

# Flagging drives letting Aedes bite

Cities, municipalities can't make fogging, spraying larvicides effective as councillors who monitor are absent

HELEMUL ALAM

Amid a dearth of local government representatives, anti-mosquito campaigns have become irregular which according to experts may lead to a deadly dengue outbreak very soon.

The number of confirmed dengue cases is already high.

After the fall of the Awami League government in early August, 12 city corporation mayors, 330 municipality mayors and administrators, almost all the zilla and upazila parishad chairmen were removed.

The interim government then appointed administrators to carry out the responsibilities of the mayors.

But as most of the councillors of Dhaka's two city corporations went into hiding after the fall of the government, there is no one to watch over the mosquito killing drives, which include regular fogging and spraying of larvicides.

Many local government representatives, most of whom were Awami League leaders, in the capital and elsewhere have gone into hiding.

Eighty percent councillors are still absent in Dhaka North City Corporation and 75 percent in Dhaka South City Corporation, according to the officials.

Meanwhile, the disease borne by Aedes mosquitoes claimed 92 lives



Makeshift tents line an embankment along the Bhadra river in Khulna's Paikgasa upazila. Hundreds of villagers were forced to relocate here after their houses were flooded on August 22. These people have nowhere else to go as their homes were destroyed when a flood-protection dam was breached. The photo was taken in Harinkhola village under the upazila's Deluti union.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



this year, and the confirmed cases was 14,804 as of yesterday. Twenty-eight of the deaths and 8,505 of the cases were detected outside Dhaka.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said the numbers may rise significantly later this month because rains are creating puddles of clear water for Aedes to breed while the authorities are almost inactive.

"We must identify the dengue hotspots and start working now to prevent more cases. The situation is bad across the country," he told The Daily Star. "Public leadership is very important in anti-mosquito campaigns. But there is no mayor."

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said surveillance, which is key to control Aedes mosquitoes, was absent even in the major cities.

"Through surveillance, we detect active clusters and breeding places of the Aedes, and then destroy them," he said.

The number of infections is likely to keep rising until the second half of October.

## HIGH CASE FATALITY RATE

In epidemiology, case fatality rate is the proportion of people who have been diagnosed with a certain disease and end up dying of it.

According to the health directorate, the rate this year is 0.61 percent, up from 0.5 percent in 2023.

At least 1705 people died of dengue last year.

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## Teesta water issue has to be solved

Says Yunus, calls for humanitarian approach to flood management

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
New Delhi

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has emphasised the need to resolve the longstanding transboundary river water-sharing issue between India and Bangladesh in line with international norms.

In the second part of the interview with Press Trust of India, conducted at the CA's official residence in Dhaka last Sunday, Yunus said lower riparian countries like Bangladesh have specific rights that must be respected.

The second part of the interview was released yesterday.

The chief adviser said Bangladesh's interim government would continue working with India to resolve differences over the long-pending Teesta



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## Ex-minister Shajahan held, placed on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed former shipping minister Shajahan Khan on a seven-day remand in a case filed over the death of 14-year-old Abdul Motaheb in the city's Dhanmondi area on August 4.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbub Ahmed passed the order after investigation officer Khokon Mia, a sub-inspector of Dhanmondi Police Station, produced him before the court seeking a 10-day remand, a sub-inspector working in the court told The Daily Star.

Shajahan, 75, also an Awami League presidium member, was arrested

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## GOVT HEALTHCARE FACILITIES Protests, departures cripple services

Scores of high-ranking health officials not being allowed to work

AHMED DEEPTO

Protests after the fall of the Awami League government have forced heads and top officials of many government healthcare facilities and institutes to resign or remain absent, leaving the entire sector in disarray, and ultimately causing patient suffering.

Even the new head of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), appointed last month after the fall of the Awami League government, has been unable to enter his office in the face of protests.

Meanwhile, a string of sudden promotions of pro-BNP doctors who were "deprived" during the AL government at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) has shed light on the direct effects of politics on the sector.

Although the influence of politics was not directly linked to the recent doctors' protests over the assault on a colleague at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), the absence of top officials was clear as the new administration grappled with the situation. Amid the doctors' strike for two days earlier this month, many patients were turned away.

Dulal Hossain, 60, a patient with chest pain from Munshiganj, was turned away.

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The shallow wetlands are teeming with red water lilies this monsoon. A hundred of these delicacies can fetch up to Tk 800 at the weekly bazaar. The photo of two people sorting them was taken yesterday from Daserpool Haat in Binoykati union under Jhalakathi Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Star INTERVIEW

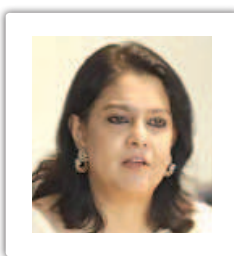
Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan discussed with The Daily Star's Pinaki Roy how the interim government is going to stop businesses from polluting the rivers of Bangladesh.

## 'Won't tolerate river pollution'

Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan has issued a stern warning against the pollution of rivers by businesses.

"This generation who waged the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement never saw any pollution-free rivers in Bangladesh. I want to show it to them," Rizwana said.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Rizwana, also in charge of the water resources ministry, said the interim government is preparing a list of rivers



that have been heavily polluted by industrial waste. "We will not tolerate pollution of any river by any business to increase profits," she remarked. The adviser also mentioned that rivers belong to people.

Bangladesh has many rivers, and the government must protect them all. But it is also true that this government would not be able to work for all at the same time, said Rizwana, known for her work as an environmental activist.

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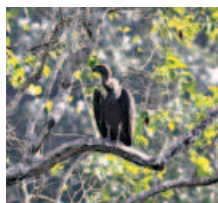
## Battleground of change

WR1



## Dismantling recruitment syndicate

P8



## The silent decline of 'nature's cleaners'

P5

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## BNP leader ‘beaten to death’ in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

A BNP leader of Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila was beaten to death yesterday.

Deceased Emdadul Haque Aklu served as the president of BNP's ward -6 unit in Muktarpur union under the upazila, reports our correspondent.

At least four people were also injured in the incident.

According to locals, a factional clash between two rival BNP groups broke out in Nashu Market area around noon during which Aklu was killed.

However, Bablu Mia, general secretary of Kaliganj upazila BNP, said Awami League members were responsible for the killing.

He claimed that local AL men in July had abducted Aklu.

"When he was going to a shop, 10 to 15 Awami League men assaulted him and beat him to death," Bablu said.

Kaliganj Police Station Inspector (investigations) Maruf Hossain said the body was sent to Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Garbage collected from homes in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area is being dumped along the Adi (old) channel of the Buriganga, polluting both the river and the surrounding environment. The photo was taken yesterday in Kamrangirchar's Koylarchat area.

## Flagging drives letting Aedes bite

FROM PAGE 1

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said since mid-August, more patients were coming with dengue.

He added that delayed hospitalisation increased the risks.

In Sri Lanka, the case fatality rate was .04 percent in July, thanks to the country's systematic methods and modern health management.

Immediately after detecting a dengue patient, health workers in Sri Lanka update their national data. Actions are taken based on the data.

"Public health teams go to the patient's house, check the

surroundings for Aedes breeding grounds, and destroy if they find any. They also look for other infected people," he said.

The teams also create awareness about how stagnant clear water can be a perfect breeding place for dengue larvae. The teams make a followup visit after a week and take legal action against residents if they find Aedes breeding places again, Nazmul said.

The chief of head of Sri Lanka's dengue management committee is the president and the army chief, ministers and top law enforcement members are also involved, he added.

Bangladesh's anti-mosquito

programmes are not coordinated like theirs, he said.

Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control And Research, urged people to consult a doctor if they have a temperature.

Administrator of Dhaka South City Corporation Sher Ali on Wednesday told reporters that larvae-killing drives were conducted regularly.

DSCC teams visit the patients' houses as part of the anti-mosquito programme, he said.

DNCC officials said 10 teams were formed on September 2 to raise awareness and monitor the anti-mosquito drives.

## Won't tolerate river pollution

FROM PAGE 1

"We have to set examples and so, we're thinking if we can free one river in each of the eight divisions from pollution and encroachment.

"Whoever works on the issue in future can follow the model. But it doesn't mean we're neglecting other rivers," she said.

The adviser mentioned that the High Court had earlier ordered the authorities concerned to evict 66,000 grabbers.

"We're asking eight divisional commissioners to submit their plans on freeing all those rivers from encroachment."

Asked how the government is going to clean the Buriganga, one of the most polluted rivers in the world, she said, "It's very challenging to make this river pollution-free. I said it earlier as well. It will take a long time to make the river water free from chromium. But we can start the process."

Apart from the Buriganga, many rivers like the Labandaha in Gazipur, the Sutang in Habiganj, and the Hari-dhoya in Narsingdi, are polluted by industrial waste.

To free these rivers from pollution, Rizwana said, they will identify the factories responsible for it and engage locals to protect the rivers.

"I think this is going to be easier for us because there are young generations in all districts who can engage in the process."

If the government officially authorises the organisations that

work voluntarily to save rivers, they will feel empowered and show interest in working on the issue, said the adviser.

So, involving the local community in protecting rivers, like giving responsibility to a group to monitor two kilometres of a certain river, and engaging students in this process will be part of the plan to save rivers, said Rizwana.

She also instructed the Department of Environment to conduct drives against the factories responsible for pollution.

Rizwana said owners of many industries make excuses for not operating effluent treatment plants (ETPs) even if they have ETPs. Sometimes, they run the ETPs the whole day but release polluted water into rivers at night.

"We need some suggestions on how to monitor and stop these ill attempts. I don't think it is impossible to detect and stop them," the adviser said and suggested using separate meters for biological ETPs to detect pollution.

For example, she said it cannot be confirmed without tests whether the Hari-dhoya River in Narsingdi is being polluted as industries are far from the riverbanks.

If the government can provide a meter, it will be possible to find out easily if the ETPs are functional in a particular period.

Rizwana encouraged good businesspersons to lead the next generation by example in refraining

from releasing industrial waste into rivers. "We will welcome them in our initiative."

She said her ministry would sit with the industries ministry to discuss the issue of the Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) not functioning properly at Savar Tannery Industrial Estate.

The adviser said she has been vocal from the very beginning that the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation is not the proper authority to monitor the CETP.

"We have to form an expert committee who will work to make the CETP functional," she said, emphasising cooperation between the two ministries.

About blackwater pollution of the rivers, Rizwana said the DoE made a list in 2017 that shows most of the rivers were polluted by sewage. "We cannot stop blackwater pollution within a very short period this government would get. Maybe we'll be able to prepare a plan."

Asked about the priorities and challenges of her work, the environment adviser said this government, unlike an elected administration, would get a short time to address many big environmental issues.

Another big challenge will be to turn the environmental administration to a people-oriented one. "It never took people's views before taking any development project."

## Ex-minister Shajahan held, placed on remand

FROM PAGE 1

in Dhanmondi early yesterday.

On August 26, Abdul Motin, father of Motaleb, lodged the murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Shajahan, and 174 others.

Shajahan is the president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, an umbrella organisation of more than 200 unions of road transport workers across the country.

He had a strong hold on the country's road transport sector and played a very crucial role to keep transport services functional amid strike called by the

BNP-led opposition in early 2015. In many cases, the government could not implement its decision to bring discipline and curb road crashes in face of their obstruction, according to media reports.

Shajahan, also the executive president of Bangladesh Sramik Federation, was the lawmaker from Madaripur-2. He was first elected MP as an independent candidate in 1986. From the same parliamentary seat, he was elected lawmaker in the national elections of 1991, 1996, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2024 with AL tickets.

The country's transport sector is

allegedly hostage to Shajahan and his activities in this sector posed a threat to road safety and public interest, the media reported on different occasions.

He and his wife's wealth have increased significantly over the last 15 years. His income has also increased.

As per his affidavits along with nomination papers submitted before the Election Commission in 2008, his annual income was Tk 6.85 lakh.

Before the 2024 national election, ex-minister showed his annual income was Tk 2.21 crore, which is almost 32 times higher than that of 2008.

## Protests, departures cripple services

FROM PAGE 1

was taken to the DMCH by his family on Sept 1 amid the strike. They had to leave without getting any treatment. "What could be more unfortunate than something like this? The patients and their families suffer ultimately," Dulal's son-in-law Md Mohsin told The Daily Star.

This reporter's repeated attempts to reach Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum for comments on the current state of the country's health sector after the political changeover via mobile phone calls and messages failed. After the doctors launched the strike, she visited DMCH and promised stern action against those involved in the attack.

At the DGHS, Professor Robed Amin replaced Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, appointed by the previous regime at the height of the coronavirus pandemic amid allegations of widespread corruption in the sector, as acting director general on August 18.

Officials and employees, however, have been demonstrating in front of the DGHS offices in Dhaka's Mohakhali almost every day demanding his removal.

During a visit to the DGHS last week, three banners were seen hanging at the main gate, each reading, "We want the removal of all corrupt officials, including new DG."

On the first floor, seven rooms of top officials were locked. They have been absent since the ouster of the AL government on August 5, said two staffers who were playing ludo on a mobile phone.

"I haven't been able to get into my office yet. I'm doing some work from home. However, not everything can be done from home. Activities of the DGHS are being severely disrupted. We can't do all the hospital-related work," Prof Amin told The Daily Star.

"I'm barred from office even amid the flood situation. I've tried several times but a section of the officers and employees are obstructing me. I'm a victim of injustice."

More than 60 percent of the officials are unable to go to the DGHS, which is hampering services at the hospitals and medical institutions, he said. "This is unfortunate."

Following protests at the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM), the interim government on August 22 replaced its director Dr Md Shamiul Islam with Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, a DGHS additional director who became a household name in the early days of the pandemic with her daily briefings.

Prof Sabrina, too, has been unable to perform her duties at NIPSOM and DGHS since protesting officials and employees declared her persona non grata, accusing her of collaborating with the previous government.

She did not respond to our calls and text messages for comments.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general of DGHS, has not been able to enter the Institute of Public Health since becoming its director on August 22.

Prof MA Mannan said he resigned as executive director of the Institute of Child & Mother Hospital at Matuail as he could not enter his office.

Abdul Kader resigned as the principal of Mymensingh Medical College on August 20 amid protests by students and staffers. Prof Md Abdul Khalek was forced to resign as the principal of Rajshahi Medical College on August 12.

Such removals and voluntary and forced resignations of health officials one after another are hampering the healthcare and medical education sector, reducing the activities of hospitals and government health offices by 50 percent, said Bayezid Khurshid Riaz, who was himself forced to resign as the additional DG of medical education.

Public health expert Abu Jamil Faisal said protests and resignations will not solve the problems in the sector.

The protesters should find an alternative method of demonstration

and qualified people for replacements.

"Otherwise, these institutions will not be functional in the absence of guardians," he said and suggested forming a search committee to find suitable people for the sector.

At Dhaka Medical College, principal Md Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury and vice-principal Debesh Chandra Talukdar resigned on August 22 after two and a-hour confinement by protesting students to their offices.

The protesters also demanded the removal of pro-AL teachers and officials but later withdrew the demand. Three professors confirmed the matter to this correspondent. Ex-principal Shafiqul, without giving details, said he was forced to resign that day.

Seeking anonymity, an administrative official of DMCH told The Daily Star that they saw the facility being occupied by groups that had been inactive for the last 15 years. "Mostly officials and employees with less political involvement are now at risk."

**DAB REPLACING SWACHIP?**

The pro-AL doctors' organisation Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad (Swachip) controlled the health sector with great force over the past 15 years. Swachip leaders used to influence recruitments and transfers, apart from doing health-related businesses.

Previously, during the BNP government's tenure, the Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), backed by the party, had similar control over the sector.

On August 8, BSMMU promoted 173 medical officers known as BNP-Jamaat loyalists to assistant professors after their promotion had been held up for years during the previous government's tenure. They are among 213 recently promoted assistant professors. In addition, 31 have become professors and 23 have been appointed and promoted to other posts.

"The Awami League deprived the pro-BNP physicians of promotion.

They have been promoted now without any interview and syndicate approval," said a doctor at BSMMU who sought anonymity.

"This deprivation will not go away. This process is not right. Questions will arise again," he added.

The then BSMMU registrar Prof ABM Abdul Hannan signed the orders on the promotions on behalf of former vice-chancellor Deen Md Noorul Huq. Both were forced to resign, along with pro-VCs Mohammed Atiqur Rahman and Md Moniruzzaman Khan, on August 18.

Asked how the promotions took place without any interview and syndicate approval, Prof Hannan said, "We had to do it under a situation. It had the consent of the VC and pro-VC."

Public health expert Jamil told The Daily Star that partisan politics was prevalent in medical institutions under the guise of professional politics for a long time.

"It won't be possible to reform the sector by keeping Swachip and DAB active," said Jamil, president of the Public Health Association of Bangladesh.

DAB, however, has tried to distance itself from the incidents in the aftermath of the AL government's ouster. The association suspended its BSMMU unit on August 27 "to prevent chaos".

DAB President Prof Harun-Al-Rashid told The Daily Star that discrimination had prevailed at BSMMU for a long time. "It has been unfair to those deprived for so many years. Reforms are now underway there," he said.

"A new VC has been appointed at BSMMU. New officers and employees will be appointed too. The DAB committee at the university has been suspended so that no one can create any chaos at this time," he said.

"Politicisation and partisanship are never good. But the previous government did these openly and secretly," said the DAB president.

## Star Media Group's Esther Ng elected new chair of ANN

STAR REPORT

Datin Paduka Esther Ng, chief content officer of Malaysia's Star Media Group, has been elected the next chairman of the Asia News Network (ANN).

She will officially assume her duties on January 1 next year, succeeding Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, reports The Star.

This is the third time a woman has been appointed to the prestigious role.

Ng, speaking at ANN's 25th anniversary summit in Malaysia, expressed her vision for modernising storytelling, the report said.

"I intend to tell stories differently. Times have changed and there are modern ways of storytelling now. We have to showcase Asia at the forefront," she said.

She also highlighted her commitment to issues close to her heart, including women, climate change, and the younger generation.

Ng praised Mahfuz Anam for his steady leadership during challenging times, particularly during the pandemic.

"He helmed it for three years due to the pandemic. He was a calming factor for all of us. The pandemic itself was a crisis and out of the blue we found ANN at a crossroads where we had to find our own fundings at some point. We started something and my job is to continue," Ng said.

Ng's appointment was unanimously confirmed during ANN's board meeting, marking a transition to younger leadership.

