Shariah-based banks are facing a huge liquidity crisis as depositors have withdrawn their funds, adversely affecting the whole sector.



## BY THE NUMBERS (As of March 2024)

Total number of Islamic banks: **10**

Total branches: **1,700**

Total deposit: Tk **439,465cr**

Total investment: Tk **456,994cr**

## SHARIAH-BASED BANKS

**Islami Bank Bangladesh, Shahjalal Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Al-Arafah Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Standard Bank, ICB Islamic Bank, Union Bank, and NRB Global Bank**

solely to make profits instead of ideological reasons. "If ideology was the driving force, then how come one person can own six to eight Shariah-based banks?" he questioned.

## STRUCTURAL ISSUES

There are some structural issues in the sector, such as the lower number of Shariah-compliant instruments that allow banks to borrow money from the call money market, which has worsened the liquidity crisis,

of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development, said most Islamic banks are worse off than before as the rules are not being followed.

Industry insiders emphasised forming supervisory committees in banks with people who are efficient in both banking and Islamic law. In most cases, bankers lack knowledge about Islamic jurisprudence while Islamic scholars have limited to no practical banking knowledge.

Hence, strict monitoring by the

A chief executive of a Shariah-based bank, seeking anonymity, said there is a need for a concentrated effort from regulators, banks, and stakeholders to enhance governance, better manage risks, and restore public confidence.

An Islamic banking law is needed to ensure compliance as the sector can play a vital role in the country's economic development and financial inclusion once it overcomes the current crisis, he added.



## How smart is shutting down social media?

It will severely curtail people's fundamental freedoms

After a prolonged internet shutdown that all but brought the "Digital Bangladesh" to a standstill, broadband internet has finally been restored across the country. However, mobile internet is still suspended. More worryingly still, sources say that the government is unlikely to provide uninterrupted access to social media platforms anytime soon—at least until tech companies comply with its demands. State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak stated on Wednesday that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and YouTube, have not been complying with Bangladesh's laws; as such, Facebook, along with Meta's other popular platforms such as Messenger and WhatsApp—and ByteDance's TikTok—will remain blocked indefinitely.

The internet was shut down at the height of the protests around 9pm on July 18, with the government offering conflicting accounts of why it occurred from the very beginning. While it claims that the shutdown occurred due to an attack on the data centres in the capital's Mohakhali area, The Daily Star, upon visiting the centres, found no sign of damage to the building that housed them—to say nothing of the fact that it's a technical impossibility for an entire country's internet to be disrupted simply because of a localised disruption.

We are disturbed that the government ordered such a shutdown, which lasted for over five days—which, as highlighted by UN experts, represent a dramatic means of limiting fundamental freedoms and contravene international law. But that it did so under false pretext can only add to people's growing mistrust of the government at a time when the latter needs to assure the former of its commitment to democratic norms and human rights. The government's decision to prolong the ban on social media will only confirm the public's suspicion that it is doing so to control the free flow of information about the severity of the atrocities conducted during the protests. During such a vacuum, it is natural for misinformation and rumours to spread among a population starved of information.

We have observed with increasing alarm the government's stringent measures to curtail digital freedoms over the decade, from arbitrarily arresting people under the draconian Digital Security Act (now the Cyber Security Act) for their social media posts, to the surveillance of private data of citizens, to demanding that tech companies block certain users or content or provide their personal details. We have seen such measures being intensified in the aftermath of mass protests. We urge the government to realise that blocking social media indefinitely will only fuel panic and resentment and further alienate it from the public.

Putting aside the obvious violations of our digital rights and freedoms of speech and expression, what is to happen to the numerous businesses that are now dependent on social media for their very survival? How is the government to commensurate its grandiloquent claims of building a "Smart Bangladesh," while taking increasingly unsmart measures to restrict people's access to digital platforms and in the process jeopardising their livelihoods? Cutting off Bangladesh from the world at large is a great disservice to the people of this country when the government would have us believe that we are riding the waves of digitisation.

## Enhance prison security measures

Narsingdi jailbreak exposes security lapses in prisons

The July 19 Narsingdi jailbreak, amid a breakdown of law and order that followed violent clashes in different parts of the country, sends out a chilling message. This was the first time such an incident occurred in Bangladesh, in which outsiders attacked a jail and aided the escape of all 826 inmates of the prison. Some were reportedly even forced to flee.

The way the incident unfolded raises questions about police intelligence, preparedness, and timely action, and the overall security lapses in our prisons. According to media reports, there were violent clashes, which left two students dead, in the areas adjacent to the prison on July 18. However, on July 19, at around 1:30pm, our correspondent saw rioters picketing, but there was no major police patrol in the area. A few police personnel initially tried to defend the prison when rioters stormed the establishment at around 4pm. The jail superintendent, too, alleged that police did not arrive at the scene before 10pm. Why extra security forces were not deployed around the prison area where deadly clashes had taken place just the day before is puzzling.

The attackers used local weapons and crude bombs, and detectives suspect that six minibuses were used to carry the fleeing inmates. Such descriptions raise the question if the attack was preplanned. It was certainly well-organised. How did our intelligence wings remain in the dark about this? Considering that the prison housed nine inmates belonging to militant outfits like the JMB and Ansarullah Bangla Team, the prison authorities should have been extra careful anyway.

We have often called attention to the security lapses in our prisons which allow extremists to mobilise within the confined, overcrowded walls. The media has reported about mobile phones being smuggled into the prisons many times. Reportedly, about 300 of the inmates who fled have surrendered to court so far. But their successful escape, especially that of the militants, does put a serious question mark on our security apparatuses. We hope that law enforcers will promptly track down the remaining escapees, bring them to book, and recover the stolen arms and ammunition. As we reflect on the violence that shook the country last week, we need to take note of our security lapses so that this kind of incident is not repeated.

# How can the rulers erase so much bloodstain?



Golam Mortoza is the editor of The Daily Star Bangla.

GOLAM MORTOZA

As of Thursday, at least 156 people have died in six days' of violence, per the tally recorded by this daily. The exact number of deaths is unknown; there is no certainty if it will ever come to light. One state minister said, "If law enforcement agencies come under attack, they will return fire. It is only natural that there would be some casualties."

On July 16, we saw the cold-blooded killing of Abu Sayed, student of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur and a coordinator of the quota reform movement, at the hands of police. A viral video of his final moments showed he was quite far from law enforcement. He posed no threat, yet the police member shot him. This does not match the government's narrative.

Within such a short period of time, an unprecedented level of bloodshed took place. This exceeded even the number of deaths during the nine years' of movement against Ershad's autocratic regime, the biggest movement in independent Bangladesh. That movement was violent too; it saw arson and vandalism, too.

Now, the main question is: why did the situation escalate last week, resulting in so many deaths and injuries?

The quotas system had been abolished following the quota reform movement in 2018. During a press conference on July 14 this year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said she had been "utterly dismayed" and had "abolished the quotas" at that time. A circular was issued accordingly. Challenging that circular, some freedom fighters' children filed a writ, responding to which the High Court annulled it on June 5 this year, effectively reinstating the quota system. The government appealed against this decision on July 6. Not relying on the government, students of public universities began their movement again, and it was completely peaceful. On July 9, two students filed a petition, which led to the court issuing a stay order against the earlier verdict. In spite of the stay order, protests continued. The Appellate Division set the hearing date for July 21. In the meantime, several ministers made comments about the movement, such as the protesters were not following the law, they are

defying the constitution, the issue must be resolved through court, the government will not bypass the court, etc. Some of those comments were condescending towards the protesters. Still, they remained peaceful.

