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The fall of a dictator should not give rise to another

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Students, locals join hands to repair damaged road in Kurigram

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All contractual appointments to be scrapped

Interim govt to draw up list of those hurt during protests, bear treatment cost

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The interim government yesterday decided that all contractual appointments of the administration will be terminated in phases.

The decision was taken at a meeting of advisory councils of the interim government held at State Guest House Jamuna.

A list of all contractual appointments is being prepared, said two advisers of the interim government asking not to be named.

While some of the disputed and controversial contracts will be immediately terminated, the rest will be done in phases, they said.

In recent years, Awami League-aligned officials were appointed on a contractual basis. These create dissatisfaction among the administration.

After the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5 in the wake of a mass upsurge led by students, the contract of IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun was terminated on August 7.

On the same day, the former Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Md Tofazzel Hossain Miah's contract was cancelled.

At present, Md Mahub Hossain, cabinet secretary; Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem, chairman of the National Board of Revenue; Lokman Hossain Miah, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, are serving on contractual appointments, among others.

At the meeting, the advisory council noted the attacks on religious minorities in some places with grave concern.

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The capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue was gridlocked yesterday as offices and businesses across the country have begun regular operations after weeks of nationwide protests and consequent violence.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Metro rail service to resume on August 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metro rail operation is set to resume on August 17, nearly a month after the suspension amid violence centring the quota reform protest.

However, the operation of two stations, Kazipara and Mirpur-10, which were vandalised on July 19, will remain suspended until those are repaired.

The advisory council of the interim government yesterday made the decision.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) restarts services with the operations of freight trains from today and the full train services will resume from Thursday.

Besides, the operation of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway resumed formally yesterday with the authorities collecting tolls from vehicles.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Gunfire, clash at Islami Bank

Protests in banks controlled by S Alam Group, Salman F Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clash and gunfire erupted in front of the Islami Bank head office in Motijheel yesterday while six individuals were injured by gunfire, a rare incident in banking history.

The incident occurred when officials appointed by the S Alam Group, which forcefully took over the Shariah-based bank in 2017, tried to enter the bank's headquarters.

Since 2017, the Chittagong-based conglomerate appointed about 14,000 officers and employees, mostly without following the proper recruitment process, according to people with knowledge of the matter. Most come from Patiya, an upazila of Chattogram from where Alam hails.

Officials appointed before 2017 started demonstrating in front of the bank's head office on August 6, a day after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government. S Alam Group chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam is a close associate of Hasina.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Cops call off strike, set to join work today

Home adviser says their uniform to be changed soon; 599 police stations resume operations partially

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police members have called off their strike and are to report to their stations today.

They made the decision after a meeting with Home Affairs Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain and top police and Rab officials yesterday.

After the meeting, the home adviser told The Daily Star that many of the demands made by the policemen were logical, and he promised to consider them. Some demands can be met now while some will take time.

"Police uniform and logo will be changed at the quickest possible time. Their hearts are heavy with grief. They [police] do not want to go out in this uniform," he said.

"If the police are not there, the citizens are not protected. So, don't harm the police. If you have problems, tell the senior officers," Sakhawat said, adding that students told him that they have no enmity with the police.

The adviser said those at the political level and issued commands were more to blame for the way police were used during the protests. "I have asked them [pointing to the IGP sitting beside him] to take necessary measures.

"I personally think there should be a police commission. Police will function under the commission, not under any political party. Political parties misuse the police."

Home Adviser M Sakhawat

any political party. Political parties misuse the police," Sakhawat said.

He said those who ordered excessive force were at the political level and no wrongdoers would be spared. There will be an investigation and the wrongdoers

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Political parties must abide by relevant act

Says home affairs adviser, threatens to close down media outlet if it turns to sycophancy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Affairs Adviser Brigadier General (retired) M Sakhawat Hussain yesterday said political parties must operate in accordance with "the political party act".

"If you [political parties] want to do politics in the country, you have to abide by the political party act whether you like it or not. As long as I'm around, I'll make it happen," he told reporters before taking charge at the home ministry in the afternoon.

"You will become a dictator -- that is not going to happen."

About the "political party act", he said, "I have prepared a draft [of the act]. There will be discussions [on it]. [But] if you are a political party, you have to register. You will form a political party and indulge in extortion -- that will not happen."

With an oblique reference to the Awami League, the home adviser said, "Look at the state of a political party today. Such a big and traditional party, whose name is associated with the independence of Bangladesh, its



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Every attack on minorities will be probed

Says Foreign Adviser Touhid

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The interim government will give a 11 - o u t efforts to investigate all the



attacks against the minorities following the fall of Awami League government, and bring to book all the criminals irrespective of their political affiliation.

"We will in no way accept people being attacked over religious or political identity. The [interim] government will ensure full transparency and diligence in this regard," said Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said in his first media briefing after taking the oath on August 8.

At a meeting with all

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Chief justice, 2 more advisers sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new chief justice and two advisers to the interim government were sworn in at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed was sworn in as the 25th chief justice at a ceremony at the Darbar Hall of the president's official residence around 12:45pm.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath to the chief justice at the event conducted by Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, other advisers to the interim government, and distinguished personalities attended the event.

Justice Refaat, who was the most senior judge of the High Court Division, was first appointed as a judge of the Appellate Division and then appointed as chief justice, Law Secretary Golam Sarwar told The Daily Star.

The previous chief justice, Obaidul Hassan, resigned on Saturday amid demonstrations on Supreme Court premises.

Later, five more judges of the Appellate Division resigned.

Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar and Supradeep Chakma also took oath yesterday as advisers.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oaths at the same venue.

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PHOTO: PID

Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed being sworn in as the 25th Chief Justice of Bangladesh by President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday.

ATTACKS ON MINORITIES BBC, dismislab debunk fake news

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While it is undeniable that the aftermath of the ouster of the Awami League government was marked by violence against the Hindus, fake news is also being spread with abandon in social media in India.

This was found by BBC Verify, the fact-checking unit of the British broadcaster.

BBC Verify found that a photo of the arson attack on the house of cricketer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is being shared as that of cricketer Liton Das's house. Mortaza was an Awami League lawmaker.

This piece of fake news was being spread from India by ultra-right wing influencers, found BBC Verify.

A report published by BBC said that a social media intelligence or "social listening" platform, also mined X, formerly Twitter, for trending hashtags pertaining to violence on minorities in Bangladesh and found that the most viral posts were generated from India.

A video of Chattogram's Nobogroho Temple in Laldighi Par allegedly being set on fire was making the rounds on social media.

BBC Verify inspected the footage and found that the temple was not the target, but rather an Awami League office situated right behind the temple was attacked.

A Bangladeshi fact-checking organisation called dismislab also found the truth to this.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Two suspected robbers beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Two people, including a teenage boy, were beaten to death by a mob while they reportedly attempted to rob a battery-run autorickshaw in Dinaipur Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The incident took place at Nawshan Dighi (Ramsagar) village under the upazila's Auliapur union shortly after Saturday midnight.

The deceased were identified as Shuvo Meraz, 20, son of Sabbir Hossain of the town's Neemnagar Balubari area and Md Tareq, 17, son of late Md Jewel block-4 of the Newtown area.

Farid Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, quoting locals, said, "Shuvo and Tareq stopped an autorickshaw at Ramsagar around midnight on Saturday and tried to rob the vehicle at knifepoint. At one point, they stabbed the driver and tried to get away with the vehicle."

Later, locals caught and beat them, leaving both injured critically, the OC said.

They were brought to Dinaipur M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared them dead on arrival around 3:20am, said Md Mortuza Rahman, a physician at the hospital.



Several thousand Hindus gather at Khulna city's Shibbari intersection yesterday afternoon to protest the attacks on their homes, businesses, and temples since the fall of the Awami League government. Bangladesh Sachetan Sanatani Student Society organised the event.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Video clip of Yunus' motorcade stuck in traffic goes viral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The motorcade of Prof Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser to the interim government, was spotted in the capital stuck in traffic.

Usually, the motorcade of the head of the government gets the full VIP treatment — a clear path to his destination without any traffic on the street, not even pedestrians on pavements or people on footbridges.

A video taken by a commuter of the stuck motorcade has gone viral on social media.

It was not immediately clear when the video was taken.

The footage shows the motorcade stuck in front of the Jibon Bima Tower in Motijheel.

The car's licence plate read, "Prime Minister".

His car was flanked by Special Security Force personnel who got out of their vehicles and encircled the car.

As people attempted to get a closer look, an SSF officer with a megaphone told people not to approach the vehicle that had tinted windows.

Previously, the prime minister and the president would opt for seamless journeys by completely blocking and emptying the road they would be travelling on without prior notice.

For the duration of the VIP movement, pedestrians would not be allowed on the pavements or on the footbridges. Even street hawkers had to close their shops and leave.

All contractual

FROM PAGE 1

Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus will immediately sit with the representative bodies and other concerned groups to find ways to resolve such heinous attacks," said another adviser.

The advisory council of the interim government also decided that a list of all injured protesters would be prepared at the earliest and their treatment would be funded by the government.

The health ministry will instruct all hospitals accordingly. The government will also support the families of the deceased protesters.

More than 400 people, including students and police personnel, were killed in the violence centring the protests on quota reforms for government jobs. Several thousands were also injured.

The ministry of foreign affairs will immediately start consultation for the release of the 57 Bangladeshis arrested and sentenced by the UAE authority for protesting in support of the Bangladeshi students and people.

"If needed, the chief adviser himself will talk to the concerned government," said an adviser.

The interim government has also accepted the resignation of Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder and Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam.

The governor of Bangladesh Bank will be appointed soon, while a three-member search committee has been formed to recommend appointments for the vacant posts of deputy governors.

The advisory council decided that the supply of all essentials shall be ensured.

Operations of metro rail, suspended since July 18, will resume from Saturday. The train, however, will not stop at the damaged stations of Kazipara and Mirpur until repair works are complete.

BBC, dismislab

FROM PAGE 1

Dismislab said that an X account called Daily Latest Updates first shared that video along with the hashtags "#AllEyesOnBangladeshiHindus" and "#SaveBangladeshiHindus". The account is run from India, said dismislab.

They found that the video was even run on an Indian channel called RepublicTV.

Similarly, Factwatch, the fact-checking wing of University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, found that an old video of a shop on fire was being shared as evidence of arson attack on Hindu establishments.

"The post says that the video shows that Hindu shops are being set on fire in Lakshimpur's Maju Chowdhury's Haat. Whereas this is an old video from July 11, 2024, of when the market caught on fire," said Factwatch.

Dismislab debunked the same video and found that it was primarily posted by an Indian X account, along with the hashtag #AllEyesOnBangladeshiHindus.

The video was also carried by Sudarshan News, an Indian news channel.

Dismislab also found that a fake photo is being shared as evidence of a Hindu woman getting raped in Bangladesh. The photo stems from an incident of sexual assault and trafficking in Bangalore in India from 2021.

However, the photo is primarily being carried by an X account from India.

Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad and Puja Udjapan Parishad recorded 205 incidents of violence against minorities in 52 districts.

Cops call off strike, set to join work today

FROM PAGE 1

will face punishment.

Over 400 people, including 42 policemen, were killed and many injured during the student mass movement that eventually forced Sheikh Hasina to resign and flee.

Sakhawat said they had decided to take action against those involved in the Rangpur shooting and killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed.

A probe has begun and the officer-in-charge who filed the FIR and "framed a 12-year-old boy" has been suspended.

Asked about many policemen accusing their commander of ordering the shooting of protesters, the adviser said, "I cannot respond immediately. But those in command also have their higher command. What did the man sitting here [at the ministry] do? I will blame the man sitting here, before blaming others."

Replying to a query, the adviser said they would discuss the probe in

this regard at the cabinet. "I am not a dictator. I will make a decision now."

Coordinators for the protesting policemen Inspector Zahidul Islam and Constable Shoaib Ahmed announced the withdrawal of the police strike after meeting Sakhawat.

They were assured that most of their demands would be met.

Formation of a police commission and a change in uniform were two of the 11 demands made by the policemen.

Earlier in the day, Sakhawat said all police personnel have to report to their stations by this Thursday or else they would be considered "unwilling to be in the force any more".

Talking to reporters at his secretariat office, Sakhawat said, "Police's morale is very low now."

As of yesterday, 599 out of 639 police stations in the country resumed partial operations with assistance from the armed forces and Ansar members.

Most of the stations were not fully

staffed. General diaries were being filed, and some office tasks were being carried out.

Police were yet to start patrolling as of last night.

Sakhawat yesterday also visited the Central Police Hospital in Dhaka and enquired about the health of the injured police personnel.

Talking to reporters there, Sakhawat said, "Police have been given lethal weapons. I was surprised to see 7.62 [7.62mm rifles] in the police's hand... Police should not be given these weapons."

"I am saying clearly, whether politicians like it or not, it will be difficult to do politics now. You can't use police like killers and henchmen any more."

"Our society cannot function without police. I am receiving reports of robberies every day," he said, adding that what the army is now doing is not their job. But they are still doing it. They were even attacked in Gopalganj.

Metro rail service to resume

FROM PAGE 1

Operations of the metro rail and passengers' trains have been suspended since July 18.

METRO

MAN Siddique, the managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, yesterday said they have begun preparing to resume operations.

They were expecting to start trial runs within a day or two, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about the two vandalised stations, he said the committee formed to assess the damage and all other technical issues was yet to submit a report.

"We are hoping the committee will submit the report soon, and we will move forward on the basis of the report."

Attackers vandalised the two stations on July 19 and authorities at that time said it would take at least one year to make the stations operational.

Over three lakh commuters used to travel on the metro rail daily.

RAIL SERVICES

BR will resume railway operations from today, after more than three weeks.

The operations will restart with freight trains while mail, express, local, and commuter trains will start services from Tuesday and intercity trains from Thursday.

Tickets for intercity trains will be available online from 5:00pm today.

However, operation of Parabat Express and Jamalpur Express trains will remain suspended, Nahid Hasan Khan, director (public relations) of BR, said in a press release yesterday.

Operations of passenger trains were suspended on July 18 amid the violence. Some freight trains continued to run for one or two days after July 18.

In another development, the authorities of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway formally resumed its

operation from 3:00pm yesterday, said an official.

However, entry ramps at Banani and Mohakhali and an exit ramp near the FDC gate (Karwan Bazar) will be closed.

"We have resumed formal operation of expressway by starting toll collection from vehicles at the airport ramp," Captain (ret'd) Hasib Hasan Khan, manager (operations and maintenance) of First Dhaka Elevated Expressway Company Ltd, which operates the expressway, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Attackers torched the Banani toll booth on July 18 and the Mohakhali toll booth the following day amid unrest centring the quota reform protest. Toll collection had been suspended since then.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5, people started using the expressway without paying tolls as the toll collection mechanism was absent.

Hasib said they closed the two entry ramps at Banani and Mohakhali as the toll booths were torched. They also closed the exit ramp near the FDC gate as one of the expressway pillars there was set on fire. "We are checking the pillar..."

The first elevated expressway was opened to traffic partially from the airport area to Farmgate in September last year, and the FDC exit was opened early this year, giving much relief to the city commuters.

On average, over 50,000 vehicles used the expressway daily.

BUS SERVICES

Long-route bus services resumed last week.

However, the number of passengers is very low, Mosharraf Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, told this correspondent yesterday.

He said they were operating 50 to 60 percent of buses in their fleet.

Gunfire, clash at Islami Bank

FROM PAGE 1

The protesters are demanding the cancellation of appointments made after 2017 without following the proper recruitment process and the reinstatement of persons illegally terminated after 2017, said Anisur Rahman, an Islami Bank official.

The protesters decided not to allow any executive who joined after 2017 to enter the bank.

Most of the officials who joined the bank after 2017 did not come to office after the resignation of Hasina, including the bank chairman, managing director, additional managing director and deputy managing directors, according to people familiar with the matter.

financial health started deteriorating after S Alam Group took control.

There is an allegation that the conglomerate took out huge amounts of money from the bank in the name of loans.

The Islami Bank recently faced a huge liquidity crisis and its current account with the central bank faced a deficit for a long time.

On the other hand, the central bank is providing liquidity facility to the lender in a special arrangement.

Mohammed Monirul Molla, managing director of the bank, could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, a group of employees of Social Islami Bank, where S Alam Group owns significant stakes, are

Since then, the group along with its associates and with the direct support of the Awami League government has embezzled thousands of crores from the bank's stakeholders and laundered the money abroad, the demonstrators said.

The employees urged the current interim government to dissolve the existing board and establish a new one composed of the bank's original owners and founding entrepreneurs, to "free the institution from the grip of money launderers".

Also yesterday, sacked IFIC officials gathered in front of the head office around 10:00am demanding their jobs back.

They also demanded exemplary



A group of Islami Bank employees, some holding cricket stumps, demonstrating in front of the bank's headquarters in Motijheel demanding the cancellation of appointments made after 2017 without following the proper recruitment process.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

But yesterday, a group of officials appointed after 2017 gathered around the head office at around 10:30am and tried to enter the office. Protesters blocked their way, which later transformed into clashes.

Six of the protesters were wounded by gunshots, they said.

Last week, Muhammad Qaisar Ali, additional managing director of Islami Bank, was forced to resign.

Once one of the most robust banks in Bangladesh, Islami Bank's

demanding the dissolution of the existing board.

The officials, all of whom were appointed before S Alam Group took over Social Islami in 2017, placed their demands from a human chain in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka.

At the programme, they alleged that S Alam Group seized control of the bank in 2017 by taking hostage the then board of directors at gunpoint.

punishment for the bank's chairman Salman F Rahman, a Sheikh Hasina loyalist, and former managing director Shah Alam Sarwar.

Meanwhile, the central bank yesterday instructed banks to refrain from undisciplined work at banks.

Such actions could cause depositors to lose their confidence, and these activities are punishable offences under the Bank Companies Act, the notice said.

Every attack on minorities

FROM PAGE 1

foreign ministry officials yesterday, he shared the priorities of the interim authorities.

He said the interim government condones all such attacks, whether for religious or political identity.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus is likely to meet the leaders of the minority communities today, Touhid said.

He also requested the media to factcheck before publishing news reports.

About the India-Bangladesh relations, he said there is no doubt the two governments had a very good relationship in the past, adding that the interim government will try to ensure the relationship is not only between the governments, but also between the two peoples.

"The people are very important in this relationship. They should feel that the relationship with India is very good... We want to take it forward and seek India's support in this regard."

About the deals Sheikh Hasina signed during her recent visit to India before her ousting, Touhid said, he is yet to look at them.

The foreign adviser also said the international community has expressed its readiness to work with the interim government, which is also committed to work with all for the best interest of Bangladesh.

About the UN's willingness to deploy a fact-finding mission to probe recent killings and violence, he said they can certainly be involved in

this regard.

Today, Touhid will hold a meeting with foreign diplomats based in Dhaka and give a briefing about the country's latest situation while also seek their support. The issue of restarting visa issuance will also come up.

He also said the government will maintain the policy of anti-discrimination in all spheres of life, and especially emphasise on the welfare of the more than 10 million Bangladeshis abroad. "We want to ensure they get better services."

Chief Adviser Yunus himself will speak to the high authorities of the UAE to release over 50 Bangladeshis, who were jailed for holding rallies in solidarity with the students in Bangladesh.

Regarding former Hasina's son Sajeb Wazed Joy's claim that Hasina has not resigned, he said he has confirmation that her resignation letter was sent to the president.

Chief justice

FROM PAGE 1

The interim government was sworn in on Thursday, three days after the resignation and departure of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina amid a mass upsurge.

Suprudeep, Bidhan and Farooq e-Azam could not be sworn in that day as they were outside the capital.

According to sources, Farooq has yet to be sworn in as he is still in the United States, and the date of his arrival is not confirmed.



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Ansars want their jobs regularised

Along with VDP, they protest in front of SC for over 5 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Ansar and the Village Defence Party blocked the road in front of the Supreme Court's main gate for over five hours in the capital yesterday, demanding immediate regularisation of their jobs.

Several hundred Ansar members, both in uniform and non-uniform, took position in front of the Supreme Court's main gate around 11:30am.

They began chanting slogans such as, "Ar Noy Jukti, Eibar Chai Mukti [No more logic, this time we want emancipation]," and "Ek Dofa, Ek Dabi, Chakri Jatiyakaron [One point, one demand, we want jobs regularisation]."

