



Shot, shackled, blinded

P3



Israeli strikes kill two Hamas commanders

P7



How Bangladesh is reviving its macroeconomy

P8



Lease land, grow your own veggies, grains

WR1

## POWER, ENERGY SECTOR

## Arrears, subsidies weighing down govt

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The interim government is struggling to pay the power bill arrears that were caused largely by "unfair" contracts signed between the previous administration and power producers, and rising international fuel prices.

It may become difficult to keep the commitment to reduce arrears by this fiscal year – a condition set by the International Monetary Fund's \$4.7 billion loan programme.

In May, during the second review of the loan programme, the IMF pressed the Awami League government to lower bill arrears.

The government then committed to paying the bills so that arrears slightly come down by the end of 2023-2024 fiscal and unpaid bills do not pile up in the current 2024-2025 fiscal.

"We plan to gradually clear arrears and return subsidy spending to a level consistent with our fiscal programme targets," the government was quoted as saying in an IMF report released in June.

The previous government also planned to "gradually clear these arrears through transparent transfers from the budget over the next five years".

According to the report, the total arrears for power, fertiliser and energy sectors was around Tk 60,000 crore at the end of June.

Of the sum, the power sector alone accounted for Tk 40,000 crore, said a finance ministry official.

To clear arrears in the power sector, the AL government issued Tk 20,133 crore in special bonds in the last fiscal year and the interim government issued Tk 5,000 crore early this month.

Yet, unpaid bills in the power sector are now Tk 37,000 crore and the



Drivers of battery-run rickshaws demonstrate near the capital's Jurain level crossing yesterday protesting the ban on their vehicles on city streets. The protest disrupted traffic in and around the area. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

### POWER SECTOR SUBSIDY (IN CRORE TK)

FY21	8,945
FY22	11,960
FY23	29,511
FY24	35,000
FY25	36,000

**"Some of the ways these arrangements have been made look like daylight robbery."**

ZAHID HUSSAIN, former lead economist of World Bank Dhaka office

amount is likely to rise in each coming month, officials said.

In the current fiscal year, the sector is supposed to get Tk 36,000 crore in subsidies. Of this, Tk 7,000 crore has been paid so far, said officials of the finance and power ministries.

The Power Division needs Tk 3,000 crore - Tk 3,500 crore each month, but gets around Tk 2,000 crore.

When the interim government took charge, the total arrears in only foreign liabilities in the power and energy sector was \$2.5 billion.

After taking office in early August, the interim government requested development partners for help in paying bills in the sector.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed last week said some bills have been paid without touching the foreign currency reserves.

The government significantly reduced the money owed to Adani Group, he said.

Power ministry officials said Bangladesh owed the Indian conglomerate \$900 million, and part of it has been paid.

Power Adviser Muhammad Fauzul Kabir Khan last week told reporters that foreign liabilities had fallen to \$1.5 billion.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation has no foreign liabilities at present, a finance ministry official said.

However, several LNG companies are owed \$250 million, the official said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## PAYRA PORT

## Poor navigability jacks up coal import cost

Large vessels can't reach port after dredging stopped

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Just six months after Tk 6,500 crore was spent on capital dredging, Payra Port's Rabnabad channel has lost much of its navigability, pushing up coal transport costs for the power plants in the area.

Mother vessels carrying coal from abroad for two power stations are unable to dock at the port jetty, forcing the plants to bear the extra cost of lightering.

Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila along the Rabnabad river houses the 1,320MW Payra Thermal Power Plant. Boasting ultra-supercritical technology, the plant began its operations in 2020.

The Rural Power Company Limited's plant in the area is nearing completion, while the Ashuganj power plant is under construction. Both the stations will have a capacity to generate 1,320MW each.

The coal for these plants is brought from Indonesia through the Rabnabad channel, officials of the power plants said.

Many other companies rely on this channel and port to import nine other commodities,

from limestone to LPG.

The Belgian contractor Jan de Nul completed the capital dredging of the 75km long channel with 100-125m or higher width by April 26. The dredging allowed vessels with a draft of 10.5m to enter the port.

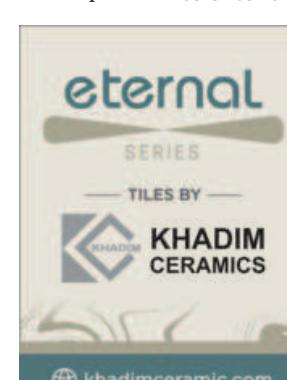
But the triumph was short-lived. With a glaring lack of maintenance dredging, the channel's depth plummeted to dangerous levels – below 6.5m at high tide and 5.9m at low tide, according to officials of the power stations and the Payra Port Authority (PPA).

No mother vessel, that requires a minimum depth of 10m, can reach the jetty now. Port users face skyrocketing costs as coal must be lightered at the outer anchorage.

Shah Abdul Mawla, project manager of the Payra Thermal Power Plant, paints a dismal picture. "We're incurring an additional \$10 to \$12 per tonne in lightering costs. This additional expense is a burden on power generation."

Without immediate dredging, transportation costs will soar, and user dissatisfaction will grow, the power station officials said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Fire and smoke erupt from a building just after an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's southern Shayah neighbourhood in Lebanon yesterday, amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hezbollah.

PHOTO: AFP

## BNP to propose balancing president, PM's powers

It may submit the proposals to reform commission by Monday

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP has finalised several constitutional reform proposals, which include balancing the powers of the president and the prime minister.

It also wants a bicameral parliament and the restoration of the caretaker government system in the constitution.

The party finalised the proposals in line with its 31-point outline for structural reforms.

It plans to submit the proposals to the interim government's Constitution Reform Commission, headed by Professor Ali Riaz, by Monday, according to party sources.

The party's policymaking National Standing Committee made the decision about the proposals at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office on Thursday night.

The proposals also include declaring equality, human dignity, and justice as the guiding principles of the constitution, according to sources.

The interim government's Constitution Reform

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



## CHATTOGRAM WASA

## Tk 100cr lost every year to 'system loss'

SIFAYET ULLAH

In the last fiscal year, 30 percent of Chattogram Wasa's water was wasted, resulting in significant revenue loss.

Its system loss has doubled in the past decade, up from 15.24 percent in 2013-14 fiscal year.

However, many of its customers are being billed for more water than they actually use.

According to its annual report, Chattogram Wasa produced 176,511 million litres of water in 2023-24, but lost revenue from 52,962 million litres, categorised as Non-Revenue Water (NRW).

With an average tariff of Tk 19.37 per 1,000 litres, the agency lost over Tk 100 crore in potential revenue.

The NRW or system loss refers to water that is either lost or unaccounted for after it is produced.

The system loss at Chattogram Wasa is the highest among the four state-run water supply agencies.

By comparison, Rajshahi and Khulna Wasa had system loss rates of 17.5 percent and 29 percent respectively in FY 23-24, while Dhaka Wasa's NRW rate was 20 percent in 2021-2022, according to data from the respective agencies.

Despite spending an enormous Tk 6,336 crore on network expansion and pipeline replacement, Chattogram Wasa's wastage continued to rise over the years.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

MY DHAKA

## 5 fun things to do in Dhanmondi other than eating out

JANNATUL BUSHRA

Dhanmondi, a vibrant high-end neighbourhood in Dhaka, is known for its heavy traffic, loud noises, and a delectable array of eateries!

But amidst all that, there are still some corners where you can escape the sensory overload and find respite from the overwhelmingly fast-paced atmosphere of urban life. From the serene lakeside walkways to the elaborated Mughal heritage, Dhanmondi has its own unique delights to offer beyond its buzzing dining scenes. We have shortlisted five activities that are a must-do to experience Dhanmondi's genuine appeal.

### 1. ANGLING IN DHANMONDI LAKE

In this tech-driven urban jungle, fishing on a lakeshore can be a great way to block out digital distractions. In fact, it's a form of meditation for many people.

Dhanmondi Lake is a great place to spend the weekend with a fishing rod if you're yearning for some serenity! You can simply purchase a ticket to reserve a designated spot on the banks of the lake for a day. Fishing is permitted in this area on Fridays and Saturdays. So, take advantage of this healing experience to unwind and spend some



PHOTOS: JANNATUL BUSHRA

### 2. ROWING IN DHANMONDI LAKE

The knots, kits, casting and then waiting patiently for hours; fishing, can feel like a lot of work! And if you are not ready to remember all these steps and master this art yet, fear not! You can still enjoy the serenity of Dhanmondi Lake by boat!

time in nature, away from the bustle of the city.

Paddling a boat before sunset or early in the morning can be a magical experience! The reflection of the vibrant sky in the lake water and the surrounding greenery will definitely put your anxious soul at ease.

### 3. DHANMONDI SHAHI EIDGAH: A PORTAL THROUGH TIME

For anyone who feels fascinated by history and heritage, a quick visit to Dhanmondi Shahi Eidgah is like stepping back in time to one of

the capital's most iconic Mughal architectural masterpieces. This historical grandeur was constructed in 1640AD, during the reign of Subahdar Shah Shujah, the second son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.

You may often find kids playing here in the evenings. Whether you are a history buff or a casual visitor, Dhanmondi Shahi Eidgah will offer you a rare opportunity to experience the rich legacy of the Mughal era in Bangladesh.

### 4. REDISCOVERING BIOSCOPE

A few steps from the Shahi Eidgah, in front of Anam Rangs Plaza at Dhanmondi 6/A, sits Muhammad Hiru, with his iconic red-covered bioscope box, almost every weekday after 5:00pm. You can consider giving Hiru a chance to take you back in time with his songs and images if you're sick of digital entertainment platforms. Hiru, in his clown costume, would do anything but disappoint you!

### 5. DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF ART GALLERIES

If you are an avid admirer of art and culture, then there are art galleries in Dhanmondi that can save you from the hustle of the outside world. One such art gallery is Gallery Chitrak, founded by Muhammad Muniruzzaman. Another notable one is the Bengal Gallery of Fine Arts. Both these places offer a wide range of art pieces from local to international artists that will make you ponder for hours.

**I did not know anything about case' Plaintiff says about 'false claim' of husband's death**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A Dhaka court placed the plaintiff of a murder case under family custody yesterday after recording her statement.

The plaintiff, Kulsum Akhter, 21, stated that she had no involvement in filing the case in which her husband was falsely declared dead, said Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

On Thursday, Ashulia police took Kulsum, along with two others, Ruhul Amin, 64, and Shafiuuddin, 40, into custody in connection with the case.

Kulsum told police that she was lured with a job offer and was threatened by Ruhul Amin and Shafiuuddin that she would face capital punishment if she denied the filing of the case.

The case was filed at the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on October 24, accusing 130 people of killing her husband during the mass uprising on August 5.

The court ordered Ashulia Police Station to record the case, and it was officially registered on November 8.

Hearing the news, Kulsum's husband Md Al Amin contacted Moulvibazar's Juri Police Station on November 13 and sought help.

Juri police communicated with Ashulia police that later took necessary actions.

Quoting the plaintiff, police said Kulsum lived with her husband in South Surma of Sylhet. She travelled to Manikganj on August 28 to search for work.

She met Shafiuuddin on a bus, who gave her his phone number.

A few days later, Shafiuuddin informed Kulsum that he had managed a job for her. He asked for her birth certificate.

Subsequently, Shafiuuddin and Ruhul Amin took her to Dhaka and told her that she was made the plaintiff of a case filed over the death of a man on August 5.

Kulsum told investigators that she did not know the accused.

Meanwhile, after hearing the news that Kulsum was brought to the police station, an accused, Liaqat Dewan, visited the police station yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## Arrears, subsidies

FROM PAGE 1

### UNFAIR CONTRACTS

The national committee to review the power sector contracts has found that more subsidies were needed as the previous government kept raising power generation capacity in an unplanned manner.

Power generation capacity was raised without ensuring a source of fuel, said a member of the community.

In 2023-2024, the subsidy allocation for the power sector was Tk 34,000 crore, which was between Tk 3,000 crore and Tk 9,000 crore from 2018-2022.

The capacity charge the previous government paid to the power plant companies was estimated at Tk 32,000 crore last fiscal year, up from around Tk 10,000 crore in 2020.

A committee member said contracts with different independent power companies including Adani were not signed keeping national interest in mind.

Bangladesh has to purchase overpriced power from them, he said.

Under the contracts, the government has to pay independent power companies a 9 percent service charge to purchase fuel, which is nothing but corruption, he added.

Another committee member said a modern power plant was built in Rupsha, Khulna, with an objective that natural gas extracted in Bhola would be its fuel. But the plant has yet to start production because the pipeline from Bhola is not there.

Besides, a coal-fired power plant has been built in Payra, but the cost of supplying coal there using the Payra sea port is high because large vessels cannot anchor there, he added.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at World Bank's Dhaka office, said power related contracts were unfair to Bangladesh, giving producers the leverage to overcharge.

"Some of the ways these arrangements have been made look like daylight robbery," he said. "We have to pay them whether we purchase power or not. The fuel costs are also overbilled, either by playing with prices or with fuel grades and types."

Zahid, also a member of the national committee to review the power sector contracts, said the previous government used to blame the international fuel prices for the increasing costs of power, a narrative created to hide their corruption.

The previous government bragged about increasing the power generation capacity to 27,000 megawatts. "How many of those megawatts are available for use?"

Regarding bill arrears, he said, "It's a recurring issue, the bills keep ticking. We have accelerated the payments. The burden is huge, but the bottom line is, the arrears are reducing, and we have to go towards zero."

## BNP to propose balancing president

FROM PAGE 1

Commission has asked the political parties to submit their proposals in writing.

The commission has already begun consulting prominent citizens and other stakeholders.

It has set a deadline of November 25 for interested individuals or organisations to make recommendations, and give opinions and proposals.

Prof Riaz said earlier that the government will discuss political parties' proposals, while the commission will hold discussions with the other stakeholders.

The BNP formed committees to make proposals for constitutional, electoral, police, civil administration, judiciary, and anti-corruption reforms in line with the six reform commissions established by the interim government on September 11. The commissions are expected to submit their reports by December 31.

At the Standing Committee meeting, the BNP also discussed the progress in finalising its proposals for reforms to the Election Commission and the police.

Major (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, a member of the Standing Committee

and head of the police reform committee, submitted their report to the party's top leadership.

Reports from the constitutional reform and Election Commission reform committees, headed by Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Abdul Moyeen Khan, have also been finalised, sources said.

The Standing Committee experts have also blamed some unscrupulous Wasa staffers for stealing water by manipulating the metering system.

This wastage has also caused severe water supply shortages for many of Chattogram Wasa's 89,508 customers.

"I get water once a week, but I still bailed around Tk 600 every month under the minimum billing system," said Habib Ullah, a resident of the port city's Cement Crossing area.

Faruq Hossain, who lives in the Mokbul Ahmed Society area of Patenga, said people of his locality get water 8-10 times a month.

"We only receive 8-12 units [1 unit = 1,000 litres] of water each month, but we are being charged for 30 units under the average billing system," said Faruk.

Sajjad Hossain, a revenue officer at Chattogram Wasa, acknowledged that many consumers are being billed for more water than they actually use.

Consumer rights activist SM Nazer Hossain said Wasa's inefficiencies are placing a financial burden on customers who are forced to pay extra.