How, then, did the protest take such a violent turn?

On July 14, the protesters submitted a memorandum to the president, saying they would launch an all-out protest if their demands were not met within the next 24 hours.

During the press conference on



FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

the same day, the PM asked, "If the freedom fighters' grandchildren won't get quotas, should the grandchildren of Razakars [Pakistani collaborators] get quotas?"

In response, DU students brought out processions that night. They chanted loudly, "Who are you, who am I? Razakar, Razakar," which naturally caused an uproar. However, the students claim that the full version of the slogan was, "Who are you, who am I? Razakar, Razakar. Says who? Says who? Shoirachar, Shoirachar (autocrat)."

On July 15, AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) would give a "fitting reply" to the student protesters who had "labelled themselves as Razakars and showed arrogance." BCL President Saddam Hussain said, "BCL

is prepared to tackle this (quota reform movement) through political means."

That afternoon, BCL launched its attack on the protesters.

On July 16, the protesters and BCL both called for a rally in front of DU's Raju Memorial at 12pm and 3pm, respectively. When the unarmed general students started gathering near Raju Memorial, BCL activists attacked them with metal rods, sticks, hockey sticks and guns. Many students were injured, and eventually, the protesters were dispersed.

At night, BCL members, aided by the police, searched for and found the protesters in DU, RU and JU's residential halls and beat them up. Many were driven out of the halls.

This provoked the protesters further. On July 17, the DU coordinators of the quota reform movement asked the students to gather at Shaheed Minar with sticks. This is the first time that the protesters took up a weapon in this



movement. The same situation arose in JU and RU. Police, along with armed BCL members, conducted waves of assaults against the protesters in all three campuses.

The protesters managed to put up a strong resistance as they were bigger as a group. By that night, the members and leaders—even the female ones—of BCL, a student organisation that is disconnected from the general students, were all driven out of the residential halls and the campuses of DU, JU and RU.

A major reason why a peaceful movement became violent is the attempt to quash it using BCL's muscle power and police-BGB's mindless shooting. BCL's "Helmet Bahini" indiscriminately used sticks and hockey sticks on the protesters. Who are the armed individuals, who were photographed along with the

BCL men, assaulting the students? Are they BCL members? It is assumed that they may have been outsiders, whose machete attacks injured many students, which further enraged the protesters.

Police and BGB fired lethal and non-lethal bullets at the students, as evidenced by published videos and photos in newspapers. This is not the conventional way of dispersing a protest. It seems it was not the police or BGB's goal to fire shots in order to scare the protesters and disperse them; it seemed they meant to shoot at the protesters.

Throughout the protest, the government repeatedly mentioned a "third party." Some intelligence high-ups mentioned that certain elements had "infiltrated" the movement.

The quota reform movement was led by anti-discrimination students' movement. This apolitical movement gained popular support from the entire student community. Undoubtedly, certain members of Chhatra Dal, Shibir and leftists, along with BCL members also joined the cause. More than 50 BCL leaders resigned from their posts and aligned themselves with this movement. But the leadership and majority participation came from general students. Chhatra Dal and Shibir never came close to assuming the leadership.

Yet, the government tried to contain the movement with a headline and brutal approach, which raised casualties.

Why did AL leader Obaidul Quader, who is a former journalist and veteran politician with roots in student politics, want to use BCL to deal with such a widely supported movement? Now he can never escape the blame for what happened; his part in this mayhem will be revisited time and time again.

Even Law Minister Anisul Huq, who is an experienced lawyer, failed to show prudence. By the time he asked to sit with the students and announced intent to expedite the appeal hearing date, the situation had already spiralled out of control. Had the government sat with the students for a discussion beforehand, the situation could have unfolded differently.

This reminds me of Pablo Neruda's poem "I'm explaining a few things":

*Come and see the blood in the streets.*

*Come and see the blood in the streets.*

*Come and see the blood in the streets!*

Since independence, we have not seen so much blood being spilt during a movement. On whose hands is this blood? Can the rulers answer this question?

Translated from Bangla by Mohammed Ishtiaque Khan.

## PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

# We are all biomass



Slavoj Žižek, professor of philosophy at the European Graduate School, is international director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London.

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

In a recent commentary, philosopher Michael Marder looks beyond the immediate horror of what is taking place in Gaza to consider the ontological implications of what we see in the long-distance drone shots of the ruins. Allow me to quote him at length:

"... Gaza is rapidly transformed into a dump, where high-rise buildings and human bodies, ecosystems ... and orchards are mutilated beyond recognition and reduced to organic-inorganic rubble. A solidarity with dumplified lives, places, and worlds requires something other than compassion. So what could that be?"

Marder's answer is to propose "another kind of solidarity based on the shared condition of biomass." To say, "I am biomass" is to "identify with a vanishing life," to see Gaza as "a condensed and particularly blunt version of a planetary tendency." The rendering of all life into mere biomass—chaotic heaps of organic and inorganic matter—can be found everywhere, but it has been "accelerated in Gaza at the cutting edge of the most recent technologies of devastation. Rather than compassion, then, what

is required is the solidarity of the dumped, who dare assert, 'We are biomass.'"

This notion of biomass echoes an insight from philosopher Levi Bryant, "In an age where we are faced with the looming threat of monumental climate change, it is irresponsible to draw our distinctions in such a way as to exclude nonhuman actors." And yet, in today's capitalist societies, efforts to mobilise a large majority of people in the name of our shared ecological condition consistently fail. We all know that we are part of nature and fully dependent on it for our survival, yet this recognition does not translate into action. The problem is that our choices and outlook are influenced by many other forces, such as biased media reporting, economic pressures on workers, material limitations, and so forth.

In her 2010 book *Vibrant Matter*, philosopher Jane Bennett has us picture a polluted trash site, where not only humans but also rotting trash, worms, insects, abandoned machines, chemical poisons, and so on each play some active role. This scene of biomass exists on the same spectrum

as the situation in Gaza, though the latter is an extreme case. Around the world, there are numerous large physical spaces, especially outside the developed West, where "digital waste" is dumped, and thousands work separating glass, metals, plastic, mobile phones, and other man-made materials from the chaotic heaps. One such slum, Agbogbloshie, near the

**What makes the exploitation of biomass different from the capitalist logic is that it accepts a chaotic wasteland as our basic predicament. Though this condition can be partly exploited, it can never be abolished.**

centre of Accra (the capital of Ghana), is known as "Sodom and Gomorrah."

Life in these environments is a horror show, and the communities that live in them are strictly hierarchically organised, with children forced to do the most dangerous work, under extremely hazardous conditions. Yet, because this exploitation of biomass appears ecologically attractive (under the banner of "recycling"), it responds perfectly to the demands of modern technology: "In the technological age," writes philosopher Mark Wrathall, "what matters to us most is getting the 'greatest possible use' out of

everything."

After all, the whole point of using resources sparingly, of recycling, and so forth is to maximise the use of everything. The ultimate products of capitalism are piles of trash—useless computers, cars, TVs, VCRs, and the hundreds of planes that have found a final "resting place" in the Mojave Desert. The idea of total recycling (in which every remainder is used again) is the ultimate capitalist dream, even—or especially—when it is presented as a means of retaining Earth's natural balance. It is yet another testament to capitalism's capacity to appropriate ideologies that seem to oppose it.