Speaking to The Daily Star at the spot, some Ansar members expressed their

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Demanding immediate regularisation of their jobs, members of Ansar and the Village Defence Party block the road in front of the Supreme Court's main gate for over five hours yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Restore order, probe all the killings

Urges Shujan, places 18 proposals for state reform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) has called for bringing the law and order situation under control quickly and initiating an investigation by the United Nations to bring the culprits of the July-August killings to justice.

Simultaneously, Shujan, a civil society platform advocating for good governance, has also called for long-term initiatives from the interim government to reform the state system.

They made these calls at a press conference titled, "What the Interim Government Should Do to Reform the State", organised by Shujan at the Dhaka Reporters Unity

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Wave of resignations hits universities

UGC chairman, at least 13 VCs and top officials quit over a week

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A wave of resignations has swept through the nation's higher education sector, as an unprecedented number of vice chancellors from the public universities are stepping down from their positions.

At least 13 VCs have so far resigned from their official positions.

"We are fearing that the number will increase in the coming days," said a University Grants Commission top official.

There are 42 public universities in the country that are teaching students. Besides there are five public universities that are yet to enrol students, five medical universities and two affiliating universities and one open university.

A UGC member said in most cases, these VCs are stepping down citing personal reasons, but they are actually doing it in the face of pressure from students and teachers.

Most of these resignations took place following the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the wake of a mass upsurge led by

An UGC member said in most cases, these VCs are stepping down citing personal reasons, but they are actually doing it in the face of pressure from students and teachers. Most of these resignations took place following the ouster of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the wake of a mass upsurge led by the students.

the students.

All the VCs' were appointed by the previous Awami League government.

UGC CHAIR STEPS DOWN

University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah resigned from his post

yesterday citing illness. In his resignation letter to the education ministry's Secondary and Higher Secondary Division, Shahidullah said he has been in Australia for medical treatment since August 20 last year.

The letter said based on advice from Australian doctors and due to his health condition, he is unable to continue his duties.

He joined as the UGC chairman for a second term on May 28 last year. Earlier in May 2019, Shahidullah was appointed the UGC chair.

Shahidullah is a brother of Awami League leader Kazi Zafarullah.

UGC member Prof Muhammed Alamgir said he will remain in charge as UGC chairman until the next chairman takes charge.

Yesterday, the UGC appointed Mohammad Fakhrul Islam, director of the research support and publication division, as its new secretary, replacing Ferdous Zaman.

Comilla University VC Prof AFM Abdul Moyeen, Jagannath University VC Prof Sadeka Halim, National University VC Prof Mashiur Rahman and Bangamata Sheikh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

INTERNET SHUTDOWN

Find out in 24hrs who's responsible

Says ICT adviser

STAR REPORT

A seven-member committee has been formed to investigate the internet shutdown during the recent protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government.

This comes after Nahid Islam, adviser for Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology, sought an explanation as to why the internet was shut down during the protest and who was responsible, with a report within 24 hours.

AKM Amirul Islam, an additional secretary at the Posts and Telecommunications Division, was appointed as the head of the committee.

"We are now working on it," he told The Daily Star.

Earlier, while speaking to journalists at the secretariat, Nahid said action will be taken against the officials involved in the internet shutdown.

Nahid said access to the internet is a right, and disrupting or shutting down internet services is a violation of human rights.

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HC division also needs reform

Says Attorney General Asaduzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court needs to be reformed like the Appellate Division, said Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman yesterday.

Speaking to reporters at his Supreme Court office yesterday, he expressed optimism that the newly appointed Chief Justice, Syed Refaat Ahmed, would soon enhance the judiciary's role in upholding the rights of the people of Bangladesh.

"The government has taken initiatives to reform the Supreme Court. With a new chief justice in place, I am confident that this institution will quickly evolve to better serve the people," said Asaduzzaman, who was appointed on August 8, even before the interim government took oath.

His remarks come in the wake of significant changes in the judiciary, including the resignation of former chief justice Obaidul Hassan and five other Appellate Division judges on Saturday, amid widespread student protests.

On the same day, Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed,

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JATIYA PRESS CLUB Memberships of Farida, Shyamal 'revoked'

The two term move unconstitutional

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of Jatiya Press Club's managing committee yesterday revoked memberships of its president Farida Yasmin, general secretary Shyamal Dutta and managing committee member Shahhaj Siddiqui Soma.

At the same time, senior vice president Hasan Hafiz and joint secretary Md Ayub Bhuiyan were selected as the new president and general secretary respectively.

The decision was taken unanimously during a meeting of the club's managing committee, following demand from the anti-discrimination student movement coordinators, said a notice signed by Hasan and Ayub.

It said the decision was taken as per clause 13 (b) and clause 34. The new president and general secretary were chosen as per clause 14 b (1), (3) and (4) of the club's constitution. Shahhaj said they received the notice.

The Daily Star could not contact Hasan Hafiz and Ayub Bhuiyan for their comments.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



They share a common grief: their sons, husbands, or brothers have been missing for years, allegedly abducted by state agencies during the 15-year rule of the Awami League. Families of such enforced disappearance victims formed a human chain in front of the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. They placed three demands before the interim government and sought a reply within 24 hours. The demands are unconditional and immediate release of their loved ones, trial of those state force members involved in enforced disappearances, and a commission for the victims and their family members under UN supervision. The event was organised by Maayer Daak.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

RMG workers seek reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Workers' Solidarity presented an 11-point demand to the newly formed interim government, calling for improvements for garment workers and other key labourers vital to the country's development.

At a meeting titled "Garment Workers' Expectations from the Interim Government" held at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital, the organisation demanded justice for the murder of garment worker Shubho Sheel and six others, urging state honours for all workers killed during clashes centring the quota reform movement, appropriate compensation for their families, and proper treatment and rehabilitation for the injured.

The group also called for the immediate withdrawal of all repressive cases filed during the 2023 wage increase movement and the release of 57 expatriate workers imprisoned in the UAE in connection with the protests.

Taslima Akhter, the organisation's president, emphasised the need for a reform to the minimum wage board and a reconsideration of the demand for a minimum wage of Tk 25,000.

She highlighted the need for unions, proper daycare centres for workers' children, extension of paid maternity leave to six months, and the creation of anti-sexual harassment complaint cells

Dainik Dinkal gets permission to resume publication

Tarique Rahman its publisher STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dainik Dinkal, a broadsheet Bangla language newspaper, received permission to resume its publication yesterday. District Magistrate Anisur Rahman gave the temporary permission to the pro-BNP newspaper in an official order. The newspaper's publisher is Tarique Rahman, the acting chairman of the BNP. The Dainik Dinkal, halted its publication in February 2023, a day after Bangladesh Press Council rejected an appeal against its cancellation order. Rashedul Haq, a news editor of the newspaper, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The previous government halted the publication of the newspaper because its publisher was out of the country and had been convicted."

"After that, the press council upheld the suspension order. However, after reapplying, we have now received permission to resume our publication," he added.

Memberships

FROM PAGE 3 Farida and Shyamal in a statement last night said some executive members were trying to take control of the club. "They are trying to grab the club like river chads. They have vandalised the rooms of the president and secretary... Vice president and joint secretary have announced themselves as acting president and secretary unconstitutionally. They have expelled three members and are trying to expel more than 50 others," it read. It said the club members elect its executive body with a neutral, systematic and participatory election. "We believe that the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, who dream a democratic Bangladesh, will not support it," the statement added.

Table with prayer timings for August 12: Fazr (4:25), Zohr (12:45), Asr (4:45), Maghrib (6:41), Esha (8:00), JAMAAT (5:00, 1:15, 5:00, 6:44, 8:30). SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SADPASHA-MUROICHHARA ROAD

Potholes all along

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

A seven-kilometre stretch of road from Sadpasha in Prithimpasha union to Muroichhara in Karmadha union in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila has long been in a dilapidated state.

The bitumen surface and bricks have been eroded from the road at numerous places due to a lack of renovation for prolonged period. There are hundreds of potholes on the road, some being 30-50 feet wide.

Residents, including students, from around 20 villages under the two unions, including 12 Khasi punjees, use the road daily for commute. The road connects several educational institutions including Longla Modern Degree College, and Ali Amjad High School and College, among others, in the area.

"The road was last renovated in 2017-18 fiscal year. Since then, it went through a lot of wear and tear, including damage from rain and flood, and is now in a terrible shape. It has become very risky and accident-prone for vehicular movement. The locals repeatedly called upon the authorities concerned to repair the road, but to no avail," said Muhibul Islam Azad, chairman of Karmadha union parishad.



Jasim Uddin, a driver of CNG-run auto-rickshaw, said, "The road surface is severely damaged. The entire seven-kilometre stretch has hundreds of potholes of different shapes. Some are so wide and deep that whenever it rains, water accumulates in those potholes to resemble a ditch. Driving vehicles on the road has become very risky and turbulent, and accidents can happen any time."

Locals Yunus Mia and Noor Mia echoed him. Jimiur Rahman Chowdhury, chairman of Prithimpasha union parishad, said he had raised the issue of repairing the road several times in the monthly meeting of the Kulaura Upazila Parishad.

"The upazila engineer gave assurance that initiative will be taken soon to repair the road," he added. Contacted, Tarek Bin Islam, upazila engineer of LGED in Kulaura, said, "A proposal has been sent to the higher authorities for repair work of 20 km road network in the upazila, including the Sadpasha-Muroichhara road. If approved, the repair work of the road will begin after the tender process."

Restore order, probe all the killings

FROM PAGE 3 yesterday afternoon.

Speaking at the event, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar demanded the punishment for those who have committed injustices, criminal offences, and corruption in the financial sector in the past.

"We believe there are long-term steps that need to be taken for reform. We need to build a new political arrangement in consultation with political parties and civil society," he said, calling for the formation of a citizen's charter by political parties.

Zakir Hossain, assistant secretary of Shujan, said the recent mass movement for reform was not a revolution. "In the past, certain individuals created a reign of power in various areas,

and MPs created their domains. This situation must end. We want to build institutions. We believe that if there is a change in the structure, and if the political culture changes, everyone will benefit and the country will move forward," he said. Shujan executive member Prof Shahnaz Huda said past corruption has left a lingering impact on people's minds, making it difficult to break the cycle.

"Sculptures have been vandalised in isolated places, which is highly condemnable," said Shahnaz, who is also a teacher at Dhaka University. Another executive member, Prof Robaet Ferdous, said the revolution the country witnessed in 2024 has also become a

social movement. "The interim government did not ensure representation of all sections of society. Structural change must be transformed into cultural change. A surveillance framework must be established to prevent the emergence of another autocratic structure."

Prof Robaet, also a DU teacher, added that the tenure of the interim government needs to be specified. Shujan's central coordinator, Dilip Kumar Sarkar, presented a keynote paper at the event, highlighting five urgent tasks that the interim government needs to address immediately.

These tasks include: bringing the law-and-order situation under control quickly, creating a list of the victims of violence in July-August, providing assistance and compensation to their families, protecting religious institutions from attackers, and initiating a UN-led investigation to identify and punish those responsible.

Additionally, Shujan presented 18 proposals, including constitutional changes, institutional reforms, electoral system changes, and amendments to election laws for state reform. Other proposals include establishing a non-partisan caretaker government, reconstituting the Election Commission, enhancing the effectiveness of parliament, and ensuring the independence of the judiciary.

hours on August 2. Mobile internet and Facebook were blocked again on August 4.

On August 5, both mobile and broadband internet were blocked again for a few hours.

The internet was fully restored after 2:00pm, when Hasina resigned from the post of prime minister and fled the country. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, then state minister for ICT and Telecom, maintained that the internet was shut down due to a fire in the data centres in Mohakhali. However, The Daily Star found no evidence of fire upon visiting these data centres. Officials of these data centres also confirmed that there were no instances of arson.

Mobile internet was restored on July 28, while social media platforms were unblocked on July 31. However, mobile internet users were unable to access their Facebook and Messenger accounts for approximately seven

HC division also needs

FROM PAGE 3

the senior-most judge of the High Court Division, was appointed as the 25th chief justice of Bangladesh.

Addressing concerns about alleged syndicates within the HC, Asaduzzaman said, "I am unaware of any syndicates in the High Court. If any such activities are reported, swift action will be taken."

Regarding the recent resignations of several law officers, including additional attorney generals, deputy

attorney generals, and assistant attorney generals, Asaduzzaman assured that the issue would be resolved promptly. Commenting on the irregularities within the judiciary, he reaffirmed his commitment to combating corruption. "The people are standing against irregularities and lawlessness. I am hopeful that the interim government will advance the cause of establishing the rights of the people," he said.

Find out in 24hrs

FROM PAGE 3

The government shut down mobile internet services on July 17 amid widespread violence over the quota reform protests.

A day later, on July 18, broadband internet was blocked, severely affecting public life and a wide range of economic activities, including utility bill payments, online banking, digital communications, digital commerce, and the clearance of goods from ports.

Mobile internet was restored on July 28, while social media platforms were unblocked on July 31. However, mobile internet users were unable to access their Facebook and Messenger accounts for approximately seven

Wave of resignations

FROM PAGE 3

Fojilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University VC Prof Kamrul Alam Khan also resigned from their positions yesterday citing personal reasons.

On Saturday, Prof ASM Maksud Kamal and Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, VCs of Dhaka University and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, resigned. Previously, VCs of Jahangirnagar University, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur, Rajshahi University, and Islamic University, Kushtia, resigned from their positions.

TOP OFFICIALS ALSO RESIGNING Additionally, several provosts from at least six dormitories at DU resigned on Saturday. On Thursday, the entire proctorial team of DU submitted their resignation letters.

At RU, 29 officials, including the proctor, 11 assistant proctors, the student adviser, and the Public Relations Office administrator also submitted their resignation

letters.

At Islamic University, pro-VC Prof Mahbubur Rahman and Treasurer Prof Alamgir Hossain resigned from their positions.

Treasurer of Noakhali Science and Technology University Prof Newaz Mohammed Bahadur also handed in his resignation.

Meanwhile, all members of the proctorial body, along with the provosts and assistant provosts of dormitories at SUST resigned as well. Besides, JnU acting registrar, its proctor, 13 assistant proctors, lone house provost and two house tutors have also resigned.

BANS ON POLITICS Authorities of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology on Wednesday and Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University yesterday imposed a ban on student politics at their campuses.

On Saturday, authorities of Dhaka Medical College, Sir Salimullah Medical College and Chittagong Medical College also banned student politics. Sir Salimullah Medical College and Chittagong Medical College have also banned political activities of teachers, and staff on their campuses and in dormitories.

Vaccination

FROM PAGE 5

"An initiative has been taken to continue our operations by bringing some equipment from the Police Hospital through the district's civil surgeon. Hopefully within 4-5 days it will be possible to resume some activities on a limited basis," she added.

Sources at mosquito control department said some miscreants looted 12 fogger machines used for spreading insecticides. Of those, four were later recovered and with those the mosquito control activities will resume soon.

Prof Zahid Hossain, convener of Sachetun Nagarik Committee, urged BCC authorities to resume the activities of the two departments promptly.

HC functions

FROM PAGE 5

The judicial functions of both the Appellate and HC Divisions have been running irregularly and with breaks after the nationwide curfew was imposed on July 20.

The functions were completely closed since August 5.

Contacted, SC Public Relations Officer Md Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star that it was not announced when the Appellate Division's judicial functions will resume.

Ansars want their jobs regularised

FROM PAGE 3

long-standing grievances.

"We have been deprived year after year," said Babul Sarkar, an Ansar member.

"Our jobs have never been regularised. We have no benefits other than our regular salary, and our pay is based on our work. If we miss a day's work, we don't get paid," he added.

"If we want to take a holiday, we have to bribe the officers. If we want to withdraw our rations, we have to pay a bribe. When we rejoin the office after a six-month forced leave, we have to pay a bribe upon returning to the officers," he claimed.

Additionally, he alleged that each Ansar member has to pay Tk 100 to the thana officers. "In every step, we are forced to pay bribes," he alleged.

Abul Kalam, an Ansar commander, said, "We are sent for six months' forced leave from our jobs every three years. Then, we have to remain idle for about six months to a year. There is no way to earn during this time."

He added there is no job stability in Ansar and VDP, which is why they have taken to the streets to press for their one-point demand of job regularisation.

Maj Gen AKM Aminul Haque, director general of Ansar and VDP, went to the scene to hear their demands. Aminul urged them to remain disciplined and not to create chaos on the road.

"I am here to listen to your demands. I assure you that I will present your demands to the ministry. I request you to form a committee which will meet with the officials concerned with written demands." He warned them not to create unrest by taking advantage of the new government and urged them to assist the government.

The Ansar chief also requested them to clear the road, but the protesters refused to clear it immediately.

They finally cleared the road over half an hour later, at 5:00pm, and a 10-member team went to the DG's office to submit their demands.

Ansar members also staged a demonstration in front of the Chattogram Press Club yesterday over the same demand.

Meanwhile, the Ansar chief after a meeting with 10 coordinators of the protests took three days to fulfill their demand, said Md Nasir Miah, chief coordinator of the protests.

RMG workers

FROM PAGE 3

in factories. The organisation called for the formation of a national commission to ensure safe working conditions, national policy dialogue on housing, healthcare, education, and fair retirement benefits, and the enactment of laws for compensation adhering to international standards.

Speakers underscored that previous regimes suppressed workers' protests, especially during the 2023 wage movement, and stressed the importance of safeguarding workers' rights to free speech and organisation.

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PHULBARI UPAZILA

Students, locals
join hands to repair
damaged road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A group of students have joined local people to repair a damaged road in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram for the time being until extensive renovation can be made to it.

Visiting the road along Helipad area in Phulbari Sadar union, this correspondent saw sand filled geo-bags were being dumped on the damaged portions of the road to prevent further damage. The work has been continuing since Saturday noon.

The road sustained significant damage due to heavy rains two weeks ago, said locals.

Several thousand people from some 10-12 villages in the vicinity use the road to communicate to the upazila headquarters. Since the road got damaged, no initiative was taken to repair it from the authorities concerned despite repeated requests from the locals.

"Around 18-20 students are working on repairing the damaged parts of the road alongside local people. The effort will continue till all the damaged roads in the area are repaired to make those passable for pedestrians and vehicles," said Shahiqul Islam, a student engaged in the effort.

Mobarak Ali, 65, a local farmer, said, "The students have been working tirelessly to repair the collapsed road even though there is no government allocation for the repairs. We are also working with them."

"If the students remain dedicated to the welfare of the people, the country will progress rapidly," he added.



A group of students, along with locals, repairing a damaged road in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram yesterday. The road had sustained significant damage due to heavy rains two weeks back. The photo was taken near the Helipad area in Phulbari Sadar union.

PHOTO: STAR

100 AL men
sued over
killing of
studentsOUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

More than 100 activists of Awami League and its affiliated organisations have been sued on charges of killing two students during their anti-government movement in Pabna on August 4.

Md Dulal Uddin, father of one of the deceased, filed the case yesterday, said Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Rawshan Alam.

However, the OC declined to disclose the names of the accused for the sake of investigation.

"We are investigating the incident and trying to nab the culprits," he said.

The students brought out a procession in Pabna on August 4. Suddenly, the AL men opened fire on them at Traffic Intersection, leaving two students – Md Jahidul Islam, 19, and Md Mahabub Hasan Niloy, 14 – dead and many others injured, said sources.

HC functions
resumes on a
limited scale today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Judicial functions of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court will resume on a limited scale today.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed yesterday constituted eight benches of the High Court with its 13 judges for hearing and disposing of cases.

Among the eight benches, five are division (two judges) benches and three are single (one judge) bench.

There are a total of 82 judges for the HC Division and only two judges, including the chief justice, for the Appellate Division of the SC currently. Of the total 82, three HC judges have been kept away from judicial functions since August 2019 as an inquiry is pending against them.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

ACC sues 4 over
Tk 5.37cr graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against four individuals on charges of attempting to misappropriate Tk 5.37 crore by creating forged documents and bills from the public exchequer.

The case was lodged yesterday by Assistant Director Enamul Hoque of Chattogram ACC Integrated Office-1, accusing Munsir Farukh Hossain Mintu, Munsir Sazzad Hossain, Mukit Mandol, and Mohammed Furkan.

Among the accused, Furkan is the accountant at General Hospital in Andarkillah, while the others are employees of MS Ahmed Enterprise.