"System losses directly affect consumers. If these losses were reduced, Wasa would generate more revenue and wouldn't need to hike prices," said Nazer, vice president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

He accused some unscrupulous Wasa staffers of manipulating meters to steal water.

"The system loss will persist unless authorities take firm action against those involved."

Maksud Alam, chief engineer of Chattogram Wasa, admitted that metering errors are the primary way water is stolen.

"System loss occurs in all water supply agencies across the country, but

## Tk 100cr lost every year to 'system loss'

FROM PAGE 1

Officials have attributed the huge revenue loss to leakages in the pipelines, illegal connections, and errors in metering.

Consumers and water resource experts have also blamed some unscrupulous Wasa staffers for stealing water by manipulating the metering system.

This wastage has also caused severe water supply shortages for many of Chattogram Wasa's 89,508 customers.

"I get water once a week, but I still bailed around Tk 600 every month under the minimum billing system," said Habib Ullah, a resident of the port city's Cement Crossing area.

Besides, old pipelines stretching 150 km were replaced under the Chittagong Water Supply Improvement and Sanitation Project at a cost of Tk 1,539 crore, with a Tk 1,265 crore loan from the World Bank.

The Karnaphuli Water Supply Project (phase 2) was carried out at a cost of Tk 3,082 crore to replace 700 km of pipelines, with another Tk 2,451 crore loan provided by the JICA.

These three projects were implemented between 2011 and 2023.

However, despite all these development works, at least 900 million litres of water worth Tk 25 crore is still wasted annually on average due to leakages in pipelines.

Asked why wastage continued to grow despite major development works, Maksud said, "The system loss from leakages in pipelines is 5 percent. The remaining 25 percent loss is caused by other issues that still need to be addressed."

Muhammad Rashidul Hasan, head of the urban and regional planning department at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, attributed the huge water wastage to poor planning.

"Chittagong Wasa installed the new pipelines without proper planning, which has led to leakages again."

Chittagong Wasa currently supplies around 45 crore litres of water daily through a 1,300km pipeline. However, 35-40 percent areas of the port city still remain out of its service network.

## Dhaka-Benapole train service via Padma Bridge from Dec 2

FROM PAGE 1

new railway line from Kamalapur to Rupdia and Singriya stations has been constructed at a cost of Tk 37,155 crore.

If the Benapole-bound railway line via the Padma Bridge is operational, the distance from Dhaka to Jashore will be reduced by 200 kilometres, which will halve the travel time, said India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director Matiar Rahman. Currently, it takes more than eight hours to reach

Jashore from Dhaka.

He also said if the rail route is operational, Bangladesh's trade with India will grow.

Padma Rail Link Project Director Md Afzal Hossain said that the rail line project is the largest for the railway in terms of cost.

More than half of the cost is being provided by China as loan assistance. The Dhaka-Bangla section of this line opened in October last year and five trains are running on this section.



Goods are unloaded to lighter vessels at the outer anchorage of Payra port in Patuakhali as reduced navigability bars ships with a 10.5m draft from reaching the main jetty. Photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

# DHAKA

**EYE CARE**  
Bangladesh  
keen to work  
with Orbis  
Says Prof Yunus

**BSS, Dhaka**  
Chief  
Adviser  
Professor  
Muhammad  
Yunus has  
expressed  
Bangladesh's  
willingness to collaborate  
with global non-profit  
Orbis International to  
expand eye care services  
across the country.

During a meeting with Orbis President and CEO Derek Hodkey at his office on Wednesday, Prof Yunus acknowledged Orbis's significant contributions to Bangladesh's eye health sector. Derek is visiting the country as part of the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital's training programme, currently underway in Chattogram.

Highlighting Orbis's global impact, Derek shared that the organisation has been delivering sight-saving programmes in over 200 countries and territories since 1982. In Bangladesh, Orbis has worked with the health ministry for 39 years, screening 7.8 million individuals, providing over 4.5 million treatments, performing 258,000 surgeries, and training more than 40,000 professionals.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

**New CEC,  
four election  
commissioners  
take oath  
tomorrow**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The newly appointed chief election commissioner and four other election commissioners will take oath tomorrow.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed will administer the ceremony at the Supreme Court Judges' Lounge, Supreme Court Registrar General Aziz Ahmed Bhuiyan, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier on Thursday, President Mohammed Shahabuddin appointed former secretary AMM Nasir Uddin as the new CEC and four others as election commissioners under section 118 (1) of the constitution.

The four new election commissioners are former additional secretary Md Anwarul Islam Sarker, former district and sessions judge Abdur Rahman Masud, former joint secretary Begum Tahmidah Ahmad and Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah.

# Shot, shackled, blinded

Rahat was picked up from ambulance, beaten at police station and then sent to jail; despite losing an eye during July uprising, the 18 year old refuses to abandon his dreams

**MASHFIQ MIZAN**

Eighteen-year-old Alif Hassan Rahat, a student from Milestone College in Uttara, dreamed of becoming a rocket engineer.

On July 18, when he joined the quota reform protest, he was struck by 29 police-fired pellets -- two struck his eye, 13 on his face, and 14 his chest.

The ambulance carrying him was intercepted by cops, he was detained, and beaten up for a whole night at a police station, before being sent to jail.

Rahat was sent to Dhaka Central Jail, where he was confined to a small, dark room with four other protesters. As he languished in jail without any treatment, his health deteriorated further.

Rahat was finally allowed proper medical treatment after Sheikh Hasina fled the country.

By then, it was too late.

A pellet had reached the optic nerve of his right eye, leaving him completely blind. The pellet was too deeply lodged to be removed.

Rahat had sat for his HSC

to join them.

Suddenly, police opened fire, said Rahat.

"But we remained undeterred. Suddenly, near Uttara Square Hospital, law enforcers on a white microbus, started firing indiscriminately. Suddenly, I started bleeding. Blood was streaming from my eye like tears," Rahat said.

He was rushed to Uttara Adhunik Hospital. Some of the pellets from his face and chest could be retrieved.

Doctors couldn't stop the bleeding in his eye, so they bandaged it and told him to seek treatment elsewhere.

Then he went to Kurmitola Hospital but did not receive much help.

All the hospitals nearby were stretched thin as injured protesters were arriving in numbers.

So, he went back home. The next day, when Rahat woke up, he panicked as he couldn't see anything through his right eye.

**AMBULANCE INTERCEPTED TWICE**

On July 20, Rahat went to an

One officer sneered, "Look, we have some fighters here," before hurling abuse at them for participating in the protests.

Despite their visible injuries and need for medical attention, the police detained all of them and took them to the Uttara East Police Station.

Once inside, officers seized all their belongings, including medical reports.

A group of five cops then surrounded the 18-year-old, punching, slapping, and kicking him.

The psychological torment began in the afternoon.

A police personnel was reloading his gun in front of Rahat. "I've already killed a few. You're next," the cop told Rahat.

Rahat was thrown into a cramped holding cell, packed with over 40 detainees, while

leave jail, and even if I did, I'd never resume my studies," Rahat recounted.

At dawn, detainees were lined up outside the station. Rahat was handcuffed. They were herded onto a prison van bound for the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka.

At court, Rahat and other detainees were thrown into an iron cage. "Over 100 people were crammed into the small cage. Just like animals," Rahat said.

By 1:00pm, after hours in the cramped cage, they were sent to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj, without any hearing as no judge showed up.

Sending accused detainees to jail without any hearing is a violation of relevant laws.

Rahat was accused of attacking a Rab-1 team and vandalising their vehicle with weapons, intending to kill them.

Md Abdul Hakim, a warrant officer of Rab-1, filed the case, accusing 1,000-1,500 unnamed individuals.

The senior officials of Uttara East Police Station have been on the run since August 5. All attempts to reach them have been unsuccessful.

Md Mohibullah, newly-appointed officer-in-charge of the police station, said he does not know the whereabouts of his predecessor. He said normal operations resumed at the station in the last week of September following partial repairs.

**INSIDE PRISON WALLS**

Inside the jail, Rahat was taken to the prison hospital. But the facilities were a far cry from the advanced treatment he needed.

Later, he was moved to a cell, surrounded by hardened criminals. The reality of his circumstances started to set in, and he started crying in despair.

A man with shackles in his legs and ropes binding his arms tried to offer comfort.

Another inmate handed him some biscuits.

"These were the only signs of humanity I experienced in days," Rahat said.

The only treatment he received that night was some eye drops and a few painkillers.

"The next morning, I was taken to a field to register my name. They stamped a mark on my arm -- a prisoner's identity," Rahat said.

From there, he was led into a cramped, dark room already

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 23, 2024

AGRAHAYAN 8, 1431 BS

The Daily Star

3



**JULY UPRISING**

**Women activists  
feel sidelined  
and forgotten**

**Demand equal representation  
in state reforms at discussion**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Women leaders and activists, who actively participated in the July uprising, yesterday said despite their contributions at every level, they have been systematically sidelined in the post-movement period.

They pointed out that equal representation of women was not ensured in the reform commissions or other state institutions.

They added that the longstanding culture of denying women their rightful roles and excluding them from various sectors continues unabated.

They made these remarks at a discussion titled "Dialogue on Women of the Mass Uprising: Where Did the Women Go?" held at the Jatiya Press Club, where injured participants and female activists shared their experiences.

The event was jointly organised by two volunteer organisations, Loraku 24 and Empowering Our Fighters.

Umama Fatema, spokesperson for the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said it has become evident that there was a deliberate and successful attempt to sideline women in the aftermath of the uprising.

"When male leaders were arrested, women stepped up to lead and continued until August 5. But after that, I was completely sidelined. Attempts were made to portray men as the heroes of the movement, and I began experiencing an identity crisis," she said.

"Women leaders were harassed on social media, and those in power took no action. This further marginalised the women who participated in the movement," she added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

**JOB SCAMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

**Travel alert issued  
for five countries**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has issued a travel alert for Bangladeshi citizens planning to visit Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

In a recent press release, the ministry warned about fake job advertisements on websites, emails, and social media offering high paying positions like computer operator, typist, and call centre operator.

These scams lure victims, only to force them at gunpoint into illegal activities.

The Bangladeshi embassy in Thailand has already helped some citizens return safely after escaping these fraudsters.

The scammers often use Facebook and WhatsApp to target victims, asking them to invest in cryptocurrency accounts, which are then closed after stealing the money.

The ministry urged citizens to be cautious while using social media and to verify job offers carefully, especially those involving computer operator roles.

They advised job seekers to consult the ministry's relevant section or contact Bangladeshi embassies abroad to confirm the legitimacy of potential employers.



After a photo was published in The Daily Star on November 16, inset, showing a man crawling through a gap in a road divider on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Hemayetpur, Savar, local resident Ahmed Ali took an initiative to address the safety hazard. Despite a footbridge just 60 metres away, many pedestrians were risking their lives by using the unsafe shortcut. Motivated by a sense of responsibility, Ahmed, along with his family, sealed the hole to encourage safe practices.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

**Climate change behind  
prolonged dengue season**

**Say experts; 123 die in 22 days in November**

**HELEMUL ALAM**

In the first 22 days in November, the country has already witnessed over 123 deaths and 23,009 dengue cases, showing an alarming trend this year.

Experts identified climate change as one of the main factors behind this prolonged dengue season this year, which is also the picture of the last few years.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), November 2022 saw 274 dengue deaths and 40,716 cases, while December recorded 83 deaths and 9,288 cases. The figures for 2021 and 2022 were significantly lower, with 27 deaths and 5,024 cases in 2021, and 113 deaths and 19,334 cases in 2022.

This year, dengue has claimed 438 lives, with total cases reaching 84,826 so far.

According to the LANCET Countdown on Health and Climate Change data sheet 2023, from 2018 to 2022, the average summer temperatures that people were exposed to were 0.9 degrees Celsius higher than the 1986-2005 baseline average.

The conditions are suitable for the spread of malaria for more than half of the

year, and the basic reproduction number (an indication of how many other people each infected person will make sick) for dengue has been above 4 since at least the 1950s, it said.

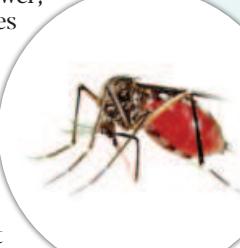
**Climate change also changes the pattern of humidity in weather, which has changed the adaptation pattern of Aedes mosquitoes and also changed the behaviour of Aedes mosquitoes. This is why the seasonal dynamics of Aedes mosquitoes have changed.**

**PROF KABIRUL BASHAR**

Entomologist at JU

Entomologist Manzur A Chowdhury noted that the warm, humid conditions, which typically taper off by November, persist this year. "Temperatures between 16°C and 30°C are ideal for Aedes mosquitoes, and biting tendencies increase in such conditions," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



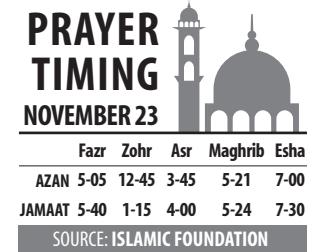
## AL govt

FROM PAGE 5  
Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan emphasised the need for a fresh approach to railway development, including plans to enhance passenger services and address staff shortages.

"New strategies will be adopted to improve services and rethink the overall development of the railway sector," he said.

Following his inspection, the adviser held discussions with officials and employees of the locomotive workshop. Senior officials from the Ministry of Railways, including the secretary, were present during the visit.

Later, the adviser visited another railway workshop in Saidpur in the afternoon.



## Women activists feel

FROM PAGE 3  
Nazifa Jannat, a student of East West University and coordinator during the movement, said, "It is deeply unfortunate that we are now compelled to assert that we, too, were part of the movement."

"People are asking, 'Where are the women now?' This question should be directed at the political parties that, despite their capacity, failed to include women," she said, calling on the media to raise such questions.

She emphasised the importance of increasing women's representation in positions of power.

"Women should not have to demand recognition for their roles; it is the state's responsibility to acknowledge them. We protested against discrimination in the past, and we did so to eradicate all forms of inequity," she said.

Dr Worthy Jukhrif, who provided medical aid alongside Dr Hritisha Aktar Mitheen to over 100 injured persons during the uprising, said, "We believe women should be equally represented in every sector of the state, including the Reform Commission, to eliminate all forms of discrimination."

Jannatul Ferdous Nitu, a second-year student at Barishal Government College, said, "No female students were included in the advisory council. Even though one woman was named spokesperson for the main committee, she has been noticeably absent in press releases and other activities," she said.

Samia Akhter Jannat, a tenth-grade student who was injured multiple times during the movement, said not only are women's contributions unacknowledged, but they are also being deliberately excluded.

Sabina Yasmin, a protester and female labourer from Ashulia, observed, "Many labelled the uprising as a student movement. In reality, labourers, including female workers, participated spontaneously. Many women were injured or killed, yet their sacrifices remain unrecognised."

Sumaiya Nishu, a student



Every morning, sellers cycle from nearby villages to Khulna city, carrying puffed rice (muri) to sell at Tk 80 per kg. Each seller manages to sell 60-80 kg daily, visiting various areas. The photo was taken on the Khulna City Bypass Road in the Aranghata area yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Climate change

FROM PAGE 3  
He warned that infected individuals, not the mosquitoes themselves, primarily spread the virus to new areas. "Aedes mosquitoes can be infected from a dengue patient one day prior to fever symptoms appearing and up to the day of recovery," he explained.