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A trader sorts hilsa after they were brought to the Port Road Bazar in Barishal city for selling. Despite a government ban on exports to India this year, price of hilsa continues to soar in local markets. Fishers and traders say the price rose due to a scarcity of fish in the sea, increased fishing costs, and rough weather conditions.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Hilsa remains costly despite export ban

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The price of hilsa continues to soar in local markets, despite a government ban on exports to India this year.

Fishermen and traders attribute the high prices to a scarcity of fish in the sea, increased fishing costs, and rough weather conditions.

According to fisheries officials, fishermen in Bangladesh catch an average of 5.5 to 6 lakh tonnes of hilsa annually.

This supply comes from two sources: the Bay of Bengal and rivers, with about 60 percent of the total haul coming from the sea.

However, this year, fishermen are struggling to catch adequate amounts of hilsa in the sea, leading to a low supply and driving up prices.

In previous years, the government allowed the export of 3,000 to 5,000 tonnes of hilsa annually around Durga Puja, said Nripendra Nath Biswas, deputy director of the Barishal Divisional Fisheries Office.

"But considering the scarcity of fish in the country, the government has decided to impose a ban on hilsa exports this year," he told The Daily Star.

At the Port Road Hilsa Market in Barishal, the largest wholesale market for hilsa in the country, prices vary depending on size.

A hilsa weighing around 1.5 kilogrammes is selling for about Tk 1,800, while a 1.2-kilogramme fish is priced at Tk 1,600, and a one-kilogramme hilsa at Tk 1,500. These prices are Tk 150 to Tk 200 higher than last year, according to traders.

"We are facing huge demand for hilsa, with orders from major cities like Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Sylhet.



Fishermen and traders attribute the high prices to a scarcity of fish in the sea, increased fishing costs, and rough weather conditions.

However, the supply is inadequate, which is why the prices are so high this year," said Shahidul Islam, a trader at Port Road Hilsa Market.

Fishermen cite poor catches as the main factor behind the price increase.

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## FLOOD AFTERMATH IN AKHAURA AND CUMILLA

### 1,258km roads, 32 bridges and culverts damaged

KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla

Rural and regional roads, bridges, culverts and other infrastructures sustained considerable damages in the recent spells of flood in 16 upazilas of Cumilla.

Thousands of people have been suffering with their daily commutes and emergency needs as the floodwaters washed away stretches of roads and left bridges and culverts vulnerable at different places, causing severe disruption to road communication within the district.

Transporting patients to hospitals and goods to different places have become very difficult in the present scenario.

"It used to take Tk 50-60 for a single trip to Cumilla city from my village. Now it costs much more as the road has been left in a sorry state after flood," said Ali Akber, an employee of a private bank in Cumilla city who resides in Burichang Bakshimul village.

"The flood also damaged the approach road of a culvert and rail tracks connecting Kalikapur," he added.

Syeduzzaman Sadek, executive engineer of Local Government Engineering Department in Cumilla, said, "At least 1,158km of rural roads and 32 bridges and culverts have been damaged in 16 upazilas of Cumilla district."

"The roads collapsed in many places, while bitumen surfaces were lost on most roads, causing formation of small and large potholes. Also, approach roads of many bridges and culverts were

washed away," he also said.

Higher authorities have been informed of the matter and requested for allocation of funds for repairing the rural infrastructures, the official added.

Contacted, Suniti Chakma, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department in Cumilla, said, "The flood also caused damages to 100km of regional roads across the district, including a 15km stretch of the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Chaudhagram area."

"However, the damaged portions of the regional roads and the highway have been repaired by RHD after floodwaters receded," she added.



## Fish farmers stare at losses

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

The recent flood has dealt a heavy blow to fish farmers in Akhaura upazila of Brahmanbaria.

The floodwaters washed away fish from ponds in numerous fish farms across the upazila, leaving farmers facing heavy losses.

Ibrahim Miah, a fish farmer from Rahimpur village in the upazila, is one of them.

"Fish from 33 ponds on our farm were washed away. It is now uncertain how I can possibly make a comeback after being hit hard by the flood. There has not been any compensation or assistance yet," he said.

Sohag Miah, another fish farmer from Saheb Nagar village, echoed his concerns.

"All the fish from my seven ponds were washed away, causing a loss of Tk 20 lakh. I had invested in fish farming after borrowing from a

bank. How am I going to repay the loan now?" he said.

Both Ibrahim and Sohag have sought government support to recover their losses.

The flood inundated 34 villages in the upazila, washing away fish from nearly 400 ponds and waterbodies, causing an estimated loss of Tk 12 crore, according to sources at the Akhaura Upazila Fisheries Office.

When contacted, Rounak Jahan, the senior fisheries officer in the upazila, said, "A list of the affected fish farmers has been sent to the higher authorities of the fisheries department. We have also submitted proposals to provide carp fish fry and fish feed free of charge to the affected farmers, as well as loans on soft terms."

"If the proposal is approved, the farmers will receive assistance to help them recover from the losses incurred," he added.

## Father accuses Hasina of stalling Taqi murder trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Rafiqur Rabbi, father of Tanvir Muhammad Taqi, yesterday renewed his call for a swift trial in his son's murder case, which has remained unresolved for the past 11 and a half years.

Speaking at a rally, Rabbi, a cultural activist, accused former prime minister Sheikh Hasina of stalling the trial and said she should be held accountable.

He alleged that Taqi was tortured and killed on the orders of Shamim Osman, with the involvement of Osman's son, nephew, and their associates.

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## OSMAN FAMILY An infamous clan that refuses to give up arms

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, Narayanganj

In Narayanganj, the Osman family name has long been synonymous with power, corruption, and violence for the past 15 years.

Led by Shamim Osman, the middle of three brothers, this family has dominated headlines for all the wrong reasons, often tied to criminal activities and political scandals.

On July 19, a group of AL men led by Shamim Osman was seen opening fire on quota reform protesters.

Video footage circulating on social media showed Shamim's son Imtihan Osman Ayon and brother-in-laws Tanvir Ahmed Titu and Faizuddin

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## Dewanbag Sharif attacked, torched in Narayanganj

Demo held at Sylhet's Shah Poran's shrine demanding ban on music

STAR REPORT

Miscreants attacked and torched the Babe Jannat Dewanbag Sharif, a shrine in Madanpur area of Narayanganj's Bandar upazila, yesterday morning.

At least four persons injured in the incident are undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said police.

According to locals and police sources, some people broke into the shrine around 6:00am and carried out arson and vandalism.

As caretakers of the shrine tried to resist, the attackers beat them up.

The shrine again came under attack later at noon, said locals.

Confirming the incident, Golam Mostofa, officer-in-charge of Bandar Police Station, said, "Police are working to identify the perpetrators and bring them to book."

After the incident, Pratyush Kumar Majumdar, superintendent of police in Narayanganj, visited the spot in the afternoon, the OC added.

Earlier on August 25, Aynal Shah

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Activists under the banner of "July Mass Uprising Forum" held protests in the Dhaka University area yesterday, condemning the indiscriminate killings conducted by Indian Border Security Force in the border area between Bangladesh and India. This comes in the wake of BSF shooting and killing of a 13-year-old Bangladeshi girl on September 1.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## National anthem sung nationwide 'in protest of conspiracy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national flag was hoisted in open spaces and the national anthem was sung nationwide yesterday morning to thwart any conspiracy against the anthem.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Goshthi organised the countrywide initiative.

"Since the political shift brought about by the mass movement of students and the public, various conspiracies have surfaced concerning matters close to the hearts of the people, including the Liberation War, the national flag, and the national anthem," said a press release of the organisation.

The cultural organisation held the programme at 10:00am in protest of these malicious plots and with the determination to stop them, the press release said.

Artists and activists from almost all districts and branch committees of the organisation, along with the general public, sang the national anthem that was earned through the blood of countless martyrs, according to the release.

The central committee arranged the "hoisting of the national flag in open spaces and the singing of the national anthem" at Udichi Chattar opposite the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.





PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**FROM PAGE 5**

"I ask the government to support us and offer my son Sakib a job," he said, adding, "Our dreams ended with Rouf's death, but his sacrifice was for a greater cause."

**FROM PAGE 5**

The bodies were handed over to the families of the deceased after completing legal procedures, said the OC.

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-35	12-45	4-30	6-20	7-45
JAMAAT	5-10	1-15	4-45	6-25	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**FROM PAGE 3**

They all went underground following Sheikh Hasina's fall on August 5, and took their firearms with them, the same firearms which were

FROM PAGE 3

Meanwhile, similar

Their defiance mirrors that of another high-profile figure in the district – former Jute and Textile Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi. Gazi, his wife, and their two sons hold licences for four shotguns issued in 2017, but none of them have been handed over to authorities.

Rafiur Rabbi, the father of Taqi, said, "The Osman family is involved in numerous killings in Narayanganj. It's time the government recovers these firearms and holds them accountable."

**FROM PAGE 5**

Mamun's body was taken back to his village and buried in the family graveyard. He left behind three children, including his eldest daughter, Sadi Akter, who is 10 years old and suffers from a mental illness, and his two sons, five-year-old Sheikh Sadi

FROM PAGE 5

Ahnaf's younger sister, Tasfia Jinnat Shafi, shared similar sentiments.

“Who will look after us? How will our family survive?” she said.

Sabina, Mamun's widow, said, "I have no savings, no way to support my children. Living back in the village has provided some shelter, but I have nothing to provide for my children's future."



FROM PAGE 3

He also called for restoration of the justice system, stating, "We want to see a judicial system that can deliver true justice."

Seventeen-year-old Taqi went missing on March 6, 2013 after leaving his home on Shaistakhan Road for the Sudhijon Pathagar, a local library. His body was found the following day in the Shitalakhya River.

FROM PAGE 5

The leaders of the platform demanded immediate publication of the list of all martyred garment workers and students, compensation to the families of the deceased and injured workers, and maximum punishment for the culprits.

She also urged all workers to remain united and not to get involved in any subversive activities.

FROM PAGE 3

Music on Thursday nights and during “urs” ceremony has been an integral part of the shrine’s tradition for over seven

Facing the demonstration, Kabul Ahmed, the shrine's khadem (caretaker), accepted their demands. "As their demands are valid based on religious grounds, we will take necessary steps in this regard," he said.

GD-363GD-353



Five girls go missing from Joypurhat madrasa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Five students from the residential section of Chaklamua Sahih Sunnah Girls' Madrasa in Joypurhat's Kalai upazila went missing since yesterday morning. The madrasa's superintendent Feroz Alam filed a complaint with Kalai Police Station in this connection in the afternoon. The madrasa has around 100 students, with 55 of them residing in its dormitory. According to a written complaint, the students had dinner and went to bed as usual on Thursday night. At dawn, when the dormitory supervisor, Manjuara Bibi, unlocked the doors for the students to perform Fajr prayers, five of the students went outside, but did not return. All of them are aged between 10 and 12 years. Of those missing, one is daughter of the madrasa's superintendent. Families of the four other missing students have been reached out, but they said the girls did not go home till yesterday evening. Three of the girls who went missing left behind notes in their trunks, said Feroz Hossain. The complaint lodged with Kalai Police Station, has been registered as a general diary. Anwar Hossain, inspector (investigation) of the police station, said police are investigating the incident.

INTERNATIONAL VULTURE AWARENESS DAY

The silent decline of 'nature's cleaners'



PHOTO: MD REZAUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

MINTU DESHWARA

Around three decades back, flocks of vultures were a common sight across the country. These vultures, known as nature's "cleaners", would gather around dead cattle left in open fields, swiftly removing the bodies and sanitising the area. However, the environment that once supported such gatherings has disappeared. Over the past three decades, vulture populations have declined sharply. Deforestation has removed their habitat, and there is a significant food shortage. Additionally, painkillers like diclofenac and titoftenac, used to treat sick domestic animals, leave harmful residues in the carcasses, leading to vulture deaths when they consume these contaminated bodies. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed vultures as critically endangered. Today is International Vulture Awareness Day. It is observed on the first Saturday of September each year to highlight the plight of these birds. The Forest Department data shows the vulture population was 1,972 in 2008. By the 2015 census, the number had plummeted to 260. Of these, around 100 vultures are found in the greater Sylhet region, and 70 to 80 are in Rema-Kalenga National Park in Habiganj. According to the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, vultures are unique in their ability to consume and digest dead animals, including those that are still fresh. Their feeding process helps quickly deodorise the environment and they possess the ability to digest various pathogens, including anthrax. In Atgaon, adjacent to Dighirpar Bazar in Amtoil Union in Moulvibazar Sadar Upazila, vultures are frequently seen in a fallow area. When dead cows and goats are discarded there, flocks of vultures gather to feed. On July 23, a group of 40 vultures was observed in this area, said Nazrul islam, a resident of Atgaon village. Mirza Mehdi Sarwar, wildlife and biodiversity conservation officer of the Forest Department, confirmed that vultures only visit Atgaon when dead cows are disposed of in the area. Shibli Sadik, an ornithologist at the forest department's wildlife rehabilitation facility, said, in 2015 the vulture population was 260, but it has now decreased to 245. This decline is primarily due to the death of 26 vultures in Moulvibazar, compounded by the continued use of harmful painkillers like diclofenac and titoftenac, he said. The vulture population in Rema-Kalenga Forest has also declined. In 2023, it was reported that 14 vultures died in Moulvibazar, but in reality, 26 vultures perished. Vultures from Rema-Kalenga Forest used to travel to Moulvibazar to feed, and a satellite-tagged vulture from Rema-Kalenga confirmed this migration pattern. The number of vulture nests in Rema-Kalenga Forest last year was lower than in 2014-15. The main factor contributing to the decline in vulture numbers is the lack of safe food sources. Funding for vulture conservation by IUCN is very limited and misallocated. There has been no funding for vulture conservation since 2023, and the funds available in 2022-23 were insufficient. The vulture known as Bangla vulture, associated with the Bengali name, has not received ongoing support. Continuous funding is essential for the conservation of this critically endangered species, but no significant conservation efforts have been undertaken since 2015, and the situation remains unchanged, Sadik added.

4 killed as bus hits microbus in Cumilla

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed when a bus hit a microbus from behind on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Cumilla's Chaudagram upazila early yesterday. The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately. The incident happened around 6:00am in the Batisha Nankora area when a Dhaka-bound bus hit the microbus, said Lokman Hossain, in-charge of the Miabazar Highway Police Outpost. Both the bus and the microbus involved in the accident have been seized, he added. In Dinaipur, helper of a truck driver was killed after the vehicle hit another parked truck in Ghoraghat upazila of Dinaipur yesterday, said police. The deceased is Shree Sourab Pahan, 22, of Joypurhat. In Gaibandha, a man and his son-in-law died in a road accident on Bogura-Rangpur Highway in Gobindaganj upazila on Thursday night, reports UNB. The deceased are Jahidul Islam, 40, and Shamim Mandal, 25, said Gobindaganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shariful Islam. Witnesses said the accident occurred around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ensure safety of RMG workers, pay their dues: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Garment Workers' Solidarity, a labour rights organisation, yesterday demanded justice for the garment workers, students and others killed in labour-prone areas including Ashulia during the anti-discrimination student movement. They also demanded that the garment owners pay the workers' dues and meet their fair demands. The organisation made the call at a rally, organised by its Ashulia unit, in front of Ashulia Press Club. Even though a month has passed since the horrors of violence during the student protests, most of the perpetrators are not even identified yet, speakers said. At least 75 were killed in violence during the movement between July 18 and August 4, and 15 more on August 5 in police firing in Ashulia, while

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

More than just NUMBERS

A 27-year-old driver shot in Uttara. A 30-year-old student gunned down by police in Savar. An RMG worker, fatally shot in Jatrabari. Over 550 lives (the actual number could be much higher) were lost when law enforcers opened fire on protesters during the recent unrest. But these victims are not just statistics; they are children, parents, and friends. In this report, we try to know the stories of three such names among these tragic numbers.



'His sacrifice was for a greater cause'

Says grief-stricken father of Rouf, 27, who was shot in Uttara

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

Abdur Rouf from Nilphamari Sadar upazila had moved to Dhaka with the hope of securing a better future for himself and his family.

He started working as a driver in Uttara.

The eldest of three siblings, Rouf, 27, had been sending Tk 20,000 each month to support his family's needs and cover his younger brother Sakib Hasan's educational expenses.

However, everything changed on the evening of July 18. During the students' protests in Uttara, Rouf was fatally wounded by gunfire.

He died on the way to Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, and his body was returned to their village in Majhpara the following day for burial.

Since his passing, his family has been grappling with the emotional and financial challenges of losing their sole provider.

"My education is now in jeopardy," said Sakib. He said just a day before his death, Rouf had

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'I have nothing left to live for'

Says mother of Ahnaf, 30, who was fatally shot in Savar

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Ahnaf Abir Ashrafullah had a promising future. He passed his SSC from Government Syed Abdul Jabbar Boys High School in 2011 and earned a diploma in Electrical Engineering from Munshiganj Polytechnic Institute in 2016.

He was a third-year student of Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Manarat International University.

However, his poor family's hopes and dreams centring him ended in tragedy when he was



killed in a police firing at Baipile in Savar on August 5.

Ahnaf, 30, was the third child of Harun Or Rashid and Asia Khatun from Barpakhia village in Delduar upazila, Tangail.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Sadi still waits for his father to come home RMG worker Mamun fatally shot in Jatrabari



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Five-year-old Sheikh Sadi still doesn't understand that his father, Abdullah Al Mamun, will never return. He waits patiently,

expecting his father to come home with chocolates, unaware that his father is gone forever.

"Every time Sadi asks when his father will come home, it breaks our hearts and casts a shadow of grief over the entire household," said Mamun's mother, Johura Khatun.

Mamun, who had only studied up to class eight, was forced to leave school due to extreme poverty. He moved to Dhaka in search of work to support his five-member family. Originally from Bottola

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Eight held with arms, ammunition in Cox's Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight people were arrested with arms and ammunition during the joint forces' drive in Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The arrestees are Kalim Ullah, 34, Md Khorshed Alam, 37, Md Hasan Sharif Laden, 20, Md Shaheen, 23, Md Mizan, 20, Abdul Malek, 48, Abdul Hai, 24 and Abdul Aziz, 25.

They were arrested from PM Khali union of the upazila around 3:00am, said Rab-15 Senior Assistant Director (Law & Media) Abul Kalam Chowdhury.

Tipped off, a team of joint forces raided two houses in the area and arrested them, said the Rab official.

A large amount of local and foreign arms and ammunition were recovered in the drive that lasted for five hours, he said.

Legal action is being taken against the arrestees, he added.