The case statement said in 2013, the hospital authorities under the Chattogram Civil Surgeon Office invited tenders for purchasing MRS, ICU beds, ICU ventilators, and other equipment worth Tk 5,32,25,000.

MS Ahmed Enterprise won the tender and supplied the equipment, but the items were found to be substandard, prompting the authorities to request their return.

Despite this, from 2019 to 2022, the accused allegedly attempted to withdraw the tender bills by forging documents and the then civil surgeon's signature.

Only 31mm rain
inundates port city

The GEC intersection in the port city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

All it needed was some 31.4mm of rain to submerge many areas of the port city yesterday, once again exposing the dilapidated state of the city's drainage system.

The downpour, recorded between 6:00am and 9:00am, led to vehicle shortages in low-lying areas, forcing many residents to wade through flooded streets to reach their destinations.

Key areas like GEC, Katalganj, and Chawkbazar went under ankle to knee deep water following the rain.

Nizam Uddin, a resident of Katalganj, was forced to walk a kilometre to reach Agrabad due to a lack of available vehicles. "I had to avoid my usual route through Chawkbazar to escape the worst of the waterlogging," he said.

The waterlogging also caused traffic jams at several busy intersections. However, the situation improved by noon.

Residents expressed their frustration over the persistent waterlogging issue, which has plagued the city every monsoon for years.

"We face this problem every year, despite the government spending crores on multiple

projects," said Zahid Bin Hossain, a resident of Katalganj. Abdus Sabur from Halihsahar echoed the sentiment, questioning how much longer they would have to endure the situation.

Despite ongoing efforts by various government agencies, including the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), Water Development Board (WDB), and Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), residents have yet to see substantial relief. The four major projects, worth a combined Tk 14,388.74 crore, have been in progress for several years but have not delivered the expected results.

The CDA's "mega project" to address waterlogging, initiated in 2018 at an initial cost of Tk 5,617 crore, has seen its budget balloon to Tk 8,626.62 crore, with the deadline extended to June 2026.

Despite claims from Lt Col Ferdous Ahmed, the project director, that the project has improved water flow in the city's canals, residents remain unconvinced.

Work on the other three projects – two by CDA and WDB initiated in 2017 and 2019, and one by CCC since 2014 – continues, but the completion remains uncertain.

ALLEGATIONS OF
VIOLENCEBNP leader
expelled in
PatuakhaliOUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Humayun Kabir alias Naiya Kabir, the president of the BNP's Bauful town unit in Patuakhali, has been dismissed from his post due to his involvement in violent activities.

The dismissal, effective from August 10, follows accusations of vandalism, looting, and issuing threats in various parts of the upazila.

This decision was confirmed in a letter signed by district BNP convener Abdur Rashid Chunnua Mia and member secretary Snehanshu Sarkar Kuttu.

According to BNP sources, after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, specific allegations against Humayun Kabir came to light.

He was also issued a show-cause notice on August 8.

The district BNP found his responses unsatisfactory, which led to his dismissal.

Efforts to reach Humayun Kabir for comment were unsuccessful as he did not respond to phone calls.

However, his son, Imamuzzaman Anik, who is the BNP student affairs secretary in the municipality, said, "My father is a victim of political conspiracy."

"There is no evidence to support the charges against him," he told The Daily Star.

ARSON ON BCC BUILDING

Vaccination, anti-
mosquito drives
halted for six days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The vaccination of newborns under Expanded Program on Immunisation (EPI), as well as anti-mosquito drives of Barishal City Corporation have remained halted for the past six days after the BCC building came under arson attack on August 5.

According to sources, the annex building of BCC was completely burnt down by miscreants on August 5. All the machinery, equipment and important files, computers and medicines of the EPI and mosquito control departments located in the building were also damaged.

Since then, all the activities of these two departments have been completely halted.

BCC officials, however, said these facilities will be available soon.



Annex Bhaban on Sadar Road in Barishal was set on fire on August 5.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Sources at EPI department said at least 10,000 children were scheduled to be vaccinated, according to roster. The ice boxes, freezer, and about one lakh vials of medicines for 154 centres across the city were all burnt to ashes in the arson attack.

As a result, vaccination and vitamin programmes for around 5 lakh children are currently suspended.

Rebeka Sultana, a resident of the city's Katpatti area, said, "As the vaccination centre at Ashwini Kumar Town Hall is not operational, I am unable to get my child vaccinated. An official told us to get the vaccination done from hospital."

Dr Pallabi Sultana, acting chief health officer of BCC, said residents of BCC area can get vaccination for their children from Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital and Barishal General Hospital.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



DAWN OF FREEDOM. Two students painting graffiti on the wall of the office of Brahmanbaria deputy commissioner yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



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GD-14

14

BNP leader Salahuddin

FROM PAGE 16
government, Salahuddin paid respects to BNP founder Ziaur Rahman at his grave in the city's Chandrima Udyan.

Speaking to reporters there, Salahuddin called for meaningful reforms to the country's democratic structures to build a "truly democratic state".

"We must make this victory meaningful," he said, referring to the outcome of the recent uprising.

The BNP leader urged everyone to be patient and restore discipline so that the people can enjoy the benefits of freedom and democracy.

"If we can establish the rule of law, create a state governed by the rule of law, and allow all constitutional and

democratic institutions to function independently and impartially, its benefit will reach every home of the 18 crore people."

He vowed to protect the country from external enemies and internal conspirators.

"This country did not achieve independence under the leadership of a single person. The country was liberated through the participation of all the people."

"Independence cannot belong to any single party, nor can it belong to any individual. This liberation and victory belong to all of us, and we must protect this country," he added.

After being missing for 62 days, former state minister Salahuddin was

found in Shillong, the capital of the northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya on May 11, 2015.

He was arrested for entering India without valid documents and charged under the Foreigners Act. Later, Shillong police pressed charges against him in the case.

The BNP alleged that Salahuddin was abducted from his home in Uttara, Dhaka, on March 10, 2015, by people posing as police detectives.

On October 26, 2018, a Shillong court acquitted him of the charges related to illegal entry.

A higher court upheld the verdict on February 28, 2023, and directed the Indian government to arrange for his return to Bangladesh.

Form special tribunals

FROM PAGE 16
of 10 percent of parliamentary seats for members of minority communities and the enactment of a minority protection law.

In Sylhet, several thousand people from all walks of life protested against vandalism, arson, attacks, and looting of Hindu houses and temples in different parts of the country.

As part of the nationwide programme, a rally was held in front of the Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar premises.

"The main goal of the recent uprising was to establish a society without discrimination. But in the present context, it is evident that minorities are being oppressed all over the country. We strongly protest it," said Himadri Shekhar Roy, a professor at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

In Narayanganj, several hundred people from the Hindu community brought out a protest procession for the second consecutive day.

The protesters started the procession around 4:00pm from the

Shahid Minar area followed by a sit-in at the Chashara intersection.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi, a prominent cultural organisation, also held a rally in the Shahid Minar area.

In Barishal, a protest rally was held in front of the Ashwinikumar Hall area which was joined by around a thousand members of the Hindu community around 3:00pm.

Later, they brought out a procession from the area which marched through different major streets of the city.

In Lalmonirhat, defying the heavy rain, several thousand people from the Hindu community formed a human chain at the Mission Mor in the town at 10:30am.

In Patuakhali, two separate programmes were held under the banners of "Sanatan Nagorik and Students" and "Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council".

Sanatan Nagorik and Students formed a human chain in front of Patuakhali Central Shaheed Minar

around noon. They later submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner demanding an end to communal violence.

Meanwhile, the district unit of Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council brought out a procession from Patuakhali cremation grounds around 3:00pm.

In Pabna, over a thousand people from the Hindu community brought out a protest procession from the Joy Kalibari Temple area and paraded through the major streets in town.

In Joypurhat, around 4,000 people staged demonstrations and formed a human chain protesting the attacks on Hindu properties across the country.

They gathered at the Zero-point area of the town around 11:00am, where they formed a human chain.

In Cumilla, around a thousand people held a rally in the Town hall field area of the city as part of the nationwide protest programme to end violence against minority communities.

USA pip China in medals table

FROM PAGE 16
At the velodrome, Dutch star Harrie Lavreysen surged to the men's keirin for his third gold of the Games, ending British dominance of the event they had won at every Olympics since 2008.

New Zealand's Ellesse Andrews blasted to the women's sprint title to add to her keirin gold, while American cyclist Jennifer Valente won the

women's omnium.

In men's water polo, Serbia won their third straight Olympic gold with a 13-11 victory over Croatia at La Defense Arena and pulled their coach into the pool in the celebrations.

As the sport ends, attention turns to the closing ceremony and the next Olympics in Los Angeles in four years. "On August 11, the Olympic Games

will be over, and the Olympic flame will be extinguished," said Thomas Jolly, who masterminded the unique opening ceremony along the River Seine.

"That moment will remind us just how precious are these Olympic Games," added Jolly, whose opening ceremony sparked outrage in some quarters with a scene that appeared to parody the Last Supper.

Political parties must abide by relevant act

FROM PAGE 1
members have to be on the run now."

Warning all the political parties, Sakhawat said, "Now, if you think you'll take control of the markets and resort to extortion, you can go ahead and do it for a while. But I have requested the army chief to break your legs ... I don't care, go to hell."

"I am neither the public nor a politician, I come from a military background. I'll do what I say for as long as I stay."

Sakhawat, a former commissioner of the Election Commission, urged all to refrain from extortion.

"Whoever resorts to extortion -- no matter what party you are associated with -- I would ask the people to give them a beating. Those who extort, catch them on the spot. We'll do what needs to be done. We'll restore law and order. The country cannot run like this. We cannot lease out the country."

Saying that 30 lakh people made the supreme sacrifice for the country's independence, he added, "Aren't you ashamed of getting involved in extortion and doing politics, sitting on their blood? Don't do it. I warn you [political parties]. Take care of your men. Or else, you have seen how it doesn't take long to fall."

He said over a thousand people, including police officers, had to shed

their blood. "You have to pay the price."

About the previous government's ban on a particular party, Sakhawat said, "It's a political matter. It will be discussed."

Regarding the mobs storming the Gono Bhaban and Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, he said, "Any destruction is bad. These are state assets, I condemn those [the destructions]. A mass uprising as such in any country in the world does not happen with limits or discipline. Similar incidents occurred during the Arab Spring ..."

About the attacks on minorities, he said it is the responsibility of every citizen to deter such attacks.

He called upon all to come forward to save the minority communities.

"It is the sacred duty of the majority ... We're going through turbulent times. I request the majority of the society to protect the minorities and the oppressed."

Earlier, speaking to reporters after visiting the injured police members at the Central Police Hospital in Dhaka, the home adviser threatened to shut down media outlets if they turn to sycophancy.

"I saw what happened in the country through BBC. But our media said nothing had happened. If the media had played an objective role, police would not face this situation."

Prof Yunus acquitted in graft case

FROM PAGE 16
oath after the resignation and departure of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the face of a mass upsurge led by students on August 5.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka yesterday acquitted Prof Yunus, Nurjahan, and 12 others accused after the ACC applied with the court, seeking withdrawal of prosecution of the case under Section 494 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Amir Hossain, an ACC official working in the court, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, the anti-graft watchdog approved the withdrawal of the prosecution of the case after scrutinising an application submitted by the case investigating officer and other case records, Amir added.

A day before his oath on August

8, Prof Yunus, also chairman of Grameen Telecom, and its directors -- Ashraful Hassan, M Shahjahan and Nurjahan Begum -- also got acquitted in a labour law violation case in which they were sentenced to six months imprisonment and fined Tk 30,000 each on January 1.

On June 12, Prof Yunus, Nurjahan, and 12 others were indicted in the ACC case filed over the misappropriation of about Tk 25.22 crore of Grameen Telecom Workers' profit participation fund. The court was also scheduled to record the statements of the witnesses.

On February 1, Investigating Officer Gulshan Anwar Prodan, a deputy director of the ACC, placed the charge sheet before the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka.

On April 2, the Metropolitan

Shame on you. Shame on the media owners.

"A country drowns when the media does not speak the truth and publish false information."

About the culture of politics in the country, he said "The politics of Bangladesh is the politics of sycophants. We didn't make politicians, we made sycophants. There is so much flattery that even when people are dying, they will say nothing happened. Such sycophants can't do politics."

On the extent of corruption, he said, "A peon owned Tk 400 crore! I can't even think beyond Tk 1 crore! ... Such a plunderer! They [the plunderers] have amassed no less than Tk 4,000-5,000 crore and have 10-12 homes abroad."

He also said he will be submitting his own wealth statement soon.

"A state can't be run according to one's whims, no matter who or what they are. Bangabandhu has of course contributed, but thousands of people fought and 30 lakh people were killed to liberate this country. The state is not anyone's personal property..."

Criticising dynasty politics, he said, "Power has been consolidated [through dynasty politics]. They want to stay in power even after killing thousands of people. It's very sad."

Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka accepted the charges pressed against the 14 accused.

On that day, the court also transferred the case to the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka for the next course of action.

The 12 other accused are Grameen Telecom Managing Director Nazmul Islam, Directors Ashraful Hassan, Naznin Sultana, Parvin Mahmud, M Shahjahan and SM Huzzatul Islam Latife, Sramik Karmachari Union President Kamruzzaman, General Secretary Firoz Mahmud Hasan and representative Mainul Islam, Jatiya Workers Federation Office Secretary Kamrul Hasan, and lawyers Zafrul Hasan Sharif and Yusuf Ali.

On May 30 last year, Gulshan Anwar filed the case with the ACC's integrated district office in Dhaka.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	
Department of Immigration and Passports	
Data and Personalization Centre	
E-7, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207	
www.dip.gov.bd	
Invitation for International Tenders	
Sl. No.	Description
1	Ministry/Division
2	Agency
3	Purchaser name
4	Purchaser code
5	Purchaser district
6	Invitation for
7	Invitation Ref No.
8	Date
KEY INFORMATION	
9	Procurement method
FUNDING INFORMATION	
10	Budget and source of funds
11	Development partners
PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
12	Project / programme code
13	Project / programme name
14	Tender Package No.
15	Tender package name
16	Tender publication date
17	Tender last selling date
18	Tender closing date and time
19	Tender opening date and time
20	Name & address of the office(s)
21	Pre-tender meeting (optional)
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER	
22	Eligibility of tenderer
23	Brief description of services
24	Price of tender document (Tk)
25	Package No.
26	Designation of official inviting tender
27	Address of official inviting tender
28	Contact details of official inviting tender
29	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the Tender proceedings

Services to be delivered:

The objectives of the Tender is to select a reliable and International experienced postal/courier service provider that would collect printed passports from personalization Centre at Uttara and Agargaon. Dhaka and distribute those to 81 Bangladesh Missions (BM) in abroad. Name of the Bangladesh Missions are: 1) Ankara, Turkey, 2) Beijing, China, 3) Birmingham, UK, 4) Colombo, Sri Lanka 5) Kathmandu, Nepal, 6) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 7) London, UK, 8) Manchester, UK 9) Muscat, Oman, 10) New Delhi, India, 11) Rabat, Morocco 12) Berlin, Germany, 13) Brussels, Belgium 14) Doha, Qatar, 15) Calcutta, India, 16) Male, Maldives, 17) Moscow, Russia, 18) Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 19) The Hague, Netherlands 20) Tripoli, Libya, 21) Washington, USA, 22) Tokyo, Japan, 23) Paris, France, 24) Los Angeles, USA 25) Bangkok, Thailand, 26) Brunei 27) Cairo, Egypt 28) Canberra, Australia, 29) Hanoi, Vietnam 30) Jakarta, Indonesia, 31) Thimphu, Bhutan, 32) Seoul, South Korea, 33) Singapore, 34) Stockholm, Sweden, 35) Pretoria, South Africa, 36) Agartala, India 37) Amman, Jordan 38) Islamabad, Pakistan 39) Jeddah, KSA, 40) Karachi, Pakistan, 41) Manama, Bahrain 42) Rome, Italy 43) Riyadh, KSA 44) Tehran, Iran 45) Abu Dhabi, UAE 46) Hong Kong 47) Kuwait 48) Madrid, Spain 49) Manila, Philippine 50) Nairobi, Kenya, 51) New York, USA 52) Ottawa, Canada, 53) Yangon, Myanmar, 54) Istanbul, Turkey, 55) Milan, Italy, 56) Baghdad, Iraq, 57) Athens, Greece 58) Kabul, Afghanistan 59) Freetown, Sierra Leone 60) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 61) Bucharest, Romania 62) Vienna, Austria 63) Warsaw, Poland 64) Copenhagen, Denmark, 65) Mumbai, India 66) Abuja, Nigeria 67) Kunming, China 68) Port Luis, Mauritius 69) Lisbon, Portugal 70) Beirut, Lebanon 71) Mexico City, Mexico, 72) Algiers, Algeria, 73) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 74) Chennai, India, 75) Guwahati, India, 76) Sydney, Australia, 77) Florida, USA 78) Khartoum, Sudan, 79) Geneva, Switzerland, 80) Dubai, UAE, 81) Toronto, Canada.

The services include:

- To collect passports from Personalization Center (Uttara and Agargaon) of Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) and deliver them to respective Bangladesh Missions in abroad in each working day from 2 PM to 5 PM.
- To deliver different sizes of packages to Personalization Center (Uttara and Agargaon) for packing ready printed passports as per DIP requirement.
- Service provider will attach proper label on the front side of the packages.
- Service provider will provide proper secured vehicle for carrying passports.
- Service provider will provide proper security for the purpose of carrying and delivery of passports to the Bangladesh Missions.
- Service provider will bear all expenses for carrying and clearing from respective customs department of respective countries.
- Service provider will establish two ways online tracking system one is web-based, open for all and other is through customized software for any individual passport on delivery.
- Service provider will engage sufficient and efficient manpower for service delivery.
- In case of miss delivery, service provider will collect and deliver to the proper Mission at their own cost without charging any extra service charge.
- Service provider will give sufficient access in favors of concerned DIP/Mission official to the system deployed for this purpose.
- Service provider will maintain the collection and delivery system throughout the contract period and hand over the system after the end of the contract.
- Service provider will response real time basis to DIP/Mission's authorized personnel on any queries related to shipment and delivery of passports.
- Online tracking system shall be established by service Shipment and delivery status at any passport.
- 24x7 call center service should be in place in Bangladesh and in abroad at which DIP/Mission official can call free of cost to have information.
- Service provider shall deliver passport to the concerned Bangladesh Mission within 48-96 hrs. Of pick-up from DIP. If fails service provider have to compensate 10% of the service charge.
- All relevant expenses including TAX vat and customs duty for the purpose of service delivery shall be borne by the service provider.
- Service charge will be deducted at certain percentage mentioned in the particular condition of the contract for the delay of delivering services.
- The service provider shall be solely responsible for missing or damage of passports and confirm that packets shall remain closed and not to be opened till delivery to its destination.
- The service provider shall provide an insurance appropriate to cover liabilities and damages to passport, while in their possession.
- Client will visit at least 3 bond houses of the service provider in destination countries.
- The service provider will submit report monthly on performance under the contract using the criteria stipulated above.

FDC has now become a grazing field: Uzzal

“The previous government has inflicted wounds on every part of the state, and BFDC (Bangladesh Film Development Corporation) is no exception,” remarked veteran actor Uzzal. He has spoken to The Daily Star about various issues, including the censor board, the grant committee, and his expectations from the new government.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Some people say that the FDC of the past no longer exists.

Just as the former ruling party had destroyed the state, they also ruined all the institutions related to the arts and literature of the country by politicising them. BFDC has now become a grazing field. The floors of BFDC have been demolished, even though it was possible to develop the place, while keeping the floors intact. We have countless memories associated with each of these floors. The film industry has been heavily factionalised.

What do you think about the grants received all over these years?

Many undeserving artistes have received grants over the years. There has been politicisation here as well. Why have films been made by various ministries? This has led to a waste of public money.

Despite your illustrious career in the film industry for over five decades, you haven't been awarded a lifetime achievement honour or the Ekushey Padak.

If I wanted, I could have received major awards during the BNP government, but I did not. It is not in my nature. However, the previous government did not do so. There has been lobbying in grants, the censor board, national film awards, Ekushey Padak, and Independence awards. Yet, it was martyred President Ziaur Rahman who introduced the National Film Awards.

Could you elaborate on the establishment of the National Film Awards?