Manzur emphasised preventing patient movement and using mosquito nets to curtail transmission. He also called for targeted anti-mosquito drives around patients' homes when case numbers are low.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, stressed that climate change is altering Aedes mosquitoes' behaviour.

"Rain patterns have shifted, with rain now observed even in late October and November. This, combined with changing humidity levels, has led to year-round mosquito breeding," he said.

"Climate change also changes the pattern of humidity in weather, which has changed the adaptation pattern of Aedes mosquitoes and also changed the behaviour of Aedes mosquitoes. This is why the seasonal dynamics of Aedes mosquitoes have changed," he added.

Aedes mosquitoes, once limited to summer, are now active throughout the year, he said, adding that their biting habits have also changed, with bites occurring not just in the morning and evening but also at night.

These behavioural changes are happening due to climate change, he said.

Prof Bashar added that factors like water storage during winter and unplanned urbanisation exacerbate the problem, providing breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

## Shot, shackled, blinded

FROM PAGE 3  
packed with over 100 men. The room had a terrible smell; a tiny washroom in one corner. Filth covered the floor, and there was barely room to sit, let alone move.

When food was finally served, Rahat looked down at the plate of rice and watery lentils. "It was inedible," he said.

After biometric registration, Rahat was taken to a separate building. Fourth floor, cell 3 was his "home" for the next few days. Arman was with him.

It was a tiny room with only a small window through which daylight barely seeped in. Three people were already in that cell from before.

There were no pillows, so they had to use water bottles as one instead.

A dirty, smelly blanket served as their mattress. The washroom, without any doors, was right beside them. Five dirty plates cluttered the corner.

The food served was bread and pumpkins, often rotten.

Meanwhile, Rahat's eye condition deteriorated. When taken to the jail hospital, the doctors said he needed to be shifted to a hospital outside as soon as possible.

Most detainees inside similar cells were student protesters, Rahat said.

### SHACKLES REMOVED

On August 1, a decision was made to transfer Rahat, Arman, and Rashidul to the National Eye Institute.

Once admitted to the eye hospital, doctors informed Rahat that as too much time had already passed, it would be difficult to retrieve the pellets from his eye.

That night, after police in plainclothes visited them, the three were shackled at the hospital. When some nurses and

medical staff protested, they were met with threats.

On August 2, Rahat was granted bail as part of the government's decision to release all detained underaged students. The shackles were finally removed.

After 13 days in detention, Rahat was at last allowed to see his parents. "My mother had to be hospitalised after I was held," Rahat said.

"She has diabetes and hypertension. To this day, I haven't told her I can't see anything through my right eye. I tell her my condition is improving."

### DESPERATE FOR SIGHT

Since August 5, Rahat has moved from one hospital to another, holding onto the hope that he might regain his vision. But so far, the only response he received was -- "We are sorry."

According to ophthalmologists, who examined Rahat's case, with optic nerve damage, restoring his sight would be exceedingly difficult.

He has knocked on many doors, seeking help from student leaders and authorities for potential treatment abroad.

In response, a medical board reviewed his case. They, too, concluded that restoring vision would be a challenge.

Still, Rahat refuses to give up.

"I can't see through one eye. I have to walk with a stick. Almost every day, I suffer from an unbearable headache."

Frequent fevers is something I have accepted by now. My body still aches from all the torture."

"I had big dreams. I still haven't given up on them. But how can I achieve them if I am blind. I want everyone's help," Rahat said.

This newspaper contacted Rahat's father

## Call for data autonomy to ensure transparency



STAR REPORT

A discussion titled "Data Integrity for Development: Ensuring Transparency and Accountability in Bangladesh" was held in Dhaka on November 21, said a press release.

Organised by UNDP's SIPS project and Prothom Alo, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and research input from the Centre on Budget and Policy (CBP), University of Dhaka, the event focused on key issues surrounding data governance.

Dr Selim Raihan delivered the keynote, highlighting concerns about government control over Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data.

He emphasised the need to ensure BBS's autonomy, prevent data manipulation, restructure its organogram, and recruit skilled statisticians.

Participants included representatives from civil society, academia, the private and public sectors, and UNDP.

Discussions addressed the impact of data manipulation on policy, the need for an autonomous National Statistical Office, and establishing an independent data commission.

The dialogue also explored the media's role in fostering transparency, strategies for improving data collection methodologies, and building public trust in BBS. Experts proposed actionable steps to enhance data governance and reinforce accountability, underscoring the critical role of reliable statistics in national development.

## Khasi people now

FROM PAGE 5  
around Tk 2 lakh to organise. Instead of the usual grand celebration, the Khasi people will observe the day with smaller, domestic programmes, Pohthmi confirmed on that day.

The Daily Star could not contact Rashidul, the other injured protester detained alongside Rahat and Arman.

Recently, Rahat has been admitted again at CMH. His condition remains unchanged.

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 3  
Orbis has also established 42 vision centres and supported improvements to 17 secondary hospitals and four tertiary hospitals nationwide. It has equipped 400 community clinics with vision screening tools and developed the country's first national guidelines for managing retinopathy of prematurity, a leading cause of childhood blindness.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Pohthmi explained that the community's primary source of income -- betel leaf cultivation -- is currently facing a severe downturn. "Farmers are not receiving fair prices for their betel leaves, which has led to widespread financial hardship," he said.

So, we have decided to cancel the celebrations, he said.

Yesterday, he said the government assurance has cleared the way for the celebrations.

Like every year, the Khasi punjies in the Magurjhara area of Moulyibazar's Kamalganj upazila will be colourfully decorated as part of the event, he added.

Traditionally held on November 23, the festival is a significant cultural event for the Khasi people, marking the end of the old year and welcoming the new one.

Every year, people from around 73 Khasi villages across Sylhet division celebrate this festival, while tourists from home and abroad also participate in it.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD,

Road Division Lakshmpur

Phone: 01730-782657

e-mail: celakshmpur@gmail.com

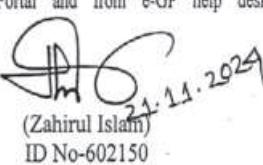
Date: 21/11/2024

### e-Tender Notice (OTM)

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

SL No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of Works	Tender Document last selling Date and Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time
01	103989, eGp-31/OTM/LRD/PMP/Major-Road/2024-2025	Periodic Maintenance Programme (PMP) Rigid Pavement, Strengthening & DBS wearing Course at Ch. 89/400m (Bordar Bazar) to Ch. 107/895m (Lakshmpur Bus Terminal) of Cumilla-Lalmi-Chandpur-Lakshmpur-Begumganj Road (R-140) under Lakshmpur Road Division during the year 2024-2025.	22-Dec-2024 16:00	23-Dec-2024 12:30

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

  
Zahirul Islam  
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বিল্ডিংস্ট্রাকচ জোনে খনামন্ডি  
ডেভেলপমেন্ট কর্তৃক নির্মিত বিক্রয়  
সহিতের রেডি ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয় করা হবে।  
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## NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH

HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(Statutory Original Jurisdiction)

Company Matter No. 1240 of 2024

Syeda Farhana Ahmed .....Petitioner

-Versus-

Akash Bangla Livestock Company Ltd. and others

.....Respondents

Notice is hereby given for all concerned that an application

under Section 233 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed

on 31.10.2024 on behalf of the above petitioner before the

Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of

Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, his lordship Mr.

Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to admit the application

by an order dated 03.11.2024. The Hon'ble Court was

further pleased to stay the operation of memo No.

53.13.0000.0



The Bangabhasha Lekhok Jadughar in Uttar Baravita, Kurigram, displays biographies and memorabilia of over 200 late poets and writers, alongside rare books and publications. Established by teacher and lyricist Touhid-ul Islam, the museum celebrates Bangla literature and culture, inspiring young generations to connect with their heritage. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

#### 'BANGABHASHA LEKHOK JADUGHAR'

## A teacher's mission to protect literary heritage

SDILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

In the quiet village of Uttar Baravita in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, a unique tribute to Bangla literature stands as a testament to one man's dedication.

Built on 10 decimals of land, the "Bangabhasha Lekhok Jadughar," a museum preserving Bangla language and literature, showcases a treasure trove of rare books, biographies, and letters from celebrated writers and poets.

Opened in December 2023, this museum is only the second "Writer's Museum" in Bangladesh, following the Bangla Academy's Bardhaman House established in 2011.

Touhid-ul Islam, a 57-year-old teacher at Lalmonirhat Government Girls' High School and an accomplished lyricist, built this museum from a deep sense of responsibility to his culture.

Known for his Bhawaiya and modern song compositions aired on Bangladesh Betar and BTV, Touhid's devotion to Bangla heritage shines in his life's work.

With five galleries, the museum displays photographs and biographies of over 200

late poets and writers, alongside defunct Bangla newspapers and magazines that highlight the region's rich literary history.

Touhid said he began the project with Tk 2 lakh from the "IPDC-Prothom Alo Best Teacher Award" he received in 2022, supplementing the funds with his own earnings.



He also established a library on two decimals of land, boasting 6,000 books, and the Syed Shamsul Haque Cultural Club in 2021.

"I had to sell some of my land to support my vision, leaving me with just two bighas of farmland," he said.

His wife Begum Amina Sultana said, "Initially, we found his efforts unusual, but seeing the response and admiration he got from people, we now admire his commitment."

Their son Anupam Saikat Apu, a Dhaka University student, and college-goer daughter Nilanjana Saikat Nila echoed her.

giving chocolates to children who came to borrow books.

Students, teachers, and curious visitors from across the region come to explore the museum's collections and learn about the lives of poets and writers who helped shape Bangla literature.

"This museum has immense historical value," said local journalist Mahfuzar Rahman, noting that it offers people in the village a unique opportunity to connect with their heritage.

Touhid said, "I hope to preserve these collections in a more secure, concrete structure, as the current tin-shed building leaves the artefacts vulnerable."

"I do hope the government will support me to safeguard this cultural repository, but, if needed, I'm prepared to continue investing my own savings, including my retirement funds, to maintain the museum."

"My collection is inspiring this generation to thirst for knowledge," Touhid says, "and I believe it will guide future generations in understanding our historical heritage. The museum, library, and cultural club are my contributions to nation-building, and in that, I find my ultimate peace."

They said their father's work will remain as a contribution that will live on beyond their lifetime.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that locals of various age groups visit the library. He also saw Touhid encouraging young readers by

## WAR IN LEBANON

### 82 Bangladeshi expatriates return home

UNB, Dhaka

A total of 82 Bangladeshi expatriates have returned home from war-ravaged Lebanon in an Emirates Airlines flight.

The flight, EK-584, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 11:00pm on Thursday, said a media release sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The repatriation was made with the help of the ministries of foreign affairs, expatriate welfare and overseas employment, Bangladesh embassy in Lebanon's Beirut, and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Among the returnees, 76 expatriates were repatriated at government expenses, while six others were funded by the IOM.

As of yesterday, a total of 697 Bangladeshi returned from Lebanon through 11 flights since the conflict started there.

The returnees were welcomed at the airport upon their arrival. Mostafa Jamil Khan, director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, exchanged greetings with the returnees and inquired about their well-being.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Khasi people now will hold 'Seng Kut Snem'

The community says the festival back on track thanks to govt support



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Days after deciding to scrap a key festival over financial hardships, the indigenous Khasi community in the greater Sylhet region yesterday said they will be celebrating their New Year celebration as usual, thanks to the government's promise of full support.

Philah Pothimi, general secretary of the Khasi Social Council, said "Seng Kut Snem", a festival to welcome the New Year as per their calendar, will be held on November 23 with day-long festivities like the previous years.

Now the event will be organised in collaboration with the Chief Adviser's Office, he said, adding the news reports, including that of The Daily Star, on the

decision to cancel the event drew the attention of the government high-ups.

"After the news was published in The Daily Star and different other media outlets, the matter came to the attention of the government. The Chief Adviser's Office contacted us and assured full cooperation in celebrating the festival," he added.

On November 19, The Daily Star ran a report titled "Financial hardship forces Khasis to scrap key festival".

The report, quoting a Khasi community leader, said the people of the community couldn't raise enough funds to organise the programme due to economic challenges.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## TAZREEN FIRE

12 yrs on, justice still elusive  
Say speakers

DU CORRESPONDENT

Justice for those killed in the Tazreen Fashions tragedy remains elusive even after 12 years, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They were speaking at a cover unveiling event for the book, "12 Years of Impunity: Tazreen Worker Murders — Stories of Fire and Life," marking nearly 12 years since the devastating fire at Tazreen Fashions, which killed at least 117 workers and injured over 150 others.

The book, published by Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati, a platform for RMG workers, was launched at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro at Banglamotor in the capital.

November 24 will mark over a decade since the tragic blaze at Tazreen Fashions, located in Nishchintipur, Ashulia.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## RAILWAY PROJECTS

# AL govt misused public money

Says Adviser Fouzul Kabir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DinaJPur

The AL government misused public money in the name of developing the railway sector in the country during its 15-year rule, said Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the Ministry of Railways of the interim government.

The adviser made these comments while he was visiting the Central Locomotive Workshop (Keloka) in Parbatipur upazila of DinaJPur yesterday.

After arriving at Saidpur Airport, the adviser went to Keloka at around 11:00am by road.

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan criticised the previous AL government for the billions of taka that was squandered without focusing on improving passenger services or facilities.

"The previous government expanded the network everywhere without any proper studies, but the quality of services and passenger benefits were largely ignored," he said.

He accused the past AL government of building extravagant railway stations in places like Gopalganj, allegedly to appease the then ministers and MPs, even where such infrastructure was not needed.

Additionally, he cited the Karnaphuli Tunnel, constructed at a cost of Tk 10,000 crore, as an example of ineffective planning, claiming that it currently sees little to no vehicular use.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## LAST DAY TODAY

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## North Korea's Kim accuses US of stoking tension Warns of nuclear war

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has accused the United States of ramping up tension and provocations, saying the Korean peninsula has never faced a greater risk of nuclear war, state media KCNA said yesterday.

The comments came amid international criticism over increasingly close military co-operation between Pyongyang and Moscow, and assertions that North Korea sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia to support its invasion of Ukraine.

Previous negotiations with Washington have only highlighted its "aggressive and hostile" policy toward North Korea, Kim said in a speech at a military exhibition in Pyongyang, the capital, the KCNA news agency said.

"Never before have the warring parties on the Korean peninsula faced such a dangerous and acute confrontation that it could

### N Korea sent more than 10,000 troops to Russia to support its invasion of Ukraine

escalate into the most destructive thermonuclear war," he said on Thursday.

"We have already gone as far as we can on negotiating with the United States," he said, adding that the talks had only shown its aggressive and hostile policy toward North Korea could never change.

North Korean state media have not yet publicly mentioned the re-election of Donald Trump, who held three unprecedented meetings with Kim during his first term, in Singapore, Hanoi, and at the Korean border, in 2018 and 2019.

But their diplomacy yielded no concrete outcome due to the gap between US calls for North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and Kim's demands for sanctions relief.

Trump has long touted his ties with Kim, saying last month the two countries would have had "a nuclear war with millions of people killed", but he had stopped it, thanks to his ties with the North's leader.

Hong Min, a research fellow at the Korean Institute for National Unification in Seoul, said Kim could be trying to underscore the North's nuclear capabilities ahead of Trump's second term, while leaving the door open for diplomacy.