Two children die from snakebites

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

In separate incidents, two children died from snakebites in Yakubpur and Syedpur villages under Thakurgaon Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victims are Aditya, 7, a second-grader from Yakubpur village, and Jannat, 12, a seventh-grader from Syedpur village.

Both Aditya and Jannat were sleeping when they were bitten by snakes, according to family sources.

Aditya was rushed to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, from where he was referred to Dinaipur M Abdur Rahim Medical College and Hospital. He passed away on the way. Jannat died on the way to be taken to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital.

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Memo No: 57.03.0000.070.007.203.034- Date: 04 Sept. 2024

**e-GP Tender Notice**

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods details belows in the table.

Sl. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender ID No. (From e-GP Portal)	Tender Description	Publication Date and Time	Opening Date and Time
01.	57.03.0000.070.007.203.24 -736 Date: 02.08.2024	1010368	Chemistry Lab 03-Supply & installation of Equipment for Chemistry Lab For 17 TSC	08-Sep-2024 09:00	07-Oct-2024 12:00
02.	57.03.0000.070.007.203.24 -737 Date: 02.08.2024	1010367	Physics Lab 03-Supply & installation of Equipment for Physics Lab for 17 TSC	08-Sep-2024 09:00	07-Oct-2024 12:00
03.	57.03.0000.070.007.203.24 -738 Date: 02.09.2024	1010366	Basic Lab-3, Supply & installation of Equipment for Basic Lab for 17 TSC	08-Sep-2024 09:00	07-Oct-2024 12:30
04.	57.03.0000.070.007.203.24 -739 Date: 02.09.2024	1010365	Office-3, Supply & installation of Equipment for Office For 17 TSC	08-Sep-2024 09:00	07-Oct-2024 12:30


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The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.

  
Dr. Abul Kashem Mohammad Jahangir Hossain  
Project Director (Deputy Secretary)  
Email: 100s.pd@gmail.com



## Trump taps Musk to ‘save trillions’ in war on waste

AFP, New York

Republican White House candidate Donald Trump unveiled a plan Thursday to install tech billionaire Elon Musk at the head of a government efficiency commission to eliminate “trillions” of dollars in wasteful spending.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO has emerged as a major voice in US politics but is accused of turning the social media platform



Twitter, now known as X, into a megaphone for right-wing conspiracy theories since acquiring it in 2022.

Trump told business executives at a speech in New York that Musk -- the world's richest man, according to Forbes -- would oversee a “complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government” in a second Trump administration.

“As the first order of business, this commission will develop an action plan to totally eliminate fraud and improper payments within six months,” he said.

Musk, who endorsed Trump in July, is one of the Biden-Harris administration’s fiercest critics. The efficiency commission was initially Musk’s idea, but this is the first time Trump has confirmed he would adopt the plan and tap Musk to lead it.

“I look forward to serving America if the opportunity arises. No pay, no title, no recognition is needed,” Musk posted on his social media platform, X.

# Curtain raises on 2024 US election

First ballots sent to voters two months before the polling day

AFP, Washington

The first ballots for the US election were slated to go out to voters yesterday, two months ahead of what looks set to be a photo finish between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

The closely fought battleground state of North Carolina was expected to distribute around 130,000 absentee voting slips, with a presidential debate -- the next likely campaign inflection point -- set for next week.

Early in-person voting will start as soon as September 20 in some states.

North Carolina is among a handful of swing states that Harris and Trump have been crisscrossing as they embark on the most intense phase of a White House race expected to be decided by razor-thin margins.

Harris’s entry into the contest six weeks ago turbocharged enthusiasm among Democrats, who had been despondent about President Joe Biden’s chances of stopping Republican Trump from re-entering the White House.

Her team announced Friday that it raised \$361 million in



August, the largest monthly haul of the cycle and nearly triple the Trump team’s figure.

“In just a short time, Vice President Harris’s candidacy has galvanized a history-making, broad, and diverse coalition -- with the type of enthusiasm, energy, and grit that wins close elections,” said campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez.

“As we enter the final stretch of this election, we’re making sure every hard-earned dollar goes to winning over the voters who will decide this election.”

Harris’s ascent to the top of



the ticket has tilted the races for the White House, Senate and House of Representatives in the direction of Democrats, though all three fights remain close.

While Trump has seen the leads he built over Biden evaporate, his campaign still sees several possible paths to victory and believes it has more support on key election issues like the economy, immigration and crime.

Trump’s aides argue that Harris’s “honeymoon” with voters has overstated support that is beginning to erode as her policy views come into focus.

Harris is up 1.8 percent in head-to-head nationwide polling, according to aggregator RealClearPolitics.

The polls that really count -- in the crucial swing states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia and North Carolina -- show an even tighter race, with Harris up 0.2 percent overall, a statistical dead heat.

Other wrinkles on the path to November 5 include Trump’s 34 felony hush money conviction in New York, which is likely to charge back into the headlines with his much-delayed sentencing scheduled for September 18.

The first -- and perhaps only -- debate between Harris and Trump is the next big landmark, set for Tuesday on ABC News.

Trump -- who has consistently opposed mail-in voting -- posted a short video on TikTok urging Americans to send him back to the White House, “whether it’s mail-in ballots, early voting, or voting on Election Day.”

He was due to address an influential police union in North Carolina on Friday, and then hold a rally on Saturday in Wisconsin.

## Yagi slams into south China

AFP, Hong Kong

Super Typhoon Yagi slammed into China’s Hainan island yesterday, bringing windspeeds of over 230 kilometres an hour in what is set to be the strongest storm to hit the region in more than a decade.

Hainan province evacuated more than 400,000 people ahead of the storm’s expected landfall, while tens of thousands prepared to seek shelter in neighbouring Vietnam.

Yagi killed at least 13 people in the Philippines this week when it was still classified as a tropical storm, triggering floods and landslides on the main island of Luzon before strengthening into a super typhoon over the past few days.

The typhoon “is equivalent to a Category 4 hurricane”, according to Nasa Earth Data. Yagi will head towards Vietnam after moving through southern China, on course to hit the northern and north-central regions around the famed UNESCO heritage site Halong Bay today.



## ONLINE AD TECH Google ‘anti-competitive’: UK

AFP, London

US tech titan Google employs “anti-competitive practices” with regards to online advertising, Britain’s competition watchdog concluded yesterday in provisional findings of a two-year long investigation.

The probe has focused on so-called ad tech -- the system that decides which online adverts people see and how much they cost. The US Department of Justice and European Commission are carrying out similar investigations into Google.

In Britain, the Competition and Markets Authority “provisionally found that Google is using anti-competitive practices in open display ad tech, which it believes could be harming thousands of UK publishers and advertisers”, the CMA said in a statement yesterday.

In a statement to media on Friday, Google VP of Global Ads, Dan Taylor, said the CMA’s “case rests on flawed interpretations of the ad tech sector.

“We disagree with the CMA’s view and we will respond accordingly”.

## Ex-bureaucrats

FROM PAGE 12

an investigation into alleged corruption by former cabinet secretary Kabir Bin Anwar. He is accused of amassing illegal assets under his name and those of his family members through abuse of power.

According to an ACC source, a complaint filed against Kabir in November 2022 said that he amassed illegal wealth while serving as the secretary of the water resources ministry.

Among the former bureaucrats who would come under the ACC scanner are former cabinet secretaries Khandaker Anwarul Islam, Mohammad Shafiqul Alam, and Mohammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, former principal secretaries to the prime minister Ahmad Kaikaus, Nazibur Rahman, Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Abul Kalam Azad, Abdus Sobhan Sikder, and Sheikh Md Wahid-uz Zaman.

Speaking to journalists, ACC Secretary Khorshedha Yasmeen recently said, “Once a complaint is filed against any individual under the Anti-Corruption Act, we take action against that person, no matter who it is. If the allegations are found to be true during an investigation, charge sheets are filed and cases are lodged in courts. There is no room for leniency.”

## Star Media Group’s

FROM PAGE 2

Anam, reflecting on his tenure, emphasised the importance of continuing to project Asia’s voice globally. He also shared details of upcoming ANN projects, including an “Asia Dialogue” series and initiatives to recognise young changemakers across the region.

“ANN is a platform that tells Asian stories through Asian newspapers to the rest of the world,” Anam noted, emphasising the need for the region to have its own media voice.

He acknowledged the rise of social media and digital platforms as key shifts in the media landscape.

ANN is a leading regional alliance of news outlets from Southeast, East, and South Asia, promoting regional collaboration and sharing editorial content on major developments across Asia.

## Ukraine needs more weapons

FROM PAGE 12

The package “will surge in more capabilities to meet Ukraine’s evolving requirements,” Austin told the meeting.

The assistance is expected to include ammunition for HIMARS precision rocket launchers, artillery rounds, anti-tank and anti-air weapons, a US defence official said on condition of anonymity.

The talks in Germany, with representatives from some 50 nations, will focus on areas including bolstering Ukraine’s air defences and encouraging allies to boost their defence industries, Pentagon spokesman Major General Pat Ryder said ahead of the meeting.

“Ukraine matters to US and international security, and the efforts of (Kyiv’s allies meeting in Ramstein) continue to play a vital role

in Ukraine’s fight for freedom and sovereignty,” he said.

The meeting comes as Moscow’s forces advance in the Donbas, with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday declaring that capturing the eastern area was his “primary objective” in the conflict.

Since the start of its offensive in February 2022 when it failed to seize the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, Russia has adapted its aims, concentrating instead on trying to conquer eastern Ukraine.

While Ukraine’s surprise push into Russia’s Kursk region last month caught Russian forces off-guard, Putin stressed that the move had failed to slow Moscow’s advance.

The United States has been Ukraine’s biggest backer during the conflict, providing military aid worth more than \$55 billion (50 billion euros) since February 2022.

## Gazi Tyres factory

FROM PAGE 12

Many people were reportedly trapped inside and remained missing after the incident,

However, no body was recovered as the building was declared too risky to conduct any rescue operation.

Families of the missing people, however, entered the building and claimed to have found some human remains on September 1. The collected remains were handed over to police later.

A security guard of the factory told this newspaper that he quit his job because of safety concerns.

“There’s no security in this factory anymore. Despite the presence of law enforcers, people enter the factory and loot goods every day. Some people

tried to hack me when I tried to stop them from looting on early Thursday. I’ve quit the job today [Friday] for my own security. I can’t continue this anymore,” the guard said.

Narayanganj Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Mahmudul Haque said Industrial Police personnel were deployed to the factory after the August 25 fire incident. He promised action over the latest incident.

Md Asaduzzaman, superintendent of Industrial Police 4 in Narayanganj, said the factory covers an area of at least 50 acres, which is open from all sides.

“The security situation of the factory is now very vulnerable. Moreover, you know the existing condition of police. We’re trying our best [to maintain law and order].”

## Hasina, Quader

FROM PAGE 12

However, the accused, allegedly following directives from Sheikh Hasina, Obaidul Quader, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and other senior leaders, carried out attacks on the protesters at various points in the town, according to the case documents.

The accused also allegedly vandalised BNP offices, businesses, and homes, looted properties, and set them on fire, said the case details.



Residents walk amid the destruction following an Israeli military raid in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Trail of destruction as Israeli forces leave Jenin

FROM PAGE 12

announced on Sunday.

Before also visiting Ramallah, she warned against calls by headline right-wing members of Israel’s cabinet for the military to take a similar approach to the West Bank as in Gaza.

“When members of the Israeli government themselves call for the same approach in the West Bank as in Gaza, that is precisely what acutely endangers Israel’s security,” Baerbock told reporters.

Jenin, in the northern part of the West Bank, has long been a stronghold of Palestinian armed factions, and the Israeli military said the operation, which also targeted the city of Tulkarm, was aimed at thwarting Iranian-backed militant groups planning attacks on Israeli civilians.

Yesterday, thousands, including large numbers of armed men who fired into the air, joined funeral processions for people killed during the fighting. Many of the bodies

were wrapped either in Palestinian flags or the green, black and yellow flags of Hamas, Islamic Jihad or Fatah.

In all 21 people were killed in Jenin during the operation. Many were claimed as members by the armed factions but a number were uninvolved civilians, including a 16-year-old girl, apparently shot by a sniper while looking out of the window.

More than 680 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to Palestinian health ministry figures.

In Nablus, Rafidia hospital director Fouad Nafaa said a US citizen, an activist in her mid-20s, died from a “gunshot in the head” after being admitted yesterday.

The official Wafa Palestinian news agency said she was an activist in a campaign to protect farmers from Israeli settler violence.

Meanwhile, Israeli military strikes killed at least 12 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip yesterday, medics

said, as health officials resumed vaccination of tens of thousands more children in the enclave against polio.

In Nuseirat, one of the territory’s eight historic refugee camps, an Israeli strike killed two women and two children, while eight other people were killed in two other strikes in Gaza City, the medics said.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces battled Hamas-led fighters in the Zeitoun suburb of Gaza City, where residents said tanks have been operating for over a week, in eastern Khan Younis, and in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, where residents said Israeli forces blew up several houses.

Since October 7 last year, Israel’s offensive in Gaza has so far killed at least 40,878 people, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Most of the dead are women and children, according to the UN rights office.





# Steadfast Siam

## Valiant Siam

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

"Everyone is free to use their words as they wish, but it's disheartening to see behaviour that doesn't sit right with me," shared Siam Ahmed. The actor is equally shocked as his other colleagues in the fraternity after the exposé of the WhatsApp group 'Alo Ashbei', which became the talk of the town as some of its members are veteran actors of the industry.

Their remarks about the artistes who stood in support of the anti-discrimination students' movement hurt many and sparked much discussion and debate within the industry, keeping everyone on their toes.

"I'm aware of the situation. Actually, I have nothing to gain or ask for here. Wearing one mask in public, another behind closed doors—this double standard is not something I can support. If you don't like someone, just say it to their face; it's simpler and more honest that way.

from every corner imaginable—from all possible government sources and even private agents trying to scare me. But I've remained steadfast in my beliefs. Truth be told, my parents were worried, and my wife, Abanti, was deeply anxious. With a little one at home, her concern was completely understandable. Yet, despite the pressure and fear, I chose to stand by my convictions."

Upon asking if he thinks artistes should get involved in politics, the actor remarked, "Everyone has the right to participate in politics—it's a fundamental civic right. However, we must not let our political involvement overshadow our primary identity as artistes. When artistes become too politically prominent, their artistic identity can fade, leading to potential problems."

According to him, audiences generally don't expect artistes to stay silent in their personal lives while being vocal on screen. There's often a disconnect when artistes protest publicly but are quiet in their real-

“Each artiste has their own way of expressing dissent. A musician might channel their protest through their music, while a painter might use their art to speak out. When faced with injustice, artistes need to use their unique mediums to voice their opposition. It's not just appropriate—it's vital for their role in society.

Differences in beliefs are natural, and we should be able to express ourselves. But let's keep the conversation respectful—our words should have dignity. After all, we can't force others to see things our way."

Siam hopes that the people within the industry could be less judgmental. "This isn't just for a few—it applies to all artistes. Forgiveness is a virtue, and I urge everyone to reconsider their approach. However, at the end of the day, it's your choice how you think and act. Change is personal, and no one can force it upon you."

The actor was outspoken in the movement on the streets in support of the students. He even told the media that he was subjected to threats and intimidation because of this.

"I've been threatened and intimidated

life actions, leading to a loss of credibility and trust.

"Each artiste has their own way of expressing dissent. A musician might channel their protest through their music, while a painter might use their art to speak out. When faced with injustice, artistes need to use their unique mediums to voice their opposition. It's not just appropriate—it's vital for their role in society."

Siam's film *Jongli* is yet to be released. For now, the actor is waiting for the film shoots to resume as soon as possible. "While other sectors have resumed shooting, the film industry is lagging behind. Without ensuring that everyone's basic needs are met, artistic endeavours will struggle. We're eager to overcome these challenges and get back on track."

### TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix: Kaos



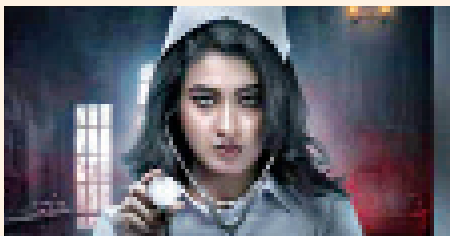
Prime Video  
Call Me Bae



Hulu: Tell Me Lies



Binge: Ekti Khola Janala



Chorki  
Forget Me Not



### OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Stand Up Event: Girls Take  
The Stage

September 12 | 7:30pm  
Grilled, Dhanmondi 16



Play: Closet Land

September 14-15 | 7pm  
Bangladesh Mohila Samity



Concert: Legend of The  
Decade

September 27 | 5pm  
Dhaka Arena, Purbachal

### STYLE STATEMENT

## Cate Blanchett

Cate Blanchett radiated elegance on the red carpet in a breathtaking champagne-hued gown that perfectly accentuated her graceful physique. Her look was further enhanced by exquisite Louis Vuitton jewelry, each piece adding a touch of opulence to her dazzling presence. At the premiere of *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* during the 81st Venice Film Festival, Blanchett embodied effortless glamour, captivating everyone with her ethereal beauty and timeless sophistication.



## I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN



*I'll See You Again* is a poignant ballad by Irish boy band Westlife, released in 2009 as part of their album *Where We Are*. The song showcases the group's signature harmonies and emotional delivery. Its heartfelt lyrics explore themes of loss, grief, and the hope of reunion, resonating with listeners who have experienced separation from loved ones.

The track features a gentle piano-driven melody that builds to a powerful chorus, supported by sweeping orchestral arrangements. Vocally, the band members deliver nuanced performances that convey the song's bittersweet sentiment effectively.

While some critics might view the song as formulaic within the realm of pop ballads, as a listener, you might appreciate its sincerity and the comfort it offers.

## ‘The Frog’: An intricate thriller entangling past and present

Netflix's latest offering *The Frog*, directed by Mo Wan-il and penned by Son Ho-young, threads a complex tapestry of interconnected stories, utilising distinctive plot elements, skilled lighting, colours, and music to create the atmosphere for each scene.

The narrative alternates between the early 2000s, focusing on Sang-jun's (played by Yoon Kye-sang) family at Lake View Motel, and the early 2020s with Young-ha (Kim Yoon-seok) and Seong-a (Go Min-si).

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While the timeline may seem confusing at first, the show effectively differentiates past and present without explicit cues. The connection between Sang-jun's and Young-ha's stories becomes clear in the series' second half.