However, what makes the exploitation of biomass different from the capitalist logic is that it accepts a chaotic wasteland as our basic predicament. Though this condition can be partly exploited, it can never be abolished. As Marder puts it, biomass is our new home; we are biomass. It is a fantasy to think that such environments can be left behind and replaced by life in some idyllic "natural," ecologically sustainable environment. That easy way out has been irretrievably lost to us. We should accept our only home and work within its confines, perhaps discovering a new harmony beneath what appears to be a chaotic heap.

This will require us to be open to the objective beauty of different levels of reality (humans, animals, ruins, decaying buildings), and to reject a hierarchic ordering of aesthetic experiences. Are we ready to do this? If not, we are truly lost.



# A generation's fight in the shadows of quota



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

Dr Shamsad Mortuza  
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

**SHAMSAD MORTUZA**

Once the curfew lifted, driving on the familiar roads seemed unfamiliar. The oleanders and allamandas on the airport road were in perfect bloom. During the imposed hiatus, the rain and shine had done them good. Maybe the lack of air pollution had given them some extra lustre. I drove through the link road to attend a meeting near a spot that had witnessed one of the bloodiest pitched battles between protesters, police, and their auxiliary forces. As I took the U-loop to get to Hatirjheel Drive, the charred walls of the national television centre came into sight. On that day, I encountered additional signs of destruction: the eerie toll booth at the entrance of the elevated expressway, the towering BRTA and Bridge Authority buildings adorned with burnt feet, the metallic apparitions of numerous ashen vehicles, and the vandalised metro rail stations—all emblematic of the development discourse. However, the streets hold no remembrance of the fallen and injured. To do so, you'll probably have to visit hospitals, graveyards, grieving families or turn to social media. While the broken infrastructure can be fixed, the lives lost can never be regained.

During the state-sponsored lull, the internet shutdown revived an almost forgotten device: the unsmart TV that only speaks. Unlike your mobile phone, it does not listen. The TV channels used sanitised rhetoric to cite official numbers and figures. Life without the internet, the long lines for prepaid utility services, and the spiked prices of daily essentials became unbearable as we craved for normalcy. Memories of anomalous deaths were pushed aside.

The army was brought in to restore peace. Meanwhile, we heard the movement was no longer about quotas; it was about justice. Students fighting for an end to positive discrimination have won their initial battle. The government claims it agreed with the demand from the start. The government was the one who appealed against the court ruling that resurrected the dead quota system. It also patiently allowed the peaceful Bangla Blockade to continue, allowing the



FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**Our political leaders have failed to see that these young people fighting for their rights don't want to be trapped in any identity binary.**

legal system to run its full course.

On July 14, a taunt from above was audible. The insinuation that the protesters were the descendants of the 1971 collaborators sparked a spontaneous reaction. "We demanded our rights and got branded as collaborators," the students chanted. Their ironic slogan, "Who am I? Who are you? Razakar, Razakar!" was lost in translation. The movement that maintained a career agenda for all potential job-seekers suddenly became ideological. Skirmishes turned ugly. Violence erupted on

the Dhaka University campus. The general secretary of Awami League boasted that his party's student wing was enough to quash the storm. Images of attacks started pouring in. Students turned against each other. Helmet-clad gangs did not even spare female students, causing the movement to spread to other regions. The next day, while we were watching TV, in Rangpur, they shot Abu Sayed, a student of English literature. In a

grieving hearts. At least six people died that day.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) intervened, closing all public and private universities indefinitely. The fulcrum shifted. The students discovered unexpected allies in the "general mob," who started fighting by their side. Their agenda was many and unclear. The police used extreme measures, inciting further violence. By that time, the death toll

to the madness and carnage? The healing process can only begin with a thorough survey of these questions.

The verdict, however, is already out. We hear that dark forces have taken control of the movement and turned it into arson. It appears that the ship for dialogue has sailed. When the students went to the president, he could have just given them his sympathetic ears. When the government decided to scrap the quota, they could have communicated in a non-sarcastic manner. A healing strategy was necessary when students suffered physical and emotional harm. Sending stick-wielding students to beat up the injured inside the hospital was never a solution. The internet abruptly shut down whenever the need to establish a communication channel arose, blaming the fire on the data centre and the fibre cables.

Businessmen showed concern over losing buyers as e-commerce collapsed. Fixing the economy became the priority. The black banners by the elevated expressway serve as a reminder of the time it will take to transform the once hard-earned road into a functional one. The prime minister wept at the vandalism that brought the coveted life in the metro rail to a halt. The home minister has visited the injured policemen. However, no one is present to support the injured and deceased students or ordinary citizens. The tears of grieving parents and kin are spinning in cyber reels.

Meanwhile, the protest has moved to a different level. And our political leaders, blinded by their egos, have failed to see that these young people fighting for their rights don't want to be trapped in any identity binary. They are citizens of the world. They sang "Bella Ciao," hacked into government websites, and mobilised international support. Their idealism has the freshness that defies the stink of old politics. Even the government isolated the arrest of the "BNP-Jamaat" axis from the activities of the students. The sooner the government understands that a student faction or increased military presence cannot destroy the student movement in five minutes, the better for the country. Giving the movement a political colour can create a long-term rift that the country cannot afford. We need to bring the killers and arsonists to justice, but we also need empathy and open-minded leadership.

As a teacher, I want to go back to my class and embrace all my students as one. We will begin the healing process by creating space for one another to share and grow in the true spirit of the Liberation War.

## Can we expect some accountability from the government?

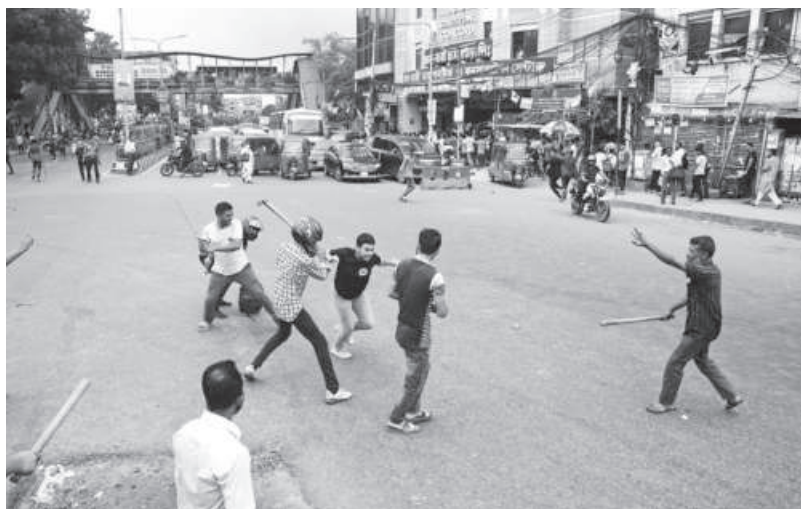


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**RAINER EBERT**

Last week's political violence in Bangladesh was by far the worst I have seen since I first visited and fell in love with this country 15 years ago. Some media outlets report that around 150 lives have been lost, others say 170. Among those who lost their lives are young adults, uninvolved bystanders, and law enforcement personnel. Once the dust settles and a careful tabulation is done, the actual number of deaths could be far higher than the numbers circulating at the moment. In addition, thousands were injured, many of whom have a long road to recovery ahead, and some of whom may never fully recover.