"He might be suggesting Trump should show his 'willingness to co-exist' before re-opening any talks and calling for a change in the U.S. hostile attitude," Hong said.

## Potato price

FROM PAGE 12  
unusually high, or even gone up, despite the start of the harvest season. The current price hike has further destabilised the market.

"The price of potatoes at the supplier level is high on one hand; we are not getting the required supply on the other hand. We have a daily demand of 1,500kg of potatoes, but we can only purchase 1,000kg from the cold storage," Mohammad Sabuj, a wholesaler at Karwan Bazar kitchen market, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sabuj said he had neither bought nor did he sell potatoes at such high prices over his four decades in the trade.

"Brokers of cold storage used to lobby us to buy potatoes, but we are now compelled to lobby them to collect the item," he added.

Traders usually purchase potatoes from Munshiganj, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogura, but the supply from Bogura and Rajshahi is declining, said Sabuj.

Though the rate fixed by the government is Tk 39 per kg at the cold storage level, wholesale traders yesterday purchased it at almost double the price - Tk 65 per kg.

Last year, the highest price per kg potato at the cold storage level was



Congress party workers holding placards shout slogans during a protest march against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and billionaire businessman Gautam Adani, calling for the tycoon's arrest due to corruption allegations made by the US, in Kolkata, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Record 281 aid workers killed in 2024: UN

Majority of deaths involve local staff working with NGOs, UN agencies

AFP, Geneva

A staggering 281 aid workers have been killed around the world so far this year, making 2024 the deadliest year for humanitarians, the UN aid chief said yesterday.

"Humanitarian workers are being killed at an unprecedented rate, their courage and humanity being met with bullets and bombs," said Tom Fletcher, the United Nations' new under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

The majority of deaths involve local staff working with non-governmental organisations, UN agencies and the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, Fletcher's office said.

With more than a month left to go of 2024, the "grim milestone was reached", Fletcher said, after 280 humanitarian workers were killed across 33 countries during all of 2023.

"This violence is unconscionable and devastating to aid operations," Fletcher said.

Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza was driving up the numbers, his office



said, with 333 aid workers killed there - most from the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, UNRWA.

"States and parties to conflict must protect humanitarians, uphold international law, prosecute those responsible, and call time on this era of impunity," Fletcher said.

Aid workers were subject to kidnappings, injuries, harassment and arbitrary detention in a range of countries, his office said, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Ukraine.

"Violence against humanitarian personnel is part of a broader trend of harm to civilians in conflict zones,"

Fletcher warned.

"Last year, more than 33,000 civilian deaths were recorded in 14 armed conflicts -- a staggering 72 per cent increase from 2022."

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution last May in response to the surging violence and threats against aid workers.

The text called for recommendations from the UN chief -- set to be presented at a council meeting next week -- on measures to prevent and respond to such incidents and to increase protection for humanitarian staff and accountability for abuses.

Meanwhile, a senior official of the main UN aid agency in Gaza, UNRWA, said yesterday that a humanitarian disaster in Gaza is being deepened by a total breakdown in law and order and the conflict between Israel and Hamas is rendering the enclave uninhabitable.

UNRWA official Natalie Boucly also said arrest warrants issued against senior Israeli politicians as well as a leader of Hamas by an international tribunal meant there would be a reckoning for the suffering inflicted on millions.

## What's next for Adani after US bribery charges?

REUTERS

Gautam Adani, the billionaire chair of Indian conglomerate Adani Group and one of the world's richest people, could face a long road to trial in the US on criminal charges over his alleged role in a multi-billion-dollar fraud and bribery scheme. Here's a look at what's next for Adani.

### WHAT IS HE CHARGED WITH?

The indictment alleges Adani and his co-defendants agreed to pay more than \$250 million in bribes to Indian officials to obtain solar contracts worth an estimated \$2 billion over 20 years.

Adani is charged with foreign bribery, securities fraud, securities fraud conspiracy and wire fraud conspiracy.

### HAS ADANI BEEN ARRESTED?

No. If Adani is in India, US prosecutors would need to ask the Indian government to extradite him under the terms of the two countries' extradition treaty.

That process would be handled by a court in India, which would need to consider several factors including whether the crime he was charged with in the US is also a crime in India.

### HAS ADANI ENTERED A PLEA YET?

No. Adani has not been arrested and his whereabouts are unknown, though he is believed to be in India. He could not immediately be reached for comment.

### CAN ADANI DISPUTE THE CHARGES?

Yes, but until he appears in US court, Adani's lawyers could only challenge the indictment on procedural grounds, for example by claiming US prosecutors do not have the authority to charge him.

After Adani appears before a US judge, his lawyers could attack the substance of the indictment by arguing the charges are legally deficient or unsupported by the facts.

### WHEN COULD A TRIAL HAPPEN?

A trial could still be a long way off even if Adani is extradited or surrenders in the US.

Adani's lawyers would be entitled to litigate the admissibility of evidence and other legal questions before a trial could begin, as would lawyers for his seven co-defendants, who could seek separate trials.

### PENALTIES

If convicted, Adani could face decades in prison as well as monetary penalties, though any sentence would ultimately be up to the judge overseeing the case.

Adani faces up to five years in prison for foreign bribery and up to 20 for securities fraud, wire fraud, obstruction of justice and conspiracy charges. A jury of 12 would need to unanimously vote to convict Adani, and he could appeal a verdict against him.



Firefighters work at a site of a residential area hit by a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Sumy, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## WI go slow after Tigers opt to field

FROM PAGE 12  
Taskin didn't take long to take his second scalp as he made Carty give a leading edge towards mid-on where Taijul Islam, who was one of the two players alongside Miraz playing his 50th Test, took a regulation catch to send the batter back to the pavilion.

Although the hosts were pretty slow with their scoring rate, the second session saw only one wicket fall - that of Kevan Hodge (25 off 63) who perished through a run-out. Louise (71 not out of 166 deliveries) and Alick Athanaze (13 not out of

49 deliveries) steadied the ship since Kevam's fall.

For the game, Bangladesh have gone with three pacers -- Taskin, Shoriful Islam, and Hasan Mahmud -- and two spinners -- Miraz and Taijul -- along with six genuine batters. The hosts, meanwhile, have four frontline pacers -- Alzarri Joseph, Shamar Joseph, Kemar Roach, and Jayden Seales -- in their eleven.

The two match series is Bangladesh's last assignment in the ongoing ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 cycle.

### I did not know

FROM PAGE 2

He claimed that he gave money to Ruhul Amin to drop his name from the case.

"I came to know that Ruhul Amin was involved in the filing of the case. His son, who claimed himself to be a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, demanded the accused pay Tk 2 lakh each to have their names dropped from the case. Eventually, I, accused, including myself, paid Tk 17 lakh to Ruhul Amin," Liaqat said.

FROM PAGE 12

railway lines, which caused traffic congestion on the surrounding streets. Around 1:00pm, the police asked them to leave the area. However, the drivers continued to protest.

A chase and counter-chase between the drivers and the police ensued, leading to a brief clash. The police dispersed the drivers by firing teargas canisters and charging truncheons.

Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station, said the police initially tried to persuade the demonstrators to quit the area. But as the protesters were unwilling to listen, police chased them away, he

added.

Mohammad Anwar Hossain, station master at Kamalapur Railway Station, said rail communications between Dhaka and Narayanganj, Rajshahi, and Khulna were disrupted from 11:20am.

Two trains that were supposed to leave Dhaka for Narayanganj and two that were supposed to enter Dhaka from the neighbouring city were delayed.

The Nakshi Katha train going to Khulna from Dhaka, and Dhaka-bound Modhumoti Express from Rajshahi were delayed. The lines were cleared around 3:10pm, said the station master.

On Tuesday, the HC directed the government to take necessary steps to stop the operation of battery-run rickshaws in Dhaka within three days. The following day, drivers took to the streets in protest of the order.

Hundreds of drivers blocked road and rail lines in Dhaka, including at Mohakhali, Agargaon, and Mirpur-10, on Thursday, bringing traffic to a halt for more than five hours. Rail communications between Dhaka and most of the country were suspended for around six hours from 9:45am after a group of drivers blocked the Mohakhali level crossing.

## Drivers block Jurain level crossing

## SOUTHERN LEBANON 5 medics killed in Israeli strikes

Four Italian soldiers injured at UNIFIL base

AGENCIES

Five medics were killed in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon yesterday, the Lebanese health ministry said.

The ministry said three medics were killed and three others were wounded when they were targeted in an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese town of Qotran, reports Reuters.

An earlier Israeli strike on a vehicle had killed two medics in southern Lebanese town of Deir Qanoun Ras Al-Ain, the ministry had said.

The state-run National News Agency said "enemy warplanes" had carried two raids on south Beirut, and that "thick smoke was seen rising from the vicinity of the Lebanese University" in the Hadath neighbourhood.

Four Italian soldiers were lightly injured after two rockets exploded at a UNIFIL peacekeeping force base in southern Lebanon, the Rome government said.

## NORTH AFGHANISTAN 10 killed in attack on Sufi shrine

AFP, Kabul

Ten people were killed when a gunman opened fire on a Sufi shrine in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province, an interior ministry spokesman told AFP yesterday.

"A man fired on Sufis taking part in a weekly ritual at a shrine in a remote area of Nahrin district, killing 10 people," the ministry's Abdul Matin Qani said.

A Nahrin resident, who knew victims of the attack, told AFP that worshippers had gathered at the Sayed Pacha Agha shrine on Thursday evening.

They had begun a Sufi chant when "a man shot at the dozen worshippers", he said on condition of anonymity.

"When people arrived for morning prayers, they discovered the bodies," he added.

Attacks regularly target Sufis during rituals or gatherings in Afghanistan, a country with a very large Muslim majority but where the Taliban authorities impose a strict interpretation of Islamic law, or sharia, which is different from Sufism.



Palestinians gather to buy bread from a bakery, amid the ongoing Israeli offensive in the enclave, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Israeli strikes kill two Hamas commanders

Dozens of Palestinians killed or missing as IDF presses its north Gaza offensive

AGENCIES

Israel's military said yesterday it had killed two Hamas commanders, pressing its north Gaza offensive a day after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants over the offensive.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) said an air strike on the territory's north killed five Hamas members, including two company commanders "who participated in the October 7 massacre" last year.

Medics said dozens were killed or missing after an overnight Israeli raid on Beit Lahiya and nearby Jabalia, which are among the targets of a sweeping Israeli assault on the north Gaza.

The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday described the arrest warrant as the "end and political death" of Israel, in a speech.

Residents claimed that Israeli soldiers yesterday set fire to residential buildings in Beit Lahiya to prevent families from returning

to the area.

Israeli gunboats have also fired at a fishing boat off the coast of Gaza City, killing one person and wounding another, report Al Jazeera online.

Biden, in a statement later on Thursday responding to the ICC's arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, called them "outrageous", vowing to "always stand with Israel against threats to its security".

China, which like Israel and the United States is not a member of the ICC, urged the court to "uphold an objective and just position".

The Palestinian Authority and Hamas both welcomed the warrants, reports AFP.

However, Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris said yesterday that Netanyahu would be detained if he arrives in Ireland.

The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday described the arrest warrant as the "end and political death" of Israel, in a speech.

More than 44,056 people have been killed in Gaza in more than 13 months of offensive.

## India security forces kill 10 Maoist rebels

AFP, Raipur

Indian security forces gunned down at least 10 Maoist rebels yesterday during a firelight, police said, as New Delhi steps up efforts to crush the long-running armed conflict.

More than 10,000 people have died in the decades-long insurgency waged by the Naxalite movement, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised Indigenous people of India's remote and resource-rich central regions.

The gun battle took place in a remote forested area of Chhattisgarh state, the heartland of the insurgency.

"Dead bodies of 10 Maoists have been recovered so far," Veeranand Sinha, chief of the state police's anti-Maoist operations, said.

## Pakistani town in uproar after 40 Shias gunned down

REUTERS, Peshawar

Angry crowds gathered in the remote Pakistani mountain town of Parachinar yesterday, incensed by an attack on an escorted convoy of buses in which 40 Shia Muslims died after being sprayed with automatic fire in an ambush.

The Parachinar district, on Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan, has frequently experienced violence between its Sunni and Shia Muslim communities over land and power. Travellers to and from the town ride in convoys escorted by security officials.

The region's Shias, who are in the minority in the predominantly Sunni Muslim nation of 241 million, have also been attacked by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Sunni militants, who consider them heretics.

Local official Javedullah Mehsud said the death toll from the attack had risen to 40, including eight women, and that 29 people were being treated in hospital, nine of them in critical condition. He and a hospital medical officer said all the dead were Shias.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Mehsud said two Sunnis had been killed in reprisal attacks.

All markets, education institutions, transport and other businesses in the town of Parachinar were closed, residents said.

## Trump picks Pam Bondi for AG after Gaetz withdraws

REUTERS



US President-elect Donald Trump said on Thursday he would nominate former Florida Attorney General and loyalist Pam Bondi to be US Attorney General (AG), moving swiftly to replace his former nominee Matt Gaetz after the embattled former congressman withdrew from consideration.

Gaetz was the subject of a House Ethics Committee probe into allegations of having sex with an underage 17-year-old girl and illicit drug use. He has denied wrongdoing.

Bondi, 59, was the top law enforcement officer of the country's third most populous state from 2011 to 2019, and served on Trump's Opioid and Drug Abuse Commission during his first administration.

She was also part of Trump's defense team during his first impeachment trial, in which he was accused of pressuring Ukraine to conduct a corruption investigation into his rival, now-President Joe Biden, by withholding military aid.

**The Russian escalation and provocation... is an attempt to scare us from supporting Ukraine, and that will fail.**

Says Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson



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Enrollment Deadline: 09 January 2025  
Class Commencement: 17 January 2025



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## খুলনা প্রকৌশল ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

খুলনা-১৯২০৩

### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্যন্ত বিশ্বাদিসহ সম্পূর্ণ অর্থনৈতিক ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ও ছায়া নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে আবেদনপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম	বেতন ক্ষেত্র ও প্রোত্তৃ (২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	পদ সংখ্যা
<b>শিল্পকলা</b>			
১।	সহকারী অধ্যাপক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), আইআইসিটি	৩৫৫০০-৬৭০১০/- (প্রেত-৬)	১ টি
২।	সহকারী অধ্যাপক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), আইডিএম	৩৫৫০০-৬৭০১০/- (প্রেত-৬)	১ টি
৩।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), সিভিল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	২ টি
৪।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), সিভিল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
৫।	প্রতিকর্মক (হাইটেকটেক্নিক্স এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স) ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
৬।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), ইলেক্ট্রনিক্স এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রোনিক্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
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১২।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), ইলেক্ট্রোলজ ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
১৩।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), কম্পিউটার ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
১৪।	প্রতিকর্মক (সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), কম্পিউটার ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৩৩০৬০/- (প্রেত-৯)	১ টি
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১৬।	প্রতিকর্মক (অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), ম্য		

## New EC must deliver fair polls

The electoral process begins finally amid huge expectations

We welcome the formation of the new Election Commission headed by former health and energy secretary AMM Nasir Uddin. With this, the "train to the election"—as termed by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus—has indeed started rolling. While this is just the first step in what promises to be a lengthy journey, it is a momentous one for a nation emerging from the long shadow of fascism. The announcement about the five-member commission, which will be sworn in on Sunday, seemed imminent following the chief adviser's address marking 100 days of the interim government. In the coming days, this moment will serve as a reference point for what follows, and we hope it will be for all the right reasons.

