



### BB to design new law for bank mergers, acquisitions

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### US House vote hangs in balance

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### External forces must not interfere with the media

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### Maldives eye victory in both friendlies

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## Bridge this year, full benefits not before 2030

### Work on 2 projects linked to Jamuna rail bridge yet to start

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Bangabandhu Railway Bridge over the Jamuna is set to be inaugurated next month, but people will not get the full benefit of it until at least 2030.

Trains travelling to and from the north and northwest would still have to wait at stations to let other trains pass until the single line between Joydebpur and Ishwardi is converted to a double line.

People heading for Bogura would still have to take a 112km detour.

This is because the works of two projects, which were supposed to be done or almost done by now, have not even started yet. One of them is for the double line from Joydebpur to Ishwardi and another for a direct line between Sirajganj and Bogura.

The projects had faced delays and construction work could not start even five years after approval. Authorities now hope to start the work within 2026 and finish by



#### RAIL BRIDGE PROJECT

Original cost: Tk **9,734**cr  
Original deadline: Dec 2023  
Revised cost: Tk **16,781**cr  
Expected opening: Dec 2024

#### JOYDEBPUR-ISHWARDI EXPANSION

Original cost: **14,251**cr  
Original deadline: Dec 2024  
Status: Work yet to start

#### SIRAJGANJ-BOGURA RAIL LINE

Original cost: Tk **5,580**cr  
Original deadline: June 2023  
Revised deadline: June 2024  
Status: Work yet to start

2030, officials said.

Because of the delay, the 4.8km dedicated railway bridge being built at a cost of Tk 16,780.95 crore with foreign loans will remain under-utilised for at least the next five years, as the double-line bridge will be fed by a single line.

As the capacity of the single line has been exhausted, Bangladesh Railway cannot increase the number of trains.

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As the Bhabadah 21-vent sluice gate remains non-functional, the pumps installed nearby have to drain out the water from several hundred villages of Jashore and Khulna, which have been suffering from waterlogging for the past two months. However, the pumps are proving to be less effective due to the huge amount of water to pump out. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Around 50,000 farmers at risk of missing Boro season

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Ullas Biswas is unsure if he will be able to cultivate Boro paddy on his five bighas of land in Khulna's Dumuria upazila this season as his entire land is waterlogged.

The farmer from the Beel Dakatia area of Rangpur village harvested 105 maunds of Boro paddy in the 2022 season. The following year, he could only grow 30 maunds on one and a half bighas, with the rest of the land waterlogged.

"Arable land in parts of Dumuria upazila is now under waist-deep water. These areas include Rangpur, Ruparampur, Shalua, Mixi Mill, and Rudaghora. We have no idea when the water will recede," Ullas told The Daily Star on November 5.

Farmers will miss the opportunity to farm Boro paddy this season if the water does not drain away within the next four weeks.

At least 50,000 farmers in 10 upazilas of Khulna, Jashore and Satkhira districts have been facing uncertainty over growing Boro

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## BHABADAH AND BEYOND Marooned for months

### At least 300 villages, 200 educational institutions of 3 dists remain inundated

PINAKI ROY

On the way to Ranjit Kumar Bawali's home in Dumurtola village of Jashore's Bhabadah, a young boy giving directions pointed towards a slim bridge made of bamboo.

It had to be crossed to get to the house as the area has been under water for months.

As this correspondent reached there, Ranjit, a farmer and convener of Bhabadah Water Drainage Movement Committee, said, "See how we've been living? It's been over two months that my courtyard has been inundated."

"It was full of fruits and vegetables, all of which has rotted in the knee-deep water. Tilapia fish swim here now."

Earlier, the waterlogging was confined to the Bhabadah region. "But over the years, the problem has spread to other areas," he said.

In the district, Bhabadah is often called the "Sorrow of Jashore". It has been a victim of waterlogging since the early 1980's, when all the nearby rivers had begun drying up after the construction of embankments and sluice gates.

The Bhabadah Water Drainage Movement Committee was formed in 1982 to combat the waterlogging problem in the area.

Since its formation, the committee has been sharing practical knowledge on dealing with waterlogging from the grassroots to the policymakers; it has held demonstrations for the implementation of the Tidal River Management (TRM) system; and has regularly urged relevant officials, including those of the region's Water Development Board, to keep the upstream and surrounding rivers' estuaries flowing.

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## Migrant workers played key role in July uprising

### Yunus says at inauguration of HSIA lounge for them, gives pep talk to officials in Baku

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday inaugurated a lounge dedicated for the country's migrant workers at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to make sure that they get the honour and facilities like guests for their significant contribution to the country's progress.



"Our migrant workers are nation builders. In the July-August mass uprising, they played a big role. We will always be grateful to them," said Prof Yunus.

The "Probashi Lounge" is the first of its kind at the airport. "We believe this lounge will make their [migrant workers'] travel easy," Prof Yunus said.

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## UNPAID WAGES RMG workers block Dhaka-Mymensingh highway again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Workers of five TNZ Group garment factories ended a three-day blockade of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway over back pay last night.

The traffic situation became normal around 10:00pm when the workers left, said Gazipur Traffic Police Inspector Abdullah Al Mamun.

Mosharraf Hossain, an assistant superintendent of police at Gazipur Industrial Police, told The Daily Star that the workers agreed to leave after the authorities in a meeting at the labour ministry decided to pay the wages for the month of September by November 17. The wages for October will be given by November 30.

The workers launched the protest on Saturday morning after the factory authorities missed several deadlines for the payments.

Traffic on the highway returned to normal briefly around 2:15pm yesterday as the workers left the place at the request of police who promised to mediate a discussion between the owner and the workers.

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## PRESS FREEDOM CPJ outlines 10 actions for Prof Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists has urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to urgently address press freedom in the country.

In a letter sent yesterday, following a recent meeting at the 2024 UN General Assembly, the CPJ outlined 10 key actions for the interim government to protect journalists and uphold freedom of expression.

Among the top priorities, CPJ called for a moratorium on repressive media laws, specifically following the announced repeal of the controversial Cyber Security Act 2023. This law, which replaced the much-criticised Digital Security Act, has been used to target journalists under previous administrations.

CPJ also called for the dismissal of hundreds of retaliatory criminal cases against journalists,

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Students of Jagannath University demonstrate in front of the Secretariat yesterday to press home their five-point demand, including putting the army in charge of constructing their new campus. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'Govt must stop giving key posts to AL loyalists'

### Say several student coordinators, threaten to take to streets again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Anti-Discrimination Student Movement leaders yesterday demanded that the government remove those, who they believe are "allies of the fascists", from the posts of advisers.

Some of them also warned that they would not hesitate to take to the streets and remove the entire council of advisers "if the government continued to rehabilitate Awami allies".

"The advisory council needs to explain the contributions of those being appointed. We want to know about their struggles over the last 16 years," said Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

He made these remarks while addressing a demonstration at Raju Memorial Sculpture where Dhaka University students protested the recent appointments to the interim government.

Eight coordinators of the movement were present. On Sunday, renowned filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Akiy Bashir Group MD Sk Bashir Uddin, and chief adviser's special assistant Mahfuj Alam were sworn in as advisers.

Immediately after they took the oath of office, there were protests against the appointments of Farooki and Bashir.

Hasnat said, "If decisions are made beyond the mandate

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