Similar to many other Korean thrillers, *The Frog* critiques prominent issues in South Korean society, including the defects in the criminal justice system, school bullying, and the exploitation of power by the elites.

However, the pacing of the show is inconsistent but the exceptional acting performances, particularly in the latter half of the series, make it well worth watching.





## Restoring full police capacity is urgent

Police must be able to provide security to citizens

It is disheartening that the police still remain in a state of disarray despite attempts in recent weeks to overhaul the force and imbue it with a new sense of direction. According to a report by this daily, the violent fallout of the regime change on August 5 continues to cast a shadow over the force even now, with logistical challenges as well as low morale due to the fear of withdrawal, transfer, forced retirement, lawsuits and/or arrest still stifling their capacity. This cannot be allowed to persist, as the role of the police is critical in maintaining law and order, ensuring public security, and preventing chaos.

Presently, police services remain largely limited to registering complaints and cases. Despite all police stations resuming their operations several weeks ago, there has been little field presence of officers, especially after dark and without army escorts. Meanwhile, the national helpline 999 continues to struggle to provide services because of the lack of police personnel and logistical support. For a time, all the 999 calls asking for police help were referred to the armed forces. Even though the home adviser has urged the superintendents of police to work sincerely with the force and logistics they have in their respective districts, a number of issues have combined to make progress difficult.

Key among them is the lack of morale. Reportedly, the fear of being sued or arrested or, worse, facing public wrath for police actions during the bloody mass uprising still haunts police members. To this day, over 700-800 officers remain absent without leave. Add to that the fear of being withdrawn or transferred, with major reshuffles being announced every now and then. There is no easy solution for this. It is natural for police, after having served as enforcers of an authoritarian regime for over a decade, to find themselves caught between the need to redeem their credibility and the lingering fear of consequences. Ensuring accountability and creating an enabling environment for police are both important. The authorities must find a way to achieve these objectives with tact, and with people's expectations in mind.

The issue of diminished operational capability is another major barrier, one that should be handled with relative ease, however. Given the overarching need of public safety, the authorities must urgently expedite their efforts to reinforce and restructure the police force, make necessary resources available, and repair damaged infrastructure. Soon after the mass uprising, over 450 out of 664 police stations were attacked by mobs, with some set on fire. Around 300 vehicles were also destroyed. Large quantities of firearms and ammunition were looted as well, leaving a security concern for the future. Restoring full police capability means addressing all such logistical issues as well as staff shortages created afterwards, through new recruitments if necessary.

We must say that we expect a better performance from the interim government in terms of fully operationalising the police force. Police must be able to secure the streets, protect citizens, and prevent crimes. The responsibility to ensure that they are able to do so lies on the government. Reforms cannot happen overnight, so striking a balance between reform and general functionality may be considered in the short term, keeping long-term reforms for the future.

## Don't allow natural degradation anymore

News of continued onslaught on forests deeply troubling

It is sad that at a time when young people imbued with a revolutionary spirit are trying to change the course of the country after the fall of the Awami League government, activities that go directly against the interests of our nation are still taking place out in the open. One example is the recent razing of a tamarisk tree forest in Teknaf. According to a report by daily *Samakal*, local timber traders are cutting down tamarisk trees in collusion with government officials, with at least 1,000 of trees apparently felled in the past week.

The forest department planted 40,000 tamarisk trees in FY 2014-15 and 2015-16 on the beach from Teknaf to Shahporir Dwip. These trees have served as a defence against cyclones and tidal waves, thus protecting local communities. Cutting them down will not only make coastal areas more vulnerable to natural disasters, but the land near the beach will also erode. The question is, why are such environmentally degrading activities still going on? Reportedly, since August 5, BNP-affiliated leaders and activists have been trying to take control of all unscrupulous businesses formerly conducted by their Awami League counterparts. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Over the past few decades, we have seen how forests, hills, rivers, and such natural resources have faced continuous assaults from unscrupulous groups mostly connected to power. During the last 15 years of AL rule, we have also seen how anti-environment projects, such as the Rampal power plant, were undertaken in the name of development. The question is, if a mangrove forest is cut down to build a sanctuary for birds and wildlife, for example, can we call it development? If a reserved forest is ravaged to make a prison or a housing establishment, is it still progress? Sadly, the old regime paid little heed despite frequent criticism of its development narrative, and people in the administration who were supposed to check destruction of nature remained generally silent.

Now that a new government has taken charge of the country, we hope that all these anti-environment activities will come to stop. We hope officials at the local administrations will not be engaged in such activities or enable others to ravage our nature. Reports have earlier found how forest officials were often themselves involved in destroying the forests. This trend has to change. We hope the interim government will take concrete steps to save our forests, rivers, and the environment in general, and take punitive actions against anyone, regardless of which party they belong to, committing such mindless acts.

### MALAYSIAN LABOUR MARKET

## Breaking the recruitment syndicate



### ON THE SHORES OF (IN) JUSTICE

Dr C.R. Abrar is an academic with interest in human rights. He is the executive director of the Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU).

C R ABRAR

*Syndicate may exist at our end which is outside the control of both Bangladesh and Malaysian governments.*

— Malaysian high commissioner in Dhaka, May 29, 2024

Shoring up Bangladesh's plundered economy is a top priority of the country's incumbent interim government. Soon after its assumption of office, the government announced its resolve to uproot corruption, a phenomenon that became all-encompassing during the 15-plus years of Awami League rule. A classic case of monumental corruption took place centring the recruitment of workers for the Malaysian labour market. A syndicate of key actors with access to corridors of power in Bangladesh and Malaysia were able to establish their total sway over the labour recruitment process, which led to a massive spike in migration costs—at least four to five times the official rate.

In March 2024, the new Malaysian government announced that the flow of workers to the country would be halted from May 31. The decision was made in view of various irregularities, including corruption and high migration costs, committed by those involved in facilitating recruitment to the country. About 50,000 workers from Bangladesh missed their employment opportunities even after being selected for jobs.

The syndicate is steered by a Malaysian Dato of Bangladeshi origin who owns the IT company Bestinet. Its subsidiary company, the Foreign Workers Centralized Management System (FWCMS), extends online support to the Malaysian government's foreign worker recruitment initiative. While FWCMS provides only online technical support for labour recruitment from all of the 14 other source countries, it is exclusively in the case of Bangladesh that the agency, abusing its assigned role, has established a stranglehold on the labour recruitment process from the country. In doing so, it has robbed the Malaysian companies of the liberty to recruit workers directly through their preferred recruiters in Bangladesh, choking free competition among Bangladeshi recruitment agencies.

Under the auspices of the FWCMS, as many as 2.67 lakh and 4.76 lakh Bangladeshi workers went to Malaysia in 2016-18 and 2022-24, respectively, totalling 7.43 lakh. While the official figure of recruitment fees for Malaysia stood at Tk 78,990, Bangladeshi workers had to pay Tk 4 lakh to Tk 5 lakh to the agents. On March 28, four UN experts wrote to the Bangladesh and Malaysia governments about the situation of Bangladeshi migrants in

Malaysia and mentioned that each migrant spent between \$4,500 and \$6,000.

Industry sources acknowledge that in addition to actual costs, recruiting agencies were obliged to pay Tk 1.52 lakh to Tk 1.65 lakh per worker to the protagonists of this scheme. Therefore, a cursory estimate reveals that in the two rounds of recruitment in the Malaysian labour market, a staggering sum of over \$941 million, equivalent to nearly Tk 11,294 crore (at \$1= Tk 120), has been allegedly usurped by the members of the syndicate.

The sources further inform that Bestinet's Bangladeshi counterpart collected the amounts from recruiting agencies in cash that were



**The syndicate system that has thrice disrupted the flow of migrants from Bangladesh to Malaysia must be dismantled.**

FILE PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

subsequently transferred via hundi to Malaysia. Likewise, a huge sum of money was also syphoned off through pre-departure medical tests by the same group. In this case as well, the recruiting agents were obliged to conduct the tests in facilities charging hefty amounts that were listed by the syndicate. Such a practice undermined the list of diagnostic centres approved by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Reputed recruiting agents with a track record of sending workers to Malaysia have alleged that, in many instances, the agencies listed with the FWCMS were only performing the role of *dalal* (intermediaries), extracting money from genuine recruiters in exchange for the demand letter. While the non-listed companies did most of the recruitment tasks of contacting employers, securing demands, and eventually sourcing workers, many among the listed ones charged them

stocky sums simply by trading papers. Under such a shady scheme, the actual facilitators of migration did not find a place in the official books of sending and receiving countries. It is the non-performing inactive companies who were recorded as facilitators.

Media reports have highlighted on many occasions that the "sub-agents" (non-listed recruiting agencies) were required to provide written undertakings that made them liable for any subsequent complaints of irregularities. This is surely a case of grievous anomaly in ensuring accountability and transparency in the recruitment process. The syndicate's unrestrained power was palpably demonstrated when the Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL), the state-owned recruiting agency, was made to endure major obstacles in processing the clearance of demand letters it received. The agency could secure clearance for only 15 percent of the 10,000 demand letters as many of those were mysteriously "redirected" to private agencies.

The seed of the syndicate arrangement was sown in the

Bangladeshi recruiting agencies against the syndicate arrangement with the Anti-Corruption Commission in Bangladesh and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission in 2017 failed to gain traction.

Initially, 25 agencies were selected to send workers to Malaysia; subsequently, following an outrage among the BAIRA members, the number was increased to 101. As no criterion for qualification was set, many new recruiting agencies were issued with licence and were enlisted. Curiously, several such newly licensed agencies with appropriate political linkage became the major beneficiaries of the syndicate.

There are indications that the ban currently in force on the Malaysian labour market may be lifted. Rumour is also rife that the protagonists of the syndicate arrangement have become active to establish their absolute control over the new dispensation. Under the circumstances, the Yunus government should immediately take meaningful steps to dismantle the syndicate system that has thrice disrupted the flow of migrants from Bangladesh to Malaysia, causing immeasurable sufferings to our migrant workers. Those in authority may consider taking the following measures: firstly, there is an urgent need to revise the clause in the MoU between Bangladesh and Malaysia to ensure that all registered recruiting agents in Bangladesh can facilitate recruitment to Malaysia. It may be noted that such a restriction was imposed only in Bangladesh's case, thanks to the machinations of the syndicate. No recruiting agent of the 14 other source countries face such discriminatory prohibition.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to hold to account the perpetrators of the syndicate system both in Bangladesh and Malaysia. The government should institute a thorough and credible investigation into the corruption and fraud committed by the principal operators, including public representatives, members of state agencies and those of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh, and urge the Malaysian authorities to do the same. Their crime is tantamount to economic sabotage of the state.

Thirdly, for future recruitment initiatives, the Bangladesh government should ensure that (a) all transactions including recruitment fees, government charges, medical tests, etc are conducted by cheques and workers are provided with proper receipts for such payments, and (b) workers can have their medical tests done at any of the diagnostic centres listed by the ministry.

And finally, to design an appropriate strategy to hold the syndicate members accountable, the authorities should set up a cell in the expatriate welfare ministry to document cases of high migration costs, unemployment, non-payment of wages, cheating and fraudulence of workers adversely affected by the arrangement.

## Reforms required in Bangladesh's school system



Azwa Nayeem is chairperson of Alotito Hridoy Foundation and adviser of SAJIDA Foundation.

AZWA NAYEEM

The education system of Bangladesh is at a critical juncture. The country faces a multitude of challenges, from severe literacy and numeracy gaps to the politicisation of school committees. Among these pressing issues, one crucial area that remains under-addressed is the lack of climate education. As Bangladesh is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, the urgency for action-oriented climate education and the development of green skills cannot be overstated. There is a need for comprehensive reforms in the country's school systems, including the integration of climate education.

Bangladesh is grappling with a severe literacy and numeracy crisis. The National Learning Assessment (NSA) conducted by the Directorate of Primary Education in 2022 revealed that over 70 percent of Class 2 and Class 3 students struggle with basic literacy, underscoring the gravity of the situation. The implications are profound. A population struggling to read or perform basic arithmetic is vulnerable to misinformation,

exploitation, and limited economic opportunities. This crisis is particularly acute among the most disadvantaged segments of society. Urgent action is needed to address these gaps. Past literacy projects have been criticised for their ineffectiveness, often being too generic and not tailored to specific needs. A targeted, evidence-based approach to equip its students with the skills they need for future success is a must.

The other problem is child marriage, which continues to be a significant barrier to girls' education in Bangladesh. A staggering 51 percent of girls marry before the age of 18, often leading to early motherhood and school dropout. The dropout rate at the secondary level in 2022 was 35.98 percent, with girls having a slightly higher rate (40.78 percent) than boys (33.25 percent). The dropout rate at the secondary level in 2023 was 32.85 percent, with the girls' dropout rate at 34.87 percent. The reasons behind these dropout rates are deeply rooted in sociocultural gender norms, economic deprivation, and rural

environments. A study by Alam and Hoque (2023) highlighted that female students are often burdened with domestic responsibilities, and parents frequently view investment in their daughters' education as wasteful. These entrenched norms must be challenged. This requires a multifaceted approach, including stricter enforcement of child marriage laws, increased investment in girls' education, and the creation of a female-friendly school environment.

Bangladesh also faces a critical shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. Corruption in teacher recruitment, where nepotism often trumps merit, exacerbates this issue. Even when teachers receive training, it is often heavily theoretical, with a significant gap between what is taught and the practical demands of the classroom. This disconnect leads to suboptimal student outcomes. Continuous professional development programmes that prioritises practical skills and classroom management, merit-based recruitment, and regular performance evaluations are essential. Additionally, incentives for teachers in underserved areas, such as housing and transportation allowances, could help address these shortages.

In addition to these challenges, Bangladesh's education system must urgently address the lack of climate education. As a country most vulnerable to climate change, Bangladesh needs to educate its youth on climate action and green skills. Students must be equipped with the

knowledge and skills to understand the environmental challenges they will face and to contribute to sustainable solutions for the future. Investing in climate education is about empowering the next generation to take action now. Schools must incorporate practical lessons on environmental stewardship, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture. This approach should be complemented by initiatives such as school-based green projects and partnerships with local communities to foster environmental awareness and responsibility.

Realising the full potential of Bangladesh's education system requires a comprehensive and strategic approach. This includes increasing public investment in education, strengthening data management systems, and establishing clear accountability mechanisms. Public-private partnerships are essential to supplement government efforts and enhance resource mobilisation. Bangladesh must also adopt a decentralised governance model by granting greater autonomy to local education offices and schools to enable them to better address the unique needs of their students. Ultimately, the goal is to create an education system that addresses the current literacy and numeracy crisis and prepares students for future challenges by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world where climate change is a reality.



# ‘Reforms are crucial to strengthen the Election Commission’

**Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of SHUJAN: Citizens for Good Governance, speaks with Naznin Tithi of The Daily Star about the changes needed in our electoral system and related laws before the next election.**

**The chief adviser is supposed to present a roadmap for state reforms soon. What kind of reforms should be prioritised before the election, and how long should it take to implement them?**

What I learned from the people who participated in the mass uprising is that they wanted justice for the criminal acts such as the killing of students and civilians, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, violation of human rights, etc. They also wanted accountability for the financial crimes committed over the past 15 years. Another key demand of the students is state reform or *raastro meramot*. So, we are glad that the chief adviser is going to declare a roadmap after ongoing dialogues with the political parties. Once that roadmap is laid out, we will know what reforms they intend to undertake and how far they are willing to go.

Broadly speaking, I see two key areas where reform is required. One is the need to revise various laws, including those governing the appointment of members of the Election Commission (EC), the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, the local government, laws for appointing the judges, etc. These laws need to be updated and amended to reorganise both constitutional and statutory institutions. Another need is reforming the constitution, which is the most important and yet most difficult task.

Now, there are two alternative views. While some are opting for completely rewriting the constitution, others want changes in some key areas. These include bringing a balance between the powers of the president and the prime minister, reforming or abolishing Article 70, deciding on whether or not we should have a proportional representation system and bicameral legislation, establishing term limits for the prime minister, and setting the duration of the legislative term, etc. These are some of the major things that need to be addressed if we are not rewriting the constitution. We hope to get some sort of guidance on this from the chief adviser's forthcoming roadmap.

There are two ways to institute these

reforms. One is by declaring the 15th amendment unconstitutional. In that case, the provision for referendums will come back. If that happens, it could be used for adopting some of the desired constitutional changes. Some laws could also be reformed, and the president could issue an ordinance to turn these into laws. But they will have to be approved in the first session of the parliament when it is formed. But you cannot change the constitution with an ordinance, so that will have to wait.

Now, the first round of dialogue is going on. There may be a second and even third round. After the chief adviser declares the roadmap, there will be further dialogues, through which an agreement among the political parties, government and other stakeholders can hopefully be reached. That agreement could be signed into a document, which can be called a National Charter. After the political parties sign the document, there could be a free and fair election. Then, whoever comes to power will be obliged to implement those reforms. However, our political parties don't have a good track record of keeping their commitments. So, there will have to be a body which will stand guard. I think our students could probably play this role.

But if we go for rewriting the constitution, then there has to be a constituent assembly through which a new constitution could be adopted.

**What, in your view, can be a reasonable timeframe for polls?**

The timeframe for the election will depend on what the political parties and the interim government agree on doing. It will depend on what milestones the interim government would like to achieve first. The good thing is that discussions are currently underway, which we hope will result in a timeframe agreed upon by all stakeholders involved.

**The political parties have also proposed to hold the local government elections before the national polls.**

Our local government system is in a bad shape. Also, some of the local government bodies that are very important for providing



Badiul Alam Majumdar FILE PHOTO: STAR

services to the people have been dissolved. So, elections to these bodies should be held as soon as possible for practical reasons. This will give the interim government, and a reconstituted EC, the experience required for holding the national election. The local elections will not be as contentious, because they will not cause changes in power. But before these elections are held, the local government laws should be reformed.

**What kind of reforms are needed in our electoral system and in the Election Commission laws to make the system foolproof, so that the EC can hold elections independently in the future?**

There is nothing we can do to make the electoral system foolproof because it does not depend fully on the EC, even though it is the biggest and most important stakeholder in case of elections. The other stakeholders are the political parties and their candidates,

law enforcement agencies, bureaucracy, civil society, and media. If political parties and their candidates do not abide by the laws, and if the law enforcing agencies and bureaucracy are partisan, then the EC cannot really do much. Having said that, the EC can prevent/stop bad elections because its constitutional mandate is to hold an inclusive and competitive election.