What we saw was nothing short of disturbing and, tragically, seems it could have been largely avoidable. The protesters' initial demand for a reform of the quota system in



**What we saw last week was nothing short of disturbing and, tragically, it seems it could have been largely avoidable.**

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

**What was the process and legal basis for the government's decision to shut off mobile data as well as broadband internet on July 18? Was civil society given the opportunity to request a judicial review of that decision? Considering the devastating impact of the decision to impose a curfew and shut off the internet for millions of people in terms of education, commerce, healthcare, and personal relationships, was that decision proportionate to the purpose it was meant to achieve?**

government job recruitment, whether you agree with it or not, was surely not unreasonable, and should have been addressed through political dialogue. Instead, armed Chhatra League members entered the University of Dhaka campus on July 15, and attempted to quell the protests by assaulting protesters. The situation only escalated from there.

Now, as Bangladesh slowly edges towards a semblance of normalcy, all eyes must be on the government: will it choose accountability, or more of the cronyism and selective application of the law that got the nation into this trouble in the first place? As I write this column, I am looking at a bunch of national dailies and I see reports of more than three thousand arrests and many more cases filed in connection with the recent violence. BNP and Jamaat are mentioned over and over again, and the prime minister herself said that this time she "will not spare them." Insofar those arrested have in fact been engaged in violence and the destruction of public infrastructure

and private property, and it is expected that they will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

I then searched for any reports of legal proceedings of any kind against the Chhatra League and law enforcers, but it was in vain. True accountability requires the equitable prosecution of everyone who broke the law, regardless of political or

rods, sticks, stones, other weapons, and helmets. Yet, in many places, including in front of Dhaka College, there were clashes despite police presence. What was the rationale for letting violence unfold unopposed by law enforcement?

A day later, videos of a member of police shooting unarmed protester Abu Sayed point blank were widely shared on social media. He later died in a hospital. Has a formal investigation been launched, and has the officer involved in the shooting been suspended pending its outcome?

Are those responsible for the deaths of Dhaka Residential Model College student Farhan Faiyaz and countless other protesters across Bangladesh being held accountable? Has an independent commission to investigate these deaths been formed? Who authorised the use of lethal force against protesters? What structural steps are the security forces taking to prevent the use of excessive force in the future?

What was the process and legal basis for the government's decision to shut off mobile data as well as broadband internet on July 18? Was civil society given the opportunity to request a judicial review of that decision? Considering the devastating impact of the decision to impose a curfew and shut off the internet for millions of people in terms of education, commerce, healthcare, and personal relationships, was that decision proportionate to the purpose it was meant to achieve? Were there no less disruptive means available to the government to achieve the same purpose?

With no opposition worth the name in parliament, who will do the necessary political work of reviewing the manner in which the total internet blackout unfolded and was justified by the government? Who will ask the government the questions that need to be answered to determine if it has overstepped its authority? The people of Bangladesh deserve timely answers to these and many other questions they are certain to have, and the government will be measured by the quality of the answers it provides. It has an opportunity to stake out a positive path forward. If that opportunity is missed, then who knows what awaits the country in the future.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                            |                      |                       |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>              | 37 Golf peg          | 18 Ominous tarot card |
| 1 Like some notebook paper | 38 Desire            | 19 Less               |
| 6 Taking to court          | 41 Beyoncé hit       | 20 Cloth scrap        |
| 11 Dote on                 | 44 Microwave feature | 21 Metal source       |
| 12 Passion                 | 45 Gives over        | 22 Lust, e.g.         |
| 13 Barbra Streisand hit    | 46 Stretches over    | 24 Tiny taste         |
| 15 Compass dir.            | 47 Valentine symbol  | 25 Yale rooster       |
| 16 Pen fill                |                      | 26 Valentine color    |
| 17 Fall behind             | <b>DOWN</b>          | 30 Nymph chasers      |
| 18 Jeans material          | 1 Statutes           | 31 Hold tightly       |
| 20 Valentine's Day gift    | 2 Wedding vows       | 33 Floral garland     |
| 23 Frisco player           | 3 Alaskan city       | 34 Play parts         |
| 27 Opera piece             | 4 Memorable time     | 35 Journey            |
| 28 Cairo's river           | 5 Disavows           | 36 Baby's call        |
| 29 Polite chaps            | 6 Registered         | 38 Luke's teacher     |
| 31 Amorous archer          | 7 Online address     | 39 At any time        |
| 32 Corridors               | 8 Revered one        | 40 Egg setting        |
| 34 Cash dispenser          | 9 Flaring star       | 42 Buddhism branch    |
|                            | 10 Golfer Norman     | 43 Spike of film      |
|                            | 14 Tourist stop      |                       |



### JULY 15 ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

### CORRIGENDUM

In our July 16, 2024 issue, the set of clues for the crossword puzzle that was published was wrong. We sincerely apologise to our readers for this unintentional error. We are publishing the same puzzle today with the right set of clues.



REFLECTIONS

# In both form and content: A political (un)reality

**I was particularly enraptured by *Life and Political Reality's* usage of the device of memory—both individual and collective—and how it helps construct the narrative of the war and its consequences. Memory is a silenced device in the novella, particularly the memories that address gendered and sexual violence. Memory is also unreliable and open to distortion and damage.**

NAZIA MANZOOR

Over the last two semesters, my course on South Asian writing at both the undergraduate and graduate level begins with Shahidul Zahir's *Jibon O Rajnoitik Bastobata* (*Life and Political Reality*, translated by V Ramaswamy and Shahroza Nahreen). As anyone who has ever had to design syllabi for survey courses—courses that survey a period, a genre, or an entire body of work representing various peoples, languages, and political history—knows, a lot of complex thinking goes into the process. Issues of representation, language, length, complexity, diversity, readability, and even pleasure haunt an educator's thinking as he finalises the texts for the semester. As I spent the last week away from my classroom, and as the nation erupted all around us revisiting old, foundational questions about what it means to be a patriot and indeed, a Bangladeshi, I recalled the discussions we had on 1971 in my classroom, especially while reading Zahir together.

Published in 1988, Shahidul Zahir's first novella is a tale of two days, set 15 years apart and written in one long, breathless paragraph, examining 1971 and its aftermath. The story is centered primarily around Abdul Mojid, a young man from Dhaka's old parts and his affective ties with his traumatic past and grotesque present. The slim novella opens with the sound of Abdul Majid's sandal's straps going "phot", a mundane sound that is magnified by its significance as he hears the voice of Moulana Bodu's son Abul Khair address the inhabitants of his moholla or neighborhood as "brothers". Bodu, an accessory to the Pakistani forces during the terrible nine months of 1971, was the man behind the rape and murder of Mojid's sister, Momena. The novella's opening is breathtaking—Zahir draws the reader in with unparalleled urgency and plunges those that have only heard of 1971 anecdotally from family members, or read about dispassionately in mandatory school textbooks, straight into the narrative.

At an allegorical level, *Life and Political Reality* is about Bangladesh itself and the inexorable ways in which a small community in Dhaka's Lakshimbazar bears witness to the nation's history. While Bodu's 1971 actions of violence and his later rehabilitation form the central narrative tension of the novella, it is Mojid's final decision to sell his ancestral home that stages the ultimate rupture in the narrative—with Mojid abandoning his home, the nation too, snaps, mimicking the muted explosion of the sandal's snap, but this time on a much grander scale.