One doesn't need reminding of the immense expectations and challenges facing the new commission. The stakes are high, especially after more than 15 years of autocratic rule by the Awami League that systematically disenfranchised citizens, but also because of the enormous sacrifices that went into ousting it. During the July-August uprising, around 1,500 people lost their lives, while nearly 20,000 were injured, many critically. Their demand for democratic rights free from discrimination—underpinned by a fair and credible election—is a mandate that the commission must fulfil. There is optimism that it will not repeat the mistakes of its predecessors, but it must remain vigilant at all times given today's polarised socio-political climate.

An election alone will not solve all our problems, however. This is why the chief adviser's emphasis on implementing some essential reforms prior to the election, leaving the rest to a democratically elected government, resonates so strongly. For now, we must keep our eyes on the process—the journey rather than the destination—and that, for the Election Commission, begins with laying down the tracks for necessary electoral reforms. BNP and other parties are calling for an election roadmap, which will be issued once decisions on the electoral reforms are made. A commission is currently working on that and will likely submit its reports between December and January. There is a process in place to finalise the agenda, which we hope will lead to an electoral framework that is not only fair but also perceived as such by all political parties and the public alike.

We look to the Election Commission to ensure that the upcoming election, whenever it is held, genuinely reflects the will of the people. Anything less would—echo the chief election commissioner—betray the sacrifices of all those who gave their lives in the mass uprising. The authorities must not fail them.

## Restore Leinga canal in Chattogram

What's the point of excavating a canal if it gets filled up soon?

We are disappointed to learn about the fate of the Leinga canal in Chattogram's Karnaphuli upazila, which has been filled up just two years after its excavation. Reportedly, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) dredged a nine-kilometre stretch of the canal in 2021 under a project intended to restore its natural flow. However, upon completion in 2022, heaps of excavated earth and garbage were left piled along its banks. These were eventually washed back into the canal by rain, reducing it to a narrow ditch. It's baffling why the BWDB would leave excavated earth on the banks instead of disposing of it responsibly. Wasn't it part of the project to clear it as well? Such oversight from a state agency is simply unacceptable.

A few decades ago, this 12-kilometre-long and 20-45 foot-wide canal was the lifeline of the area. Farmers relied on it for irrigation, boats used it for transporting goods, and it acted as a natural drainage channel for rainwater into the Karnaphuli River. However, silting and indiscriminate dumping of garbage gradually blocked its flow, causing severe waterlogging along its banks. The BWDB initiated the project to address this problem, but the canal became clogged again due to its mismanagement.

Unfortunately, this counterproductive practice of leaving excavated material after dredging canals and rivers on their banks is all too common across the country. In Dhaka, for instance, city corporations often leave canal and drain waste on the banks or roads. This defeats the very purpose of cleaning or excavation drives, resulting in further public suffering. Moreover, such unplanned work squanders public funds. In the case of Leinga canal, for instance, around Tk 2 crore was effectively wasted. This is unacceptable.

Over the decades, unplanned development projects have cost the nation thousands of crores, but to little avail. The situation was particularly bad during the 15 plus years Awami League rule when corruption and irregularities regularly drained resources meant for public interest projects. This must stop. We urge the interim government to ensure transparency and accountability in all such initiatives so that public money is no longer squandered due to the inefficiency or corruption of project authorities. The BWDB must answer for the failed Leinga canal excavation and take immediate steps to restore the flow of this water body.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY



#### Ley Juárez passed

On this day in 1855, a special law named Ley Juárez was passed in Mexico abolishing special courts for the clergy and military, in an attempt by Justice Minister Benito Juárez to eliminate the remnants of colonialism in the North American country and promote equality.

# EDITORIAL

## How Bangladesh is reviving its macroeconomy



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is vice chairman at the Policy  
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SADIQ AHMED

Bangladesh's economy has been on a downward trend since early 2022, marked by high inflation, dwindling foreign exchange reserves, depreciation of the taka, poor health of the banking sector, low and stagnant tax-to-GDP ratio, and falling public spending. GDP growth rate as well as growth in exports and investment rates have been falling too. This downside is the outcome of poor economic management and endemic corruption, especially thefts in the banking sector and corrupt practices in public procurement.

The dwindling macroeconomy, combined with autocratic and corrupt political governance, rising income inequality and human rights violation, led to the inevitable demise of the previous government on August 5, 2024. An interim government was established, charged with the responsibility of stabilising the macroeconomy and reforming the country's political governance. The most immediate action of this government was to stop the theft-related bleeding of the banking sector by making wholesale changes in the affected banks' management. Second, it fully deregulated the interest rate policy and tightened domestic liquidity by increasing the Bangladesh Bank policy rate. Third, a broad-based fight against corruption, including efforts to recover stolen assets, was announced. Several other reforms now underway include revisiting public spending priorities to cut waste and leakages, reducing corruption and increasing tax collections through online tax filing, lowering duties on essential food imports to reduce inflationary pressure, and mobilising greater financial assistance from multilateral financial institutions.

Although the reforms have just started, some positive results are already visible. The outflow of theft-related bank resources has stopped, demand for credit has slowed, remittances have increased, and deposits are growing. October saw an encouraging recovery in exports. However, inflation remains stubbornly high, the government revenue inflows remain sluggish, and the foreign reserves have declined to \$18.4 billion as of November 14, down from \$20.4 billion in July. This is partly explained by the increase in debt payments and a pickup in imports. Additionally, the expected capital flows from multilateral institutions has not yet materialised, pending the IMF review of the ongoing programme and the time lag in negotiating new BOP financing from the multilateral institutions.

The immediate challenge is to

reduce inflation sustainably. And that requires a recovery of imports and manufacturing sector production. More generally, except for domestic resource mobilisation, the demand stabilisation measures are broadly on track. Policy attention now must shift to enhancing imports and augmenting domestic supply, which is intimately linked to the recovery of production, investment and exports.

The supply side agenda is tough and involves both short-term (one to three years) and medium-term (three-plus years) reforms related to skills,



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

technology, domestic investment, foreign direct investment (FDI), and export diversification. These encompass policy reforms in many areas. The most immediate reforms include:

**Exchange rate management:** Years of controlled exchange rate management have clearly demonstrated the futility of such a system. The sharp appreciation of the real effective exchange rate between 2011 and 2022 is a major contributor to the present balance of payment crisis. The exchange rate has been slowly liberalised since May 2024 through the unification of multiple exchange rates and adoption of a crawling peg. However, the utility of staying with a crawling peg system is dubious, and it is best to move to a fully flexible market-based exchange rate. The demand management policies in place will protect the rate from fluctuating wildly. A market-based exchange rate is the best way to provide incentives to exporters and remittance senders.

The Bangladesh Bank should also carefully review the outdated foreign currency regime that is riddled with exchange controls and other restrictive practices that impose high transaction

spending has been reduced by poor spending priorities and corruption. Public spending on health, education, water resources and social protection have been grossly inadequate, while most spending has concentrated on civil service salaries and benefits, subsidies, interest cost and large infrastructure projects. The quality of infrastructure spending has been poor owing to corruption in procurement, contributing to delays and cost overruns.

Clearly, overhauling both tax and expenditure systems is of the highest priority. This is not an easy task and will take several years of sustained effort. The interim government has started to reform both aspects. On the revenue side, it has rightly focused on overhauling the income tax system, where corruption is most endemic. The move to an online system is a smart policy step. But this alone will not yield the full benefits.

To provide incentives to tax filers, two carefully-reformed reforms are essential. First, the tax form must be simplified by doing away with the reconciliation of income, expenditure and wealth. This is a rent-

seeking instrument for harassing tax filers and its revenue implications are dubious. Taxpayers enter negotiated settlements with the NBR staff, and the Treasury loses out. Eliminating this requirement would greatly simplify online tax filing and encourage many more filers to go online.

Second, tax audits must be automated based on pre-selected triggers and be highly selective, mostly focused on large taxpayers. Full documentation including income and wealth reconciliation become relevant during an audit review.

Regarding expenditure management, a top priority is to cut back on fossil fuel subsidies and large infrastructure projects and increase spending on health, education, water resources and social protection. In the present environment of high inflation, higher spending on social protection with a focus on the poor is essential.

**Meaningful property tax:** Local government institutions—i.e. city corporations and municipalities—are ineffective because of heavy resource constraints. Global experience shows that the best instrument for augmenting their finances is through the institution of a meaningful property tax system that is based on market value of properties and a meaningful tax rate. Substantial revenues can be collected from this reform that will ease the pressure on treasury transfers to these institutions.

**State-owned enterprises (SoEs):** SoEs are draining the scarce fiscal resources of the Treasury with poor financial performance. The total book value of SoE assets in FY2021 was estimated at 16 percent of GDP, yet the net fiscal transfers to these SoEs was in the range of two to three percent of GDP. I prepared a detailed report on how the financial performance of SoEs can be improved and shared this with the finance ministry in early 2024. The core reforms involve corporate governance and pricing policy. This is a low-hanging fruit, which the interim government may want to focus on.

**Trade policy:** A sharp reduction in trade taxes is essential to diversify and boost exports. Doing so will also reduce inflation. Government revenues must be raised through income taxation and VAT. The trade policy should focus on supporting the expansion of manufacturing exports and limited support for well-established import substitutes.

**Investment climate:** Reversing the downturn in private investment and attracting FDI will require sharp improvement in the investment climate. Establishing law and order, including protection of private property, is the topmost priority. Resolution of labour disputes is another priority. Restoring the confidence of the domestic private sector is essential to attract FDI. Easing of foreign currency regulations and imports, provision of uninterrupted power supply, and tax and trade policy reforms will all help improve the investment climate.

## Energy transition can address global inequality



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MOHAMMAD EMRAN HASAN

It is well-established that the world is deep into the climate crisis, posing multi-dimensional hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, and loss and damage. Multiple studies indicate that climate-related damages have increased by five to seven percent in the last 10 years, resulting in an economic loss amounting to around \$270 billion in 2023 alone, while in 2022, the loss and damage costs reached \$1.5 trillion. This, unfortunately, is just the beginning.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) introduced the concept of climate system tipping point more than two decades ago, and various studies now confirm that many of those tipping points could be exceeded much sooner than anticipated.

We are currently at 1.2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period, and the Paris Agreement benchmark is 1.5 degrees Celsius. The year 2023 is the warmest year on record, but what has gone less noticed is that the average temperature between February 2023 and January 2024 was 1.52 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period, exceeding the Paris Agreement threshold by 0.02 degrees Celsius, according to the Copernicus Climate

Change Service. Whether this shift is temporary or lasting, it is clear that our mitigation strategies and actions have proven inadequate. Bangladesh alone faced five major climatic shocks only in 2024, with a month yet to go.

Since 1750, humankind has doubled atmospheric carbon, adding 210 parts per million (ppm) of CO2. In just the last 22 years, an additional one quarter of that doubled carbon has been added, leaving us with 422 ppm of carbon in the atmosphere today. Development and energy consumption are strongly correlated, and developed countries grew rich by emitting 92 percent of excess carbon by burning fossil fuels. On a national scale, the US alone, through its 22 mega fossil fuel projects, emits a fifth of the global carbon emission.

On an individual level, the richest 10 percent of people globally emit as much as 50 percent of carbon, while the wealthiest one percent emits double the carbon that the poorest 50 percent of the world's population emits combined. Moreover, the emissions of a single billionaire (three million tonnes) are a million times higher than the emissions of an individual (2.76 tonnes) in the bottom 90 percent of

humanity. In stark contrast, the entire African continent emits less than four percent, and developing countries like Bangladesh emit less than 0.5 percent.

As the Global North and the wealthiest continue these egregious practices, global leaders like the COP28 president dismiss the science behind the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold with calls for a fossil fuel phaseout. The world is edging closer to what UN Secretary-General António Guterres has termed "global boiling." Yet, emissions continue to rise, and an additional 16 percent increase by 2030 will push us to 2.7 degrees Celsius by 2100. To limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, we must halve the emission by 2030, and reach net zero by 2050, which eventually might prevent us from irreversible climate emergency. Ironically, despite having already surpassed 1.5 degrees Celsius and reached multiple tipping points, 82 percent of the world's energy still comes from fossil fuels, while only 6.5 percent comes from renewable sources.

There is, however, immense potential for renewables as the Earth receives about 1.52 million TWh of energy annually only from solar, which is 8,700 times more than the annual global energy demands (170,000 TWh). Additionally, there are other renewable sources feasible enough based on the geographic locations.

Energy transition is considered one of the most plausible solutions to save humanity from the brunt of climate change. If we consider the fair share of carbon, the Global North has already exceeded its limit. And yet, if

they continue using fossil fuels while prescribing transitions for developing nations, it becomes an unjust, colonial approach. More importantly, we must assess the entire life cycle of the energy transition and ensure it does not place an additional burden on developing nations in terms of finance, environmental degradation through resource extraction, loss of natural resource rights for marginalised communities, job loss, etc.

The ideal recommendation is Just Energy Transition (JET). Least developed countries (LDCs) can phase out coal, then developing nations should immediately phase out fossil fuels. The Global North and wealthy nations should finance the energy transition for LDCs, and developing countries should transfer renewable energy technologies to them. Moreover, the JET must be rooted in four pillars of justice: a) historical injustices, rights, and concerns of marginalised and impacted communities must be recognised; b) affected people, associations, and civil society voices must be reflected in policies and all energy transition processes; c) responsibilities and benefits of the transition must be equitably distributed; and d) affected people must be fairly compensated for energy transition-related harm and loss and damage as part of the remedy.

The world is a shared space, and as we tackle the common climate crisis, we must do so with equity at the forefront, not vested interests. This is the way to introduce JET—the key to an equal and sustainable future.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY



#### Ley Juárez passed

On this day in 1855, a special law named Ley Juárez was passed in Mexico abolishing special courts for the clergy and military, in an attempt by Justice Minister Benito Juárez to eliminate the remnants of colonialism in the North American country and promote equality.

# Hasan Mahmud's comical U-turn



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HM NAZMUL ALAM

Once a fierce critic of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), former Foreign Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud now finds himself in an unexpected role. The Awami League (AL) politician, who is currently in London, recently sang praises for the BNP—or, as some may put it, he tried “wooing” his once despised rival. After 15 plus years of relentless criticism and jabs aimed at the BNP, Hasan’s sudden pivot, following the ouster of his government through the July uprising, has left political analysts and laypeople scratching their heads. A tale as twisted as a Dickensian plot, his evolution from BNP’s heckler to a begrudging admirer is nothing short of literary satire.

Let’s rewind to a simpler time: the era of Mahmud’s full-throated attacks on the BNP, almost as consistent as the sunrise, and twice as intense. He labelled BNP as a “party of parasites” and often credited them with conjuring chaos as easily as Shakespeare’s Iago wove schemes in *Othello*. BNP leaders, according to him, were architects of anarchy, always “misleading the masses” and “haunted by the ‘Tarique ghost,’” referring to the

party’s acting chairman, Tarique Rahman. His words were chosen with such precision and relish, it was as if he had plucked them from Dante’s *Inferno*, casting BNP leaders into circles of political damnation.