However, there are quite a few areas where reform is vital to strengthen the Election Commission. First, we need to reform the law enacted in 2022 for appointing election commissioners. This law was basically recycled from the old circulars that the Awami League government used in the last few elections to appoint the commissioners of their choice. We need to do away with this law. Incidentally, the legality of the appointment of the now-former Election Commission is in serious question. Because the 2022 law calls for only political parties and professional bodies to propose names to the search committee for the appointment of election commissioners. But the search committee, in violation of the law, allowed all citizens to propose names, including their own. For example, Kazi Habibul Awal's name was proposed by the late Zafrullah Chowdhury. Although he was a distinguished person, he was not qualified as per law to nominate anybody. A similar thing happened in the case of other commissioners. Therefore, we need to reform this law to reconstitute the EC. However, because of the unusual situation caused by the mass upsurge, the interim government should be able to appoint a new EC without following the existing law or enacting a new one.

We also need to make quite a few changes in the Representation of the People Order (RPO). For example, according to section 90B of the RPO, political parties registered with the EC must not have provisions for associated and affiliated bodies in their constitutions. This was intended to disband such bodies. Our political parties removed such provisions from their constitutions but kept those affiliated bodies by terming them as "brotherly" organisations so as to use them as their *lathiyal bahinis*. Thus, our political

parties adhered to the letter but not the spirit of the law. To remedy this, section 90B of the RPO needs amendment.

Moreover, the nomination trade has become a big concern as it allows people to buy nominations in exchange for money. Consequently, more than two-thirds of our parliamentarians were businessmen. As a result, we now have the "best" democracy money can buy. Redressing this will require amending section 90B of the RPO, requiring the nomination of candidates for parliament elections to be determined by the votes of the activists of each constituency.

In addition, a few more changes are needed with regards to the candidates' affidavits, which must be scrutinised. There must also be provisions for counter-affidavits so that one can challenge the affidavit of a candidate. Furthermore, the present outdated affidavit form needs to be updated, and election expenses should be scrutinised and monitored. All these must be included in the law.

Additionally, we need a constitutional change if we want a proportional representation system. We will need constitutional changes for women's representation in parliament, to hold direct elections for the women's seats, and to preserve at least a third of the seats for women. Constitutional changes will also be needed if we want to go for a bicameral legislature and set term limits for the prime minister.

**What's your thoughts on the proportional representation system that some parties have suggested?**

Proportional representation means that political parties will get the seats based on the proportion of votes they get. So, if a party gets 50 percent of the votes, it will get 50 percent of the seats. If we go for this system, it will prevent the monopoly and tyranny of the majority. In 2008, the BNP received about 33 percent of the votes but got only 10 percent of the seats. In a proportional system, the BNP would have had more seats. So, this system should be seriously considered.

## OUR MIGRANT WORKERS IN UAE

# Bound by borders, freed by conscience



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Bangladeshi migrant workers dedicate all their labour to host countries, but their hearts seem to be rooted in their homeland. They became the unsung heroes of a mass movement that witnessed the downfall of the previous regime. With all the focus on students and the general public who came to their aid, we often overlook the courageous acts of diasporic nationalism by our overseas workers. Their decision to stop sending money through official routes caused a financial shockwave for the then government, causing a shortage of foreign currencies. They took part in a series of protests, both on the streets and in cyberspace, showing their loyalty to the people's fight for justice at home. For some, this came with a high personal cost.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) sentenced 57 Bangladeshi migrant workers to 10 years to more of imprisonment (three were sentenced for life) for staging protests against the Awami League government. The oil-rich country, which hosts around 10 lakh Bangladeshis, also constricted the issuance of new employment visas. We saw similar protests in front of other Bangladeshi missions abroad. But the swift judgement by the UAE and the equally quick intervention by the interim government of Bangladesh is a moment worth reflecting upon from multiple angles: diplomatic, humanitarian, and human rights. The incident underscores the delicate balance between upholding the rule of law in host countries, the soft power of individual leaders, and the enduring vulnerability of migrant workers, who are the lifeblood of our economy.

Central to this issue is the conscience of migrant workers—individuals who, despite their distance from home, carry with them the sociopolitical struggles of their homeland. Their conscience-driven participation in the protests and loyalty towards their country violated the UAE's strict laws prohibiting public protests, particularly by non-citizens. They faced detention, an expedited trial, and prison sentences as a result. The former prime minister cited the sentencing order to vindicate her government's position, but they made little to no effort to aid our citizens abroad.

Soon after the interim government assumed power, it appointed a legal adviser to assist the detainees. Chief Adviser Dr

Mohammad Yunus raised the issue and requested clemency for the jailed workers when UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan phoned him on August 28. A general pardon was granted less than a week later. From a diplomatic perspective, the release of workers represents an early win for the interim government. The positive response to this appeal demonstrates the strength of Bangladesh-UAE relations and the persuasive power of diplomatic negotiations. The UAE's goodwill towards Bangladesh goes beyond mere economics—it reflects an acknowledgement of the contribution these workers have made to the development of the UAE itself, a country that is home to 90 percent non-Emirati.

The humanitarian intervention elevates the status of migrant workers from mere economic agents and demonstrates the empathetic sides of both governments. However, the incident underscores the necessity of educating our workers about the legal frameworks and political rights of their host countries. Any ignorance leaves them vulnerable to arbitrary detention and harsh legal consequences. The commendable diplomatic engagement of the interim government of Bangladesh in securing the release of jailed workers also highlights the fundamental need for safeguarding our migrant workers from unjust punishment for their acts of conscience.

The negotiation, quite possibly, got through because of the individual influence of Bangladesh's Nobel laureate. *The Washington Post* recently speculated that Dr Yunus's soft power may have indirectly influenced the UAE's decision to grant clemency. The UAE, mindful of its international reputation and relationships with key global figures like Dr Yunus, may have found itself inclined to show mercy, particularly given the international outcry from human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch over the harsh sentences. Dr Yunus represents the kind of moral leadership that transcends borders and governmental affiliations. Years of advocating for the poor and marginalised have built his personal diplomacy, making him a figure of influence that the UAE could not ignore. This has come as sheer joy for all Bangladeshis. So much so that one Gen Z member commented

on Instagram, "Dr Yunus is cooking!"

The UAE, like many Gulf nations, faces persistent criticism over its human rights record, particularly in relation to migrant labour. The controversial kafala system, which binds migrant workers to their employers and limits their freedom, is often considered a form of modern day slavery. International observers saw Bangladeshi workers' sentences for peaceful protests as an example of the

only from a position of strength, but also with cultural and political sensitivity.

The media coverage of this event captures the diplomatic nuance. An editorial in this newspaper framed the pardon as a diplomatic success, focusing on the economic implications. The narrative of diasporic nationalism took precedence over a critical examination of the workers' rights violations. The international press, particularly outlets like Al Jazeera

As Bangladesh looks to the future, it must recognise the vulnerability of its migrant workforce. While diplomatic victories like this are important, they do not address the systemic issues that lead to such incidents in the first place. We must tackle the ignorance of legal rights, the repressive labour conditions under the kafala system, and the lack of effective protections for migrant workers head-on. Civil society organisations and the



The release of 57 Bangladeshi nationals who were sentenced to prison by a UAE court demonstrates the strength of the two countries' relations and the persuasive power of diplomatic negotiations. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

repressive laws governing public dissent in the UAE. However, the UAE president's decision to intervene reflects a balancing act between enforcing the rule of law and demonstrating a humanitarian impulse. We should view the president's clemency within the broader context of the UAE's efforts to manage its global reputation while maintaining internal security. He upheld the law in this case, punishing the workers for breaking it, while simultaneously demonstrating mercy, a key value in religious and Gulf leadership traditions. This can be a learning dashboard for our foreign, labour, and expatriate welfare ministries. We need to learn to negotiate not

and *The Washington Post*, focused more on the human rights dimension—highlighting the excessive nature of the sentences, the arbitrary detention of peaceful protesters, and the systemic oppression faced by migrant labourers in the Gulf. This divergence in reporting reflects a broader tension between national economic interests and the universal advocacy for human rights. While local media may be inclined to present such events in a manner that maintains favourable diplomatic relations, international outlets often take a more critical stance, examining the implications of these events for global human rights norms.

government must work together to educate workers heading to the Gulf about their rights and responsibilities in their host countries. They must also advocate for labour rights reforms in these countries to protect workers from exploitation and arbitrary detention. Respecting migrant workers' conscience necessitates legal awareness that enables them to navigate the complex realities of life in countries such as the UAE. Only then can Bangladesh truly ensure the safety and dignity of its diaspora, not just as economic contributors but as human beings deserving of rights and protections both at home and abroad.



I met Nahid Rana a couple of years ago in Chattogram where he was part of a young group that came to play against Sri Lanka. I was really excited about watching him. I'm glad he has now got a role.

former Bangladesh pace bowling coach  
ALLAN DONALD



# The path behind Nahid Rana’s emergence

Nahid Rana stunned the cricketing world with his raw pace during Bangladesh’s historic 2-0 Test series triumph over hosts Pakistan, clocking over 150 kmph while also claiming his career-best figures in the second Test. Even though Bangladesh cricket has been reaping the benefits of forming a potent pace group across formats in recent years, the factors behind the emergence of talented quicks have not been focused on a large scale. The Test series triumph against Pakistan in Rawalpindi would not have materialised if pacers like Hasan Mahmud, Nahid, Shoriful Islam, and Taskin Ahmed had not outshone the quicks of Pakistan – a country historically known as the ‘land of pacers’. What comes as a hopeful sign for fans and a sweet headache for the team management is that these four aforementioned pacers are not the only ones available in the Tigers’ pace tank. Khaled Ahmed, who was also part of this Pakistan series, Ebadot Hossain, currently rehabilitating from an ACL injury that saw him out of action for more than a year, and white-ball regulars Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Mustafizur Rahman are all part of the Tigers’ current pace battery. While they gel together in the national team under the guidance of foreign coaches, the story of their emergence began under local coaches to whom they turn to whenever needed. In this special issue of The Daily Star Sports, we look at one such local coach, Alamgir Kabir, and one of his disciples, Nahid, who came to the fore through the recent Pakistan series. The Daily Star’s Samsul Arefin Khan reached out to both Nahid and Alamgir, and the excerpts of their interviews are provided below:

## ‘Coaches should not compromise with raw pace’

**The Daily Star (DS):** Your students, Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam, have done exceptionally well during Bangladesh’s maiden Test series win over Pakistan. How satisfying is that for you?

**Alamgir Kabir (AK):** It’s obviously a great feeling. When your children do well, as a guardian, you obviously feel well. When I see them doing well for Bangladesh, happiness comes automatically. I hope that they will serve Bangladesh cricket for a long time and remain injury-free.

**DS:** Can you enlighten us regarding Nahid as you were his direct coach at Clemon Cricket Academy?

**AK:** I found him at Clemon Rajshahi Cricket Academy when he got admitted all by himself. We have eight to nine coaches and there are few groups. He was initially in a different group. We arranged taped-tennis matches for the players and they played these matches divided into groups. While playing in such a match, we needed a bowler, where he was picked. My first impression of him was that he was bowling too fast with a taped-tennis ball. I asked him whether he could bowl fast only with a taped-tennis ball or with a cricket ball as well. He replied in the affirmative. He bowled so fast that

as well. He is still a young kid and his muscles will improve and the bones will get stronger further.

**DS:** We know local coaches contribute massively in preparing players for the national team level, where some might do well instantly. But often those players fail to deliver similar performances consistently. How do you see that in case of Nahid Rana?

**AK:** As Shoriful Islam [another student of Clemon Cricket Academy] had already played for the U-19, A team and national team by the time, he gave us the updated details that helped me groom Nahid well. When he provided me with the details or sent me videos, I instantly showed him those and told him to be in touch with Shoriful. If Nahid didn’t understand sometime, I was there to help him out. He is always willing to learn and I continue to give him guidance.

**DS:** You have been in coaching profession for a long time. How do you see the interest growing in players to become a genuine fast bowler?

**AK:** We get many pace bowlers in district and divisional level matches. When we do the selection, we count more on their performances. If we don’t analyse someone’s performance only but also focus on their pace, I think we would find more players for

enough remuneration in your job, you can’t give full concentration. You will definitely look for other avenues of income. So, the focus on your job becomes 50-50. The district coaches want to work properly, but due to their financial situation, they have to work at different academies. In my home district in Chapainawabganj, I have a mango-selling business in the mango season while I also sell paddy during harvesting season. My question is why I should think about such things if I earn decent money from coaching. So you can understand how much remuneration we are getting. I want to take cricket to a new high but at the same time, I have to give attention to my financial well-being.

The kind of salary that they have increased is okay. But if you consider the inflation and cost of living since when I joined till now, is minimal. As a former national team player, the kind of remuneration I get as a district-level coach, I will say is zero. Since I love cricket and want new players to be in a good place, I’m still doing it for the sake of cricket.

**DS:** Haven’t you and your colleagues, as coaches, raised your voices regarding remuneration?

**AK:** I have spoken personally about the issue. Khaled Mahmud Sujon,

**We arranged taped-tennis matches for the players and they played these matches divided into groups. While playing in such a match, we needed a bowler, where he was picked. My first impression of him was that he was bowling too fast with a taped-tennis ball. I asked him whether he could bowl fast only with a taped-tennis ball or with a cricket ball as well. He replied in the affirmative. He bowled so fast that the wicketkeeper missed all his first five deliveries. I heard that he was in Group C and then I told everyone that he will be in Group A next week. His journey started from there.**

the wicketkeeper missed all his first five deliveries. I heard that he was in Group C and then I told everyone that he will be in Group A next week. His journey started from there.

His bowling action and run-up were different at that time. Now he bowls with a good action but at an early stage, he had a peculiar bowling action while releasing the ball. I had to work on these at that time. As he was under-18 at that time, I told him that I would look after him in the next two years. Then we started working together and worked on his bowling and also showed him different bowling videos, so that he didn’t have to struggle when he went to a senior level.

**DS:** Do you think the change in his action helped him increase his pace?

**AK:** When I worked on his accelerator, his pace decreased drastically. I told him not to worry about it and work for six months with the new action as it would get adjusted to the muscle. His muscles and bones were growing at that time and day by day he started to grow stronger. I hope his pace will increase in the coming days



**\*\*Alamgir Kabir is a former Bangladesh seamer who played three Tests for the Tigers. He is currently working as a district coach (Chapainawabganj) under BCB Game Development. The 43-year-old is currently also working at PKSP and previously worked at Clemon Cricket Academy in Rajshahi.**



## ‘Easy for local coaches to identify shortcomings’

**The Daily Star (DS):** Tell us about your introduction with Alamgir sir at the Clemon Cricket Academy.

**Nahid Rana (NR):** When I got into the Clemon Academy, I had the first chance to talk with him [local coach Alamgir Kabir]. One day, he saw my bowling and took me to his group. At that time, I had no spikes (sports shoes) and he managed one for me. The journey actually started from there. Since then, whether it’s guiding me or looking after me, he took care of everything until I got picked by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

**DS:** You had a different bowling action when you started bowling. You had to change your action and although initially your pace reduced, it gradually went up. Can you enlighten us regarding the matter?

**NR:** I had a different run-up action. He told me that anywhere I go, they will change my run-up. He said if I change it initially, it will be good for me as I won’t face any problems. He was the one who changed my run-up and bowling action. He has seen me since childhood and understood a lot of things really well. He realised much earlier what would be good for me in the future.

**DS:** Even though you are in the early stages of your career, how do you rate Alamgir sir’s influence on it?

**NR:** I can’t express it in words. This is huge. He has made an immense contribution to my growth as a cricketer. He is like a parent to me. He guides me like a father in my cricketing journey.

**DS:** Coming to the Pakistan Test series, was it an expected performance to all of you guys after going into the series with a very good preparation?

**NR:** Of course, the preparation was good. I had a plan that if I get an opportunity, I will deliver my best. I had an ambition of doing well for the country. Alhamdulillah, everything went fine.

**DS:** Pakistani batters negotiated you well in the first Test. But you made a brilliant turnaround in the second one. Did you have different plans for the two Tests?

**NR:** It was part of the plan for the first Test to bowl in such a way. But the batters judged me well and they scored runs against me. In the second Test, I was allowed to bowl as per my

plan. In that game, I tried to bowl according to my plan and the captain also gave me some insights during the match and that’s how I succeeded.

**DS:** Can you tell us about the spell during the fourth day of the second Test in which you took three wickets in the space of a few deliveries?

**NR:** Before that spell, they scored a few extra runs. I had the plan to bowl at a good length so that I would not leak runs, creating chances for taking wickets.

**DS:** When did you feel that you could touch or break the 150kmph barrier?

**NR:** Actually, I didn’t think about my pace. When my body gives me the opportunity to bowl with such pace, I always try to bowl with my heart. I didn’t bowl with any specific target. My aim is always to do well for the team.

**DS:** Did you make specific plans for specific Pakistani batters?

**NR:** Of course, when we had a camp, we made plans against them. We saw the videos of their batting and talked about how to bowl against them.

**DS:** What is the basic difference you see between the foreign coaches and local coaches?

**NR:** If we do badly or have a setback, we often go to local coaches. When we are at our peak or in the national team, we get to work with foreign coaches. They also try their level best to improve our bowling. But one foreign coach can’t understand everything about a bowler within a month. Our local coaches have been seeing us from our childhood and it’s easy for them to identify our shortcomings. But it takes some time for the foreign coaches.

**DS:** You guys don’t have a long time to prepare for the next assignment against India, beginning with the first of two Tests from September 19. Everyone is expecting a more challenging series over there. Preparation-wise, what will be your plan as they have some outstanding batters on their side?

**NR:** I’m not thinking too much – just the usual. It doesn’t bode well for you if you overthink.



# Incredible CR7 reaches record 900th goal

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 900th career goal -- becoming the only player ever to do so -- in Portugal's 2-1 win against Croatia in the Nations League on Thursday. Ronaldo put his side 2-0 up at the Estadio da Luz in the 34th minute when he got on the end of a Nuno Mendes cross with a tap-in volley from close range, before falling to the ground looking emotional at reaching another milestone. Ronaldo leads the all-time scorer's list while Argentina's Lionel Messi sits second with 859 career goals. Though Brazilian legend Pele claimed to have scored 1281 goals in his career, it is widely accepted that hundreds of those strikes came in tour or unofficial friendly matches, leaving Ronaldo as the all-time highest goalscorer in football history.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

RONALDO'S GOALS FOR CLUB AND COUNTRY	Team	Goals
	Real Madrid	450
	Manchester United	145
	Portugal	131
	Juventus	101
	Al-Nassr	68
	Sporting Lisbon	5



# A historic first for San Marino

AFP, Paris

San Marino, the world's worst team according to the FIFA rankings, made history on Thursday by beating Liechtenstein 1-0 in the UEFA Nations League to claim their first ever competitive win.