Often a restrained, poignant study of the inequalities of life experienced by the ordinary subjects of the state, Zahir's fiction almost always captures the haunting of Bangladesh's political past



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

with an urgency that is hard to ignore. A bureaucrat by profession, Zahir is generally considered to be one of the most influential and unique voices to have emerged in independent Bangladesh's literary landscape.

I was particularly enraptured by *Life and Political Reality's* usage of the device of memory—both individual and collective—and how it helps construct the narrative of the war and its consequences. Memory is a silenced device in the novella, particularly the memories that address gendered and sexual violence. Memory is also unreliable and open to distortion and damage. Rituparna Mukherjee notes that characters like Bodu "alter the memory narrative to suit their own needs". Yet some memories linger. After Khayer addresses the moholla as brothers, and upon realising that the horrors of the past are acutely, profoundly present in the current moment, a devastated Mojid sobs into his wife's shoulder. As he touches her bony shoulder and remembers the exact spot where Momena was pierced by a bayonet, Mojid bears witness to the trauma of a nation's collective gendered and sexual past while also confronting his own limitations as a masculine subject of a liberated state. Feeling weak and emasculated by the reappearance and reclamation of power by the forces that made those nine months a traumatic experience for oppressed subjects such as himself and his sister, Mojid's devastation is made palpable with agonising clarity.

Memory further uncovers the link between communal (dis)harmony and the West Pakistani regime's commitment to rid the "Hinduani" from the East and marking them as minoritised, Hinduised Muslims whose lives are expendable. Mojid's memory recalls how Momena is the only Muslim girl in the Lakshimbazar area who sings in a choir with the Christian Bashanti Gomes, establishing a moment of quiet communal camaraderie. That the singing leads to Bodu cursing Momena out and an ontological enmity being formed between the teenage Mojid and Bodu reestablishes Zahir's flair for marrying the personal with the political. As the current unrest continues to unfold with dizzying speed all around us, I wonder how our memory will recall this July. How this story will be written. What conversations we will have about it.

Much has been said by critics about Zahir's writing, its uniqueness, and its carefully chaotic, breathless brilliance. Hasan Azizul Huq argues that there is "extreme disinterestedness" in Zahir's "narration or writing style...severing the roots of emotionality, waving logic aside, taking unexpected turns, creating unanticipated relations through the threads of sentences". For Sarker Hasan Al Zayed however, that disinterestedness Huq speaks of is revealed in the "form of sudden interjections and subtle innuendoes" in the text. "It is, as if, partial exposure is the mode through which this novel has chosen to explore the truly traumatic memories and political failures of the nation," he adds. The

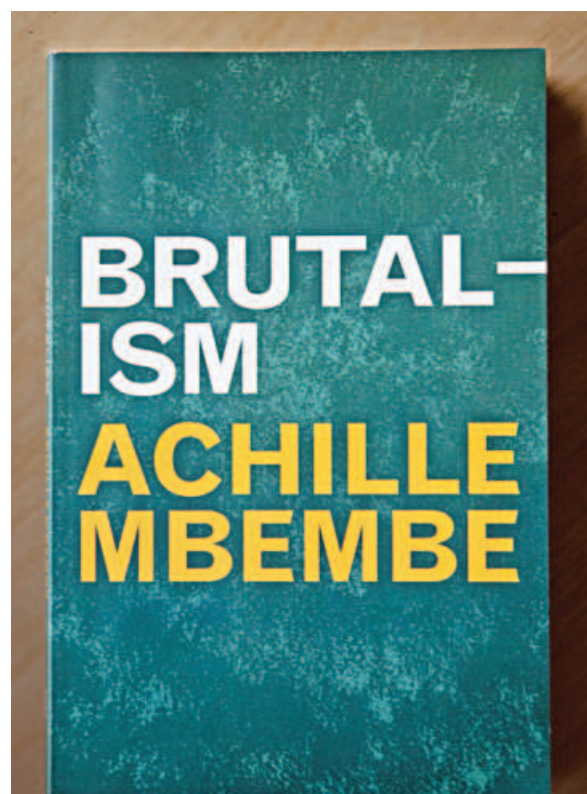
collective narratorial voice and the specificities of the lived realities of characters give the novel a poetic *joie de vivre*. In the days prior to the pogrom of March 25, for instance, when Jamir Baypari and Abdul Majid's mother show up to Bodu's house and Bodu slaps Jamir Baypari, the moholla's collective audience "looked on in a dazed astonishment, like how entranced spectators gaze at a magician's inexplicable acts and try to figure it out". This collective inability to comprehend the meanings of such action signifies the inexplicable violence of '71, as well as testifies to the incomprehensibility of genocidal violence at large. Ironic then, that a similar sense of incomprehensibility haunts a lot of our collective thinking now, especially as we too, look on in "dazed astonishment" as events continue to unravel around us.

Finally, it is not only the urban underclass human who testifies to the trauma of the past but the nonhuman other that participates in narrating the unsayable in the novella. From the crows that eat the flesh of the enemy, to the Tulsi tree that bears witness to communal harmony as well as antagonism—the ecology opposes as well as reproduces the regime of terror set in motion during and after the war. When Bodu's young son Abul Bashar (a hermaphrodite who dies under mysterious circumstances) is permitted to mourn the death of his beloved dog but the moholla is unable to mourn their seven dead neighbors during '71, the text stages a collapsing of the binaries separating the human from its nonhuman other and with it, raises complex questions about the quality of life as well as death under conditions of extreme political unrest.

Last semester, as our course drew to its conclusion, a student mentioned how this is now the book she makes everyone read—her parents, her friends, her peers. For generation Z, 1971 is more relevant than ever, as evidenced by this July. Throughout this slim novella, Zahir helps sketch the unadorned horror of the return and rehabilitation of noted war criminals as political leaders, problematises the forgiveness granted to those perpetrators by former leaders of the liberation movement, and examines Mojid's relationship with his memories, his neighborhood, and eventually the nation. If there's one thing our troubled political history has taught us, it is that our literature has steadfastly engaged with the complexities and nuances of our political landscape and today, if we are to step away from the binarism of us vs. them, Zahir's work can be our guiding light.

A version of this article first appeared in *The Literary Encyclopedia*, February 2024.

Dr Nazia Manzoor teaches English at North South University. She is also Editor, *Star Books and Literature*.



WHAT WE'RE READING THIS WEEK

## Brutalism

ACHILLE MBEMBE

Duke University Press, 2024

One of the most influential cultural and political thinkers of our time, Mbembe's latest book is a careful study of politicised acts of "brutalism", a concept he studies, analyses, and investigates by invoking architectural aesthetics. A careful study of demolition and production on a planetary scale, the book interrogates capitalism's brutal assault against all spheres of human, nonhuman, and environmental realms. He offers that "the many practices of demolition had nothing accidental about them". The book also cautions against the blurring of the natural and the artificial in this age of unprecedented technological advancements while remaining unabashedly optimistic about a futurity that will offer a renewed sense of community.

POETRY

## The song of freedom

MARZIA RAHMAN

the bloodied scarf of my sisters' shoulder lies on the dusty footpath, the bullet hole in my brother's chest unfolds like a Pandora's box like a new sun heralding a new era. The slogans are echoed from street to street, from campus to campus, from Teknaf to Tetulia. Hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters march ahead, shouting the names of their dead brothers and sisters. The wind, breeze, trees, leaves, birds, sons, daughters, mothers, father shouting along, the song of freedom.