One could almost hear his booming voice, drenched in theatrical scorn, recounting BNP’s supposed failure to win the people’s favour as he proudly paraded AL’s achievements with an air of unearned grandeur. “The BNP presented a fake adviser to Joe Biden,” he would proclaim with mock indignation, using his platform like a mediaeval troubadour, weaving tales of his rivals’ bumbling with all the flair of a Marlowe villain.

With the authoritarian AL regime suddenly overthrown, Mahmud went from denouncing BNP’s every move to extolling the virtues of “restoring democracy,” a concept he had once wielded as a cudgel to suppress dissent. His rhetoric, once thick with sarcasm and scorn, now drips with the honeyed appeal of a suitor attempting to rekindle an old flame—except, of course, that the “old flame” is the very party he tried to extinguish.

Now, as if reliving *Romeo and*

*Juliet*, he calls for “working together” with the BNP for the “greater good” of Bangladesh. In an ironic twist, Mahmud has become something of a Capulet seeking Montague’s embrace, promising a collaborative future he once vehemently rejected. Some critics have taken to calling this performance “The Tragedy of Dr Hasan,” a farce in which a once-proud antagonist now plays the role of political supplicant.

It was not long ago that Mahmud championed AL’s “unassailable” record of peace and prosperity. He proclaimed with the conviction of an orator from ancient Greece that his party had brought unprecedented development to the country. He scoffed at BNP’s concerns for democratic reforms, dismissing them as desperate ploys of a “party that cannot survive without scandal.” He scoffed at BNP’s advocacy for free and fair elections, dismissing it as an “elaborate hypocrisy.” And yet, here he stands now, as humbled as King Lear on the stormy heath, calling for the very reforms he once deemed folly.

At a recent event—his first appearance after weeks of silence post-uprising—Mahmud appeared almost repentant, though it was clear that old habits die hard. Attempting a dignified pivot, he assured his audience that he was “always an advocate for democratic values.” The line was delivered with the sincerity of a character in a Restoration comedy, and the audience responded with what could only be described as a collective gasp of incredulity.

A keen observer might draw comparisons to Chaucer’s Pardoner, a man who sells indulgences with a face so earnest that one could almost forget his dubious dealings. Much like the Pardoner, his newfound alignment with BNP’s calls for transparency and electoral fairness reeks of opportunism dressed as redemption. “I agree with the BNP on

oblivious to his own years-long campaign against him and the BNP. In a fit of cognitive dissonance that would make Orwell proud, Mahmud now promotes Tarique’s vision for governance reform, a cause he had once called “antithetical to Bangladesh’s stability.”

One might wonder, is this newfound admiration genuine,

This metamorphosis, this shedding of old skin for a new one, is almost too convenient to believe. Just as Shakespeare’s Polonius is quick to switch allegiances to remain in favour with the court, Mahmud’s chameleon-like shift seems less an act of principle and more a strategy of survival. The difference, however, is that Polonius’s fickleness ultimately led to his downfall—a cautionary tale that Mahmud might do well to heed.

In his newfound role as BNP’s begrudging ally, Mahmud’s journey resembles that of a character from Molière—perhaps Tartuffe, the unctuous hypocrite who feigns virtue to gain favour. If history is any guide, his overtures will likely be met with the same distrust and ridicule as Tartuffe’s grand gestures. After all, in the court of public opinion, where actions speak louder than words, Mahmud’s record as AL’s attack dog cannot be erased with a few conciliatory statements.

As we watch this spectacle unfold, one cannot help but see the humour in Mahmud’s plight. Here is a man who spent over a decade railing against BNP’s every move, only to find himself on the other side of the table, professing solidarity with those he once derided. It is a tale worthy of satire, a drama of contradictions played out on the national stage. Perhaps the moral of Mahmud’s story is one he himself might struggle to accept: that in politics, as in literature, irony has a way of catching up with those who least expect it.



VISUAL: STAR

many issues,” he declared in a voice as smooth as an actor’s monologue, his words carefully rehearsed for maximum effect.

Mahmud has gone beyond mere agreement; he now echoes BNP’s proposals as if they were his own, including the idea of a bicameral parliament. With a straight face, he praised BNP’s acting chairman for “championing the cause of intellectual inclusion,” seemingly

or merely a last-ditch attempt to salvage his relevance in the present scenario? Perhaps he sees himself as a transformed man, like Scrooge on Christmas morning, proclaiming his repentance to an unsuspecting world. Yet, unlike Scrooge, Mahmud lacks the charm of a man humbled by self-awareness; instead, he projects the aura of a politician whose convictions change as easily as the tides.

## Of frequent demands and conspiracies

### BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

system.

Democracy requires participation from all stakeholders. By privileging one body or opinion and silencing the rest can never be healthy for democracy. We have already seen how one clandestine group used the former government as a Trojan horse to foray into their realm. The detrimental process requires reform.

that groups of rickshaw pullers, garment workers, students, and other disgruntled people are being manipulated, though only those with institutional intelligence have insights into such matters. Common sense, however, dictates that the root cause of dissatisfaction needs to be extracted so that the bad tooth does not pain the entire body.

question that we can ask. During the July uprising, we received regular updates of names and numbers. So what’s stopping the authorities from preparing such lists now?

Similarly, the battery-run rickshaw drivers were called associates of various ward commissioners of the past regime. It is surprising that a government comprising many NGO leaders is announcing policies without thinking of the rehabilitation of those affected by said policies.

There is a huge battery industry to aid the 40 lakh illegal battery-run rickshaws that are plying the streets around the country. Where will these people go? What will they do? Will they be pushed into crime?

If your livelihood is stripped away, do you really need to be a member of conspirators to take to the streets? What alternative routes or earning options are we proposing for them? The same goes for the idea of banning polythene. Without creating alternative carry-on bags, the decision ended up becoming a gimmick with the shelf life of a newspaper.

The demand for upscaling certain government colleges into public universities is another case of opportunism that should not be tolerated. The government has sought time to review the merit of the proposal, while the suspicion about the anarchy let loose by the students of said colleges is rife among the netizens.

This is solidified by the fact that one of the seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University has broken ranks with its peers. The students of Government Titumir College believe that they have the necessary infrastructure to have their own university.

Maybe they see many private universities in the city operating under the roofs of multi-storey buildings. Perhaps they are under the impression that they are adequately equipped to have a

university of their own.

I think the University Grants Commission (UGC) should seriously consider merging universities to reverse the process of “quantity over quality” policy followed by the previous government. The populist attempt to have universities everywhere has spread our resources thin. Even in the US, struggling institutions are merged to bring them under consolidated management.

A decision of merger will give the right message to the aspiring colleges that feel that rebranding would add value to their degrees. The reality is, many of these institutions don’t have the teachers with the right pedigree to teach at a tertiary level. They complain about the syllabuses and exam questions that are followed at the major public universities. This I can tell from my own experience of conducting exams at these colleges.

But when these students keep on blocking major streets or vandalising train, their motive becomes clear. They want to hit the iron when it is hot and soft. But it is time for the iron to be solid, without which there will be more copycat agitations. The actions taken by the military in dealing with the students of Dhaka College and City College were necessary. Students seem to be pursuing everything except education, which cannot be the norm. The actions, though regrettable, are the results of leniency shown for too long. The message needs to be loud and clear. Reform needs time. This is not the right time to make illogical demands. Fixing the state, as one popular graffiti tells us, will require further patience and sacrifices.

Those who gave their lives or got injured in the July-August uprising sought systemic change. Such change cannot come if everyone thinks in terms of personal agenda or vendetta. The ghost of conspiracy can be exorcised if we process the body through the required rites.



Students of Government Titumir College take to the streets in Mohakhali, Dhaka on November 18, 2024, demanding for an upgrade to university status. Their demonstration caused traffic gridlock across the capital and disrupted rail communication with the rest of the country.

FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

longer by the day. Depending simply on overseas bailouts and remittances will not mend the wounds inflicted by the stealing of money or a broken financial body. The chief adviser’s declaration to include members of the former party only after due process of trials is a welcome move. It at least gives many the hope of seeing the emergence of a democratic

Then again, it should be allowed only after following due diligence. Conversely, democracy is not synonymous with mobocracy where anything goes, and petty interests prevail over greater ones.

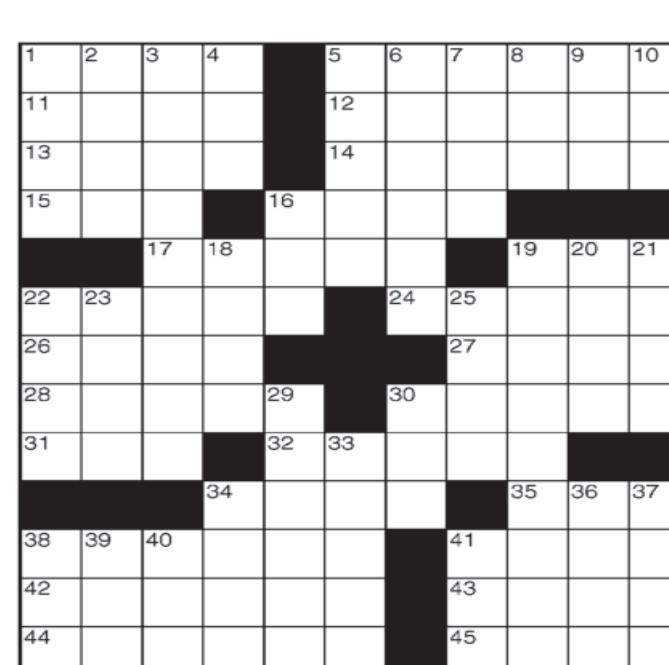
The perception of Awami League’s return in different guises is something that is held by many. There may be some truth in the idea

Dehumanising the “other” simply gives the government an excuse to ignore the core problems. The injured students who waylaid the health adviser, for instance, were quickly identified as students of Chhatra League who have taken advantage of the government’s policies to rehabilitate July victims. Why there isn’t a proper list of the injured is a

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**  
 1 Informal farewell  
 5 Collect \$200, maybe  
 11 Final, e.g.  
 12 Reverberated  
 13 Marina spot  
 14 Worn down  
 15 — Aviv  
 16 State frankly  
 17 Diamond corners  
 19 Newsstand buy, for short  
 22 Crab’s place  
 24 Hackneyed  
 26 St. Louis sight  
 27 Mob event  
 28 Gags  
 30 Stately dance  
 31 Braying beast  
 32 Witty remarks

34 Crooned  
 35 Diving bird  
 38 Speculative question  
 41 Lot unit  
 42 Pal of Pooh  
 43 Onion layer  
 44 Made tea  
 45 Sibilant summons  
**DOWN**  
 1 Final, e.g.  
 2 Car bar  
 3 Members of the offense  
 4 Band blaster  
 5 Irritate  
 6 Clue heading  
 7 Display  
 8 Grassy clump  
 9 “Golly!”  
 10 Strange



### TUESDAY'S ANSWERS



# How animal rescuers in Bangladesh save lives

**There are dozens or hundreds more animal rescuers in our country. There are even more individuals who may not be rescuers but are doing noble work for the strays of their community by feeding them and taking care of them. However, the truth that arises after careful thought is that if everyone did their part, there would be no need for animal rescuers in the first place.**

TINATH ZAEBA

In Bangladesh, stray animals can be spotted on nearly every corner in rural and urban areas. Dhaka alone is home to around 40,000 stray dogs. Most of these dogs live in deplorable conditions and are subjected to atrocities every day. Following recent political events and climate catastrophes, this has become even more true.

As our country reeled under the pressure of massive political reform and devastating floods, many people prioritised these urgent issues, leaving the animals' welfare in the background. Amid the chaos, as former politicians fled and resources were stretched thin, thousands of dogs and cats were displaced. Pets were abandoned at the last minute as airports crowded and flights overbooked. Dozens of paralysed or ill animals were inadvertently released from the shelters they had refuge in. However, their plight was not entirely forgotten. Animal rescuers stepped in during these trying times, even as their resolve was tested like never before.

Camelia Kisku is a 40-year-old animal rescuer who runs an animal foster home and shelter called Amar Asroy Home. She was one of the rescue volunteers who massively contributed to rehoming abandoned dogs when their owners and shelter supervisors fled the country.

"I rehomed around 25 dogs from shelters. When I heard that their shelter was about to be looted and possibly damaged, I knew this meant they were at risk of falling into the hands of the wrong people. So, I decided to take these dogs, many of whom were in critical condition, to my foster home to provide them treatment and shelter," said Kisku. "Despite our best efforts, approximately 20 or 25 dogs are still missing. Some of them were paralysed, sick, undergoing cancer treatment, etc. Thus, while rescuing and rehoming efforts are ongoing, we really must focus on changing how people in our country view these animals. People's empathy must be extended to them."

The negative perception people have regarding stray animals arises largely due to the overpopulation of these animals in Dhaka. People view them as unnecessary and a nuisance, rather than helpless and dependent. As a result, these animals become victims of everyday abuse, starvation, and fatal accidents.

Many dogs and cats meet the brutal fate of being roadkill or succumbing to diseases that would



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

have been preventable through better healthcare and attention from local people and relevant authorities. The overpopulation itself is a result of the negligence of the authorities towards spaying and neutering these animals.

Many animal welfare organisations like Obhryanno and 50 for Paws and independent animal rescuers have been working around the clock to arrange spay and neuter programmes in danger-prone areas. 20-year-old Sarah Fathima Brotee, founder of 50 for Paws, is one of the animal rescuers arranging a mass spay and neuter programme.

She said, "The biggest issue has been the commute. The vans needed to transport dogs are not readily available in our country, and the available ones are expensive. Even if we can arrange the transportation, the next problem is shelter. Spaying and neutering are major operations, and the animals need at least 48 to 72 hours of shelter afterward. We have to pay that foster fee as well, which, when you look at it, comes up to such a big amount that you

could easily neuter more animals with that amount itself."

While undeniably brave in pushing against these odds to help stray animals, these rescuers are not endlessly immune to the hurdles they face. Sarah, who has rescued over 100 animals with the help of fundraising, opened up about the mental strain on rescuers. "Mentally, it's very draining. Nobody wants to work for themselves or take responsibility. Even if it's something as simple as posting on Facebook for adoption, they're constantly depending on us to take care of everything."

The mental strain is not the only problem rescuers face. The limited manpower of these organisations also hinders them. In Bangladesh, animal rescuers work using a step-by-step procedure. There are numerous communities on social media constantly spreading awareness about the current situation of strays in our country. When an injured animal is spotted, people post its picture on these communities, so that it can

get shared by others and hopefully reach an animal lover in the area. Spot treatment then occurs using accessible medicines such as Scabo and Viodin. If the animal's situation is severe, it is later rehomed to a shelter. Most of this process relies on fundraising, where the rescuers post the medical prescriptions on social media to ask people to donate. These donations are used to cover the costs and lighten the financial burden.

Asiya Hossain, 22, a student and animal rescuer, explained how social media acts as a powerful tool but needs to be improved. "People are aware and generous nowadays, so fundraising is possible. However, the problem is the lack of manpower. It makes it very difficult to utilise social media to the fullest because the rescuers are too busy taking care of the animals to take pictures. For instance, our teams saved hundreds of cows, cats, dogs, and goats during the flood crisis. But we were so busy physically doing all the work, that it was difficult to take pictures. We ended up sharing only half of what we

did on social media. We need greater manpower to ease this burden and help us raise awareness."