Probably in 1978, during the presidency of Ziaur Rahman, he was scheduled to visit the BFDC. Everyone was a bit surprised since there was no preparation or decoration for his visit. Shamsul Huda Chowdhury, who was then a minister, asked me to arrange a later event. However, we found out that the President was



Shah Rukh Khan honoured with Lifetime Award at Locarno



Last Saturday (August 10), Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan captivated Piazza Grande in Locarno, Switzerland, as he received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, known as the Pardo alla Carriera or Career Leopard, at the 77th Locarno Film Festival.

On stage, while accepting the award, Khan expressed gratitude for his career and fans, saying, “For 35 years, I've had the chance to be a villain, a champ, a superhero, a zero, a detective, and a resilient lover. I usually don't attend events like this. I'm not great at interacting with people, just at acting a little – not too much.”

As per The Hollywood Reporter, Locarno organisers said the Lifetime Achievement Award honours his “outstanding career in Indian cinema, including over 100 films across diverse genres.”

Ongoing unrest casts doubt on Farin's upcoming film

In early August, it was revealed that Bangladeshi actress Tasnia Farin is set to co-star with Kolkata's megastar Dev. The actress shared her excitement about this new project titled *Pratiksha*, to be directed by Atanu Roy Chowdhury.

The future of the Dev-Farin starrer project has become uncertain following the recent change in the Bangladeshi government, brought about by a successful student movement.

Due to the current political climate, visas to India have been temporarily suspended too. This



has raised concerns about Farin's ability to travel to India for the film's shooting.

Speaking about her upcoming film with Dev, Farin recently shared, “I've finalised a project titled *Pratiksha* where I'll be acting opposite Dev. The shoot is set to begin in November. However, the current situation of the country has led the Indian government to indefinitely suspend visas.”

The actress further added, “I have no idea when the visa process will resume. This has made the entire film project uncertain. It feels like luck isn't on my side right now.”

There is significant inequality in Bangladesh. It is this inequality that led students to protest and achieve success. Just as the youth desire an egalitarian Bangladesh, I also want the same. The students have shown the way forward. Discrimination was the reason Bangladesh was created from Pakistan, at the cost of much bloodshed.

Besides being a cultural personality, you have direct involvement with politics. What kind of Bangladesh do you want at this moment?

There is significant inequality in Bangladesh. It is this inequality that led students to protest and achieve success. Just as the youth desire an egalitarian Bangladesh, I also want the same. The students have shown the way forward. Discrimination was the reason Bangladesh was created from Pakistan, at the cost of much bloodshed. There was a disparity in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres. I do not want that inequality anymore. I want to see a beautiful Bangladesh free from inequality.

The students aimed to end quotas and give merit its rightful place. Many young people, including Abu Sayed, lost their lives for this cause. In the new Bangladesh, I hope that the talented can fully develop their abilities.

What are your expectations from the new government?

We are fortunate to have a Nobel laureate as the head of the interim government. He has

global acceptance. The students brought about a significant revolution by ending autocracy. After that, the new government, referred to as the interim government, has taken charge. They are expected to bring about reforms and then hand over power to a government elected by the people through a fair election. I am optimistic about the new government, and hope they will deliver a free and fair election.

Widespread violence has been occurring throughout the country. What do you have to say about this?

For the last 15 years, there has been politicisation and repression. This has become known internationally, which has led to a strong stance in international politics. The police have not been on duty for some time, and some individuals are taking advantage of the situation, engaging in vandalism, arson, and looting. We do not support such actions. Our party has clearly warned against it. I want peace to prevail regardless of religion or ethnicity. We are all Bangladeshis.

already on his way.

He arrived and on that very day announced the National Film Awards. He also made announcements for the support of distressed artistes and grants. However, the previous government did not remember this. At no point during the National Film Awards was his name mentioned.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Ilias Kanchan commends students for traffic management

For nearly a week, the streets of Dhaka have been operating without the proper traffic police force. In their absence, students have taken it upon themselves to manage traffic regulations across the capital, earning widespread praise from the city's residents. Among those joining the students in this effort is the renowned actor and chairman of the Nirapad Sarak Chai (NISCHA), Ilias Kanchan.

“I've observed that none of the students are sitting idle, even for a moment,” said Kanchan. “They have taken to the streets with a commitment to ensuring the safety of the public. Everyone should love and respect the work they are doing.”

Kanchan also noted that while traffic chaos is often observed even with traffic police present, the streets have remained orderly under the volunteering students' supervision.



“I've also noticed that drivers are strictly following the students' instructions. They do so out of respect,” Kanchan remarked.

Meanwhile, the actor himself took to the roads to control traffic as NISCHA has announced that in this time of national crisis, with traffic police absent, they are supporting the students' efforts. The organisation has also launched simultaneous traffic management initiatives through its branches across the country.



PHOTO: RATUL CHOWDHURY

‘AWAAZ UDA-KOTHA KO’ Chobir Hat reopens after a decade

TASRIEFA TRISHA

Chobir Hat, a longstanding hub for students and progressives, reopened after a decade-long closure, symbolising much more than a physical space—it embodies a cultural spirit. The inaugural concert of the “newly independent Bangladesh”, titled *Awaaz Uda-Kotha Ko*, has recently taken place at Chobir Hat in Suhrawardy Udyan.

The concert was organised by students and cultural activists on Saturday (August 10).

Closed during the former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime, Chobir Hat regained life following widespread student protests demanding quota reform, leading to the resignation of Sheikh Hasina on August 5. This cultural revival culminated in the *Awaaz Uda-Kotha Ko* concert.

Commencing at 4pm, the open platform welcomed musicians, poets, filmmakers, photographers, artists, and liberal-minded individuals, enriching the event's atmosphere. The programme opened with Tulkalam band's rendition of *Mone Pore Jay*, honouring martyrs of the anti discrimination student movement. Faria, from Tulkalam and an event organiser, highlighted their commitment to rebuilding Bangladesh. She emphasised the need for societal justice and well being.

The newly formed band, HO3DiVE, performed Janis Joplin's *Me and Bobby McG*, celebrating student sacrifices and freedom from the dictatorship's grip.

Jahir Rayhan's band presented *Pakhi Ure*, echoing student-government tensions, advocating for free speech and rights in the digital age. Rapper Hannan captivated the crowd with his rebellious anthem

Awaaz Utha, reflecting on his recent imprisonment for speaking truth to power. Shezan followed with *Kotha Ko*, another stirring anthem.

Musician and photographer Avishekh Bhattacharjee, invoking *Inquilab Zindabad*, praised Generation Z for their resilience during the protests, shifting his perceptions and affirming their vital role in shaping Bangladesh's future.

Popular singer Ahmed Hasan Sunny, along with R Bashar Lisan, Akil Ashraf, and Muiz Mahfuz, also graced the stage, each adding their unique voice to the concert's powerful message.

Syeda Nilima Dola, one of the event organisers of *Awaaz Uda-Kotha Ko*, emphasised to The Daily Star the importance of preserving Chobir Hat as a cultural beacon, advocating for an inclusive Bangladesh free of discrimination.

Can we overcome the deficit in public health expenditure?

On June 11, 2024, the CSO Forum for Strengthening a Sustainable SRHR Ecosystem in Bangladesh, in collaboration with The Daily Star, organised a roundtable titled "Public Health Expenditure: A Critical Challenge in Ensuring Healthcare in Bangladesh." Here, we present a summary of the discussion.



Dr. Sayed Rubayet,
Convener, CSO Forum
and Country Director,
Ipas Bangladesh

According to Article 15 of our Constitution, the fundamental responsibilities of the state under the provisions of necessities include food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care. Article 18.1 states, "The state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties."

The revised budget for FY 2023-24 for health was Tk 29,783 crore, which is substantially lower than the proposed budget. This year's budget is Tk 41,407 crore which means that the per capita healthcare allocation is \$20.6 through this budget.

Looking at the last 25 years, in 2000 the government per capita expenditure on health was \$8, in 2010 it was \$13.7, in 2021 it was \$25.9, and this year it has been proposed to be \$20.6. We have always seen that the allocation decreases in the revised budget for the health sector. The data for 2021 is used in this entire presentation as most countries' data is available up to 2021. The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Health Expenditure database was updated on April 15 this year. According to this information, in Bangladesh, the government spent \$26 per capita on health expenditures in 2021. In Myanmar, this expenditure was \$48, positioning it just after Bangladesh. Following Myanmar are Pakistan, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.

The WHO included 192 member countries in the list, identifying the 20 countries with the lowest per-capita government health expenditures. Bangladesh is ranked 19th lowest in per-capita government health expenditure. The Asian country closest to Bangladesh is Afghanistan. The rest of the countries are either in Africa or in war zones.

In the year 2000, the percentage of GDP used for health expenditure was 0.51 percent, then a few fluctuations occurred. It has been observed that since 2017, it has been repeatedly declining, and in 2021 it became 0.4 percent in a linear trend.

I have compared three timeframes with our neighboring countries from 2000, 2010, and 2021 so we can understand the trend. For Bangladesh, the government health expenditure is going down. In Bhutan, it is also going down but is in a better condition in comparison to GDP. In India, it has gradually improved, being 2.5 times higher than Bangladesh. Even though Sri Lanka is battling its own challenges, the country's government health expenditure is 4 times higher than Bangladesh's. No country is near Bangladesh at 0.4 percent. Except for Pakistan and Bangladesh, no country has less than one percent in health expenditure. Currently, Bangladesh holds the lowest position in the region.

If we look at the data from 212 countries regarding the proportion of GDP allocated by the government for health expenditure, Benin has the lowest health expenditure,

followed by Bangladesh in the second position, then Haiti, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Togo. This image is not a promising one.

Among developed countries, Cuba tops the list in terms of government healthcare spending as a proportion of its GDP. The top ten also include countries such as France, Austria, USA, Sweden, Germany, and the UK. These countries are spending 9.3 to 12.6 percent of their GDP on their health expenditure.

In our political priorities and discussions, the health sector is the most neglected one, even in the media as well. The out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure is increasing day by day. In 2000, the expense was Tk 6 out of Tk 10, which has increased to Tk 7.4, meaning now the out-of-pocket expenditure stands at 74 percent.

The list of countries with the highest out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure is topped by Armenia at 79 percent. Bangladesh holds the sixth position due to substantial medical costs, an insufficient government health budget, and a near absence of financial protection for health-related events. Among neighboring countries, Myanmar and Afghanistan are in similar positions.

However, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka have progressed substantially. Bhutan and the Maldives are far ahead of us, spending only 19 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

In Bangladesh, catastrophic health expenditure (CHE) is increasing day by day. The government has committed to reducing out-of-pocket expenditure to 32 percent by 2030, in line with universal health coverage and SDG commitments.

Catastrophic health expenditure in Bangladesh has serious consequences. 24.6 percent of the Bangladeshi population spends 10 percent of their total expenditure on health, and this proportion increases to 61.7 percent if at least one household member utilizes an inpatient service.

In Bangladesh, 52 percent of people with at least one household member utilizing a public facility spend more than 10 percent of their total expenditure on health. This proportion increases to 65 percent among those using private facilities. Additionally, 11 percent of people spend 40 percent of their income on health, excluding food costs. If a household has a chronically ill member, this figure rises to 18 percent of the population. For families using inpatient services, 29 percent of the population spends 40 percent of their income on health. For those using public facilities, the proportion is 25 percent, and for private facilities, it rises to 32.6 percent of the population. This is driving people into poverty.

According to the 2016 National Survey on Household Income and Expenditure, 4.5 percent of the population fell below the poverty line due to health expenditures. This affected 8.6 million people. Consequently, the government has to invest significantly more in poverty alleviation programmes to help these people rise above the poverty line.

Due to poor health investment, our health system is becoming unable to meet the needs of the people and provide quality health services, causing many to seek healthcare

services abroad. In 2019, 54 percent of medical tourists to India came from other countries, with one-fourth from Bangladesh for medical treatment. In contrast, the Maldives has made constant investments in health. Comparatively, 57.5 percent of Maldivians visiting India did so for medical purposes, which has reduced to 7.3 percent. We must ask ourselves: Can our citizens escape this insufficient investment?



Golam Mortaza, Editor,
The Daily Star Bangla

In a recent newspaper article, I read about a significant shortage of medical technologists. While we need around 84,000 technologists, we currently have only about 24,000, with over 31 percent of government positions in this field remaining vacant. For the past 15 years, there has been no recruitment. Recently, around 800 people were hired, but due to severe financial constraints, they have not received any salary for the past 1 to 2 years, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Health and healthcare budgets are absent from the election manifestos of our country's political parties. Additionally, the mass media and civil society have failed to take an adequate critical stand against our policymakers seeking medical treatment abroad. As a result, this practice has become accepted as normal, despite its implications for our healthcare system. The national budgetary allocation for our healthcare sector decreases annually. This decline is partly due to our policymakers not taking this issue seriously, as they themselves do not use the health facilities within our country. Instead of addressing the root causes, we often blame doctors for the shortcomings in our health sector. While we have excellent doctors, we lack proper medical management and infrastructure. It's crucial that we focus on improving these areas. We must continue to discuss these issues to influence our policymakers. The mass media should take a much more critical stance on such matters to drive necessary changes in our healthcare system.



Dr. Mohammad Mainul Islam, Professor,
Population Science,
University of Dhaka.

I would like to discuss the Perspective Plan (2021-2041), where the government aims to invest 2 percent of GDP in the health sector and 4 percent in the education sector by 2041. However, I believe investing now will bring us greater benefits sooner specifically before 2036-2037. Health and education are sectors that need major investment to turn the unskilled population into human capital benefiting the entire country.

Over time we see the money allocated for specific demographics gradually reducing proportionately. We have not even reached

1 percent growth and are currently at 0.7 percent. This is not being addressed according to the rising number of children, adolescents and older population.

Upon reviewing the budget, I found a lack of useful or in-depth data regarding these issues. If we look at public health, we see a demographic shift and an epidemiological transition where chronic diseases are overtaking and infectious diseases increasing personal expenditures. As time passes, the elderly population grows and many die from chronic illnesses. The degrading climate affects the quality of life and health of the population. Health indicators are deteriorating day by day with child mortality rising and maternal death rates not decreasing as expected. Data collection on these issues is also less effective than before.

The budget's ineffectiveness in the health sector stems from several issues: inadequate financial management, a complex procurement system and tendering process, delays in disbursing the last quarter of the budget, lack of leadership, absence of need based budgeting practices, insufficient training for health workers, lack of educated health staff, and disparate procurement processes for capital expenditure.

Systematic improvement in the budget allocation, procurement and actualisation of government projects is crucial. The investment ratio in health and education should increase sooner to achieve faster benefits. We need to enhance managerial efficiency, delegate financial power, and reduce the complexity of the procurement process. Health should be viewed as human capital.



Kishwar Imdad,
Country Director, Marie
Stopes Bangladesh

I worked at a renowned private hospital for some time, and there I witnessed the staggering extent of out-of-pocket expenditure and the

lengths to which people will go, regardless of their socioeconomic background. To lessen the suffering of these people and ensure equitable healthcare for everyone, there was supposed to be a pilot project focused on health insurance, which the health secretary also mentioned. However, it ultimately did not come to fruition. Countries like Canada have implemented healthcare programmes that deduct a certain portion from the paychecks of every job holder, which then funds healthcare for them and the masses. Taxpayers also contribute a portion of their taxes allocated specifically to the healthcare system. This model could be adapted in Bangladesh as well.

I firmly believe that a broader approach to tackling these challenges might not be as effective as focusing on specific facets of the problem one at a time and diligently addressing them.

I have worked at Marie Stopes, and I have firsthand experience with issues regarding reproductive rights and the benefits received by women. We have observed that the

under utilisation of funds can occur due to protracted and complex procurement and tendering processes. We collected relevant data, submitted comprehensive reports, and made recommendations on how to tackle these situations. However, the lengthy evaluation process hindered the effectiveness of these initiatives. There are many factors to consider, but these two should be our foremost priority in ensuring a brighter future for the population: transforming the populace into human capital, and providing quality healthcare for all.



Dr. Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, Scientist,
icddr/b

Major portion of the out of pocket expenditure is spent for drugs; this is extremely difficult for the poor people particularly for chronic

diseases like diabetes. There are instances where poor people ration medicine instead of taking regularly for chronic illness. While public hospitals handle deliveries and operations, private hospitals significantly outnumber them in service provision; 2.5-3 times more deliveries, 4 times antenatal care, and 12 times more operations take place in private hospitals in contrast to public facilities. The government faces challenges in regulating and supervising the vast number of private facilities. There is an urgent need to increase budget allocation not only for public healthcare facilities but also to collaborate effectively with private providers to ensure accessible and quality healthcare for all. Ministers, political leaders, and senior government officials should utilize the country's public health facilities for their own healthcare needs. This may help improve the quality of services at these facilities.



Ikhtiar Uddin Khandakar, Director,
Health and Nutrition,
CARE Bangladesh

A major underlying problem is a lack of trust in the healthcare system, particularly in public healthcare. New positions need to be created and existing vacancies need to be filled to ensure adequate human resources. Investment in technology is paramount.

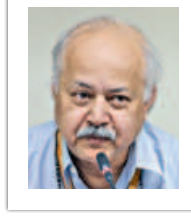
One such area is improving service quality. Another pressing shift is the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases, each imposing significant financial burdens on patients and their families due to required operations and medications. It is essential to identify specific areas where investment can yield optimal results. Primary healthcare must be a focal point, emphasizing family planning, nutrition, WASH, and other related services, which require systemic investment to meet local healthcare needs and reduce out-of-pocket expenses.

Developing accountability mechanisms through public representatives, in parallel with a centralized system, will enhance service quality.



Shshir Moral,
Journalist, Prothom Alo

A civil society movement in favour of reducing the prices of medicines is crucial to reducing out-of-pocket expenditure in the healthcare sector. We also need to strengthen Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL) because if the government starts producing essential drugs, the prices are bound to go down, ultimately reducing out-of-pocket expenditure. Simultaneously, corrupt officials who are still dealing with the healthcare sector need to be removed from their posts.



Dr Shams El Arifeen,
Senior Director and Senior Scientist, icddr,b

I don't think having our policymakers treated here at home will solve the issues in our healthcare system.

In our country, the "VIP culture" takes precedence over everything, so those in important positions will be prioritised over the common people. Ultimately, they will never get to realise the struggles these people have to face while trying to access healthcare.

We need to revolutionise and reform our healthcare system from within. Unfortunately, we don't see healthcare being discussed in political discourses. Bureaucracy will never get the system to change, that is a job for political leaders.



Samia Afrin,
Director, Naripokkho

We need to strengthen our monitoring mechanisms and ensure accountability to make our healthcare system work. Hospital

management committees usually have a wide array of representation of public representatives at all levels. However, they do not prioritize the issue of healthcare. The common people need to be involved to hold our institutions accountable.

In every five-year plan, there is usually a huge chapter on healthcare the timely and effective utilization of the allocations are in need to be ensured with close monitoring and the expenditure should be reviewed by civil society instead of increasing the budgetary allocation in the sector, so that the learnings can be incorporated into the next plans.



Kaosar Afsana,
Professor, James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

We need a proper review of public expenditures right after the budget proposals every year.

Our healthcare system is not only about the doctors. We need to work as a team, including other healthcare workers as well.

Our government should invest more in science policy interfacing so we can identify the gaps in our system, research how we can address the gap and compare our situation with other sectors. We can engage in dialogue with members of parliament to discuss health issues and involve them. The essential drug policy is an important agenda that needs more focus to reduce out-of-pocket expenses.



SM Shaikat,
Executive Director, SERAC Bangladesh

We must realise the difference between need and right. Since healthcare is not recognised as a fundamental right in

our Constitution, we cannot ask for legal help if we are denied medical treatment. The state can only try to make it more accessible for us, but it does not have a liability to ensure access to healthcare.

Our politicians also need some more literacy when it comes to health issues. They need to focus on policies that aim towards making people healthier rather than building infrastructures.



Sharif Mostafa Helal,
Executive Director, BWHC

I agree that health service would improve if political leaders, MOH officials and other VIPs started availing the services offered to

the common people from the public health facilities. Unfortunately, that is not how things work in our country. Recently I saw the news that a VIP went to a government eye hospital to seek treatment. While we were busy applauding the move, we conveniently forgot to address how common people seeking treatment at that facility might have been deprived of necessary medical assistance at the time the VIP was there. The reality is that the institutions active at the grassroots levels don't have adequate human resources to treat every patient.