Marzia Rahman is a flash fiction writer and translator. Author of two books, *The Aftermath and Dot and Other Flashes*, she has been published widely in both print and online journals.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

## Ghostly tenants

WAZIHA AZIZ

My father speaks in a dismantled language that goes up in smoke. He leaves broken edges of questions wedged into corners of empty rooms he walks past. Enter smoke churning, pervading, answering. In my house we sit at the table with ghosts. We offer tea and biscuits. They accept, soundlessly. These temporary tenants shatter the glass in my mirror to tell tales of towns of timbre on fire. Through kaleidoscopic images. The words that fell out of burning bodies my father fled. Fires bellowing, a little boy running. Wind curdling like dissipating smoke.

Running, from nothing to nothing. What goes around comes around and rests—The country, silent Because quiet men don't whisper, but haunt. Haunting, rumbling, smoke rising from chimneys of a million homes. Pieces of ballot paper in flames flowing turbulent smoke The looters, afire. Screaming. Begins again. I'm sorry, my poetry is only a stream of apologies I inherit from my father. In his burden I share. His vow: To remember. So together we house the ghosts that fought for no home. Together we house the smoke.

Waziha Aziz is a writer from Chattogram, Bangladesh.



## Tigresses 'couldn't understand what they wanted'

SPORTS REPORTER

Familiar batting woes returned for Bangladesh in a disheartening 10-wicket loss in the 2024 Women's Asia Cup semifinal against India in Dambulla yesterday, with skipper Nigar Sultana Joty mentioning that she had no clue about what they wanted to achieve in a shambolic batting effort.

"We couldn't understand what we wanted," Joty, at the post-match presentation ceremony, reflected on the huge-margin loss as India restricted the Tigresses to a meagre 80 for eight before chasing it down with ease in just 11 overs.

When opener Dilara Akter flicked Renuka Singh for six over deep square leg in the very first over, it appeared the batting unit had the resolve to challenge an in-form Indian outfit, who had romped to the semifinal unbeaten.

However, Dilara was dismissed in the very next delivery, holing out to deep midwicket while trying to play a similar shot. The Tigresses went on to lose three wickets in the Powerplay, the last of those of in-form opener Murshida Khatun, who had hit a career-best 59-ball 80



against Malaysia in the previous game, as Bangladesh slumped to three for 21 in 4.5 overs.

"Losing too many wickets in the Powerplay hurt. When top order is not making runs, it is difficult for teams to come up with runs," Joty rued that phase of play.

Unable to recover, Bangladesh slumped further to 44 for six and were eventually restricted to a low total.

Renuka, who was named player of the match, was the pick of the bowlers for India with all three of her wickets coming in the Powerplay. That set the tone for another batting mishap as apart from Joty's 51-ball 32 and a cameo 18 ball 19 from Shorna, no other batter was able to reach double figures.

Joty also praised Shorna for the type of character she showed down the order. "Shorna has a job to do in the five-

six overs, unlucky today as she did not get much strike. She is showing her capability, she came from the Under-19s and is showing character," Joty said.

India, unscathed, cruised to the target as Smriti Mandhana, who came out to open the innings, hit a 39-ball 55 while her opening partner Shefali Verma remained unbeaten on 26.

For Bangladesh, it was another quizzical batting effort.

Bar the 191 for two that the Tigresses posted in the Group B game against Malaysia, the batting effort showed no signs of improvement as of late. Oftentimes, Bangladesh batters went into their shell, and against India, they failed to apply themselves against some tight bowling.

Ahead of the T20 World Cup at home in October, questions remain as to how the batting unit can thwart such disasters.

"It is about mentality. They are capable of playing shots, but against India, they played differently. We need to work on our batting, we are losing games because of it. Before the World Cup, we will try and rectify our mistakes," Joty added.

## Joy, Aich strike fifties against Pak Shaheens

SPORTS REPORTER

Skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Aich Mollah struck fifties before Bangladesh High Performance Unit were bowled out for 258 in their first innings on the opening day of second four-day match against Pakistan Shaheens at the DXC Arena in Darwin on Friday.

Joy scored 69 off 90 balls with eight fours and a six while Aich scored 55 runs as the pair shared a 54-run stand for the fifth wicket after Bangladesh were reduced to 104-4 at one stage.

Bangladesh lost both the batters in quick succession to be left reeling at 188-7 before Mahidul Hasan Ankon (31), Rejaur Rehman Raja (28) and Ripon Mondol (17) made some vital contributions to help the team cross the 250-run mark before being all out in 67.3 overs.

Shaheens pacers Khurram Shahzad finished with 3-69 which included the wickets of opener Parvez Hossain Emon (30), Amite Hasan (seven) and Ankon while Kashif Ali, Faisal Akram and Kamran Ghulam bagged two wickets each.

Pacer Ripon then struck twice as he removed both the Shaheens openers Sahibzada Farhan (4) and Haseebullah (18) to leave their opponents at 39-2 at stumps.

Mohammad Ali (one not out), who was sent in as night-watchman, will be at the crease with Omaid Bin Yousuf (seven not out) at the start of play on second day.

## Rony's quest for a comeback

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Pacer Abu Hider Rony sees his call up to the High Performance Unit for the tour to Australia as a lifeline for his international career and believes it can open a path for him to make a comeback to the Bangladesh side after a lengthy gap.

The 28-year-old was a surprise inclusion in both the one-day and T20 squads of the HP unit, which will leave for Australia tonight, for their forthcoming white-ball series against Pakistan Shaheens and Big Bash teams.

Rony, who played two ODIs and 13 T20Is between 2016 and 2018, has been a consistent performer in the domestic circuit for years but has hardly been considered for the senior side or for other developmental teams in years.

The left-arm pacer last toured with the national team during a three-match T20I series against India in 2019 and since then, has been in the wilderness when it comes to playing for the Tigers in any format.

"It's an incredible opportunity for me. I think the opportunity arrived because I have consistently performed well in the domestic circuit," Rony told The Daily Star recently.

"If I can do well there, I can hope to make a comeback to the senior side. I will try my best to utilise the opportunity," said Rony, who previously toured Australia twice - first during the Under-19 World Cup in 2012 and then in 2018 with the HP Unit.

The fact that the national side already has two left-arm pacers in Mustafizur Rahman and Shoriful Islam in the mix works against Rony's chances of making a comeback.

To overcome this hurdle, Rony has been working on sharpening his batting skills



as he believes that can help him stand out among his peers. His performances with the willow in recent domestic matches also show that this extra emphasis has not gone to waste.

During the 2023-24 season of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League, Rony, who emerged as the highest wicket-taker in the List A competition with 31 wickets in 16 matches, made 250 runs at a strike rate of 121.9 and scored two fifties for eventual runners-up Mohammedan Sporting Club.

"From the beginning of my career, I had a good command over batting. Earlier, I never put too much effort into it. But now, I have been trying to do well in this department alongside my bowling. It's very difficult right now to survive in

Bangladesh cricket with only bowling," he said.

"In order to make a comeback to the national side, I think my batting is very important. I'm still working to improve my batting alongside my bowling. If I can do well in both departments, I can contribute much more for the team. I really enjoy the dual role and I think I need to hone this skill further.

"It has definitely become really tough to make a comeback to the national side. Our pacers have been doing very well. I think there is a healthy competition between the pacers which is good for the team. Those of us who are trying to break into the national team need to perform exceptionally well. We are enjoying this competition," he concluded.