There are dozens or hundreds more animal rescuers in our country. There are even more individuals who may not be rescuers but are doing noble work for the strays of their community by feeding them and taking care of them. However, the truth that arises after careful thought is that if everyone did their part, there would be no need for animal rescuers in the first place. Perhaps, in an ideal Bangladesh, we can dream of fundamental equality for animals, where they can exist peacefully. But, right now, while scrolling through social media and seeing these suffering strays, that dream seems far out of reach. These animal rescuers are the only ones taking the responsibility that others are not willing to shoulder.

**Tinath Zaeba** is an optimistic daydreamer, a cat mom of 5 and a student of Economics at North South University.

# Submitting to literary magazines doesn't have to be overwhelming

**The stress of putting myself out there and the slim chances of getting published kept me hesitant. I find myself wondering whether anyone will even read whatever I've sent in.**

OHONA ANJUM

Submitting to literary magazines can feel downright intimidating regardless of how optimistic or pessimistic you think you are. With countless rules to follow, it's easy to feel that your creative spark has flickered out. It was no different either when I wanted to submit a piece. I must have opened and closed the submission portal at least a hundred times before gathering the courage to hit "send".

The stress of putting myself out there and the slim chances of getting published kept me hesitant, especially because acceptance/publication rates for some publications are in the single digits. I find myself wondering whether anyone will even read whatever I've sent in. The process can feel overwhelming but understanding it from both your and the publication's point of view can make all the difference.

As an anxious writer, I know that I often judge my own work far more harshly than any editor might. But here's some good news: smaller literary magazines are often incredibly supportive and responsive, especially to emerging writers. Most usually take somewhere between less than a month to three months to give you a timely response so you're not left wondering about the fate of your work. Remember that each submission brings you closer to finding that one magazine, editor, or audience that truly connects with your words.

Submitting to any magazine, whether it has a large following or a



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

niche readership is a step in the right direction. When you're starting out, don't focus too much on the number of readers; the magnitude ideally should not define your motivation.

Instead, think of each submission as a chance to share your voice, to be heard, and to grow as a writer.

Along the way, you will likely encounter a common misconception that only writers who know others in the industry get published. Networking and knowing people in the literary world can open doors but it is by no means a requirement.

The reality is that reputable literary magazines, especially international ones, focus far more on the quality and relevance of your work.

Most magazines follow a blind submission process, meaning the editors often don't even know who the writer is until the piece has already been selected. This eliminates any chance of biased selection, giving every writer a fair chance. So, instead of worrying about connections, invest your energy into crafting a piece that resonates with the essence of the magazines you admire while also

showing off your best attributes as a writer.

However, understand that publishing in literary magazines is not going to pay your bills. A handful of established magazines might offer a modest honorarium while others pay little to nothing for published pieces. Literary magazines often operate on limited budgets, with most funds reserved for production and distribution, leaving little for contributor fees. For most writers, publication in these magazines is more about building credibility, gaining

exposure, and connecting with an audience than making money.

While the idea of getting your work published is exciting, it's essential to make sure your submission is polished and aligns with the magazine's guidelines. Literary magazines receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of submissions, so even the smallest oversight can determine the difference between acceptance and a swift rejection. Before submitting, take the time to carefully read the magazine's specific requirements regarding format, word count, genre, and themes. Ensuring your piece matches their guidelines shows respect for the editors' time and demonstrates your professionalism. Additionally, a well-edited, thoughtfully refined piece will stand out far more than a rough draft, giving your work the best chance to make a lasting impression.

It's tough to predict every bump and twist you will face. You will have to find your own way, one step at a time. Carving out your path can feel a little nerve-wracking (maybe a lot), but the outcome is worth it. Every submission, whether it's accepted or not, helps you overcome the nerves. You are slowly breaking through the fear of putting yourself out there, which is a huge win in and of itself. With each submission, you learn more about your craft and develop a sense of what clicks and what doesn't. After all, every stumble means that you're moving forward and that's what really counts.

**Ohona Anjum** writes, rhymes, and studies English literature.

# Captain Miraz's all-round test in Antigua

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

Not often can a cricketer boast reaching a milestone just by stepping onto the field. But on Friday, all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz reached not one but two significant career milestones when he went out for the toss ahead of the first of the two Tests against West Indies in Antigua.

Miraz, in the absence of regular captain Najmul Hossain Shanto who is out injured, became the 14th cricketer to lead the Tigers in Tests and also earned his 50th Test cap alongside teammate Taijul Islam.

As one of only seven cricketers to play 50 Tests for Bangladesh, Miraz is undoubtedly among the most experienced Test cricketers of the country. Playing in the ongoing series, only Mominul Haque has played more Tests than him in the Bangladesh squad (68).

Experience inevitably attracts responsibility, and adding the role of captaincy on top of it, the pressure is definitely mounting high on Miraz in the Windies Tests.



On top of that, the absences of all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, the experienced Mashfiqur Rahim, and Shanto have created a vacuum in the batting

department and made it exceedingly difficult for the team management to form a balanced unit.

In a bid to have five proper bowling options, something they did not have in the two Tests against South Africa at home and suffered dearly for it, the management made the call to pick four bowlers -- pacers Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud and Shoriful Islam and spinner Taijul -- and place Miraz in the all-rounder's role for the Antigua Test.

Till the West Indies Tests, Miraz has been Bangladesh's most successful batter in the ongoing cycle of the ICC World Test Championship, making 561 runs in 11 innings with five half centuries.

Miraz has been scoring crucial runs for the Tigers batting at number 7 and 8 and in the ongoing Test, there is a possibility of him occupying the number 6 position, usually reserved for Shakib in Tests.

Form-wise, this should be the ideal time for the 27-year-old to bat higher up the order. However, his past record in the Caribbean as a batter in Tests does not

present a rosy picture.

The right-hander has batted eight times in five Tests against the hosts in the Caribbean and has reached the double-figure mark only once, making 10 in the second innings in Kingston back in 2018.

He averages an appalling 4.12 with the bat in Tests in West Indies, whereas his career average is a shade below 23 and his average in the last two years has been a shade above 39.

West Indies have packed their eleven with four pacers and would try to run through the Tigers' batting line-up, like they had done many times in recent tours.

Miraz deferred this trial by pace by choosing to bowl first after winning the toss, but he and the Bangladesh batters will have to face the music in the second innings.

For Miraz, the Antigua Test began with achieving two milestones. However, if he fails to deliver with the bat and succumbs to the West Indies' attack as he has in the past, the ending would not feel as sweet for the all-rounder.

Nine banned, fined in 3rd division league

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) yesterday issued one-year suspensions and fines to eight players and a team official for breaching the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)'s Code of Conduct during the Meghna Bank Dhaka Third Division Cricket League 2024-25.

BCB President Faruque Ahmed reaffirmed the board's zero-tolerance stance on disciplinary breaches, stating, "Let this be a message to all players and officials."

The incident occurred earlier this week on November 18, during a Super League match between Tejgaon Cricket Academy and Sapphire Sporting Club at the PKSP Ground - 1.

A field altercation between players from both teams prompted an investigation by the CCDM Technical Committee, which reviewed visual evidence before delivering its verdict.

Consequently, Tejgaon Cricket Academy players Yesin Arafat, Md Rifat Al Emon (Anik), Tasin Ahmed Ronobi, Md Rabbi Hasan, Md Parvez Ahmed Joy, and team official Robin, along with Sapphire Sporting Club's Md Rana Khan, Saiful Islam Shawon, and Md Hridoy, were found guilty of a Level 4 offence under Article 2.19 of the BCB Code of Conduct.

Level 4 violations carry severe repercussions, including a potential lifetime ban. After deliberation, the CCDM decided on a one-year suspension from all BCB competitions for the nine individuals. Each was also fined a minimum of 50,000 taka.

» Man City have won just three of their last 10 Premier League games against Tottenham.



» Under Guardiola (since 2016-17), City have lost more Premier League games (six) and conceded more Premier League goals (22) against Spurs than they have against any other opponent.

## BUMRAH SHINES brightest on pacers' day

India roared back in the first Test against Australia on Friday after being skittled for 150, taking seven wickets in the final session to put themselves in the box seat after a riveting opening day in Perth. At the close, the hosts were in disarray on 67-7 after stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah demolished the Australian top order in a devastating spell to end the day with 4-17.

- » On the opening day of the first Test between India and Australia at the Perth Stadium yesterday, a total of 17 wickets fell -- the most number of wickets on the first day of a Test in Australia since 1952.
- » All 17 of those wickets were scalped by pacers, with Australia's Josh Hazlewood's four for 29 in 13 overs being the best figure after India's Bumrah.
- » India were bundled out for just 150 in 49.4 overs -- the ninth instance of India being all out on the opening day of an away Test, and the first since their game against West Indies in Kingston in 2011. However, 49.4 overs is the fewest overs faced by India in those nine instances.
- » India captain Jasprit Bumrah became only the second bowler after South Africa's Dale Steyn (at Port Elizabeth in 2014) to dismiss Australia's star batter Steven Smith for a golden duck.
- » The ball on average seamed more than 0.793 degrees yesterday -- the average seam movement on a day has been more than that only 94 times in Test history.
- » Yesterday's batting average of 10.64 for both India and Australia combined (181 runs for 17 wickets) is the second-lowest in those 94 days of play -- with the second day's play in a game between Australia and South Africa in Brisbane in 2022 seeing an average deviation of 0.810 degrees and batters averaging 9.16 (18 wickets for 165 runs).

### Day 1

**India:** 150 all out in 49.4 overs (Reddy 41, Pant 37; Hazlewood 4-49, Marsh 2-12)

**Australia:** 67 for seven in 27 overs (Carey 19 not out, Head 11; Bumrah 4-17, Siraj 2-17)

**"We have the advantage now and I'm hoping we can bat better in the second innings and put them under pressure,"** said India's debutant Nitish Kumar Reddy, who top-scored for the visitors with 41 off 59 deliveries.

**"Obviously a good day to be a fast bowler. There was a fair bit in the wicket, swing and sideways movement, and some good pace and carry. We'll come out tomorrow [today] and try and get as close to their total as we can,"**

Australia pacer Mitchell Starc, who got two wickets for 14 runs.



## Redemption for Topu and Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

After flicking home Miguel Ferreira's corner from an unmarked position inside the box to draw Bashundhara Kings level in their Bangladesh 2.0 Challenge Cup fixture against Mohammadan at the Bashundhara Kings Arena last night, Topu Barman made a shushing gesture to the crowd as if he was celebrating in front of opposition fans.

The goal came in the 73rd minute of the match, right after a lengthy hold up in play due to flares thrown onto the pitch, and there was no looking back for the five-time Bangladesh Premier League champions since then.

Two more goals -- Faysal Ahmed Fahim's side-volley on a Ferreira cross in 81st minute and then Ferreira's top-notch finish in the seventh minute of the 18-minute stoppage-time capped off a superb fightback for last season's treble winners.

While it was a redemption for Kings who had lost all three of their AFC Challenge Cup fixtures last month under new coach Valeriu Tite, it was also some sort of redemption for Topu, who had coped considerable amount of flak for his performances with the Kings and the national team recently.

Topu, not at his usual best in recent times, was at fault for Bangladesh conceding the first goal in an eventual 2-1 win against Maldives at this venue a week ago.

When asked about his celebration, Topu said there was 'noise' from the galleries which he tried to shut with his celebration.



"It was a relief," Topu said after the match. "I admit I was at fault for that goal against Bangladesh. We were under some pressure as a team after going down in the first half. There was noise from the galleries, and my celebration was a reaction to that."

"This was a very important match for us. We had lost three matches in Bhutan

(AFC Challenge Cup). And we conceded early here. So we were under pressure. Plus Mohammadan are never an easy opponent. So I believe this win will boost our confidence in the upcoming tournaments," said Topu, who was adjudged the player of the match.

The inaugural match of the season which was named Bangladesh 2.0 Challenge

Cup to pay homage to the martyrs of July Movement, started with a minute's silence to July Martyrs as well as former national team skipper Zakaria Pintoo, who passed away recently.

The contest was a tale of two halves. Mohammadan, who had finished second to Kings in all three competitions last season, were clearly the better team all through the first half, and deservedly took a seventh-minute lead through a towering header from captain Souleymane Diabate.

But the Black and Whites sort of went into a shell in the second half as the Kings once again showed their bouncebackability with three wonderful goals.

Mohammadan coach Alfaz Ahmed did not admit that his team went defensive in the second half, instead said the throwing of flares and the subsequent hold up of play was the turning point of the match.

"It is never easy to win at this venue against the Bashundhara Kings. The ground, the atmosphere and their familiarity with it make them almost invincible here," the former national team striker, who has guided the Black and Whites through a resurgence in recent years, said.

"However, the break in play was the turning point for me. Our concentration and flow of play was broken because of it," Alfaz added.

The match was attended by Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud, who handed over the prizes to the teams. Later the prize money from the match, Tk 25 lac -- were donated to the July Martyrs Memorial Foundation.

## Youth hockey team eye WC qualification

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national U-21 hockey team will leave the country in the afternoon today for Muscat, Oman to take part in the Men's Junior Asia Cup with hopes of securing a place in the FIH Hockey Junior World Cup next year.

The 11th edition of the Junior Asia Cup is scheduled to take place in Oman from November 26 to December 4, with 10 teams, split into two groups, competing in the tournament. The top six teams will qualify for the 2025 Hockey Junior World Cup.

A total of four teams from Asia competed in the 16-team Junior World Cup last year. However, International Hockey Federation (FIH) this time decided to increase the number of participants to 24 in the upcoming Junior World Cup, allotting six spots for teams from Asia.

Bangladesh, placed along with Pakistan, Malaysia, Oman, and China in Pool B, entered into the Junior Asia Cup after emerging champions in the qualifiers with a 7-6 win over hosts Oman in the final in January.

Coach Moududur Rahman Shuvo has set his sights on beating Oman and China in the pool matches to brighten their chances.

## Potato price soars to Tk 80 per kg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The price of potatoes, harvested in the previous season, has increased by Tk 10 in a week and now are selling at Tk 80 a kg, which traders say is an all-time high.

The new potatoes, mostly imported, were being sold for Tk 120-140 at different kitchen markets in the capital yesterday, down by Tk 10-20 last week.

However, poor-quality potatoes were available at Tk 70-75 a kg at some kitchen markets.

According to traders, the wholesale price of potatoes has gone up by at least Tk 5 a kg in a week.

This correspondent found that potatoes cost between Tk 64-68 per kg at Kachukhet, Mirpur, and Karwan Bazar wholesale markets.

Traders blamed "inadequate" supply for the price hike.

According to the wholesalers of Karwan Bazar, the stock of potatoes in cold storage is nearing an end, causing a supply shortage.

They said, in an unusual trend this year, the price of potatoes remained

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Nations snub \$250b climate finance offer

**Poor countries say proposal 'totally unacceptable'; rich nations term it 'uncomfortably high'**

REUTERS, Baku

The COP29 climate summit ran into overtime yesterday after a draft deal that proposed developed nations take the lead in providing \$250 billion per year by 2035 to help poorer nations drew criticism from all sides.