Prof. Dr Sameena Chowdhury,
Past-President, OGSB

Hospitals must provide appropriate and necessary facilities and create an enabling environment to encourage women to seek services. The lack of quality in hospital services often discourages recipients from seeking care. Improving service quality requires not only equipment and medicines but also changes in the overall system and in the behavior and practices of service providers.

Service providers should treat recipients with due respect and dignity, promptly providing necessary treatment. Recipients must be informed of all essential information in a timely manner, enabling them to make informed decisions and express their preferences regarding their treatment. Government initiatives are necessary to ensure 'women-friendly' services and to encourage recipients to seek care from public health centers, thereby reducing out-of-pocket expenses. Additionally, the government should allocate the necessary budget to support these initiatives.



Dr Esrat Jahan,
Regional Inclusive Health Specialist - South Asia, Handicap International

In Bangladesh, chronic illness accounts for 51 percent of the current mortality rate, and 42

percent of persons with disabilities suffer from chronic illness. Consequently, out-of-pocket expenditure is higher for persons with disabilities than for other groups, with most living below the poverty line and facing unmet healthcare needs three times greater than the general population. Chronic illness is closely linked to life expectancy, with persons with disabilities having a life expectancy 10-20 years shorter than others. They often cannot access health centres, private health facilities are unaffordable, and government facilities are inaccessible. Service providers are not trained to meet their needs.

of-pocket costs won't fall to 30%.

The private sector plays a crucial role in the health sector. It's time they are brought under government regulations and laws. This will help to ensure quality control, define their roles, and guide their operations. It can also help partially control costs, and reducing out-of-pocket expenditures. The reluctance to collaborate between the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) must be overcome. Their budget allocation and utilization have been decreasing, as seen in past budget and health expenditure analyses. To address this issue, alongside the government's initiatives, the government should also play a significant role in the planning phase and in utilizing additional funding in the health sector for strengthening the health system through bilateral agreements within the development sector. The right skill mix must be considered. It's not just about increasing the number of nurses or doctors; it needs to be ensured that we have the pipeline to meet our targets. Investment in this area is crucial. Nationally, there are approximately 12 12.4 health related professionals per 10-12,000 people. This number decreases in rural areas and even more in hard-to-reach areas like Char and Haor. We need to move beyond just talking about "leaving no one behind" without a comprehensive plan for the well-being of these communities. This demand should not remain at the planning level; there are opportunities to raise this demand from the community itself. Lastly, with 41 districts now climate-vulnerable, compared to 19 coastal areas five years ago, there is a significant opportunity to address climate and health issues together, as health issues in these vulnerable areas will become more severe in the coming days.



Ayesha Akhter,
Legal Specialist, Gender Justice & Women Empowerment Cluster, Blast

BLAST in a public interest litigation, highlighted a statistical report indicating that 95 percent of doctors at upazila-level Health Complexes do not stay at their workstations and instead reside in cities, primarily Dhaka.

accurate and comprehensive data.

The private health sector has grown significantly, but the lack of data from this sector creates a persistent gap in health sector discussions. After Covid-19, we anticipated emergency funds and preparations to handle future health crises, but a critical review of our health budget is needed to see if it meets these expectations.



Dr Wahida Siraj,
Director-Health, Ipas Bangladesh

Our health system's workforce structure is not proportionate to the demand for health care. We need to evaluate whether our

system is prepared to meet this demand. While our infrastructure, from the central to the community level, is excellent compared to neighboring countries, our workforce and support team are not sufficient in number and simultaneously lacks the necessary skills to effectively utilize resources and carry out their functions.

Currently numerous programmes being implemented in the upazila and higher-level health facilities. However, the management workforce has remained the same at the Upazila and district level since the British era. It is difficult to manage and supervise with this limited workforce and more personnel should be allocated for effective management. Otherwise unrealistic expectations can hinder progress.

I pose this question to the media and civil society and other stakeholders who have grave responsibilities: Instead of solely scrutinising doctors for healthcare quality, how conducive are the infrastructures and health management systems in place for them to succeed in providing quality services at minimum cost?



Dr Makduma Nargis,
Vice-President, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad

Despite many intended healthcare reform projects, bureaucratic obstacles and inefficiencies persist,

hindering our system's efficacy. If these fundamental issues are not addressed, our healthcare delivery will never reach its full potential.

During my tenure as joint secretary at the health ministry, I have noticed the continued existence of bifurcated service delivery and family planning systems in Bangladesh. This approach contributes to duplication and inefficiencies. Given our constrained health sector budget, maximising resource utilisation is paramount. This requires cohesive collaboration among all healthcare professionals, from doctors to primary caregivers, within a unified framework.

Secondly, decentralisation is often discussed but centralised decision-making remains dominant. This causes delays and gaps in addressing local issues promptly, impacting service delivery. Another crucial issue is the absence of policymakers in our current discourse. While grassroots and mainstream sectors engage in vital conversations, the absence of policymakers undermines the effective implementation of proposed solutions.

I have encountered situations where evidence-based studies compiled were overlooked by policymakers who wield the authority to act. Conversely, those implementing policies lack decision-making authority despite having immense knowledge of the issue derived from experience. This disconnect perpetuates unresolved issues.

Budget shortages are a reality, yet over-budgeting on certain programmes is also prevalent. During my tenure at a community clinic, significant funds remained unspent despite project completion, highlighting inefficiencies in budget utilisation. Pragmatic budgeting could mitigate such discrepancies and optimise resource allocation effectively.

As hypertension and diabetes rates surge in our country, timely provision of medicines in community clinics is crucial. However, interruptions in training due to conflicting government priorities have hindered progress. Effective integration of supervision, monitoring, and training across all levels is essential for improving service delivery and health outcomes.

In conclusion, addressing workforce limitations and enhancing training programmes are critical steps. Realistically, achieving comprehensive healthcare reform requires overcoming systemic challenges and aligning resources efficiently. Given the current state of our workforce and the practical constraints of our training programmes, I must realistically say that achieving this goal is not feasible at the moment.



Dr Farhana Dewan,
Co-Convenor, CSO Forum and President, OGSB

Today, we discussed a critical issue: health expenditure. Drawing from my extensive experience

across various medical colleges during my government service, I reflect on who typically relies on public hospitals—the most vulnerable population who have no other

options. The dedicated service provided by doctors in these institutions often goes unnoticed on a broader scale.

To address medication costs, it is crucial not only to reduce prices but also to ensure their widespread availability. For instance, coordinating a comprehensive care plan for pregnant women over nine months could optimise medication usage, aligning specific needs with each trimester. Regarding community clinics, while impressive infrastructure exists at various levels, coverage gaps remain. Although doctors are required to serve in rural areas for two years post-MBBS, there should be provisions for promotion to encourage sustained commitment to these underserved regions.

To enhance service quality, we must focus on robust planning and training for healthcare providers. While many essential medications are now accessible, gaps persist in availability, for instance, leading to substitutes like Magsulf, a very simple medication. Addressing out-of-pocket expenses for patients, especially for essential surgeries, is crucial and it becomes so difficult for ordinary people to pay such hefty amounts.

It is important to note that efforts to minimise operation costs are essential, ensuring affordability without compromising quality. By optimising budget allocations and refining service delivery strategies, we can bridge these gaps in our healthcare system effectively.



Syed Abdul Hamid,
Professor, Department of Health Economics, University of Dhaka

For budget allocation, we are supposed to receive 12-15 percent, but instead, we only get 5.2 percent. This is

nearly 10 percent less than what is needed. Why is it so low? Why can we not spend the allocated amount effectively?

The finance ministry sets a budget ceiling for each ministry, typically a 5-10 percent increase from the previous year. The health minister cannot exceed this ceiling unless an emergency, such as Covid-19, arises. This macro-level budgeting process means that the actual needs of patients and doctors are not fully reflected or met. Despite the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) process, where projects are supposed to be planned and budgeted for over three years, this ideal scenario often does not match reality.

Another issue is that budget requests must be tied to specific items. In the health sector, we have a high demand for human resources, including doctors, nurses, and technologists, down to the supporting staff. Timely recruitment in the health ministry is essential, yet it involves multiple layers of approval from DG Health, public administration, and finance. This bureaucratic process often delays recruitment and hampers budget allocation.

Critical sectors such as maternal care, neuroscience, and cancer care are severely understaffed. For instance, we have around 200-250 oncologists when we need approximately 1,500. By creating positions and recruiting more professionals in these vital areas, we can justify higher budget allocations. Additionally, many clinical centres need upgrades, we lack dedicated medical stores, and facilities are often inadequate. Addressing these deficiencies requires a bottom-up approach and comprehensive improvement plans.

Why can we not spend the budget effectively? There are three main reasons. First, factors like finance, procurement, and audit processes are often beyond the Health Ministry's control. Second, internal issues within the health ministry itself contribute to inefficiencies. Third, poor communication between facilities and DG Health exacerbates these problems.

A significant issue is the lack of training for facility managers and administrators. We have repeatedly advocated for a dedicated training programme for these roles, focusing on procurement, accounting, and finance from day one in the BCS. Proper training would bridge knowledge gaps and improve efficiency.

Our current procurement system is flawed, designed more for engineering and construction than health. Addressing these malpractices and managing procurements effectively is crucial for improvement in the health sector. Only by tackling these fundamental issues can we hope to see substantial progress.



Tanjim Ferdous,
In-Charge, NGOs & Foreign Missions, Business Development Team, The Daily Star

Today's discussion will shed light on the budget allocation for the health sector of this fiscal year, which is Tk 41,407 crore

out of a total budget of Tk 7,97,000 crore. We will try to identify the areas within the health sector where this allocation is being directed, assess the efficient usage of the allotment, and determine what can be done to make the usage more efficient. Additionally, we will discuss how the current scenario supports the effectiveness of the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) ecosystem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

» **Increase Budgetary Allocation:** The budgetary allocation by the government for the healthcare sector needs to be increased to meet the growing demands and ensure adequate resources.

» **Ensure Efficient Utilization:** Proper and timely utilization of budgetary allocations for healthcare must be ensured to maximize impact and efficiency. The management capacity for budgeting, implementing health programs, ensuring accountability and delegating authority to local level is key for effective utilization of resources.

» **Reduce Out-of-Pocket Expenditure:** Efforts should be made to lower out-of-pocket health expenditures for individuals, making healthcare more affordable. Prices of essential drugs need to be reduced; EDCL needs to be strengthened to reduce.

» **Universal Health Insurance:** The government should provide universal health insurance coverage to ensure that all citizens have access to essential health services.

» **Improve Data Management:** Proper management and accessibility of health data from both public and private sectors should be ensured for better decision-making and policy formulation.

» **Address Climate Change:** Climate change issues should be integrated into the upcoming health budget to address the health impacts of environmental changes.

» **Gender-Sensitive Budgeting:** Health budgeting needs to address issues from a gendered perspective, ensuring equitable access and addressing specific health needs of all genders.

» **Support for Persons with Disabilities:** The health budget should adequately address the needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring they have access to necessary health services and support.

» **Civil society and mass media must push for a review of development plans and budgetary allocations for the healthcare sector.**

Our proposed health budget lacks information on facilities for persons with disabilities. Moreover, there is no health insurance policy for them, and pregnant women with disabilities do not receive their allowances. We need to ensure a multidisciplinary approach to create an inclusive health budget.



Farhana Jesmine Hasan,
Senior Technical Advisor, SGBV, Ipas Bangladesh

Gender budgeting is addressed at the policy level in our country's health budget, but the current infrastructure and system are not gender friendly. The health budget is divided into four categories: empowerment, participation, access, and public service, but the allocation is heavily skewed towards public service. We need to enhance the monitoring system from a gender perspective to ensure better public service for women.



Dr. Imran Ahmed Chowdhury,
Programme Head, BRAC

Looking at the last 20 years, significant achievements have been made in the health sector. However, in

recent years, major health indicators have stagnated. Investment in the health sector has also been stagnant for the past 10-15 years. To improve the health sector and align with both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our national plan, the government must increase efficiency in resource utilization and boost budgetary contributions to healthcare. Without these changes, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) won't drop from 194 to 70 by 2030, and out-

Therefore, increasing the number of doctors and facilities is not enough, rather strong monitoring and accountability is required. Article 18.1 of Bangladesh Constitution focuses on public health necessitates giving importance to various components, particularly food and nutrition being critical among them. However, the general trend among the lower middle class in our country is to allocate a larger portion of their budget to medical expenses, often at the expense of their food and nutritional budget. As both medical and food costs continue to rise, this approach is unsustainable unless we balance these two essential areas.



Mayisha Kabir,
Executive Board Member, RTMI

Addressing both communicable and non-communicable diseases simultaneously presents a significant challenge. Many medical

students from neighbouring countries study here and contribute to their own countries, indicating that our problem is not rooted in education. Solutions from abroad are unlikely to apply to our unique health sector challenges; instead, we need to develop our own strategies to address these issues.



Santa Islam,
Project Officer, Ain O Salish Kendra

The 5 percent budget allocation for health has remained unchanged for over a decade, and its utilisation is not being effectively managed.

Civil society can play a crucial role in properly monitoring the health budget, particularly in hard-to-reach areas and at the upazila level. We need to engage in evidence-based advocacy at the policy level, which requires



This picture taken from Deir el-Balah shows smoke billowing into the sky during an Israeli bombardment on the Hamad residential district and its surroundings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

GOVT FORMATION IN IRAN Pragmatist picked as top diplomat

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran's new president yesterday presented his cabinet to parliament for a vote of confidence, state media reported, proposing seasoned pragmatic diplomat Abbas Araqchi as foreign minister at a time of heightened regional tensions.

President Masoud Pezeshkian is shaping his cabinet at a time of an increased risk of escalation of the conflict in Gaza into a broader regional war, after the recent killings of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut drew threats of retaliation against Israel.

Following the death of hardline President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May, Pezeshkian won a snap election last month by promising to improve ties with the world, promoting a pragmatic foreign policy, and to ease social restrictions at home.

Pezeshkian's proposed cabinet lineup requires lawmakers' approval and parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that parliamentary commissions will start reviewing his candidates today.

Araqchi, 61, who was Iran's ambassador to several countries, including Japan, played a key role in negotiating Tehran's 2015 nuclear agreement with six world powers, which then US President Donald Trump exited in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

Araqchi later led Iran's negotiators during multilateral efforts - ultimately unsuccessful - to revive the pact via indirect diplomacy with Washington before he was replaced by hardline Ali Bagheri Kani in 2021.

The president's powers are limited in the Islamic Republic by those of the Supreme Leader, who is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, appoints the head of the judiciary and has the last say on major policies.

Abbas to visit Russia today

AFP, Moscow

Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas will visit Moscow next week to discuss the Gaza war with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a Palestinian envoy said.

Russia's state-run TASS news agency cited the Palestinian ambassador in Moscow as saying Abbas will arrive on Monday and meet Putin tomorrow.

Abbas heads the Fatah Palestinian movement.

Ambassador Abdel Hafiz Nofal said the two leaders would discuss events in Gaza since the October 7 attacks on Israel. "They will talk about Russia's role, what can be done."

He added: "We have a very difficult situation, and Russia is a country that is close to us. We need to consult each other."

Moscow for years tried to balance relations with all major players in the Middle East - including Israel and the Palestinians.

But since the Israel-Hamas war and Russia's own offensive on Ukraine, Putin has moved closer to Israel's foes, Hamas and Iran.

'Children torn apart'

Israel strike rains hell on Gaza dawn prayers

AFP, Gaza City

White body bags littered the floor and mourning filled the air after a school housing displaced Palestinians was struck with Israeli missiles Saturday - a horrific and increasingly common sight in the Gaza war.

Dawn prayers were shattered by the early morning triple air strike from Israeli warplanes, which gutted Al-Tabieen religious school and mosque in Gaza City.

In the hellish aftermath, body parts were strewn around the rubble and charred, bloodied bodies slumped in the wreckage of the two-storey complex.

Grim-faced volunteers piled corpses in blood-stained blankets into an ambulance, as seriously wounded men lay groaning on the ground.

Gaza's civil defence agency said at least 93 people were killed, 17 of them women and children, making it one of the war's deadliest strikes.

Israel's military disputed the death toll, saying the school was targeted with "precision munitions" because it "served as an active Hamas and Islamic Jihad

military facility".

Such incidents have become a pattern in recent weeks. According to an AFP tally, at least 14 schools sheltering Gaza's displaced have been hit since July 6, killing more than 280 people.

"Peaceful people - women, children, and youths - were performing the Fajr prayer as usual when suddenly a missile hit them," said Abu Wassim, who lives nearby and came to survey the scene.

"They were reduced to remains. Children were torn apart, and women were burned. What can we say or do? What is in our power?"

As the sun climbed and mourners gathered, one man stroked the face of a dead child shrouded in a plastic body bag.

"They dropped a missile on them while they were just praying. Fear God, people! Fear God, Arabs!" a woman wailed over the body.

Another man looked lost as he held a small corpse wrapped in a blanket. Nearby, six body bags lay on the ground, three of them children. Tattered Qurans were piled on a window ledge.

"We woke up before dawn to the sound of a strike," said Sakr, a

resident from the neighbourhood who gave just one name.

"We headed to the site and found body remains of civilians who were peacefully performing prayers. We found bodies of children scattered in the street."

Another man said: "You can't even recognise the bodies, there were scattered remains."

"The ones who were struck are displaced people taking shelter in a school. What's their fault? What have they done wrong?"

Mohammad Al-Mughayyir, director of the supply and equipment department of Gaza's civil defence service, told AFP that six schools in Gaza City had been targeted in the past week alone.

Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant-Colonel Nadav Shoshani said that about 20 Hamas and Islamic militants were operating from the Al-Tabieen complex.

Later on Saturday, Gaza civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told journalists that the strike "directly targeted" two floors of the school.

The strike hit "the upper floor housing women and children and the ground floor that was used for prayers by the displaced people," he said.

Since October 7, Israel's military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 39,790 people, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, which does not give details of civilian and militant deaths.

China backs Iran's right to defend its 'dignity'

REUTERS, Beijing

China supports Iran in defending its "sovereignty, security and national dignity", Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi told Iran's acting foreign minister in a phone call yesterday, according to a statement by China's foreign ministry.

In the phone call, Wang repeated Beijing's denunciation of the assassination of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31, saying the strike had violated Iran's sovereignty and threatened regional stability.

Iran and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas have accused Israel of carrying out strike that killed Haniyeh.

Israel has not claimed or denied responsibility for the killing, which has fueled concern that the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip was turning into a wider Middle East war.

Iran has vowed to "harshly punish" Israel over the assassination.

Tensions between Iran and the West have also increased over Tehran's fast-advancing nuclear programme.



BRAZIL PLANE CRASH All 62 victims body recovered

REUTERS, Vinhedo

Brazilian emergency crews has recovered the remains of the 62 victims aboard an airliner that plunged to the ground in the town of Vinhedo, near Sao Paulo the day before, killing all on board.

The bodies of most of the victims - 34 males and 28 females - had already been moved to Sao Paulo's police morgue for identification. The bodies of the pilot and co-pilot were identified earlier in the day, said Dario Pacheco, mayor of Vinhedo.

Four people with dual citizenship were among the victims, three Venezuelans and one Portuguese woman, said regional carrier Voepass, which operated the aircraft.

On Friday Voepass said the plane was carrying 57 passengers and four crew, but on Saturday the firm confirmed another unaccounted-for passenger had been on the flight, putting the number of casualties at 62.

The plane's so-called "black box" containing voice recordings and flight data was undergoing analysis.

The plane, an ATR-72 turboprop, was bound for Sao Paulo from Cascavel, in the state of Parana, and crashed around 1:30 p.m. (1630 GMT) in Vinhedo, some 80 km (50 miles) northwest of Sao Paulo. Despite coming down in a residential area, no one on the ground was hurt.

How to spot online fake news?

England mulling review of national curriculum in primary and secondary schools

AFP, London

The UK government said on Sunday schools in England could teach children how to spot extremist and online content spreading "putrid conspiracy theories", under planned changes to the national curriculum.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said she was launching a review of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools to introduce critical thinking across multiple subjects.

It follows recent disorder in more than a dozen English towns and cities following the Southport knife attack, which officials say were fuelled by misinformation online and far-right agitators.