The tiny country of barely 30,000 people came into the match at their San Marino Stadium looking for a first win since beating Liechtenstein in a friendly in 2004.



Liechtenstein had a goal disallowed for a tight offside in the first half before San Marino pounced on a defensive error to grab the winner in the 53rd minute through Nicko Sensoli.

Aged 19, he had not been born when the team who sit 210th and last in the world rankings last won a game.

The whipping boys of international football had been building up to this having claimed draws in friendly matches against Seychelles, Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis over the last two years.

They are in the three-team Group I of the bottom tier League D in the Nations League, with Gibraltar their other opponents.

# Ebadot may go with team to India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's injured paceman Ebadot Hossain has claimed that he is likely to accompany the team for their upcoming tour of India.

Ebadot suffered an anterior cruciate ligament injury last year during the Afghanistan series and had to undergo surgery in London in August last year which put him out of action for two World Cup events. Last month Ebadot said that he was hopeful of making the India Tests. Yesterday he said he may be carried with the side to monitor his progress.

"It takes a long time to recover from the kind of injury that I had. It's a difficult time. Don't think it will take too long to recover now," Ebadot told reporters in Mirpur on Friday.

"I am following the programme that the physios, trainers and fast-bowling coach have given me. I have not been given permission to bowl with hundred percent intensity. I am bowling at 70 to 80 percent now. Maybe I will be taken with the team to India. I will get support there with my bowling, the doctors and physios will be there and will be monitoring the Bangladesh team. Maybe that's why they will take me. My fitness test will take place there and then they will make a decision," the pacer added.

BCB sources have claimed that no decision has been taken yet on Ebadot being carried with the side for the tour of India in September-October.

# Pegula sets up Sabalenka final

REUTERS, New York

The cheers of home fans echoed through Arthur Ashe Stadium on Thursday as Jessica Pegula staged an astonishing comeback to beat Karolina Muchova 1-6, 6-4, 6-2 and set up a meeting with Aryna Sabalenka in her first Grand Slam final.

The prospect of an all-American final had already been scotched when Belarusian Sabalenka earlier downed Emma Navarro 6-3, 7-6 and for a while in the later match, it looked like the host nation would be unrepresented in the title-decider.

Playing in her first major semifinal, Pegula was made to look like a novice by Muchova in a disastrous opening set but somehow turned the tables on the unseeded Czech.

"It comes down to really small moments that flip momentum," said Pegula.

Sabalenka, the runner-up to American Coco Gauff last year, earlier relied on her superior power to subdue the 13th seed Navarro, sending over 34 winners and closing out the match with a satisfying overhead smash on match point.

Navarro's loss was a second disappointment for the home fans on Thursday after Italians Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori ended all-American pair Taylor Townsend and Donald Young's storybook run in the mixed doubles final 7-6, 7-5.

# Grief and financial strain test Tahsin Zia's dream

ANISUR RAHMAN

It was once a different world for the father-son duo of GM Ziaur Rahman and FM Tahsin Tajwar Zia, who happily travelled the globe together to participate in various chess tournaments.

Tahsin was initially reluctant to learn the intricacies of chess from his father, but his interest grew during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when, confined to the house, he spent a great deal of time learning from his renowned father.

As a result, the duo proudly represented the red and green flag, making history as Bangladesh's first father-son team to compete in the 44th Chess Olympiad, held in India in 2022. That same year, Tahsin achieved the title of FIDE Master.

The 19-year-old chess prodigy is now aiming to secure the title of International Master, having already earned one of the three necessary IM norms, thanks to the relentless efforts of his father, who always aspired to guide his only son along his own successful path, despite knowing the financial uncertainties ahead.

However, everything changed Tahsin after the tragic death of his father, who breathed his last on the chessboard during the 12th round of the National Chess Championship on July 5.

The top five finishers of the National Chess Championship were set to represent Bangladesh in the

45th Chess Olympiad, starting on 10 September in Hungary. Zia had occupied joint-fourth position overall, despite missing two rounds. Eventually, his untimely passing opened the door for his son Tahsin, who finished sixth, to represent Bangladesh for the second time in a row at the Chess Olympiad, alongside FM Manon Reza Neer, IM Fahad Rahman, GM Enamul

It has been two months since Zia's passing, and Tahsin is still struggling to recover from the shock, though he is trying to focus on the upcoming Chess Olympiad as well as three more international tournaments in Budapest.

"His father was Tahsin's best friend, and Tahsin is still in shock, often visiting Zia's grave. He told me he talks



Hossain Razib, and GM Niaz Murshed. Initially, Zia and Tahsin had planned to represent Bangladesh together for a second consecutive time.

In pursuit of helping Tahsin achieve the highest titles in chess, Zia had always managed to secure funding or sponsors for Tahsin's participation in international tournaments. Last year, they competed in four international tournaments in Greece and the United Arab Emirates during July and August.

to his father, saying he still has many things left to discuss with him because theirs was a very special relationship," Tahsin's mother, Tasmin Sultana, told The Daily Star on Thursday, adding that Indian GMs have been helping Tahsin prepare online for the Chess Olympiad over the last three weeks.

"You all know that a lot of money is needed to participate in GM or IM chess tournaments abroad, for entry fees, airfare, accommodation,

food, etc. Zia always managed the funds for himself and Tahsin by playing in domestic and international tournaments or finding sponsors," said Sultana, who accompanied Zia and Tahsin to every tournament, both at home and abroad, and will do so in four upcoming international tournaments.

"Without Zia, I am now in deep water trying to manage funds for the family and Tahsin, as my son wishes to fulfil his father's dream of becoming a Grandmaster," Sultana continued.

"The Bangladesh Chess Federation is funding his participation in the Chess Olympiad, but he still needs nearly Tk 1.5 lakh out of an estimated budget of Tk 3 lakh to ensure he can compete in the three additional international tournaments beyond the Olympiad.

"You all know Zia ran his family by playing chess and providing chess training, so he could hardly save anything for us. After Zia's death, the federation, sponsors, and individuals promised to raise Tk 1 crore for a deposit scheme, but that promise has not been fulfilled.

"I am struggling to support the family, and Tahsin also needs financial assistance to continue his A-Level studies. I don't know how I will be able to give him the support he needs to become a Grandmaster without help from others," she said, urging the government, federation, and sponsors to step in for the sake of the country's greatest chess player, GM Ziaur Rahman.



Before their 2026 World Cup Qualifier against Chile in Buenos Aires on Thursday, Argentina players throw Angel Di Maria in the air -- in a gesture of tribute to the winger who retired from international football after the Copa America triumph in July. Argentina, who were without injured captain Lionel Messi, had no trouble dispelling Chile as they cruised to a 3-0 home win, with goals from Alexis Mac Allister, Julian Alvarez, and Paulo Dybala, to strengthen their grip on top of the South American World Cup qualifying standings.

PHOTO: AFP

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## 14 held over workers' unrest in Savar, Ashulia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The Bangladesh Army, police, and Industrial Police detained 14 people in a joint operation on Thursday night over vandalism and assaults on factory staffers amid garment workers' unrest in Ashulia and Savar.

Ahmad Mueed, Dhaka district superintendent of police, said that 11 of the suspects were held in Ashulia and three in Savar, reports our Savar correspondent.

"We have detained a total of 14 suspects for their involvement in creating unrest in the industrial area, attacking garment factories, and committing acts of vandalism," said Mueed.

He added that authorities are investigating the detainees' connection with the unrest. Their names were not immediately available.

The operation came after the interim government warned of tough steps against anarchy as around 200 factories suspended production amid the worker unrest for better pay in Gazipur, Savar and Ashulia.

After a meeting on Wednesday, SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Parked trucks and makeshift shops have more than halved the room for vehicles to pass on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the capital's Jatrabari, leading to traffic snarls. The photo was taken around 1:00pm yesterday from the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover.

## Ex-bureaucrats to be under ACC scanner

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti Corruption Commission has recently decided in principle to investigate corruption allegations against those former top bureaucrats who served during the Awami League rule over the last 15 years.

The ex-bureaucrats used their office for personal gains, senior ACC officials told The Daily Star.

A high-ranking ACC official said, "The former bureaucrats worked for the last three full-term governments to grant legitimacy to many wrongdoings by those governments. In exchange for providing benefits to the government, they got special privileges.

"Numerous complaints have been filed with the ACC against those former bureaucrats. They have amassed huge wealth," he told The Daily Star, wishing not to be named.

The graft watchdog could not take any action against those bureaucrats previously due to pressure from the AL-led governments, the official said.

An ACC investigator said they will probe corruption allegations against former cabinet secretaries, principal secretaries to the prime minister, secretaries at the Prime Minister's Office, a public administration secretary, and a secretary of the Energy Division. The ACC will also investigate the assets of the ex-bureaucrats' wives and children.

On August 25, the graft watchdog decided to launch SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## New species of titanosaur discovered

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Paleontologists have discovered a new species of dinosaur that lived in Spain some 75 million years ago.

The sauropod — dinosaurs that are characterized by their long necks and tails, four thick legs, and small heads — was an herbivore that

lived in Cuenca, around two hours outside of what is now the nation's capital, Madrid.

It has been named Qunkasaura pintiquiniestra, a reference to the area it lived in, the Latin name for lizard, contemporary Spanish painter Antonio Saura, and a character from the novel Don Quixote.

Nicknamed "Qunka," the species is a medium-to-large-sized titanosaur, reaching nearly 50 feet long and weighing more than 10 tons. The distance from its shoulder to its foot was around 10 feet.

Researchers with the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia's Evolutionary Biology Group published their findings Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications Biology.

Alive during the Cretaceous Period, Qunka was found at the fossil site of Lo Hueco, or "The Hollow." The quarry was first discovered in May of 2007, and was excavated during the construction of a high-speed railway between Madrid and Valencia. Archaeologists collected more than 12,000 fossils during the installation of the tracks, which has become one of the most relevant collections of fossil vertebrates from the Upper Cretaceous period in Europe.

## Ex-minister's son held with gun, ammo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The son of a former minister was arrested in Pabna's Ishwardi early yesterday on charges of attacking a student-led mass protest on August 4.

Shirhan Sherif Tomal, son of former land minister late Shamsur Rahman Sherif Dilu, was detained from a house in Alobag area under Ishwardi municipality.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from Rab-12 (Pabna camp) conducted the drive in the early hours, according to a press release.

During the drive, Rab also seized a foreign-made pistol, a magazine, and four rounds of bullets from his private car.

Tomal is a key accused in a case filed with Ishwardi Police Station for attacking students and protesters on August 4 that left many injured.

Besides, Tomal is also accused in five other cases, the Rab press release said.

The arrestee has been handed over to police for necessary legal measures, the press release added.

## Trail of destruction as Israeli forces leave Jenin

Netanyahu denies US claim that '90 percent of truce agreed'

AGENCIES

Israeli forces pulled out of the Palestinian city of Jenin yesterday, leaving a mass of damaged buildings and infrastructure, following one of the biggest security operations in the occupied West Bank in months.

Road diggers began clearing piles of debris and rubble left by the operation, which involved hundreds of troops and police backed by helicopters and drones entering all areas of the city and the adjacent refugee camp as well as surrounding villages.

Thousands of residents were displaced from their homes during the nine-day operation, during which troops fought running gunbattles with Palestinian fighters from factions including Hamas and Islamic Jihad and Fatah.

"When they entered, they used bulldozers and began destroying everything. They left nothing," said Jenin resident Samaher Abu Nassa.

Water and electricity services remain cut and around 20 km of roadway was dug up by Israeli bulldozers, a tactic the military said was aimed at neutralising roadside bombs but which has ripped up much of the centre of the city.

A statement from the military said 30 explosives planted under the roads had been dismantled.

The Palestinian foreign ministry accused the

military of transferring the tactics used to level the Gaza Strip into the West Bank.

There was no official confirmation that Israel's military had withdrawn from Jenin, a bastion of Palestinian armed groups, but AFP journalists reported residents returning home.

The pull-out came with Israel at loggerheads with its main ally the United States over talks aimed at forging a truce in the Gaza war, now nearly in its 12th month.

On Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged both Israel and Hamas to finalise a truce deal, saying: "I think based on what I've seen, 90 percent is agreed."

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied this in an interview with Fox News, saying: "It's not close."

Washington and fellow mediators Qatar and Egypt have been pushing a proposal to bridge gaps between both sides.

Netanyahu insists on a military presence on the border between Gaza and Egypt along the so-called Philadelphi Corridor.

Hamas is demanding a complete Israeli withdrawal, saying it agreed months ago to a proposal outlined by US President Joe Biden.

In Israel, German Foreign Minister Annalena

Baerbock yesterday said that "a purely military approach is no solution to the situation in Gaza", after the recovery of six dead hostages

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Hasina, Quader, 124 others sued in Nilphamari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Awami League General Secretary and former minister Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and 123 others have been sued on charges of arson and vandalism.

Mokbul Hossain, district superintendent of police, told The Daily Star yesterday that the case was filed by district Swechchhasebak Dal leader Abdus Salam Babla with a court in the district on Thursday.

With this latest case, Hasina is now facing at least 130 cases, including 12 complaints related to crimes against humanity and genocide. Most of the other cases are related to murder charges.

This spree of cases filed against Hasina and others has prompted experts and the interim government to issue warnings. She is currently in India, having fled Bangladesh on August 5 in face of a mass uprising.

Other accused in the case include Central Chhatra League President Saddam Hossain, former Nilphamari-2 lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor, and several other district-level leaders of the Awami League, Swechchhasebak League, and Chhatra League.

An additional 300 unidentified persons were also named as accused in the case, read the case statement.

According to the details of the case, on August 4, students along with the general public, staged a rally.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## Ukraine needs more weapons

Says Zelensky at military aid meet in Germany

AFP, Ramstein Air Base

President Volodymyr Zelensky joined a meeting of Ukraine's international backers in Germany yesterday, appealing for additional weapons as Kyiv faces advancing Russian forces in the east and devastating strikes by Moscow.

He was also due to meet German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and then head to Italy, following the meeting at Ramstein Air Base, which comes days after 55 people were killed and 300 wounded in a Russian missile strike on the city of Poltava.

"We need more weapons to drive Russian forces off our land," Zelensky said.

He also urged Kyiv's supporters to follow through on previous commitments, saying: "The number of air defence systems that have not been delivered is significant."

And he again called for restrictions on the use of long-range Western weapons to hit targets inside Russia to be lifted.

"We need to have this long range capability, not only on the occupied territory of Ukraine, but also on the Russian territory," Zelensky said.

The meeting at the base southwest of Frankfurt is being hosted by US defence chief Lloyd Austin, who announced that Washington will provide \$250 million in new military aid for Ukraine.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



This recent undated handout photograph, released by the Presidential Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on September 5, 2024, shows the ruins of the Ukrainian town of Vovchansk, in the Kharkiv region, located approximately five kilometers from the border with Russia.

PHOTO: AFP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Gazi Tyres factory set on fire, again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Criminals again looted and torched the Gazi Tyres factory in Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila yesterday afternoon, a day after a similar incident at the plant.

A building of the plant had been gutted nearly a week ago.

Some people again broke into the factory and set it on fire after the waste section after looting goods yesterday, said Abdul Mannan, deputy assistant director of Narayanganj Fire Service and Civil Defence.

It took one and a half hours for the firefighters to douse the fire.

Around 1:30am on Thursday, some miscreants set fire to the factory's east portion.

Factory officials said people looted the factory and set it on fire after the Awami League government's fall on August 5 amid a mass uprising. The factory's owner Golam Dastagir Gazi was a minister of that government.

They torched a six-storey building on August 25. The blaze was brought under control after around 22 hours, and doused after five days.





PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# A BATTLEGROUND OF CHANGE

## Role of DU in social movements

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID and MASFIQ MIZAN

The pulsating energy of Dhaka University campus works as a catalyst to inspire students and shape their conscience.

For a student, the university days are the prime of their lives when they discover themselves, free from adult supervision. Their thought process is moulded by stimulating discussions and lectures of eminent minds of the society. They become politically charged and are able to debate and express their thoughts on an intellectual topic with faculty, they read books suggested by professors, attend poetry reading sessions, interact freely with friends in the library, share a cup of tea at Hakim Chatter and most importantly, they fall in love.

They fall in love with the ambience and energy of the campus that sets afire a series of metamorphosis within themselves; the power of expressing free will and open-mindedness. They begin to appreciate the freedom of speech and finally feel that they belong to a community.

However, for most of the last 15 years, this charm of Dhaka University was almost lost, said many former and present students.

They said the ruling party's student wing, the Chhatra League, occupied all the dormitories and controlled the intellectual sphere of the campus, calling the shots in every aspect. They swooped down on anyone who dared to protest against them, suffocating the spirit of free debate and independence that once defined the university.

The dormitories became fortresses for BCL, where dissent was crushed, and fear reigned, while general students endured unimaginable living conditions -- 20 to 25 freshers crammed into rooms meant for no more than four, with some even relegated to sleeping on balconies. These overcrowded spaces became notoriously known as "gonorooms".

The only way to escape this fate was by joining BCL politics, actively participating in all their programmes, and proving loyalty over the course of a year. Only then, with a political recommendation, could students hope to secure a proper room.

Despite this culture of repression, Dhaka University students sporadically revolted. Movements like the 2018 quota reform and the road safety protests saw brief flashes of defiance against the BCL goons. Yet, the shadow of fear loomed large, and the BCL's dominance remained largely unchallenged.

That changed in 2024. During the quota reform protest, Dhaka University students broke this culture of fear.

This time, when the BCL attacked protesters on July 15, the students didn't hide

or run. Instead, they united, armed themselves with sticks, and resisted the terror together.

They refused to bow down, standing tall in the face of violence. From the night of July 16 to July 17 morning, a remarkable shift took place -- general students liberated all the dormitories from the BCL's grasp.

Their revolt did not stop there. When students were forced to leave their dormitories in face of firing from law enforcers on July 17, the uprising spread across the country, culminating in a powerful movement that ultimately toppled the Awami League regime and forced Sheikh Hasina to flee.

What had started as a protest turned into a revolution. Since Sheikh Hasina's resignation on August 5, Dhaka University students continued to step up whenever needed, exemplified by the student-led relief efforts for flood victims, supporting the injured during anti-government protests, and standing by the families of those killed during the mass uprising.

Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, a professor at the department of International Relations in Dhaka University, earlier told this newspaper, "For the past 16 years, we have seen these kinds of initiatives be limited

**They fall in love with the ambience and energy of the campus that sets afire a series of metamorphosis within themselves; the power of expressing free will and open-mindedness. They begin to appreciate the freedom of speech and finally feel that they belong to a community.**

to the government's student organisations. But before that, during any crisis, we used to see collective participation from everyone. It seems that we have returned to that place," he said.

This is the beauty of DU, where, in times of national crisis, everyone ensures their participation equally to overcome it, he added.

LEGACY OF DU

Dhaka University is a historical ground that has served as a stimulus for social movements and political revolutions in Bangladesh for over 75 years. The lush campus is filled with symbols of our nation's struggle for freedom and justice. And as a student, constantly walking past iconic landmarks like Oporajeyo Bangla, the Shaheed Minar, or Modhur Canteen, it leaves a lasting impact and shapes their thought processes almost spontaneously.

"Being surrounded by these historical sites and knowing that distinguished alumni have walked the same grounds, one can't help but feel a profound connection to the past. The atmosphere here is incredibly motivating; it pushes us to contribute to the ongoing journey of our nation, instilling a sense of

many of us took inspiration from the courage of those who came before us. The Liberation War of 1971 is the testament to DU's critical role in the nation's history.

Over the years, whether resisting military rule, challenging authoritarian practices, standing up for the underprivileged, uniting for disaster management, or organising cultural activities, DU has consistently been a catalyst for change.

The common factor in all of these uprisings is the presence of students.

"For a student from a mufassil

class strata, have made them deal with hard reality and struggles of life. For them, there is a real need for employment after the completion of education. The recent movement was aligned with jobs they need and has thus risen absolutely from the crisis of complexity for their living standard and need for salaried jobs," explained Dr

Sowmit Joydip, assistant professor, School of General Education, BRAC University.

The energy reverberating the campus grounds, the corridors and dormitories is contagious; their identity as university students, their sense of belongingness to the campus, their youthful vigour, all these give momentum to challenge anyone in office who obstructs them.

"Their spirit spills over to private university students as a sort of proud fellow feeling. While public universities have safe campus spaces to bring out processions and give slogans, the private students take the sparks to the streets because of space constraints. This time, the long stretch of busy roads from Rampura to Uttara was occupied by student from private universities changing the force of the movement to gono andolon or mass uprising. Then the volley of mistakes and repression by the people in power has resulted in what we see today," said Joydip.

An ex-student involved in active politics added, "I am not against student politics, but it must be within the boundary of the campus. But that is an ideal picture. The truth of the matter is that they are used by politicians. They begin to fall for power, freedom, money and hero idolisation by peers. When money gets involved in politics, then the students become bigheads. But not all gets derailed..."

DU in its own exciting and stimulating tempo has shaped the political milieu of Bangladesh time and again.

And it seems now that Dhaka University has rediscovered its lost spirit, reclaiming its legacy as the heart of student activism and a beacon of hope during national crises. The students' defiance of fear, coupled with their efforts to bring change, has reignited the once-dimmed flame of Dhaka University's past glory.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

duty to uphold the values of freedom, justice, and unity," said Momena Islam, a former student.

"The university's legacy of dissent against the government, the system, or oppression has shown me -- and countless others -- the incredible strength of student unity and leadership. Our collective efforts have demonstrated time and again that when students of public university rise, they can shape the future of an entire nation," she added.

The university's rich history of resistance and protest dates back to the Language Movement of 1952, which was pivotal in asserting our cultural and linguistic identity against oppressive forces. DU students stood at the forefront of the 1969 mass uprising and

town such exposure and sense of belonging creates riots in their mindset and they begin to think independently. And if they meet with an obstacle to express their opinions and are pressurised beyond a certain point, these ordinary students take part in political movements that you witness. Only students can set in motion a revolution because they have no strings attached to them," said a 90's student who was actively involved in student politics during the anti-Ershad movement.

The crème de la crème of the students goes to medical and engineering schools, the mid-level meritorious girls and boys go to public universities and their first preference is always DU and JU (Jahangirnagar University). The socio-economic status of DU and JU students, mainly from the lower and middle-



FICTION

# ‘Twas Full Moon That Night

When I learnt hair-dressing while living in Chandaikona, I also learnt how to read people’s hands from a teacher. Hearing that from Torap Ali, even in that exceptional time, the village folk felt kind of confused, they could not recall whether they had ever heard that the former barber of the village knew astrology; but it was not an apposite time for argument, so despite their confusion they merely gazed at the speaker’s face silently and listened.

SHAHIDUL ZAHIR

The village folk remembered the moon of that night, and they described it. The day after Mafijuddin Miya of Suhasini and his family were murdered by assailants on a cloudless full moon night in the month of Bhadra, some of the villagers gathered in the compound of Mahir Sarkar’s house. Even though quite some time had gone by, they could not get over their shock at the suddenness of the incident. They sat speechless amidst the smell of cow dung and straw on the long bench in the outer courtyard of Mahir Sarkar’s house and puffed on the flat-bottomed hookah. The sensory deluge that they felt at the watery sound of the hookah being puffed in the soft and cold light of that dawn seemed to make the previous night’s incident float like a distant nightmare, and references to the moon in everything seemed to become significant to them. They could remember that a gigantic moon had risen the previous evening. Perhaps there was nothing exceptional in that awakening of the moon; but the incident that took place in the village of Suhasini on that full moon night in the month of Bhadra stunned the villagers; but after that, when they failed to explain and analyse the incident, they speechlessly puffed on the hookah in the courtyard of Mahir Sarkar’s house



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

and all that they kept thinking about was the full moon. Then Torap Ali, who was rapt in the hubble-bubble sound of the hookah and the fragrance of the special tobacco infused with herbs, spoke; he said that last evening, he was bringing home the calf that had been tethered at the edge of the road; he elaborated, At first I didn’t understand, I had a strange sensation in my body, as if I was in a trance-like stupor, there seemed to be dust all around, but the dust had a strange quality, it seemed to be suffused with a hue; I didn’t know what it was, I just knew it must be something; after that when I arrived in front of Miya’s house, I understood what it actually was; *Dehi ki myabarir*

*mathabhanga aamgastar dain paash diyya punnimar chan bhaisa uttse*, I saw that the full moon was floating up on the right side of the headless mango tree in Miya’s house. All the villagers remembered that moon, and as they sat in Mahir Sarkar’s courtyard, they said that it had occurred to them that a bloody moon like a decapitated head was rolling over the village. The village folk could not understand why the assailants preferred the luminous full moon night over the darkness of the new moon; they only kept wondering about, and being astonished by, how Mafijuddin Miya could possibly be dead; after all something like this was not supposed to happen, he was supposed to live till he was 81, and they had learnt that he was only 81. While speaking in Mahir Sarkar’s courtyard, Torap Ali,, too got awfully confused about the matter; he said, *Aage johon ami myashaaber chul kaityam tokhon myashaab ekdin amak shei chinno dehaaisilo*. When I used to cut Miya saheb’s hair, Miya saheb had one day shown me that sign. Hearing him, the villagers could remember that Torap Ali once used to work as a barber in this village, it was true; later, in the face of constant threats by his wife he changed his profession and opened a small provisions store in the village. Torap Ali said, Long before opening the provisions store, I was cutting Miya saheb’s hair in mid-afternoon under the persimmon tree in Miya saheb’s house; I wrapped a white sheet over Miya saheb, but his arm, from his elbow downwards, was sticking out of the lower end of the sheet; Torap Ali said that after a while, as he was working the scissors speedily, he noticed that Mafijuddin Miya had spread the upturned palm of his right hand on his thigh; he continued, *Chandaikona thaikte ami johon chul kaatar kaam*

*shikhi, tokhon ek ostader kase ami manusher haat dekha shikhchilyam*. When I learnt hair-dressing while living in Chandaikona, I also learnt how to read people’s hands from a teacher. Hearing that from Torap Ali, even in that exceptional time, the village folk felt kind of confused, they could not recall whether they had ever heard that the former barber of the village knew astrology; but it was not an apposite time for argument, so despite their confusion they merely gazed at the speaker’s face silently and listened. Torap Ali said that at that moment he observed an exceptional palm spread out in front of him; looking at the blank faces of the peasants who had gathered in Mahir Sarkar’s courtyard, he explained, My teacher taught me that four things influence a person’s life, one of those is the Sun, after that come the Moon, Mars and Saturn; the calculus of the reign of these four entities lies in one’s hand; if Saturn reigns supreme then the ship of business suffers, pests infest the crop, owls hoot in the darkness, and bad times arrive; but if it is the Sun that reigns, then one’s heart is full of courage and Saturn remains under control; if Mars becomes the king, then all is good; but what happens, Teacher, if the Moon reigns supreme? I asked him that, and my teacher said, There’s no good or bad there, or it’s both good and bad; when the angels pour the light of the moon on earth, the souls of trees, animals, and birds become still, and the one who enters the kingdom of the moon is unable to say whether he is awake or asleep, it’s as if he merely walks along in a stupor; That was what my teacher had told me; and that day, under the shade of the persimmon tree in the courtyard of Miya’s house, I observed on the upturned palm of Miya saheb’s hand that the reign of the Sun was dominant,

but the mound of the Moon on the palm of his hand overpowered that. Torap Ali said that after observing the lines on Mafijuddin Miya’s palm on that long-ago afternoon, he had turned terribly restless. Because, said Torap Ali, The lines on a human hand descend from the fingers towards the wrist, but the lines on Mafijuddin Miya’s hand were knotted together somewhere near his wrist and from this knot, lines like three strings of twine ran down towards the fingers and fell into the hollow between the little finger and the ring finger, the ring finger and the middle finger, and the middle finger and the index finger. Torap Ali added that on witnessing this sight of the lines on Mafijuddin Miya’s palm seemingly dropping down from his fingers, he had an uneasy feeling, and he had felt a strange kind of fear; he said, I stopped cutting his hair and kept gaping, and I asked him, Miya saheb, why are the lines of your hand like this? I couldn’t figure out whether that annoyed Miya saheb, but he turned kind of grave, and in turn asked me, Like what? I picked up courage and replied, It’s as if it’s rolling down, it’s like something falling down to the ground. When I said that, Miya Saheb examined his hand, as if he had never seen his own hand before; after that he slung his arm down at his side and said, *Je jinish jhoira pore Torap, ta hoityase jebon, ei haat theikya ja jhoira pore ta hoilo tyaj; amar ei bari aar ei gerame ami ki jebon aar tyajer abaad kori nai?* It is life that falls off, Torap, and what falls off this hand is vigour; did I not cultivate life and vigour in this household and village? The people of Suhasini who had gathered at Mahir Sarkar’s courtyard steadily got entangled in the web-like branches and sub-branches of the tale that Torap Ali unfurled; turning his gaze towards them, and taking a

long puff on the hookah, he said that even after hearing what Mafijuddin Miya declared, he felt a strange fear, and observing his fear Mafijuddin Miya had told him that he did not believe in palmistry; he had said, I will live to be a hundred-and-eleven, that has already been fated. Torap Ali said that Mafijuddin Miya undid the knot of his lungi in the dark shade of the persimmon tree that afternoon, revealed his right buttock, and showed it to him, and Torap Ali mentioned that the number ‘11’ seemed to be written with black ink on the skin of his buttock, wrinkled by age; he continued, Somehow the fear did not leave me, but I didn’t realise what it was then; now I realise that it had occurred to me that it was blood coursing down the lines of his hand; When I brought the calf home yesterday evening and observed the flaming red visage of the moon, I had it in my mind, but I don’t know why I didn’t realise it then, that it was this moon that had slipped off and floated out of Miya saheb’s hand, the moon was soaked in blood. When Torap Ali stopped speaking, the village folk kept recalling the moon in detail; although they were not convinced of Torap’s proficiency in astrology, nevertheless a suspicion arose in the minds of some of them, those who were old now, who had seen Mafijuddin in their childhood and adolescence, or heard about him, that Mafijuddin Miya probably had some kind of bond with the moon.

This is an excerpt from the Bangla novel, *Shei Raate Purnima Chhilo*, by Shahidul Zahir, translated by V. Ramaswamy and Shahroza Nahrin.

V. Ramaswamy and Shahroza Nahrin translated Life and Political Reality: Two Novellas by Shahidul Zahir.

POETRY

## What to do when faced with tear bombs

RAIAN ABEDIN

Hold on to the hand of your lover. Because when the baton falls it will be between the spaces where we stand. That’s where I connect to you. In the absence of this connection, I am an island. Here, at this point, make sure you tell them you love them. Love will conquer

all, believe it through your eyes—briny though they may feel. Believe it because when everything burns and your skin hurts to touch, there will still be a corner untouched by hurt. When you have to run because they took their chairs out to watch the bodies rot, ask yourself what the difference is between a body and a nation when

both are left, in the great silence we do not recognise as silence, with open wounds that no one sees. On concrete, we are islands that hold words. If I love you, if I love all of you, these words will no longer be islands.

Raian Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry, and a contributor to The Daily Star.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

## Silent friday

RAIAN ABEDIN

Somehow, the taste of tear gas and fear stuck to my tongue as my father took me to pray. Cold was the house of god before he began to speak. He told me he was somewhere close, and his voice was beautiful or so it seemed. Everything was suddenly beautiful, even the floor and the silence of the body and nation both. At some point I thought the imam was crying, and my father turned ‘he sounds beautiful’ he said. I wonder if all we can do in pain is be beautiful.

Raian Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry, and a contributor to The Daily Star.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA





‘What can’t we say anymore?’ ask experts

When this reporter asked a protester what their demands were, he said, “Our demands are those things that must be met.” Several other protesters seemed to be similarly confused.

JEAN PAUL SATIRE

Who would have thought? From the yoke of authoritarianism, where everything you said had to be checked for the presence of words that could anger the powers that be, today, Bangladeshis can say whatever they want to.

While freedom of speech is vital for a free society and vibrant democracy, this new set of circumstances seems to have given some people the idea that they can say literally anything that tickles their fancy.

From conspiracy theories and blatant lies to terrible opinions and absurd satire articles that should never see the light of day, everything is now out on the internet. And unprepared following years of repression, people don't even know what to take seriously and what to ignore.

For example, in a press conference on Wednesday, a former security guard laid out his vision for the nation in the upcoming future.

The 60-year-old man, named Comeon Touchme, made a series of suggestions, the most shocking of which was changing Dhaka's name to something more to his personal liking.

“The name Dhaka is okay, of course, but imagine if our city was instead called Dangerland, or Dhamaka City, or Land of the Barely Alive, or something more exciting. Wouldn't that be fun?” he said.

He also suggested creating a provision in the judiciary for trial-by-rap battle, and raising tax rates for everyone who isn't a 60-year-old former security guard.

When asked why he was saying such ridiculous things, he said, “Are you trying to shut me up? Is this the freedom we wanted?”

In response to Touchme's demands for higher tax rates, a group of 59-year-old former security guards staged a protest in front of the press club yesterday.

“We want justice,” they chanted. “Our demands must be met.”

When this reporter asked a protester what their demands were, he said, “Our demands are those things that must be met.”

Several other protesters seemed to be similarly confused.

Over on social media, almost everyone seems to have taken it upon themselves to become news sources, other than carry on as mere consumers. Every second post on Facebook is a thread about a shocking new discovery about the country's politics and history, and the sources to many of these outlandish claims are other such threads.

This reporter attempted to fact-check one such thread that provided 97 links worth of proof that several former ministers and MPs are currently hiding at the bottom of the Buriganga river after a mystic sorcerer from Kamrangirchar transformed them into mermen and mermaids.

The Pandora's box of internet filth that was unleashed by this paper's investigation of this claim was best described by one shocked intern as “the reason human beings must one day be taken over by a smarter, better species”.

However, the dubious nature of these Facebook threads does not seem to be having

an effect on netizens, who continue to think any information is worth believing as long as someone puts it in a comment thread.

In fact, some individuals have begun to speak in the language of Facebook comment threads, like my wife last week, who instead of texting me a list of groceries like usual, posted on Facebook saying:

“Things my husband needs to get from the grocery shop but will probably forget. A thread.”

In one comment, she wrote “bitter gourds” and in another she said “okra”.

Her friend commented, “Can't believe even Jean Paul Satire turned out to be like this. I thought he was one of the good ones.”

Experts seem to think this is simply growing pains for a nation who just haven't been able to say what they wanted to for a long time, and things will only get better from here.

Dr Communicado Oficial, a professor of media studies at the University of Conservative Arts Bangladesh (UCAB), said, “We must also consider the fact that free speech, when combined with general stupidity, results in the sort of absurdity we are seeing right now.”

“As more time passes, and we read more and more Facebook comment threads, we will only get smarter, and be able to use our freedom of speech for the good of society. We can even use it to finally find those ministers and MPs hiding at the bottom of the Buriganga as mermen and mermaids. I heard they are eating all the fish down there to raise prices and increase market instability. The counter-revolution must be stopped.”

## Obsessed with rainbows, ex-faculty member slapped with restraining order

When the former part-time lecturer of Crack University was let go last year for his discriminatory language and actions, he was at a loss. Why had the university dismissed him for tearing up a book as an educator?

The former lecturer, Jenó Ipad, believed that after enduring countless student assignments checked with ChatGPT and the apparent laziness of his students, his position gave him the unique opportunity to lead a movement against his profound hatred for rainbows.

Alas, since his aversion to rainbows was fascist and discriminatory towards those who accepted and loved them, he had been terminated.

Since then, Jenó has made it his life's mission to rally people against rainbows and, indirectly, Crack University for making him unemployed. He began scouring for incriminating evidence against the university, wherever he could find traces of the rainbow.

He started defacing university promotional flyers featuring multi-coloured kites and targeting students who adored wearing chrome eyeshadows simply because they loved bright colors. His particular disdain for tie-dyes was initially eyebrow-raising and confusing, but this correspondent soon realised that it was the vivid colour combinations that provoked his hatred.

One of his followers reported that they had taken to boycotting rainbows in the sky by refusing to go outside after it rains. This was especially difficult for the protesters, given that Dhaka receives 1,854 millimeters of rain on average.

Yet, his ultimate goal was to gather support against Crack University, against all odds.

One of his followers reported that they had taken to boycotting rainbows in the sky by refusing to go outside after it rains. This was especially difficult for the protesters, given that Dhaka receives 1,854 millimeters of rain on average, but their resolve was admirable.