## Sagorika wants to build on impressive debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football's latest sensation Mosammat Sagorika said she would like to build on her debut hat-trick as the women in red and green take on Bhutan in the second of their two FIFA international friendlies in Thimphu today.

The 19-year-old forward came off the bench in the second half of the first match and hauled Bangladesh from a goal down to lead them to a convincing 5-1 win against the South Asian minnows.

Bangladesh had gone to Bhutan without a few of their key players, yet trailing by a goal for 48 minutes against a side that Bangladesh had thrashed 8-0 in their previous meeting was beyond anyone's imagination.

Sagorika, however, eased the pressure of the visitors with a fine hat-trick and now she is looking for more goals.

"Scoring on debut is a big thing, and I scored three. It was beyond my imagination. I would want to score more goals so that we get a bigger margin of victory in the second match," Sagorika said ahead of the second match, which will kick off at the Changlimithang Stadium at 6:00 pm today.

Sagorika may get a chance in the starting eleven today as coach Peter Butler said he would change personnel and try to give most players game time,



with an eye on October's SAFF Women's Championship.

"I will keep the system but the personnel will change. We'll give quite a few number of players (the chance) to share the workload. I think the most important thing is we try and mix the game up," said the Englishman, adding that it would be foolish to expect Bangladesh to roll over an ever-improving Bhutan side.

Captain Sabina Khatun, who scored a goal in the first match, said they would try to rectify the mistakes from the first match. "If you followed the first match, you would've realised that Bhutan are in a much better position than they were during the SAFF Championship. But we tried to play our natural game which is why we got the result. We want to rectify the small mistakes from that match and want to win it too."

## Mominul hits ton in drawn practice game

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque hit a century in the drawn two-day practice game between BCB Red and BCB Green at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Carrying on from an overnight score of 47, BCB Red's Mominul hit 123, laced with 15 fours and a six, before perishing to Nasum Ahmed, out caught and bowled.

BCB Red declared on 274 for 9 in their first innings with a 143-run lead. Mehedi Hasan Miraz was the pick of the bowlers for BCB Green, picking up three wickets for 64 runs while Nasum and Shafiqul Islam picked up two wickets each.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who got 50 in the first innings, struck 48 for BCB Green as they reached 147 for 6 at stumps on a rain-interrupted day to draw the practice game.

Ahrar Amin and Habibur Rahman remained unbeaten on 31 and 15 respectively while Tajjul Islam bagged two wickets for BCB Red. Earlier BCB Green were skittled out for 131 in their first innings on the first day.

The second practice match, slated to be a three-day game, is scheduled to begin on July 29 in Chattogram.

## SKY ready to take India forward 'in own style'

AFP, Delhi

India's Suryakumar Yadav said Friday he was not going to repeat the mistakes of his domestic captaincy ahead of his first trial as Twenty20 skipper against Sri Lanka.

Suryakumar, 33, this month picked up the baton from much-loved predecessor Rohit Sharma, who announced his retirement from the 20-over format after India's World Cup victory in June.

He pipped all-rounder Hardik Pandya to the post after concerns over the latter's frequent injury absences.

But his previous captaincy of state team Mumbai had aroused concerns over his leadership style, after complaints from teammates prompted his 2015 sacking.

"Lot of things have changed since then. I am a different person now," the batsman told reporters in Kandy ahead of Saturday's series opener.

"I have got married and I have learned a lot from other captains. I will take the team forward in my own style," he added.

"Our brand of cricket remains the same. What the captaincy has done is it has given me new responsibility and I am looking forward to the challenge."

Star batter Virat Kohli also retired after the T20 World Cup and India's 15-man squad will give Suryakumar the opportunity to experiment with the top order, anchored on openers Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Sri Lanka also have a new short-format captain after a humiliating first-round World Cup knock-out prompted Wanindu Hasaranga's resignation just six months after his appointment.

His replacement Charith Asalanka captained Jaffna Kings on Sunday to a title win in the island's 20-over Lanka Premier League tournament.

"It's a huge challenge for us to play the world champions. We are ready for the challenge as we prepared well for this series," Asalanka said.

"Bit disappointed that we are not at full strength," he added, saying that injury and illness had hurt the team's pace strength.

Fast bowler Nuwan Thushara was ruled out of the series with a fractured thumb while Dushmantha Chameera is unwell.

Sri Lanka have brought in right-arm seamer Asitha Fernando and left-arm quick Dilshan Madushanka as replacements.

The three-match series concludes Tuesday in Kandy before a three-match ODI series begins in Colombo on Friday.

## OLYMPICS CORNER



### 'Raw meat'

AFP, Paris

France may be the home of haute cuisine but the British team have been less than impressed about the food on offer at the Paris Olympic village, especially "raw meat".

Britain have brought in an extra chef as a result and complained about a shortage of the right food at the village, and the quality of what's on offer.

Some British competitors have headed off to Team GB's base elsewhere in the city to get fed and pick up packed meals to take back for dinner.

"There are not enough of certain foods: eggs, chicken, certain carbohydrates," Andy Anson, the British Olympic Association chief executive, said of the apparently disappointing offering at the village.

"And then there is the quality of the food, with raw meat being served to athletes." Anson called the food problem "the biggest issue at the moment".

### Paolini hunting medals, and Rafa selfie

REUTERS, Paris

Italian Jasmine Paolini's breakout year could be about to get even better as she prepares for the Paris Olympics with strong medal prospects in singles and doubles and the chance to grab a selfie with French Open king Rafa Nadal.

The 28-year-old Tuscan returns to Roland Garros just weeks after reaching the French Open final - a feat she repeated at Wimbledon where she also ended as runner-up.

Those stunning runs have elevated Paolini to fifth in the WTA rankings and she will be one of the players expected to have a deep run in her second Olympics where she is seeded fourth.

Paolini will be busy on Saturday as she plays Ana Bogdan of Romania in the singles and will also team up with veteran Sara Errani in the doubles against New Zealand pairing Erin Routliffe, the world number one, and Lulu Sun.

"My goal for these Olympics is to ask Rafa for a selfie," she joked. "I have one with Roger (Federer) and one with Novak (Djokovic) from the previous Olympics, so my goal is to ask for one with Rafa."

### Brazil great Zico robbed

AFP, Paris

The Brazilian former footballer Zico filed a complaint with French police on Friday after having his bag stolen which contained cash, watches, and diamond jewellery.

The 71-year-old, who appeared in three World Cups, was in transit at the time of the theft and had left his car window open.

The Parisien daily reported the goods Zico lost to be worth 500,000 euros (\$542,000) while a source close to the matter told AFP this sum was highly exaggerated. The Selecao legend is in Paris as a guest of the Brazilian Olympic team as the 2024 Games get underway this weekend.





## CLASHES OVER QUOTA Four more die from gunshot wounds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four more people, who suffered bullet wounds during the recent clashes centring the quota protests, died at different hospitals in Dhaka in the last 48 hours.

The deceased are Imtiaz Ahmed Dalim, 20, a student of Southeast University; Mainuddin, 25, a madrasa student; Sohel Rana, 20, and Yeasin, 17.

Imtiaz's father, Nawsher Ali, said his son was shot in Rampura on July 19. Imtiaz died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 4:00am yesterday.

Mainuddin was shot in Rayerbagh on July 21. He also died at DMCH around 2:00am yesterday, said his mother, Mahfuza Begum.