The stabbing spree, allegedly carried out by British-born Axel Rudakubana, who was aged 17 at the time, left three children dead. Police have not disclosed a suspected motive for the attack but said it is not being treated as terrorism.

Online speculation in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy falsely claimed Rudakubana was a Muslim immigrant.

"It's more important than ever that we give young people the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge what they see online," Phillipson told the Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

"That's why our curriculum review will develop plans to embed critical skills in lessons to arm our children against the disinformation, fake news and putrid conspiracy theories awash on social media."

Under the envisaged changes, students would analyse newspaper articles in English lessons to help spot fabricated clickbait, while computer classes would include analysing statistics in context.

However, the review is not set to report its findings and recommendations until next year, meaning reforms would not come into force until the school year starting in September, 2025, according to the Telegraph.

The moves are set to be combined with tougher regulation of social media sites and online content, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer suggesting imminent action on Friday.



A firefighting helicopter makes a water drop as a wildfire burns in Varnava, near the capital Athens, Greece, yesterday. Residents in two areas near Athens were ordered to evacuate yesterday as dozens of firefighters battled to contain blazes fuelled by strong winds and hot temperatures.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Five pro-Iran fighters killed in Syria strike

AFP, Beirut

Five Iran-backed fighters were killed yesterday in a drone strike in Syria's east, near the Iraqi border, a war monitor said, adding it was not clear yet who was behind the attack.

"Five pro-Iranian fighters were killed and others were injured, some severely... after an unknown drone targeted the military vehicle they were in... near the Syrian-Iraqi border," said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The strike occurred in Syria's eastern Deir Ezzor province, where Iran wields significant influence and which is regularly targeted by Israel and the United States, according to the Britain-based monitor with a network of sources inside Syria.

In June, three pro-Iran fighters, including at least two Iraqis, were killed in an overnight air strike in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border, the Observatory had reported at the time.



Supporters of US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris cheer as she speaks during a campaign rally at an event in Las Vegas, Nevada, Saturday. Kamala Harris leads his Republican rival Donald Trump in three battleground states - Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan - by four points, according to polls by the New York Times and Siena College.

PHOTO: AFP

MAJOR UKRAINIAN INCURSION

Thousands of troops 'trying to destabilise' Russia'

Moscow says hit Ukraine units 30km into Russian territory

AGENCIES

Russia yesterday acknowledged Ukrainian forces had pierced deep into the Kursk border region in an offensive that a top official in Ukraine said was aimed to "destabilise" Russia and "stretch" its armed forces.

Kyiv has deployed thousands of troops to the surprise operation, a Ukrainian security official told AFP, seizing the battlefield initiative after months of slow Russian advances across the east.

"We are on the offensive. The aim is to stretch the positions of the enemy, to inflict maximum losses and to destabilise the situation in Russia as they are unable to protect their own border," the security official said on condition of anonymity.

The shock assault, now in its sixth day, appeared to catch the Kremlin off guard, with Moscow's army rushing in reserve troops, tanks, aviation, artillery and drones in a bid to quash the incursion.

But it's army yesterday appeared to concede that Ukraine had been able to penetrate its territory by up to 30 kilometres (20 miles) in places.

In a daily briefing on the situation in the western Kursk region, the defence ministry said it had "foiled attempts" by Ukraine's forces to "break through deep into Russian territory" using armoured vehicles.

But it said some of those forces were located near the villages of Tolpino and Obschchy Kolodez, which are around 25 km and 30 km from the Russia-Ukraine border.

The Ukrainian official also



said Russia's claims that Kyiv had deployed 1,000 troops were a serious underestimation.

"It is a lot more... Thousands," they said.

After days of official silence, President Volodymyr Zelensky acknowledged the offensive for the first time in his nightly address on Saturday, saying that Kyiv was "pushing the war into the aggressor's territory".

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and has waged an unrelenting campaign, occupying swathes of the east and south and subjecting Ukrainian cities to daily missile and drone attacks.

After re-capturing large areas in 2022, Kyiv has largely been on the back foot, increasingly struggling with manpower and arms supplies.

The assault on Russia's western Kursk region has been the largest and most successful cross-border

offensive by Kyiv so far -- and the most significant attack by a foreign army on Russian territory since the Second World War.

Russia has used air power, artillery fire and drones in a bid to quash the advance.

It said Saturday that more than 76,000 civilians had been evacuated from border areas, with more leaving on Sunday.

Russia's rail operator has put on emergency trains from Kursk to Moscow, around 450 kilometres away, for those looking to flee.

An overnight Ukrainian missile strike on a residential building in Kursk city, around 80 kilometres from the fighting wounded 15, Russian officials said.

Ukraine's Sumy region has also come under retaliatory fire, and authorities there plan to evacuate some 20,000 people from the border zone.

SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

Actions of China air force 'reckless' Says Philippines

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. yesterday condemned Chinese air force actions in waters of the South China Sea claimed by both countries, calling the actions "unjustified, illegal and reckless".

Manila and Beijing accused each other on Saturday of disrupting their militaries' operations around the Scarborough Shoal in the first incident since Marcos took office in 2022 in which the Philippines has complained of dangerous actions by Chinese aircraft, as opposed to navy or coast guard vessels.

The Philippine military on Saturday condemned "dangerous and provocative actions" when two Chinese aircraft dropped flares in the path of a Philippine aircraft during a routine patrol around the shoal on Thursday.

The Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command countered that the Philippines had disrupted its training, accusing Manila of "illegally intruding" into its airspace.

On Sunday, Marcos urged China to act responsibly both in the seas and in the skies.

The Scarborough Shoal is one of Asia's most contested maritime features and a flashpoint for flare-ups over sovereignty and fishing rights.

End the UK riots

Parents of murdered girl urge

REUTERS, Southport

The parents of one of three girls murdered at a Taylor Swift-themed event in northern England last month called for an end to the nationwide rioting that followed their deaths at an emotional funeral for their young daughter.

Alice da Silva Aguiar, 9, and two other girls died and eight were injured after being stabbed in an attack at the event at the seaside town of Southport two weeks ago. Days of riots followed in Southport and in towns and cities across the United Kingdom, triggered by false online posts wrongly identifying the suspected killer as an Islamist migrant. A teenager, born in Britain, has since been charged and police say the incident is not being treated as terrorism.

Resignation statement

FROM PAGE 16

changed', they will have to be changed," he said. Yunus has said he wants elections "within a few months", but Joy warned of risks if they were delayed.

"It's in their best interest to hold elections... to have a return to a legitimate government that has the legitimacy of the people and true authority," he said.

"Otherwise, it's just going to devolve into chaos." Hasina swept the January elections but only after a poll denounced as neither free nor fair and boycotted by genuine rivals after a crackdown during which thousands of opposition party members were arrested.

Members of Hasina's millions-strong Awami League have gone into hiding since she fled. There have been reprisal attacks against them and party offices have been torched.

But Joy said the party was critical to the political future of the South Asian nation of some 170 million people.

"We have tens of millions of followers; they're not going anywhere," he said.

"You're not going to be able to establish democracy in Bangladesh without the Awami League. It will never be accepted by half the people of the country at least."

"It's going to be between the BNP and the Awami League," Joy said. "We need to work together."

He sought to divert blame for his mother's ouster onto others in government.

"Were mistakes made? Of course," he said. "They were made by people at the bottom, or in the chain of command... Blaming my mother for it is unfortunate."

While accepting that police officers who fired on protesters had gone too far, he argued that there was violence on both sides.

"Some of the police used excessive force but there were attacks on the police too -- police members were killed as well. The violence wasn't one-sided," he said.

"And then as it escalated further, the protesters started attacking police with firearms, weapons."

He alleged unidentified foreign forces had supported the protests, a claim for which he provided no evidence.

"I believe, at this point, it is from beyond Bangladesh," he said.

Law enforcers

FROM PAGE 16

personnel on Saturday and warned that it would not take any responsibility for any such incidents in future. Those who commit any wrongdoings will be handed over to the law enforcers, said the statement.

The statement also mentioned that Sheikh Hasina is well, and she requested all to hold peaceful programmes.

In another development, Gopalganj AL General Secretary GM Sahab Uddin Azam, at an emergency meeting, requested party leaders and activists not to consider the army as an opponent.

The meeting also decided to observe the National Mourning Day on August 15 in a befitting manner, said meeting insiders.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh

National board of Revenue

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:

National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization
IDEB Bhaban (10th floor), 160/A, Kakrail, Dhaka

Memo no. 1(192) Active items/ Hardware /NSW/2024/2175

Date: 11.08.24

Subject: Addendum to bidding document for supply and Installation of Hardware and Infrastructure (network, communication, cabling etc.) and standard software for NSW solution; other network, communication equipment, structure, Hardware and cabling: Server & Storage and Network & Security components for NSW Server Room & DR. Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1: Request for Bids (RFB) No. NBR-GD2A.1.

Addendum No. 3

This is for the information of all Bidders concerned that the following amendments have been mad for the procurement mentioned in the subject above;

Ref	Existing Entry	Amended entry
SI No. of 6, SPN ITP-23.1& 26.1	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: August 13, 2024, Time :14.00 hours.	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: August 29, 2024, Time :14.00 hours.
	Date & Time for Bid Opening August 13, 2024, Time :14:30 hours	Date & Time for Bid Opening August 29, 2024, Time :14:30 hours

All the terms and conditions of bidding Documents (RFB) NBR-GD2A. 1 shall remain unchanged. This Addendum No. 2 shall be considered an integral part of the Bidding Documents and shall be binding on all Bidders who have obtained or will obtain the Bidding Documents from the Purchaser.

(Abul Bashir Md Shafiqur Rahman)
Project Director

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:
National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization
Email: pdnsw.nbr@gmail.com

GD-142

EDCL এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
৩৯৫-৩৯৭ তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা,
ঢাকা-১২০৮।
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ইউসিএল নিম্নোক্ত আইটেমটি প্রস্তুতকারী/সরবরাহকারীদের (সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যবসার সাহিত্য জড়িত) নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করছে :-

ক্রমিক নং	দরপত্র নং ও তারিখ	বিবরণ	পরিমাণ
০১।	ইউসিএল/ ক্রয়/স্থানীয়/দরপত্র/২০২৪/৩৩১ তারিখঃ ১১/০৮/২০২৪ইং	i. Cellulose Acetate/nitrate (pore size:0.2µm)	৬০০ পিস
		ii. Cellulose Acetate/nitrate (pore size:0.45µm) (সিডিউল মোতাবেক)	৬০০ পিস
সিকিউরিটি/ আর্নেস্ট মানি	দরপত্র শিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরৎযোগ্য)	দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
২.৫%	টাকা ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার টাকা) প্রতি সেট	২৮/০৮/২০২৪ইং বেলা ১২-০০ ঘটিকা	২৮/০৮/২০২৪ইং বেলা ১২-১৫ ঘটিকা

সকল কার্যদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে উপরোক্ত কার্যালয় হইতে শর্ত ও নিয়মাবলীসহ দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয় করা যাইবে। উল্লেখ্য যে, যাহাদের ভাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন নাই তাহাদের দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণ করার প্রয়োজন নাই।
দরপত্র খোলার দিনে কোন দরপত্র শিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হইবে না।

মহা-ব্যবস্থাপক, প্রকিউরমেন্ট
পক্ষে ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক।

(৫ ইপি ৪ কলাম)

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Locate and release disappearance victims

Their families deserve answer, justice, and closure

For over a decade, hundreds of families in Bangladesh have lived with the unbearable pain of not knowing the fate of their loved ones. These individuals—mostly critics and political rivals of Awami League—disappeared during its 15-year rule, allegedly abducted by state agencies. The government's fall has now reignited the hopes of their families, but it is a tragic reflection of our times that there is still no end date on their never-ending misery. According to a report, over 100 such families formed a human chain on Saturday, demanding information about the whereabouts of their loved ones. They held up photos of their missing sons, husbands, and fathers, some of whom disappeared as far back as 13 years ago.

These families deserve answers, justice, and closure. Unfortunately, they are yet to have the chance to move in that direction. Although the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) authorities already said that there are no detainees in their Dhaka facility, popularly known as "Aynaghor", the release of some former prisoners has raised hope that many of the disappeared could still be alive in other secret internment centres of the security forces. The DGFI reportedly promised to form a joint commission to inspect 23 other facilities across the country to see if the victims of enforced disappearance were there. The question is, how many detention cum-torture cells are there, really? How many of the prisoners held illegally over the years are still alive? How many perished in obscurity?

In a report in 2021, the Human Rights Watch said there was no trace of nearly 100 out of the 600 people who had disappeared during Hasina's rule. The number of the disappeared could be more than 700, according to Odhikar, which says some 150 are believed to remain missing. Clearly, because of the cloak of secrecy in which those behind the illegal operations wrapped themselves, there remains a huge information gap which could complicate any future effort to shine a light on all such cases and indeed to pursue justice for the security officers and services responsible.

Besides enforced disappearance, the Awami League regime had also been regularly accused of allowing extrajudicial killings and custodial torture, and so the interim government must start the process of establishing justice for all such activities. The immediate priority, of course, will be to locate and release all enforced disappearance victims. For too long, these people and their families have endured unimaginable suffering, which must come to an end. The authorities should also set up an independent justice mechanism with the UN's support to investigate each of the incidents, and put the perpetrators on trial. After Sheikh Hasina's ouster, the nation finally has a chance to unearth the full horrors of enforced disappearance and rectify the state machinery involved.

Urgent bank reforms are crucial

Recover bad loans, punish those who exploited the sector

Since the fall of the Awami League regime, there have been several chaotic incidents in the banking sector—from the resignation of Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor and other top officials to the conflicts between rival groups at the Motijheel branch of Bangladesh Islami Bank yesterday—sending out an alarming signal. These incidents are but an indication about how quickly a sector, long lying on the edge of the precipice, can unravel when push comes to shove.

A recent report by Prothom Alo sheds light on what led to the woeful state of this sector. It talks about the BB's questionable steps taken during the erstwhile government to keep several failing banks afloat by providing liquidity support without collateral; alleged unethical connections of the BB governor and deputy governors with top loan defaulters; and the change of ownership forced on several banks including the Islami Bank, creating an environment of mistrust. Moreover, the BB's choice of lending foreign currency loans from the reserve to various influential businesses through the export development fund, without proper evaluation, also resulted in many classified loans. Just think: 20 local businesses currently owe BB about \$70 million taken out of the foreign currency reserve!

The default loan amount reported by BB—Tk 1.822 trillion—is also under scrutiny. Experts estimate that the actual figure would be close to four trillion, considering rescheduled and bad/written-off loans and those currently under legal dispute. Meanwhile, depositors of the failing banks, many of which were forced to change ownership, cannot withdraw their savings. Yet, the owners of the banks are taking out loans under different names.

While some of these irregularities were mentioned in the BB's own reports, several central bank officials allege that many such activities have remained out of BB's and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit's regulatory radar. This raises serious questions about the responsibility and ethics of top officials of not just the central bank but also the governing bodies of several private and public commercial banks. There is no doubt that political appointments in the banking sector, incorrect or manipulative accounting practices, nepotism, and lack of transparency in the lending process brought the sector to its current state.

It is, therefore, imperative that the interim government urgently launches an investigation to find out the actual amount of default loans, and identify and bring to book the big defaulters along with officials who aided these questionable borrowings. Also, the government must prioritise depositors' interests and prevent any further withdrawal of money by the unwholy nexus of unscrupulous owners, borrowers, and defaulters that are bleeding the sector dry.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Phonograph was invented

On this day in 1877, American inventor Thomas Alva Edison made perhaps his most original discovery, the phonograph, and his early recordings were indentations embossed into a sheet of tinfoil by a vibrating stylus.

The fall of a dictator should not give rise to another



Saad Hammadi is fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs. His X handle is @saadhammadi.

SAAD HAMMADI

The new administration under the leadership of Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus has the aspirations of many entrusted upon him to deliver justice, create the space for a functioning economy and democracy, establish rule of law, and a transparent and accountable government. The recent violence and history of coups and staged elections give an eerie feeling that the country is not completely out of danger.

The blood and sacrifice of hundreds of people freed Bangladesh from the tyrannical leadership of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. It is even more important now that Hasina and those in the command responsibility during her time in the government are not let off the hook and are brought to justice and accountability for the unlawful killings, detention and torture of hundreds of people in the country. More than 500 people were killed in 23 days since July 16, according to Prothom Alo. The violence against minorities after Hasina's exit must also be subject to investigation.

The interim government of Bangladesh has the opportunity to do this by proactively inviting the United Nations to establish a commission of inquiry and extending its full cooperation with the procedure. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk has reiterated his office's support for a comprehensive investigation. The international community must press for the same to uphold global justice and accountability under the rules-based international order.

Justice and accountability do not begin with Sheikh Hasina and her government only. The political parties that have ruled the country before her time, too, have committed serious human rights violations and promoted a culture of impunity. There is both fear and frustration that the traditional political parties will exploit this moment to return to power and make matters worse, given their competing track records of corruption and crimes.

For the longest time, the people have shown tremendous resilience to put up with corruption, politicised judiciary, and repressive laws and law enforcement that resulted in egregious

human rights violations including torture, enforced disappearances, and unlawful killings. The crimes under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina must not subsidise those committed by her predecessors.

The young generation that has led



The young generation that has led the movement for systemic change deserves nothing short of a leadership that breaks away from the ugly legacy of the traditional political parties.

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

the movement for systemic change, and was subsequently joined by the wider population, deserves nothing short of a leadership that breaks away from the ugly legacy of the traditional political parties. The fall of a dictator should not give rise to another. The Yunus-led government must ensure that Bangladesh does not fall back on the dictatorial aspirations of political parties and ideologies that undermine cultural, political and religious freedoms.

The young generation must be afforded with safe and secure environment, free of intimidation and

for public consensus. Institutional reforms will be required throughout the administration to develop systems for transparency and accountability in the process.

The interim government must immediately scrap all repressive provisions under laws such as the Cyber Security Act (CSA), drop the charges against all those accused under the problematic provisions of the law as well as its predecessors—the Digital Security Act (DSA) and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act. New laws and constitutional reforms must be drafted in line with

free fall of the economy and recover the state at a time when even the global economic and political orders are extremely chaotic.

The interim government must be afforded the time to make foundational changes that are inevitable for a smooth transition to a democratically elected government and for the country to move forward. This cannot be an indefinite period. The interim administration must set a deadline for itself. The success of the new leadership will depend on the trust and confidence it is able to build with the people.

It's time to look forward with our fashion partners



RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

In the aftermath of the former prime minister's resignation, the country is now ready to put the challenges of the last few weeks behind it. The nationwide curfews had been withdrawn on August 6, and since then, banks, schools, factories, etc. have been re-opened and people have started their normal daily lives. The apparel factories of the country have resumed production on August 7.

So, what does all this mean for our country? The focus of this article is from a business perspective. However, the people of Bangladesh can attest to how the past few weeks of civil unrest have certainly taken their toll on an emotional level as well.

My overriding message, as somebody who lives and works in Bangladesh, is that our garment manufacturing sector remains very much open for business. But first, we need to look at what the business community needs from our state and non-state institutions to help Bangladesh regain the confidence of its international business partners.

As stated earlier, it has been a very challenging time, but I believe that the resignation of the former prime

minister and the installation of the army chief might help to restore stability. It is time to start looking forward.

Bangladesh gained its independence from Pakistan in 1971, meaning that we are still a relatively new country and the path to development has been a bumpy road. However, Bangladesh's recent problems are part of a larger historical pattern of political and social challenges. Thus, the country's history of overcoming adversity and its commitment to economic development should provide a foundation for optimism.

Over the years, the garments industry of Bangladesh has established itself as one of the key powerhouses in the country, bringing in vital export earnings. In the fiscal year 2022-23, garment exports from Bangladesh earned \$47.38 billion and the value is expected to grow year-on-year.

Despite the recent political unrest, Bangladesh's garment industry still remains a cornerstone of our economy. The industry accounts for more than 80 percent of the country's export earnings and provides employment to millions of people, particularly women.

Let us also not forget the sector has played a crucial role in lifting millions out of poverty and improving living standards. There are ambitions to increase exports well beyond US\$50bn and, in doing so, lift many millions more people out of poverty.

But in order to achieve those goals, we need the support of the international community, and the

Going forward, our leaders need to own the conversation. Historically, public relations have not been one of Bangladesh's strong suits. However, how we project ourselves to the international community is vital given the present situation.

backing of international fashion buyers.