“We don't understand why Jenó Ipad just can't get therapy. We're getting concerned about his obsession with us. It's like he's going through a really bad breakup. We're planning to issue a restraining order because of his fixation on the university,” said a teaching staff member at Crack University.

Meanwhile, after extensive investigation, this correspondent spoke with Jenó's doctor, who revealed that he suffers from microcephaly, a brain development disorder, which prevents him from accepting all colors in the same frame.



PHOTO: JORDAN MCDONALD

Email your satire pieces to [starsatireday@gmail.com](mailto:starsatireday@gmail.com)

# The Cancellling

AAQIB HASIB

The TV hummed slowly, filling the room with a soothing sound. Almost acting like a form of white noise.

The ceiling fan rolled slowly, emitting this tiny squeak that acted almost as another note to fit this mini orchestra.

Suddenly, the generic ad with its peaceful jingle playing disappeared from the screen, replaced by just two words.

BREAKING NEWS.

A newsreader came on screen, stacks of paper in hand, tacky montage background behind them.

“On today's evening news, we uncover the latest series of notable ‘cancellings’ that have happened in just the last 24 hours. Just earlier this morning, the most prominent figure to be cancelled was Dr Mohiuddin Mahmud. A notable neurosurgeon, who once even served as the country's chief medical adviser, was cancelled for his controversial comments regarding Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman.

Famously, Dr Mahmud praised the former president for his mic skills. Unfortunately, the Cancelling Council yesterday deemed the words as inflammatory and *dalali*. Now, Dr Mahmud has been cancelled posthumously. We shall never speak his name again.”

And with that, there was a small click and the lights from each corner of the TV met in the middle and it turned off.

The remote fell off the couch as Sameer rolled onto the floor, yawning. He rubbed his eyes, trying to clear his vision. Groaning, he finally got to his feet.

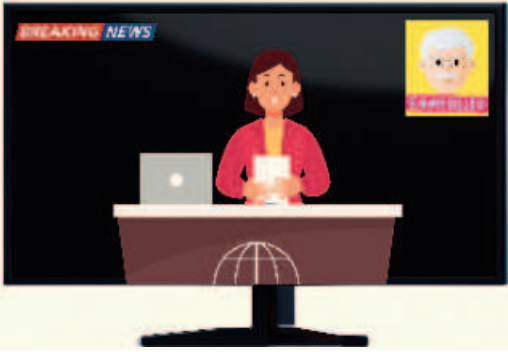
He stretched, too tired from awkwardly sleeping on the couch. Sameer pulled his phone out of his pocket, and glanced at the notifications. Just an endless list of his friends he would never be able to talk to again.

That was the problem with the

cancellling, Sameer thought, you never got to contact these people again. No phone calls, texts, chats, or even emails. They would also never be allowed outside of their houses.

It all made sense when this started. At first, it was great. You were getting rid of the worst people – perverts and musicians, sometimes both were the same. Predators and diabolical people were being removed. It was perfect.

But then, someone had to take it too far,



and things just got out of contro—

*Ring Ring...Ring Ring*

Sameer's phone buzzed, he picked it up to see that it was his mother calling.

“Sameer, baba, they are taking us away,” his mom whispered, voice filled with panic from the other side.

“WHAT? What is happening mom?” he asked.

“They say it is because your father thanked Hasina for the metro rail and I apparently watched too many hours of Zee Bangla. Son, please, be safe. This might be the final time we hear your voice. I love you...,” she said, before the line went dead with a final click.

Sameer stood there, mouth open from the shock. He had never thought his parents would get cancelled. This was a whole other can of worms.

A siren blared through the street, the sound piercing the air all the way up to Sameer's apartment on the 26th floor.

Utter chaos, Sameer thought. He at

times felt like they were some part of a sad experiment gone wrong. Where the heroes lost and they got the worst timeline. Or something. How did it go from shunning creeps on the internet to your time is up if you ironically liked a post praising the Indian cricket team.

Sameer's phone buzzed again, this time it showed an incoming video call from his friend Sayeed.

“Dude, it's done. I am barricaded in my house. They are coming for me,” Sayeed said frantically.

“No, what happened?”

“They found out that I once commented that a young Sheikh Hasina was kinda cute,” he replied.

“Wait, didn't I heart react to that comment back then,” Sameer asked, suddenly even more panicked.

Three loud knocks came from Sameer's door.

“Open up, this is the Thought Police,” a voice yelled.

### DISCLAIMER

This is a satirical page and should be considered as such. Any resemblance between the published contents here and actual events or individuals, etc. is purely coincidental. The articles and photos published on this page or the views expressed here are the author's own and do not reflect the editorial policy or view of The Daily Star.



HASINA'S 15-YEAR RULE

A regime of crony capitalists

“

We have seen infrastructure development during the 15-year rule of the past government. But there was overcapitalisation due to corruption.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN,  
a distinguished fellow, CPD

SOHEL PARVEZ

When the Awami League (AL) announced its manifesto with the slogan ‘Charter for Change’ ahead of the general elections in 2008, it drew applause from various sections of society.

Five key promises were articulated in the document -- lowering commodity prices and avoiding an economic depression, curbing corruption, increasing power and energy generation, eradicating poverty and inequity, and establishing good governance.

The party, led by Sheikh Hasina, won by a landslide and formed the cabinet in January 2009.

Six months later, it registered a big triumph, reducing annual inflation to 6.66 percent from 9.93 percent the year prior.

The AL alliance managed to keep prices to tolerable levels for the next two years, but annual inflation soared to its highest level since the turn of the millennium shortly thereafter, hitting 10.62 percent in fiscal year 2011-12.

However, it began to decline again thereafter, settling below 6 percent within three years.

That trend persisted for quite a while but finally lapsed in FY23, when consumers began to feel the pinch of rising inflation and the gradual erosion of real incomes.

The month prior to the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led AL government by a mass uprising on August 5, Bangladesh’s consumers were grappling with exorbitant prices.

In July, inflation stood at 11.66 percent, the highest in 13 years, standing in stark contrast to what the party had promised before it came to power 15 years ago.

The unbridled spiral in prices also undid much of the strides made during the AL government’s tenure in reducing the poverty rate, which dropped from 31.5 percent in 2010 to 18.7 percent in 2022. Extreme poverty also declined.

However, despite the economy growing at over 6 percent annually for one and half decades, inequality during the Hasina’s tenure in terms of both income and consumption began to stand out.

“There was growth, but it was jobless growth. It was the growth of discrimination and injustice,” stated MM Akash, a former professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

Inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, rose to a historic high of 0.49 in 2022 from 0.45 in 2005 although the AL had promised inclusive growth.

According to the scale, 0 represents a perfectly equal distribution of income or wealth while 1 reflects the extreme opposite.

Economists said the nation saw the divide grow as cronies rushed onto the scene and began to rule the roost.

From securing and rescheduling

stability on the economic front, which facilitated garment exports. Additionally, a number of people also found employment abroad.

“These favourable global economic conditions helped Bangladesh,” said Selim Raihan, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

One of the AL government’s major initial steps was aimed at the power sector, which was contending with acute supply shortages. As such, complaints were rife that the energy deficit was one of the major impediments to investment.

When the AL took charge, Bangladesh’s power generation capacity was roughly 5,000 megawatts.

Against this backdrop, the new government moved swiftly to frame the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010 in a bid to increase power generation and meet climbing demand.

However, the act included some curious clauses. For example, one stipulation stated that no question about any action, order or direction under this law could be raised before any court.

The decision created a rush among the private sector for the establishment of power plants as the government went on to purchase electricity through the direct purchase method, avoiding the competitive bidding process.

The number of power plants, which stood at just 27 in 2009, soared to over 150, largely owned by the private sector.

Today, private power plants account

for at least 42 percent of the nation’s total power generation capacity of 31,520 MW.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of The World Bank, said the energy supply act had helped increase electricity generation capacity but it

came at a great cost.

“It bankrupted the Bangladesh Power Development Board as noncompetitive procurement opened the floodgates for overpriced contracts.”

Earlier this year, the AL government curtailed the power of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission to decide electricity prices.

This decision enabled the government to pass on the costs of unbridled corruption to electricity users, he added.

Anu Muhammad, a former professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University, said mega corruption took place in the energy sector.

“The plan that was taken was environmentally disastrous, a financial waste and thoroughly corrupt,” he said.

He cited the ill-advised focus on building a coal-based power plant in Rampal, near the Sundarbans, and the nuclear power plant at Rooppur.

“Much of the energy needs could be

met through renewables,” Muhammad said.

The AL government targeted to generate 10 percent of electricity through renewable sources by 2020. But it fell well short of the goal.

At present, renewable sources account for around five percent of total electricity generation capacity, according to government data.

Hussain said the public had high expectations that the AL government would adopt policy and institutional reforms, especially in terms of public financial management, transparency, infrastructure, energy, finance, trade, education, health, and social protection.

“That government fell on August 5, leaving behind demolished institutions and botched policies in each and every one of these areas.”

Initially, the government vetted legislative reforms passed through presidential ordinances under the caretaker government.

These included the public money bill, the right to information act, separation of lower judiciary from administration, the energy regulatory commission act and so on, he said.

“Subsequently, it amended these and many pre-existing legislations such as the anti-corruption act in ways that neutralised the powers of these laws. The executive branch monopolised all the power, undoing the checks and balances that are essential for accountable management of public policies.”

Hussain said the Value Added Tax law, framed in 2012, was state of the

art for its time. But it was only framed to satisfy the International Monetary Fund (IMF) so the multilateral lender would disburse \$1 billion in credit.

“Implementation of the law was delayed year after year. During this time, several amendments made the new law worse than the one it replaced in 2017.”

“Some of the good initiatives were mismanaged by cronyism,” he said, citing the rule which directed all expanded stipend programmes in education to be distributed among beneficiaries through one mobile financial service provider, namely Nagad, a company he believes “was born through licensing irregularities”.

“The same goes for the kleptocratic management of social assistance and financial stimulus programmes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.”

He added that the Padma Bridge was a notable example of a nationally beneficial investment that took too long to complete and cost a lot more than necessary.

Approved in August 2007, the Padma Bridge, which connects 21 southwestern districts through roads and railways to the capital, was supposed to be implemented at a cost of Tk 10,162 crore within June 2015.

However, its opening was pushed by seven years to June of 2022, by which time costs had ballooned to Tk 30,770 crore.

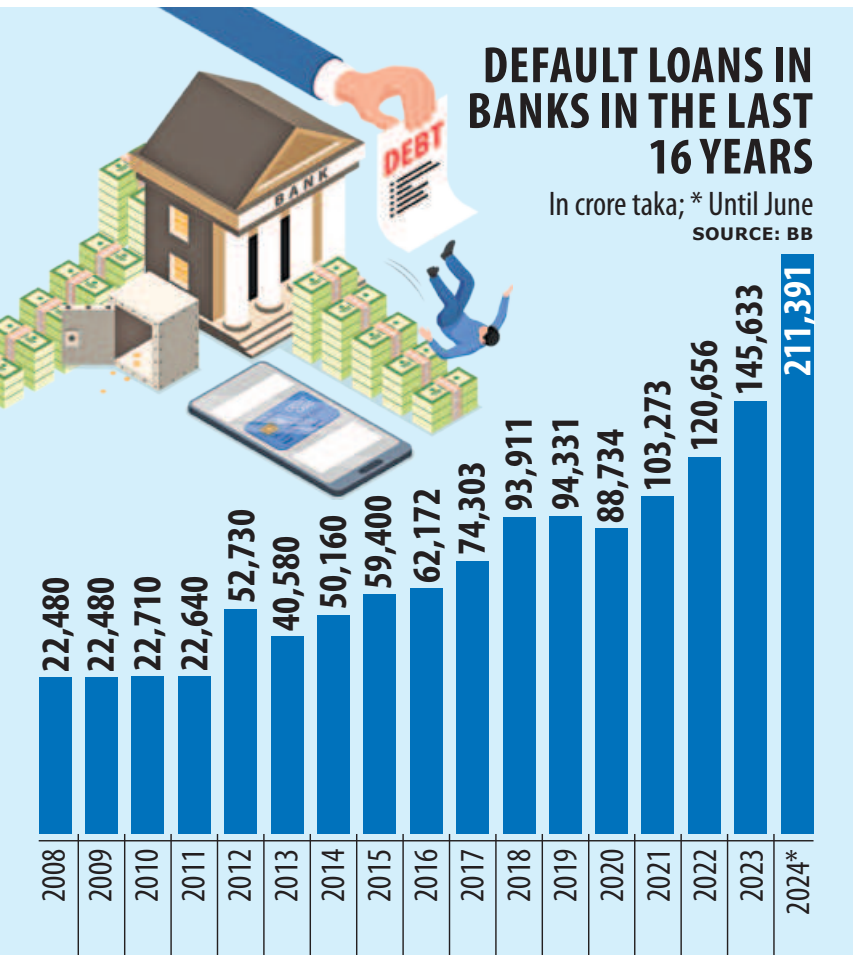
“We have seen infrastructure development during the 15-year rule of the past government. But there was overcapitalisation due to corruption,” remarked Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

“We have seen people with vested interests get contracts due to a lack of good governance and accountability.”

However, he also said there had been some gains during the AL’s tenure.

Naming a few positives, he said poverty levels had declined, infrastructure was developed, electricity generation and supply increased, agricultural production rose and exports experienced an uptick.

Data from the Power Division shows that nearly 100 percent of the



population came under electricity coverage over the past one and half decades, up from less than half.

Production of rice, a staple food item, rose to nearly 4 crore tonnes from

“I can think of three black laws that damaged the ethical side of business, banking, and finance,” said Birupaksha Paul, a professor of economics at the State University of New York in Cortland.

“The directorship law converted private banks into family-owned grocery shops. Second, relaxing the definition of defaulted loans induced moral hazards and cemented the eventual death of the banking industry by justifying willful looting. Finally, the provision to allow black money to be whitened by simply paying a 15 percent tax represented unethical validation for illicit financial outflows.”

Elaborating on the first point, he cried that during the AL’s tenure, Islami Bank, the largest bank in terms of deposits, was taken over by the Chattogram-based conglomerate S Alam Group’s founder, Mohammed Saiful Alam.

S Alam and his family members have significant stakes in half a dozen banks and were allowed to hold a higher amount of shares than the permissible limit based on special approval from the central bank.

The Bank Company Act was amended to increase the tenure of a board member to 12 years from nine years at the last moment, showing the influence of major shareholders of banks on the government.

Patronised by politically influential individuals, loan scams and rescheduling of defaulted loans were ubiquitous.

“These are the biggest blunders that the Awami regime has committed, pampering oligarchs and financing their political interests,” Paul said.

Raihan added that the economy was on the path of high growth supported by favourable global economic conditions until 2019. This, combined with the low levels of inflation that prevailed for most of the AL’s tenure, gave the government legitimacy.

“But it suffered from crises whenever unfavourable conditions emerged, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was not enough resilience in the economy,” he said.

“The economic growth failed to create enough jobs. On several occasions, we raised concerns that the jobless rate was growing. We could not diversify exports either.”

Education and health desperately required increased investment, but budgetary allocations always fell short of the requirement.

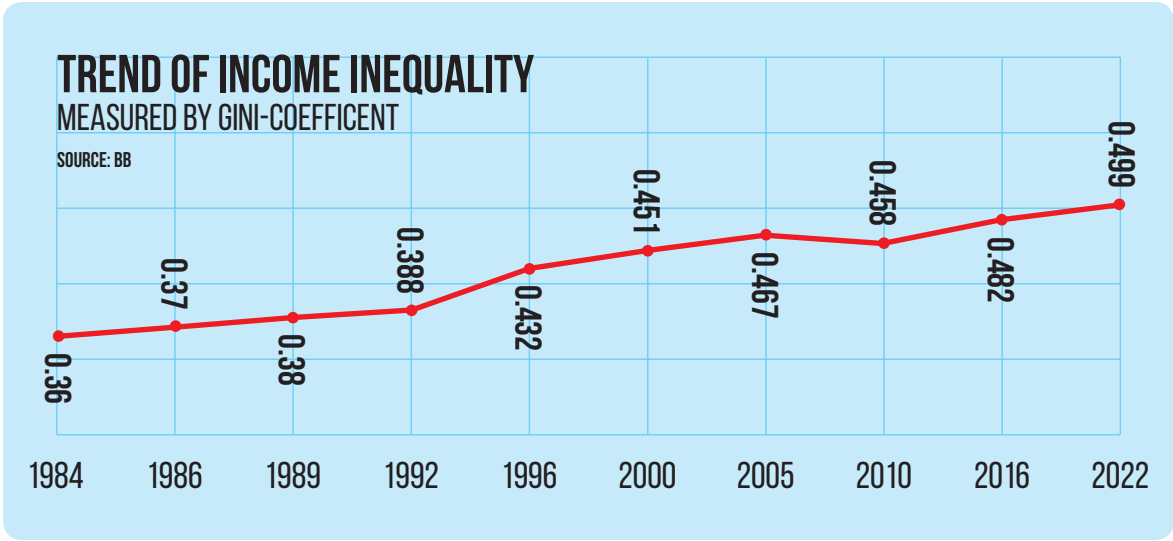
“So, in one sense, it was a decade of lost opportunity for human capital formation,” Raihan said.

Mujeri said discrimination had permeated all facets of life during the AL’s tenure as its perspective of governance was neither development-oriented nor inclusive.

“Short-term gains are unsustainable. There is no credit if you cannot ensure long-term development,” InM’s executive director added.

“We strayed from establishing a democratic and participatory state and society. The main lesson is that unless there are checks and balances and democratic values, development activities will be unsustainable and will not yield any long-term benefits.

“State structure should be designed in line with that. That brings the issue of reforming the institutions.”



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loans from banks to grabbing public contracts for power, energy and public infrastructure projects, cronies and politically influential individuals seized control.

This overtime became the rule of the game over time.

“It was a regime of crony capitalists. All loans and licences were given based on cronyism, not efficiency,” Akash said.

“Crony capitalism grew in South Korea too. But those cronies were nationalists. Here, we saw the opposite. Capital flight was rampant.”

After being sworn into office in early January 2009, the AL-led grand alliance had a relatively smooth takeoff. The turbulence in the global economy was reducing. The commodity market, which became volatile during the global financial crisis in 2007-08, had also begun to recede.

Prices were also falling domestically, supporting the government’s efforts to frame and implement policies.

Consequently, the party enjoyed