Yasin was shot in Jatrabari on July 21 and was admitted to Mugda Medical College Hospital. He died undergoing treatment around 11:00pm on Thursday, said his cousin Babul.

Sohel was shot in Rampura on July 19. He was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, where doctors declared him dead on Thursday evening, said Manik Saha, a sub-inspector of

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PHOTO: REUTERS

Members of the Bangladesh delegate wave the national flag as they parade on a boat through River Seine during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris yesterday. For the first time in Olympic history, the opening ceremony took place outside the main stadium, with some 300,000 people watching in person from specially built stands on the river banks, and another 200,000 from overlooking balconies and apartments.

## 'Sabotage' hits French trains hours before Olympics

One in four Paris-London  
Eurostar trains cancelled

REUTERS, Paris

Saboteurs struck France's TGV high-speed train network yesterday in a series of pre-dawn attacks across the country, causing travel chaos and exposing security gaps ahead of the Paris Olympics opening ceremony later in the day.

The coordinated sabotage took place as France mounted a massive security operation involving tens of thousands of police and soldiers to safeguard the capital for the sporting extravaganza, sucking in security resources from across the country.

SNCF, the state-owned railway operator, said vandals had damaged signal substations and cables along the lines connecting Paris with cities such as Lille in the north, Bordeaux in the west and Strasbourg in the east. Another attack on the Paris-Marseille line was foiled.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Two security sources said the modus operandi meant initial

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## AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY 20 students sued for attack on police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty students of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, along with many unnamed others, were sued on charges of demonstrating unlawfully in front of the campus and assaulting police.

Sub-Inspector Akhtaruzzaman of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station filed the case on July 21, ten days after the incident.

The students who have been named in the case as accused are Tawhid Ahmed Ashique, Ahmedul Kabir Taposh, Md Raihan, Sourav, Shahrar, Mohaiminul, Ahsan Habib, Anas, Sagar, Imran, Ahsan Habib, Wasilul Islam, Mujahidul Islam Shuvo, Altaf, Selim Reza, Nur Islam, Asif, Rifat, Shakib, and Mridul.

According to the case statement, students demanding reform to the quota system in government jobs blocked the road in front of Gate-2 of the university on July 11.

When police went to the spot to control the situation, students allegedly started throwing brickbats at them. At that time, several police personnel were injured. At one stage, police chased the protesters and dispersed them, it added.

As of yet, no arrests have been made in the case, Sub-Inspector SM Al Mamun of

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## Wave of Israeli strikes hit Gaza's north, south

21 more Palestinians killed; WHO sends over 1m  
polio vaccines to enclave to protect children

AGENCIES

A new wave of air strikes by Israeli fighter jets yesterday targeted the Gaza Strip, including Khan Younis in the south, the Bureij refugee camp in the centre, and Gaza City in the north of the enclave.

Gaza health officials said Israeli military forces fired live rounds at an ambulance evacuating a wounded person in southern Khan Younis, where a deadly ground invasion by Israeli forces is expanding.

The armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad said its fighters bombed Israeli soldiers and vehicles stationed around the Rafah crossing in southern Gaza with mortar shells.

The group also said it engaged in fierce clashes with Israeli forces since Thursday night in the east of Khan Younis, using machine guns and anti-tank shells.

According to Gaza health officials, Israeli military strikes in the past 24 hours had killed at least 21 people, the latest casualties in an offensive that health authorities in the enclave say has killed at least 39,196 Palestinians.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to reduce rations for families in Gaza to ensure broader coverage for newly displaced people, it said yesterday.

"Food stocks and humanitarian supplies in central and southern Gaza are very limited

- WFP reduces rations for Gaza families to ensure coverage for newly displaced
- Australia, Canada, NZ urge Israel to protect Gaza civilians
- Death toll in enclave rises to 39,196

and barely any commercial supplies are going in," WFP added in a post on social media platform X.

The World Health Organization is sending more than one million polio vaccines to Gaza to be administered over the coming weeks to prevent children being infected after the virus was detected in sewage samples, its chief said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Australia, Canada, New Zealand urged Israel to protect civilians in Gaza. The three governments have issued a statement on the need for an urgent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, saying "the situation in Gaza is catastrophic".

"The human suffering is unacceptable. It

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## Humanity suffers from 'extreme heat epidemic'

Warns UN chief, calls for action  
to limit impacts of heat waves

AFP, United Nations

Humanity is suffering from an "extreme heat epidemic," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Thursday, calling for action to limit the impacts of heat waves intensified by climate change.

"Billions of people are facing an extreme heat epidemic - wilting under increasingly deadly heat waves, with temperatures topping 50 degrees Celsius around the world," he said. "That's 122 degrees Fahrenheit. And halfway to boiling."

According to the European Copernicus network, July 21, 22 and 23 were the three hottest days ever recorded worldwide, with July 22 holding the absolute record of 17.16 degrees Celsius (62.9 degrees Fahrenheit).

Guterres repeated his call for humanity to fight its "addiction" to fossil fuels.

"Today, our focus is on the impact of extreme heat. But let's not forget that there are many other devastating symptoms of the climate crisis: ever-more fierce hurricanes. Floods. Droughts. Wildfires. Rising sea levels. And the list goes on," he said.

"To tackle all these symptoms, we need to fight the disease. And the disease is the madness of incinerating our only home. The disease is the addiction to fossil fuels.



Antonio Guterres

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## COVERING DEMO Investigate killings of 3 journos

CPJ urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday called on Bangladesh authorities to investigate the killings of three journalists and other attacks on reporters covering deadly nationwide protests over government job quotas.

"CPJ is deeply disturbed by the killing of journalists Hasan Mehedi, Md Shakil Hossain, and Abu Taher Md Turab while they were reporting on the quota protests in Bangladesh," said CPJ Asia Programme Coordinator Beh Lih Yi, according to a report on its website.

"The Bangladesh government must hold to account those responsible for all assaults on journalists and fully restore internet and phone services to allow the free flow of information needed to cover matters of public interest," Yi added.

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## Lanka to hold presidential polls Sept 21

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka will hold presidential elections on September 21, a government notice said yesterday, setting the date for a crucial vote expected to determine the future of reforms in the South Asian nation weathering its worst financial crisis in decades.

Nominations for the election have to be submitted on August 15, with incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe becoming the first candidate to do so by paying a non-refundable deposit to the election commission, his office said.

Wickremesinghe, 75, took office in July 2022 after widespread protests caused by the debilitating financial crisis forced his predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country and later resign.

Parliament elected Wickremesinghe to serve out the rest of the five-year term vacated by Rajapaksa who was elected in November 2019.



Children playing in the capital's Ramna Park during the curfew break yesterday. With schools closed and slow internet connection amid the curfew, children are left with little to do. The photo was taken around 3:30pm.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Ancient secrets unearthed in vast Turkish cave city

AFP, Midyat

Through a basement door in southeastern Turkey lies a sprawling underground city - perhaps the country's largest - which one historian believes dates back to the ninth century before Jesus Christ.

Archaeologists stumbled upon the city-under-a-city "almost by chance" after an excavation of house cellars in Midyat, near the Syrian border, led to the discovery of a vast labyrinth of caves in 2020.

Workers have already cleared more than 50 subterranean rooms, all connected by 120 metres of tunnel carved out of the rock.

But that is only a fraction of the site's estimated 900,000 square-metre area, which would make it the largest underground city in Turkey's southern Anatolia region.