It goes without saying that the international community may have read newspaper reports or even seen video footage of the political unrest that has occurred over the last few weeks, and have developed concerns about placing their orders here. Therefore, we simply cannot assume that the support from the international community will be readily available—it must be earned.

To maintain or regain the trust of the international business community, I believe three things need to happen over the coming weeks.

The first is that our country's new

Misinformation campaigns and the future of Bangladesh-India relations



Zillur Rahman is the executive director of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) and a television talk show host. His X handle is @zillur.

ZILLUR RAHMAN

After the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last week, Bangladesh was thrown into a critical state of instability and uncertainty. There was no government till Dr Muhammad Yunus took oath as the chief adviser of the interim government on August 8. During this period, the country saw an outburst of violence and crime, which was the outcome of both pent-up political frustration against the ruling party of 15 years and the result of some bigotry, and the machinations of bad actors trying to take advantage of the lawlessness for personal gains. One of the most dangerous situations that can happen in a country is the chaos, crime, and destruction that take place after an authoritarian force is forced to abdicate. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is in such a situation.

However, this issue is not just a domestic phenomenon. Several influential groups inside Bangladesh's largest neighbour have taken the initiative to create a narrative that

It almost feels like, with the fall of Sheikh Hasina, some elements in India are behaving as though India has suffered a great loss. It is my humble opinion that, instead of immediately choosing to take the easily monetisable culture-war talking points, the enlightened Indian cultural leaders should first push for a democratic Bangladesh where actual political discourse can take place without fear of getting killed or disappeared by security forces.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

this momentary lawlessness caused by the thoughtless abdication of the former prime minister is the prelude of a Bangladesh where bigotry and religious fundamentalism are going to flare up.

The main platform where such notions are being sensationalised at the moment is X, formerly known as Twitter. Many verified accounts on X are reporting rumours as actual news and sometimes just outright propagating fake news. What's worse is that this propagation of fake news has also been noted in Indian mainstream media, as

well as among popular Indian social media personalities.

It is true that there have been concerning reports of violence against minority communities. Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad reported 205 incidents of persecution of members of minority communities across 52 districts. Gobinda Pramanik, general secretary of

called for protection of the minority communities, which was answered by many. Leaders of BNP, Jamaat and other parties, too, instructed their functionaries to ensure that Hindu homes were not attacked and temples were protected.

But against this backdrop, we saw Republic TV from India spreading rumours and making strange claims.

and misleading propaganda.

The sudden upsurge in misinformation and disinformation on Indian social media coincidentally aligns with a seemingly coordinated rise in criminal activities and vandalism all over Bangladesh. Inside the country, some people are also taking to social media and calling this another attempt by pro-AL forces in India, as well as RAW, to fabricate a narrative of communalism in order to plunge Bangladesh into further unrest and instability. Needless to say, there is no evidence for any of this. Rumours beget rumours. This kind of misinformation treadmill needs to be stopped immediately lest it leads to further instances of violence, and makes the people-to-people divide between Bangladesh and India even worse.

Although it seems the Indian authorities have overtly asked for people to stop propagating fake news regarding what is happening in Bangladesh, there are many in India who firmly believe that Bangladesh is about to fall under a fundamentalist rule the moment the next general elections are held. It almost feels like, with the fall of Sheikh Hasina, some elements in India are behaving as though India has suffered a great loss. It is my humble opinion that, instead of immediately choosing to take the easily monetisable culture-war talking points, the enlightened Indian cultural leaders should first push for a democratic Bangladesh where actual political discourse can take place without fear of getting killed or disappeared by security forces. The people of Bangladesh don't need to be kept "in check" by a convenient autocrat. That is the narrative of a now-disgraced political party that has proven to lie repeatedly to the people and the world to keep power. The people of India must not fall for this narrative ever again.

India must realise the shortcomings of its foreign policy regarding Bangladesh. These should be fundamental lessons from history. Never trust a dictator to keep power. A robust and mature democracy is the only reliable international partner. Right now, India needs to revamp its approach towards Bangladesh entirely. Now is the time for genuine track 2 diplomacy. It is time for genuine people-to-people relations to ensure long-term, sustainable friendship with its most significant geostrategic partner. And this kind of change must start at home.

Bangladesh National Hindu Mahajot, recently made a video statement about the matter, in which he said that, after Sheikh Hasina's resignation on August 5, the Hindu community in Bangladesh thought they would be attacked in a massive way and there would be incidents of arson. According to the general secretary, houses of some Hindu leaders of the Awami League who were very active, as well as those of some Muslim leaders, were attacked. He also stated that some opportunistic people attacked a few local temples. Coordinators of the anti-discrimination student movement

The West Bengal Police, in a statement posted from its official Facebook page, stated that the way some local TV channels are reporting on the current situation in Bangladesh is clearly communally inflammatory and against the norms of the Press Council of India. The West Bengal Police urged viewers to exercise their own judgement when viewing this type of coverage and keep in mind that the authenticity of the footage shown by the channel is not verified by any neutral third party. They requested people not to fall into the trap of one-sided, hateful

Can the government govern itself?

The importance of institutions in democratisation and good governance



Sarzhah Yeasmin is a Boston-based Bangladeshi writer. She works at Harvard Kennedy School and is currently pursuing a micro-master's in data and economics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

SARZAH YEASMIN

Party interests and national interests have seldom aligned in the history of Bangladesh, and because of the "party archies" there is an acute dearth of strong and credible institutions in the country that can create a landscape for fairer politics. It is still premature to say that the public have won without there being any concrete agenda for correcting the historical wrongs. Institution-building and institutionalisation of best practices are a decades-long process; so regardless of the promise this transitional moment holds in the history of the country, we should tread forward with some caution. The question is, can the government govern itself? In Bangladesh's case, that is a clear no. There is engagement, enthusiasm, and energy around the issues of substance, but the political vacuum might lead the country in a regressive direction if, ultimately, we have to turn towards the vanguard of old leadership. No work has been put into developing party institutions. The problem with parties in Bangladesh is that their activism relies on backward-looking and person-centric politics and revolves around a single leader. Cultish attitudes such as pledging allegiance to one leader over the state are performative, and such performance is normalised in Bangladeshi politics.

The reason why robust political institutions have not been built during the country's lifetime is because the state apparatus is used to serve the party in power, not the people. This is a part of the broader political culture, and it will be a difficult journey out. People do not want to replace dictators with dictators. Tangible liberation is only possible when Bangladeshis can meet their full potential, when minorities do not need special protection, when people can express their views without the fear of backlash; we are not there yet. In a democratic, free and fairer Bangladesh, Bangladeshis can be pro-any social or political party, pro-any brand, and advocate for their ideologies without repercussions. The political bifurcation and polarisation in the country is murky because it is not based on differences of any substantial policy issue between the opposing parties.

Each party, while in power, has depleted the state of its resources to cater to the top leadership's and party's goals at the expense of national interests. They have broken and bent their own laws without remorse and have blamed the opposition and mysterious third-party actors for failure and unrest.

Students fought for equality and justice. Valorising looting and misogynistic language takes away from the strong ethical ground on which the student movement is established. While the former ruling government was in power, there were many unsubstantiated claims that the movement had been hijacked by the opposition and "miscreants," but there is more danger of misappropriating the goals and the language of the movement now that it has accomplished a tangible political outcome. The iconoclastic nature of desecrating the founding father's statue is deeply disturbing—denying the founding narrative of the nation because we seem not to see beyond the euphoria of this moment. Regardless of Awami League's atrocities, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has his own indelible place in the birth of this nation.

The public display of disdain does not bode well and is not conducive to creating a culture where democracy can flourish. We need to come out of our culture of belittling, shaming, looting, and euphoric mob violence if we really want good and reliable leadership, because at the end of the day, leaders are the reflection of their people, and vice versa. A dictator cannot be a dictator without support. We need a radical change in how we envision good and effective leadership and build institutions that can allow good leadership. A strong leader is not one who projects power through terror. A strong leader knows how to initiate institutions, how to adapt, listen, delegate, how to activate people to meet their potential, and take a back seat when it is necessary. The country could go in any direction, although the participation of students and civil society in creating a framework for the interim government shows promise.

So, what should be the expectation from

the interim government? The country is in shambles as it grapples with significant economic and political challenges further intensified by the current vacuum. The interim government needs to prioritise institution-building since it is only an interim government, so that the country can be ready to be handed over to good leadership. It needs to prepare the country for a democratic and fair government and simultaneously create a

In a study exploring democratisation in 15 post-conflict societies that include countries like Bosnia, Cambodia, Liberia, and Timor Leste, it was found that the design of the interim governments is foundational in determining the democratisation prospects and processes of countries after a period of conflict or shock. Factors such as inclusion of conflicting parties and diverse actors in the transitional government, putting

point of the interim government; therefore, much more work needs to be put into this major assignment that would determine the success of this transitional moment.

Bangladeshis do not want a transfer of power from criminal regimes to criminal regimes, so the choices that voters have at the ballot box would be most important. Choice should not be limited to the lesser of the two evils. As Sarjis Alam, one of the leaders of the anti-discrimination student movement, aptly says, the movement is against the system of oppression, not a particular oppressor. The purpose of a democratic election would fail if it is used to elect an undemocratic leader.

The meetings that the army chief had with different political parties and civil society representatives to ponder on the future of the country are the kinds of meetings that should be part of the regular political practice. Governments should consult with the opposition and the public, work on laws, regulations, and national strategies collectively so that they can align with national interests. Practices of finding common ground and collective participation should be instilled in institutional mechanisms and processes for decision-making. There should be opportunities for civic engagement and scope for compassionate and smart leadership so leadership can be efficient in its response to the public—so that being in the streets is not the only way to get the country moving. Historically, Bangladesh has had vibrant student movements, but that has not translated into a vibrant democracy so far. The interim government, along with sustained efforts from students, will be instrumental in creating the landscape for effective democracy during this post-conflict phase.

The model of the transitional government often determines what comes next. One likely political challenge for the upcoming transitional government will be containing oppositional and retaliatory forces and bypassing episodes of unrest that curb chances of establishing an effective democracy. The point of the anti-discrimination movement is to break away from the vestiges of the old regimes and build an independent nation where public dignity is protected, where people's potential is met. This transitional moment will be vital in fashioning an effective succession—a legitimate, viable and a fair one, so that the mass atrocities that have been normalised throughout our political history are never repeated. Bangladeshis need institutions that they can trust, a system in service of the people, a government that can govern itself.

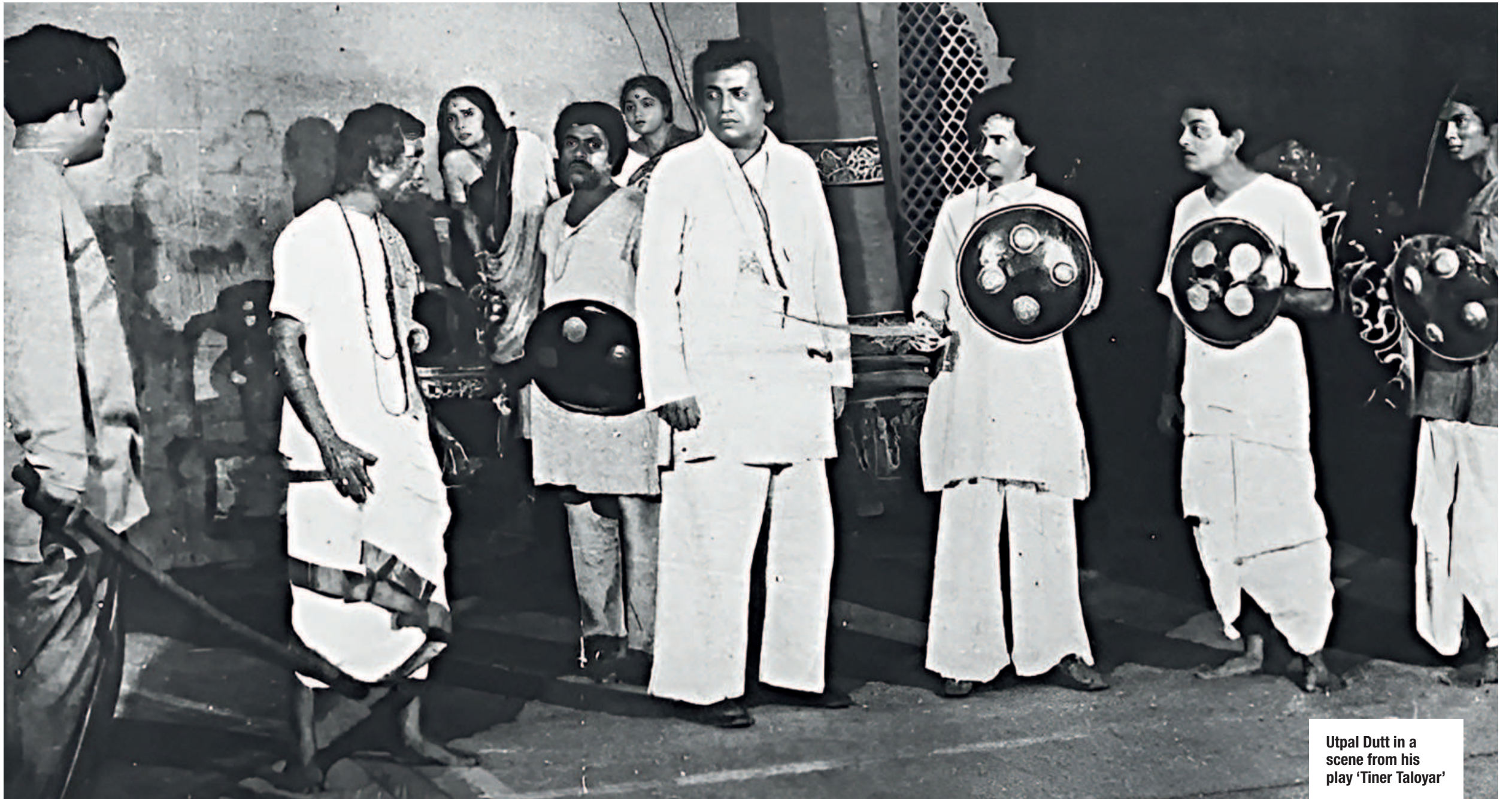


Nothing guarantees progress unless we implement measures of accountability and build institutions that are capable of being fair, transparent, non-partisan, and impartial in fulfilling their functions.

FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

political culture that fosters good leadership through setting precedents of collaboration. The country cannot move forward without addressing regulations that allow political parties to drain state resources and use terror to secure party interests. Establishing good governance and effective public service delivery should be the interim leadership's prime goals. We are in a moment of negative peace—an undesirable government has been ousted—but that does not mean that historical wrongs will be addressed adequately. Nothing guarantees progress unless we implement measures of accountability and build institutions that are capable of being fair, transparent, non-partisan, and impartial in fulfilling their functions regardless of which party takes power.

institutional constraints on the executive and decentralisation of power and governance to local levels have led to higher successes in democratisation, as power-sharing de-escalate risks of subsequent conflicts. Delegation of power provides more definite channels for transparency and accountability and more chances for civic participation. The point about conducting a fair election soon has been mentioned repeatedly, both by military and political establishments and movement actors. However, the template of a fair election assumes that there are credible processes, institutions, options, and state capacity in place to conduct and sustain a fair election. Premature elections can lead to an outcome with non-democratic actors and unfair power-grabbers. Election is the end



Utpal Dutt in a scene from his play 'Tiner Taloyar'

Utpal Dutt and Postcolonial Political Theatre

Utpal Dutt differentiated between fact and truth by focusing on their connection with social conflict and argued that fact remains mere bourgeois truth when abstracted from the context of continuous social conflict between the haves and the have-nots and conversely that fact can become a revolutionary truth when it intertwines the realities of conflict, and sides unerringly with the have-nots.

MALLARIKA SINHA ROY

The inspiration for decolonization, as a philosophical term, writes Achille Mbembe, was the 'active will to community' which can be translated as something like 'to stand up on one's own and create a heritage'. The impetus for decolonization in theatre, as it moved from re-instituting indigenous traditions in place of colonial modernity, to retrieving indigenous systems through 'provincializing Europe' as Dipesh Chakrabarty aptly defines, came from different quarters. The Cold War context provided a range of influences, from western European and north American theatre experiments to socialist realisms and socialist internationalism, as well as the inter-cultural practices emerging from Asian-African alliances. The modern Indian theatre drew on these multiple modernities. The outcome was a significant shift away not only from traditional forms of folk theatre and classical Sanskrit drama, but also from the modern colonial theatre in terms of canon formation, actor training, circulation of texts and performances, reception, patronage, and criticism. Institutionally, as part of the 'will to community', a new cultural bureaucracy, often functioning closely with the administrative one, sustained this shift from the local to the national level.

Utpal Dutt (1929-1993) embodied this shift. With the exception of direct involvement in cultural bureaucracy, he straddled the process of decolonization, forging a political theatre of the postcolonial contemporary for modern India. When he emerged as a promising theatre-maker and performer in the city of Calcutta in late 1940s, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA henceforth), as part of the communist movement in India, had already established itself as a formidable force in cultural politics and the idea of progressive political theatre had started to gain ground. Before his inevitable shift towards IPTA in 1950-51, Dutt was a member of British thespian Geoffrey Kendal's touring Shakespearean International which, performed Shakespeare's plays in metropolises and *mofussil* towns across India. Theatre critic Samik Bandyopadhyay notes that the democratic nature of this travelling theatre troupe was crucial in shaping Dutt as an artist. After touring with Kendal, Dutt started his own English theatre group in Calcutta, The Amateur Shakespeareans, and won critical acclaim for modernised productions of *Romeo and Juliet* (1948) and *Julius Caesar* (1949).

Dutt's acute sense of the need to engage with the process of decolonization was the reason behind his abandonment of English theatre even after such bravura productions. English theatre in Calcutta was a decidedly elite practice and he turned away from it to begin his stint with IPTA, joining the central Calcutta squad of IPTA as a director and actor and performing in different productions like Tagore's *Bisrjan* (performed in 1952) and Ritwik Ghatak's *Dali* (1951) as well as in various street-corner plays like *Bhoter Bhet* (1951).

The experience of making theatre with IPTA while engaging with communist politics and Marxist philosophy, though short-lived, became foundational in Dutt's subsequent journey as a political theatre artist. He created his 'Little Theatre Group' (LTG) and, in 1953 leased the Minerva theatre in Calcutta as its permanent home. LTG began with classic Tagore plays, translations of Shakespeare and Russian theatre, and social farces by the nineteenth century playwright Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Their production of *Macbeth* (1954) became particularly successful and received invitations for performances even in remote villages, smaller towns and working-class areas. LTG finally found its feet on the Bengali stage with Dutt's *Angaar* (1959), a play about the



Utpal Dutt (March 29, 1929 - August 19, 1993)

lives of coal miners that culminates in a mining disaster and references a recent catastrophe in the Baradhemo coal mine. *Angaar* became hugely popular not only for its intensely political theme but also because of the sophisticated scenography, sound and lighting design employed. The climax of *Angaar*, an exemplary feat of stagecraft depicting the despair of seven miners trapped underground waiting to be drowned, is described by Bharucha as an 'epiphany of grief' in which the spectacle of a calamity becomes a source of entertainment and is applauded. Dutt, in his later assessment of his own work, was critical of *Angaar* because it could not represent the truth of miners' resistance, but was limited to displaying the facts of their huge exploitation.

This tension between truth and fact shaped Dutt's vision of political theatre, which he called revolutionary theatre. He differentiated between fact and truth by focusing on their connection with social conflict and argued that fact remains mere bourgeois truth when abstracted from the context of continuous social conflict between the haves and the have-nots and conversely that fact can become a revolutionary truth when it intertwines the realities of conflict, and sides unerringly with the have-nots. His aim was to represent revolutionary truth because, in his view, presenting only impartial facts risked reifying bourgeois power, and he wanted his theatre to be an agent of change, and thus a factor in the revolution. This meant recounting

as many instances of such change as possible, especially historical moments when exploitative regimes are challenged by the poor, the colonized and the 'native'. He aspired to portray the full complexity of power relations at intersecting points in the context of social conflict. This is the reason Dutt so often revisits histories of anti-colonial revolts against the British in India, revolts against other imperial powers in other geo-political contexts, and rebellions against experiences of domination. His stint in the Bengali folk theatre form Jatra, from 1971 to 1988, bears the same marks of revolutionary intent in highlighting historical moments of resistance against colonial/authoritarian regimes.

'One of the ironies of political theatre', observes Rustom Bharucha, 'is that it thrives during the worst periods of repression'. Discussions of political theatre, consequently, need to be continually informed by understanding of the nature of repression and period-specific details of each socio-political situation. In order to make sense of the cultural critique offered by political theatre, the critic has to engage with the defining characteristics of the postcolonial contemporary. This need becomes even more acute in the case of an artist like Dutt because he explicitly identified his project as a revolutionary theatre, that 'addresses these working masses and must adjust its pitch, tone and volume accordingly' in order to agitate for revolutionary social transformation.

That his revolutionary theatre was dismissed by a large number of critics as communist propaganda did not dishearten Dutt, but rather he wore the term 'propagandist' as a badge of honour and declared 'to hell with the so-called critics who find our plays naive, melodramatic and loud'.

The recent revivals of his plays from 2018 to 2023 by various theatre groups, including People's Little Theatre that Dutt had created in 1971 after LTG dissolved, invite us to revisit the phase of interconnected histories from a different angle because the impetus to return to Dutt's plays adds another thread to the interconnected histories. This new thread intertwines twenty-first century experiences of the rise of the right-wing, the global south gig economy, and the coming

of a new generation of postcolonial intellectuals. Taken together these threads compel contemporary theatre-makers to bring Dutt's work back to the stage.

Let me list some of these revivals, with the caveat that this list is not exhaustive. I have already mentioned the revival of *Titu Mir*. Along with *Titu Mir* came *Ghum Nei* (1959), a play on the significance of the workers' union, which is now regularly performed by the theatre group Icchemoto to warm receptions and has received awards for its sets, sound and performance. Sourav Palodhi, the director of the 2023 revival, has argued that this play has contemporary resonance because it underlines the importance of the workers' collective voice in sustaining the secular ethos of Indian democracy (Palodhi 2023). Similarly, *Barricade* (1972), which comments on the rise of authoritarianism against the backdrop of the rise of Nazism in Germany, was revived by the theatre group Chakkaha Natyajan in January 2022 to comment on the contemporary crises of religious fundamentalism and political violence in India. Another Dutt play *Ekla Chalo Re* (1989) which re-tells the history of Partition and the subsequent religious riots through the historical moment of Gandhi's assassination in 1948, was successfully revived by the group Swapna Sandhani in 2019.

Finally, Utpal Dutt's legacy remains dependent on and is shaped by these new interpretations of his theatre. His work created a reservoir of memory and his plays and his approach to theatre-making, provide a constant reminder of the importance of history in fashioning the present. The future, however, is being shaped here and now by a new generation of directors, actors and dramaturgs who are making Dutt relevant again, and interpreting his work in ways that facilitate better understanding of the conceptual and material spaces the new postcolonial generation occupies. The process of decolonization in the political theatre of Utpal Dutt, thus remains a vital part of an ongoing movement where every act of thinking and performing is revising, recreating, reinterpreting history. Instead of romanticizing the past, this movement is taking shape as a critical multi-dimensional re-looking at the past, as a working method for making sense of collective political and artistic struggles.

Mallarika Sinha Roy is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Women's Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.



A sea of heads on Beadon Street in front of Minerva Theatre during the 'Kallol' days

Shakib stays, Taskin returns for Pakistan tour

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was called up and pacer Taskin Ahmed returned to the Test fold after over one year's gap as Bangladesh named a 16 member squad for the upcoming two-Test series against Pakistan, scheduled to begin on August 21 in Rawalpindi.

Many fans on social media were vocal against Shakib and called for his ouster from the team following his silence during the students protests. However, the selectors decided to choose the 37-year-old for the tour.

"The emphasis was on picking our best players for this version. This is a well-balanced squad," chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu



was quoted in a press release yesterday.

Shakib, who recently played in the Global T20 league in Canada, is expected to join the side directly in Pakistan ahead of the series.

Meanwhile, Taskin returns to red-ball cricket after having asked to opt out of Test assignments in February for the remainder of 2024 to manage his workload following a shoulder injury.

However, the right-arm pacer has been named only for the second Test in Karachi, starting on August 30, as the selectors first want to test the pacer's mettle in red-ball cricket in Bangladesh 'A' team's second four-day game against Pakistan 'A', beginning on August 20 in Islamabad.

"We have selected five pacers mindful of the

fact that Taskin will only play the second Test. He hasn't bowled in a Test since June last year [against Afghanistan] and we have decided to include him in the 'A' Team for the second four-day game against Pakistan 'A' to get him into the rhythm for longer version matches.

"Our attack has variety with bowlers who can bowl fast and also swing the ball and I am really looking forward to seeing them perform against world class batsmen," Lipu said.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who missed the last Test series against Sri Lanka at home due to a fracture on his right thumb, returned to the Test side and has already departed for Pakistan to play the first four-day game for Bangladesh 'A' from August 13.

Shahadat Hossain Dipu and Mushfik Hasan missed the cut from the last Test series.

Despite Bangladesh's poor record in Pakistan, Lipu was hopeful that this group of players can bring success.

"Pakistan are very tough opponents, especially in their home front and it will be a challenging tour for us. It is good that we will get additional time to prepare in Lahore. Also, some players who are in Pakistan already with the Bangladesh 'A' side, will join the national team for the Test series. Their experience of the conditions should come in handy."

No headway yet on Women's T20 WC hosting

SPORTS REPORTER

Asif Mahmud, the Youth and Sports Adviser of Bangladesh's newly formed interim government, informed the ministry will "address state-level matters" with both the Chief Adviser to the interim government, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, and seek guidance from the United Nations to facilitate the hosting of the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup.

Mahmud took office for the first time yesterday and met with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officials before addressing the media.

"We have talked to BCB about the Women's T20 World Cup. The most important thing is ensuring security, and to achieve that, there are state-level matters that need to be addressed," Mahmud told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

"We will have detailed discussions with Prof. Yunus. He is a sports-loving person, and of course, he will assist us and ensure security at the state level. We will also consult with the UN regarding their suggestions, as there are travel restrictions for a few countries," added the 26-year-old.

The International Cricket Council (ICC)

has been monitoring the situation in Bangladesh following mass protests in the country that eventually led to the fall of the Awami League government.

Bangladesh is scheduled to host the mega event from October 3 to October 20, but there are significant concerns about security following weeks of unrest. In case the tournament needs to be relocated, ICC is reportedly considering alternative options, with India, UAE and Sri Lanka being the likely candidates.

The Youth and Sports Adviser has also asked BCB – in presence of its Chief Executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury, along with seven directors – to explore the possibility of appointing an interim board president under ICC's framework, given that BCB President Nazmul Hassan is currently absent.

Mahmud further informed, "For a federation to function effectively, all of its organs need to operate. The president holds an important responsibility. However, the BCB is an autonomous federation, and we cannot impose decisions on it but can exchange suggestions.

"We want to make the necessary changes, but at the same time, we need to follow due process."



'HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?'

REUTERS, Paris

Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan sprinted through the finish of the marathon and straight into the pantheon of Olympic greats on Sunday, completing her astonishing Olympic agenda with a gold medal after taking bronze in both the 5,000 and 10,000 metres.

A hundred years on from Paavo Nurmi's five golds in Paris, the 2024 Games got the athletics hero they had been waiting for in Hassan, who became the first since Czech Emil Zatopek in 1952 to medal in those three events.

"Every moment in the race I was regretting that I ran the 5000m and 10,000m. I was telling myself if I hadn't done that, I would feel great today," she said.

"From the beginning to the end, it was so hard. Every step of the way. I was thinking, 'Why did I do that? What is wrong with me?' If I hadn't done it, I would feel so

Rank	Teams	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	USA	40	44	42	126
2	China	40	27	24	91
3	Japan	20	12	13	45
4	Australia	18	19	16	53
5	France	16	26	22	64
6	Netherlands	15	7	12	34
7	Great Britain	14	22	29	65
8	Republic of Korea	13	9	10	32
9	Italy	12	13	15	40
10	Germany	12	13	8	33

comfortable here."

Hassan stunned fans three years ago when she attempted a rare Olympic treble in the 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m – taking bronze in the shorter distance and winning the two longer races.

She earned headlines again this time around, signing up for those three events as well as the marathon for Paris.

Throng of reporters tuned in to hear her announce which she would actually run, with few predicting she would really try the gruelling distance road run on top of the two longer track events.

"For anyone else this would be insane," retired sprint legend Michael Johnson declared. But not for Hassan, who has built a reputation as one of her sport's toughest fighters.

And 36 hours after the 10,000m wrapped up across town at the Stade de France, Hassan was on the starting line,

becoming the first woman to attempt all three – and admitted she was scared to try it.

She battled with Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia and managed to shake her off in the last stretch, crossing the finish line in an Olympic record time of two hours, 22 minutes and 55 seconds.

All told, the two-time marathon major winner raced a total of 62.2 kilometres (38.65 miles) in Paris.

"When I finished, the whole moment was a release. It is unbelievable. I have never experienced anything like that. Even the other marathons I have run were not close to this," she told reporters.

"I couldn't stop celebrating. I was feeling dizzy. I wanted to lie down. Then I thought, 'I am the Olympic champion. How is this possible?'"

Hassan's outstanding grit has won over not only fans, but her rivals, too.

"She's just awesome. Who can do that? Who can come from track and win the marathon?" said Kenya's Sharon Lokedi, who finished fourth.

"I feel like I just want to be her."



LeBron 'super humbled' by third gold

AFP, Paris

LeBron James said his third Olympic gold felt the best of them all as the NBA's all-time leading points scorer helped the United States beat France 98-87 in the final on Saturday.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar returned to the Olympics after a 12-year absence, notching 14 points, 10 rebounds and six assists as Team USA held off a battling France to make it five successive men's basketball golds.

"It's a big moment for USA basketball," said James. "I'm just living in the moment. I feel super humbled that I can still play this game and play it at a high level, play with 11 other great players, and a great coaching staff go out and do it for our country."

The US beat France for the second Olympic final in a row, with James back in the squad and four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry making his tournament debut.

"It was great. I think you wouldn't want it any other way to be able to face off against the host team. It was a great atmosphere," said James.

The 39-year-old won bronze as a teenager at Athens 2004 and was part of the "Redeem Team" four years later that took gold in Beijing. James appeared again at London 2012 but had not played at the Games since.

"It's the best one because it's the one that's right now," said James, suggesting it would be his final Olympics.

"I can't see myself playing in LA (in 2028). Although I also didn't see myself playing in Paris. But four years from now, I can't see it," he said.



Resignation of BFF's Salahuddin, Kiron demanded

SPORTS REPORTER

Defying inclement weather, members of Bangladeshi Football Ultras (BFU), a fan group of Bangladesh football, gathered at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) headquarter in Arambagh yesterday, demanding the immediate resignation of BFF president Kazi Salahuddin and women's committee chairperson Mahfuza Akter Kiron.

Approximately 50 BFU members turned up as part of their 'March to BFF' programme braving the rain, chanting different slogans.

BFU has been campaigning for the resignations of Salahuddin, Kiron and senior vice president Abdus Salam Mursedy, who stepped down on Thursday soon after the resignation of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in the face of vigorous protests.

BFU members now want Salahuddin and Kiron to follow Mursedy's footsteps and exit the federation.

"I want him [Salahuddin] to willingly resign from his post like Abdus Salam

Mursedy," said BFU general secretary Mehedi Hasan Ovi in front of the main gate of the BFF House yesterday.

"Kiron time and again threatened the women's footballers and she is using the sentiments for the women's footballers to accumulate wealth for herself. We demand Kiron's resignation as well.

"They are trying to tag us as extremists, dangerous for football. But we are ready to counter the dirty games Salahuddin is playing, whom we respect as a legendary footballer but he has been a failure as an organiser," he added.

Though the BFU demanded the resignation of only Salahuddin and Kiron, former footballer and coach Shafiqul Islam Manik thinks the entire BFF executive committee needs to step down.

"I think the whole BFF executive committee should resign because no one can avoid their responsibility for the failure of the country's football," said Manik, who had once contested for the BFF president post.

Manik also added that every party should be wary of FIFA's regulations over government interference in football federations, a sentiment echoed by former footballer and coach Hasanuzzaman Khan Bablu. "I think change in a systematic

way is better because there is a FIFA binding. FIFA had suspended Bangladesh in 2001 after interference of the then government. We should not do anything that forces FIFA to ban Bangladesh," Bablu said.

"I think the interim government will form a dynamic leadership in a systematic way as the BFF election is approaching close."

Although the next BFF election set to take place in October, former footballer Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chunu thinks, "The entire BFF committee should resign before the election because it is a demand of the time."

Adviser of the youth and sports ministry in the interim government Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan has yet to comment on the matter but reiterated that the current government is determined to bring a systematic change everywhere.

"We want to reform the entire country. This reform is not about changing an individual from a position. We want to change the system."



Serbia players and coaching staff celebrate their 13-11 victory over Balkan rivals Croatia in the final of men's water polo on the last day of Paris Olympics at the La Defense Arena yesterday. The win extended Serbia's reign over the sport with a third successive gold medal. PHOTO: REUTERS





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USA pip China in medals table

AFP, Paris

The United States pipped China for top spot in the battle of medals yesterday as Paris prepared to bring the curtain down on one of the most successful Olympic Games in history.

In a thrilling finale that capped 17 days of spellbinding action, the United States women's basketball team squeezed past France 67-66 to clinch the last gold of the Games.

The win -- the eighth consecutive Olympic women's basketball won by the USA -- ensured the Americans finished level with China on 40 golds each as the games drew to a close.

The USA however finished on top of the overall medal table with a total of 126 medals, with China in second place on 91.

The final day began with a gripping women's marathon victory by the Netherlands' long-distance running star Sifan Hassan, who overhauled Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa to take gold by three seconds in an Olympic record of 2hr 22min 55sec.

Wrestling, weightlifting, water polo, volleyball, modern pentathlon, handball, and track cycling were the other sports to crown Olympic champions on the last day.

Hungary's Michelle Gulyas ran and shot to Olympic gold in the modern pentathlon, with home favourite Elodie Clouvel roared on to clinch silver.

In weightlifting, China's jubilant Li Wenwen lifted her coach into the air instead of the bar, having already secured gold.

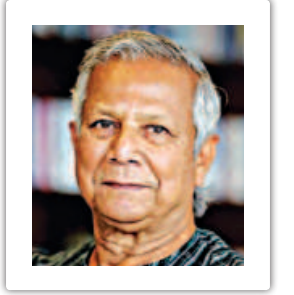


SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Athletes enter the stadium during the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis yesterday. A star-studded ceremony took place in front of around 71,500 spectators to crown an event that has been broadly acclaimed as one of the greatest editions of the Olympics ever held.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Prof Yunus acquitted in graft case

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus has been acquitted in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), four days after being cleared of charges in a labour law violation case.

Meanwhile, Nurjahan Begum, the recently sworn-in health adviser and another accused in the graft case, was also acquitted.

The development came yesterday, three days after the council of advisers in the interim government led by Prof Yunus took the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

ATTACKS ON MINORITIES

Form special tribunals to try culprits

Demand leaders of minority communities

STAR REPORT

Leaders of the minority organisations yesterday demanded the formation of special tribunals to expedite the trials of those who were involved in the attacks on minorities and compensation for the victims.

They placed the demands at the demonstrations that continued for the third straight day in the capital and elsewhere in the country, organised under the banners of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council and Bangladesh Puja Ujapan Parishad.

In the capital, the central rally was held in front of the National Museum.

"This is our country. We were born here. We will give our lives, but we will not leave this country," said Basudev Dhar, president of the Puja Ujapan Parishad, while speaking at the rally.

Following the rally, the protesters brought out a procession, which ended at the Central Shaheed Minar premises, where another rally was held.

There, they placed several other demands, which included the allocation

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Israel faces anger over Gaza school 'massacre'

More Gaza evacuations ordered; Palestinians and UN say nowhere in Gaza safe

AFP, Gaza City

Israel yesterday faced international condemnation for its strikes on a school in Gaza used for internally displaced people.

At least 93 people were killed in the attack. AFP could not independently verify the toll which, if confirmed, would be one of the largest from a single strike during 10 months of war between Israel and Palestinian militants since Hamas's October 7 attack.

The bombing of Al-Tabieen religious school and mosque drew criticism from across the Middle East and beyond alongside calls for a ceasefire, after international mediators invited the warring sides to resume talks towards a long-sought truce and hostage-release deal.

Civil defence rescuers in the Hamas-ruled territory said three Israeli missiles hit the complex in Gaza City while people were performing dawn prayers. The military confirmed it had used "three precise munitions".

Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil

defence agency, said 11 children and six women were among the 93 who died at the school shelter, "and there are many unidentified body parts".

"They dropped a missile on them while they were just praying," said one woman, mourning over a dead child shrouded in a plastic body bag.

Israel's military said it had "precisely struck" Al-Tabieen, later adding that intelligence suggested "at least 19 Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists were eliminated".

Hamas denounced it as a "dangerous escalation", while the Palestinian group's Lebanese ally Hezbollah called it a "horrific massacre".

Iran, which backs both militant groups and had accused Israel of wanting to spread war in the Middle East following high-profile killings in Tehran and Beirut, condemned what it called a "barbaric attack".

"Those who were inside the mosque were all killed," said local resident Abu Wassim. "Even the floor above, where women and children were sleeping, was completely burned."

- Israel issues massive evacuation order in Khan Younis
- Tens of thousands made to leave homes in darkness
- Palestinians and UN say nowhere in Gaza is safe



BNP leader Salahuddin returns after nine years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed returned to Bangladesh yesterday from India, where he ended up under mysterious circumstances over nine years ago.

To give him a warm welcome, thousands of party members gathered at Dhaka's Shahjalal International Airport, where he landed at 2:15pm after departing from Delhi at 11:00am.

Upon his return in a changed political landscape after the ouster of the Awami League

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Scientists invent new way to make Mars habitable

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists want to sprinkle engineered dust particles across the Martian atmosphere, warming it up so that it could be made habitable.

The groundbreaking idea is one of a number of revolutionary ways that scientists have proposed to terraform Mars, so that it could be made more like Earth and perhaps even serve as a home for humans.

At the moment, the Martian surface is inhospitable: it is punishingly cold, blasted by deadly UV rays, the soil is salty, the air is thin, and there is no evidence that anything currently lives there.

The new method is more than 5,000 times more efficient than previous schemes, the scientists behind it say.

It makes use of resources that are easily available on Mars -- rather than requiring us to transport materials from our planet, or digging them out of the Martian ground.

Researchers warn that the proposal would take decades to actually work. But many other proposals could be impossible because of the vast amount of work required to make them happen.

The first proposals for terraforming Mars started in the early 1970s. In the 50 years since, researchers have suggested a host of different ways of making it more like Earth, none of which have got off the ground.



Resignation statement news 'fake'

Says Joy about Hasina; 'mob rule being allowed'

STAR REPORT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy yesterday doubled down on his earlier claim that his mother did not resign.

"The recent resignation statement attributed to my mother published in a newspaper is completely false and fabricated," he said in his verified X handle.

"I have just confirmed with her that she did not make any statement either before or since leaving Dhaka," he wrote.

Meanwhile, in an interview with AFP, he thanked New Delhi for "saving her life", accused the interim government of allowing "mob rule" and warned of chaos ahead without swift elections.

Hasina, 76, fled by a helicopter to longtime ally India in a culmination of a student-led uprising on August 5.

"Right now in Bangladesh, you have mob rule," Joy told AFP from Washington.

He pointed to the ouster of top officials, including the chief justice, central bank governor and police chief, following protesters' demands.

"If the mob tomorrow says, 'no, we want this person in the interim government

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Displaced Palestinians flee Hamad City following an Israeli evacuation order in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Law enforcers not our enemy' Gopalganj AL says errant people to be handed over to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Gopalganj Awami League has asked leaders and activists of the party and its associate bodies not to hold any programme blocking roads and interrupting daily life.

It also asked them to hold peaceful events and not to carry any homemade weapons, said a press release yesterday.

The directives came a day after at least nine army personnel were injured and a military vehicle was torched during a clash in Gopalganj following an AL procession demanding the return of party President Sheikh Hasina to the country.

"Remember law enforcement agencies are not our enemy," said the press release, asking not to use any power against them.

The district AL regretted the untoward incident that happened with the army

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