World governments represented at the summit in the Azerbaijan capital Baku are tasked with agreeing a sweeping funding plan to tackle climate change, but the talks have been marked by division between



The two-week conference in the Caspian Sea city, due to end yesterday evening, spilled past its scheduled close as the wrangling continued, with expectations the \$250 billion target could yet rise.

"I'm so mad. It's ridiculous. Just ridiculous," said Juan Carlos Monterrey Gomez, the Special Representative for Climate Change for Panama, who called the proposed amount too low. "It feels that the developed world wants the planet to burn."

A European negotiator, meanwhile, told Reuters the figure in the draft deal released by the summit presidency was uncomfortably high and did not do enough to expand the number of countries contributing to the funding.

"No one is comfortable with the number, because it's high and (there is) next to nothing on increasing contributor base," the negotiator said.

Governments that would be expected to lead the financing include the European Union, Australia, the United States, Britain, Japan, Norway, Canada, New Zealand and Switzerland.

**'Shockingly insufficient'**  
Says climate adviser about COP29 draft deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the environment ministry, yesterday criticised the \$250 billion annual climate aid to poorer countries proposed at COP29 as "shockingly insufficient".

Wealthy nations yesterday offered the money to help poorer nations hit the hardest by global warming, but faced immediate calls from several groups of nations to give more as UN climate negotiations in Azerbaijan extended into overtime.

Rizwana also expressed her "profound" disappointment with the latest text on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, published by the COP29 presidency.

In a statement, she criticised the text as a "very disappointing package", noting its failure to meet the critical needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

"The proposed decision to allocate \$250 billion per year for all developing



SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## World's tallest, shortest women meet for tea

CNN ONLINE

The world's tallest woman and the world's shortest woman have met for afternoon tea in London to celebrate Guinness World Records Day.



The height difference between the two women might be a massive 152.36 centimeters (5 feet), but the pair reportedly got on famously.

"We do have things in common. We both love make-up, self-care, jewellery and doing our nails," said Gelgi in the statement. "It was difficult for us to make eye contact at times due to our height difference, but it was great," she added.

Amge added that she was "so happy" to meet her fellow record holder.

Gelgi, a web designer from Turkey, was confirmed as the tallest woman living in 2021. Her height is due to an extremely rare condition called Weaver syndrome.



Traders pack vegetables into polythene bags at Town Hall kitchen market in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday. Use of such bags continues unabated in the city despite a ban. The traders argue that the lack of alternatives forces them to rely on polythene bags.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## ELECTRIC RICKSHAW Drivers block Jurain level crossing

Several trains get delayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Battery-run rickshaw drivers yesterday blocked a railway line in the capital's Jurain area for around four hours, disrupting rail communications and traffic movement.

The operation of trains between Dhaka and Narayanganj, and between Dhaka, Khulna, and Rajshahi was halted from around 11:00am as the drivers were protesting the ban on electric rickshaws, in line with a High Court order.

During the blockade, a chase and counter-chase also took place between the drivers and police. The demonstrators were cleared of the area around 3:00pm.

Witnesses and police said about 400 drivers blocked the Jurain level crossing, demanding that the battery-run rickshaws be allowed to ply the city streets.

They said the protesters lowered the barriers at the crossing on

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

**UNYIELDING CRAFTSMAN**  
For half a century, Muhammad Janu has been preserving the fading art of stencil-making in Old Dhaka. In the past, craftsmen such as him were in high demand. However, over time, the advent of technology and the rising popularity of digitally printed banners and posters have put most of them out of business. Now, he is one of only two who cling to this craft on Nazimuddin Road, where business once boomed. Today, he earns Tk 500-Tk 800 a day, whereas even a decade ago, he would get Tk 2,000-Tk 3,000 worth of work orders per day. Despite these challenges, Muhammad Janu remains steadfast and continues with dedication. The myriad of stencils on display at his workshop is a testament to his artistic prowess.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Ballistic missile strike on Ukraine a warning to West

Says Kremlin; Moscow speeds up its advance in northeast Ukraine

AGENCIES

The Kremlin said yesterday that a strike on Ukraine using a newly-developed hypersonic ballistic missile was designed to warn the West that Moscow will respond to moves by the US and Britain to let Kyiv strike Russia with their missiles.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was speaking a day after President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had fired the new missile - the Oreshnik or Hazel Tree - at a Ukrainian military facility.

Putin's confirmation of hypersonic missile use contradicts Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's claim that Russia launched an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Peskov said Russia had not been obliged to warn the United States about the strike, but had informed the US 30 minutes before the launch anyway. Putin remained open to dialogue, Peskov said.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov said yesterday that Russian forces had accelerated their advance in the north-east of Ukraine and had ground down the Ukrainian army's best units there.

"This work we have done here now has crushed the best (Ukrainian) units. Now the advance has accelerated. We have derailed their entire 2025 campaign," said Belousov.

A Russian drone attack on the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy killed two people and injured 12 yesterday morning, regional authorities said.

➤ Russia claims it 'derailed' Kyiv's war plans

➤ Drone attack on Ukraine's Sumy region kills two

➤ Nato, Ukraine to meet over Russian missile strike

## Jamaat not in favour of banning AL Says its secy gen

UNB, Meherpur

Referring to the Awami League, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday said the party is not in favour of banning any political organisation, including its rivals.

Secretary General Professor Mia Golam Parwar, at a programme in Meherpur, reiterated that Jamaat believes in the democratic process and dialogue with all political parties to solve national issues.

Commenting on the issue of banning political organisations, Parwar said Jamaat was banned four days before August 5. However, the Awami League and Chhatra League couldn't survive even four days after that. Due to widespread public outrage, Sheikh Hasina and her family were forced to flee the country.

He also said which party will attend the next election will be determined by the people of the country.

"The people will decide whether Awami League can contest the elections," he said.

He said election in the country should be held at a reasonable time, but only after carrying out key reforms to create a congenial environment for free and fair polls.

Parwar also said that Sheikh

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## WI go slow after Tigers opt to field

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pacer Taskin Ahmed struck twice to give Bangladesh early momentum but opener Mikyle Louis held firm as hosts West Indies reached 116 for three at tea on the first day of the first Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua yesterday.

Taskin dismissed Windies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (4 off 38) and Keacy Carty (0 off 8) cheaply, limiting their opponents to 50 for two at lunch.

With no wicket in the opening hour, during which the West Indies made 23 without loss in 12 overs, it seemed like stand-in skipper Mehedi Hasan Miraz's decision to bowl first backfired for the visitors.

However, Taskin, who didn't feature in Bangladesh's last three Tests, struck in his first over after the drinks break as he trapped Brathwaite in front with a straight delivery to give the Tigers a much-needed breakthrough.

Brathwaite took a review after having a chat with his opening partner Louis but the umpire's original decision prevailed.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Lease land, grow your own VEGGIES, GRAINS

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

It all began with a surprise addition to lunch -- long bean mash.

The emerald-green pods from my rooftop garden were steamed in the rice pot alongside the cooking rice. The starch imparted a subtle sweetness to this otherwise bland, often overlooked vegetable. Spiced with chili, onion, and mustard oil, this earthy, humble dish opened my eyes to the deeper issues of farming aggression in our country.

The difference in taste and flavour between my chemical-free rooftop produce and store-bought vegetables was striking!

I realised how much we are deprived of proper nutrition when buying genetically modified or hybrid vegetables from local bazaars or vans.

Thus began my search for natural farming produce.

My quest took me to a remote village in Koutia village of Baliakhora union in Ghior upazila of Manikganj, where Delowar Jahan, farmer and coordinator of the Natural Agriculture Centre and Biodiversity Farm (NACBF), grows crops and vegetables using natural farming methods.

This unique venture of organic farming initiated by Delowar and his friends in 2004 was a safe food campaign. After years of tests and trials, they now encourage enthusiasts to lease out arable lands from the NACBF to grow their vegetables organically.

I joined this initiative by leasing a one-decimal plot (435.6 sq. ft.) and planting winter greens like turnips, peas, cauliflower, radishes, and tomatoes. Working under the scorching sun, I learned to sow seeds, tend crops, and appreciate the intricacies of organic farming. This experience also gave me a newfound respect for farmers, whose struggles I now understand more deeply.

As a result, I am now farming leasing a one-decimal plot (435.6 sq ft). I have made five beds in my tiny land and after weeding out the grass and tilling the soil, I have planted winter leafy greens and vegetables like turnips, peas, cauliflower, cabbage, radish, beetroots, tomatoes, etc.

"With this initiative of hands-on involvement of general city people, we have planted the notion in them of the need to re-establish and encourage natural farming. The idea of cultivating winter vegetables caught on like wildfire. This season we have 25 families leasing out one to four decimal lands," Delowar explains their trending scheme.

Working in the fields under the scorching sun for the first time in my life, I learned to sow seeds, care for the harvest, and appreciate the process of organic

farming. But I now see farmers in a whole different light as well. Many enthusiasts like me have started their farms by buying land in the village.

The Talk: Farmer to Farmer

Delowar is a promoter of folk ideology and traditional agriculture. He wants to live a meaningful life and grow safe, natural food. He demands the same from local farmers, to produce using only their primitive indigenous knowledge, and depending on natural resources and organic fertilisers. For him, farmers' cultural values and homegrown knowledge are more important when it comes to respecting nature.

Delowar and his like-minded group of communication researchers worked on the problems and crises plaguing our farming community and coaxed them to practice the native way of farming.

"Blending in with the local farmers and understanding their language and knowledge of primitive farming, their ways of working with nature, the soil,



weather, and calamities are of utmost importance. If we were to work with them and for them, it was ideal to talk our way in, instead of disregarding their present need for chemical farming and imposing our textbook knowledge. It might not have worked out," Delowar explains their strategy to start over the age-old practice of natural farming.

For ages, farmers cultivated this fertile Gangetic delta in an indigenous way. They knew when to sow grains that would survive rough monsoons and flash floods



posed by these methods.

"People have polluted the environment with harmful farming practices. Our job is to break this vicious circle. We want farmers to shift their focus to nature and environment-friendly eco farming, where production may be less, but quality is ensured," he continues.

Initially, Delowar started practising eco friendly agriculture in the villages of Manikganj, Tangail, and Jhenaidah as test runs, where they tried to create awareness among farmers about chemical farming.

"By taking a land lease on the bank of a small river in Manikganj, we began to produce crops without using chemical fertilisers and started to save the indigenous seeds and re-distribute them among villagers. We began by giving three days of intensive training to farmers and interested city people from 2012," he says.

By visiting the villages and speaking with the farmers, they realised that unless fair prices were ensured for their crops, poor farmers would not be interested in natural, poison-free farming.

So, they started working on changing the marketing system along

The farmers gradually resorted to farming using synthetic agrochemicals, pesticides, herbicides, and growth promoters to multiply their produce.

He says, "Hybridisation is farming tailored to environmental conditions with the capability of producing high-yielding crops. In this way, farmers create seeds from crossbreeding making agriculture more efficient and sustainable.

"But that is just half of the story. Aggressive farming has suppressed 1,200 years



of successful local agricultural knowledge. Now farmers are rooting for the hybrid way and believe that growing produce without chemicals is impossible," he says.

The state demands magnified production of crops to feed its population, and capitalist businesses thrive on this requirement. However, there is zero communication on the harmful side effect of chemical farming. There are no guidelines for managing the environmental and human health hazards



with crop production and launched the Natural Agriculture Marketing Centre in Salimullah Road, Mohammadpur, where they started selling the produce in 2014.

"Vegetables and fruits produced without the use of chemicals was a novel idea back in 2014. For the poor farmers to sustain their living costs, we encouraged them to cultivate organically in a small section of their farm to begin with. At present, the crops produced by the farmers of 15 districts are being sold through our marketing centres," he says. These crops include those produced through Jum cultivation.

They now have farms in Narayanganj, Jhalokathi, Jhenaidah, Khustia, Rajbari, Pabna, Natore, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Bogura, Tangail, and Sylhet.

The story of biodiversity farm

For the past six years, Delowar has been farming on 0.33 acres of leased land in Ghior Upazila. At least 60 farmers now work on his farm, which also has fish farming ponds with its shorelines adorned with fruit trees.

Locally, his flood-resistant homestead is known as "basher bari" and any villager would point you to the sprawling courtyard.

The complex sports mud huts (his living quarters), a mud-built training centre, a granary, and a two-storyed "bamboo machang" house for guests and visitors.

The cosy mud kitchen and open dining area are separated by a deep tubewell. This serene rural household always has food on the mud stove for impromptu visitors.

It was in this alfresco dining space I had my first taste of "adi dhan" or indigenous deep-water rice. The meal served in a terracotta beggar's bowl had khichuri made from bawaili digha rice grains, free-range chicken egg omelettes, and freshly picked coriander chutney. This was one of my most relished meals after working in the fields.

"We have collected 16 different local paddy seeds, which grow in deep water, from old farmers. We are currently harvesting these almost extinct varieties of grains called hizol digha, bawaili digha, lokhi digha, chamara, dhepo, dulai boron, chondon

binni, rajbhol, aamshail, and mofhushail this Aman rice season," he informs.

Aman is the winter rice season. The crops of this season are monsoon dependent as sowing is done in June-July and harvesting begins in November-December. This Aman harvest time is a celebration of the age-old farmers' ritual of Nobban -- nobo (new) and onno (rice) which literally means new rice.

Throughout the year they also harvest 20 variants of indigenous rice for mass production, consumption, sale, and growing a seed bank. According to a 20th-century survey, there were once 15000 adi dhan variants in both East and West Bengal.

This natural farming centre runs entirely on solar power. Most interestingly, Delowar has made a jhop (that translates to a bush in English) of small trees and ferns to house birds, bees, insects, snakes, and frogs which play an important role in protecting biodiversity.

Bangladesh is a slope basin: farmers knew what to reap.

Genetically modified food lacks the much-needed micronutrients like zinc, magnesium, iron, iodine, folate, vitamins B12 and A, and other minerals in grains. The overuse of chemical fertiliser compromises the soil fertility. It also contaminates the nearby brooks and ponds killing the aquatic life. It directly affects the health of farmers because they do not use any protective gear while spraying chemicals and fertilisers. They mostly work barefoot and without a mask.

"We are aware of the detrimental effects of chemical farming, yet we do not take any action against it. In the process, the farmer becomes the real victim. As he eyes maximum production, he ends up spending more on fertilisers and chemicals, putting his and his soil's and future generations' wellbeing on the line. We are here to just point these issues to them.

"In my opinion, the state's promotion of chemicals including fertilisers for enhanced production to feed its people is a scam game of profit and greed. In Bangladesh, almost 40 percent of food is wasted for miscellaneous reasons during the process of bringing the food from the field to the table," he says.

To transition back to natural farming, a chemical-affected land requires at least four years to regain its fertility. Therefore, we encourage farmers to start organic farming with small sections of their land. This approach allows them to sustain their family's living expenses while gradually expanding to larger plots as they gain confidence and experience, he explains.

The Natural Agriculture Research Centre has launched a nature-saving and safe agriculture movement. This initiative focuses on farmer-to-farmer education and sustainable production practices, and safeguards seed varieties. And the profit it makes is reinvested in research to expand its horizon.

Ultimately, living in harmony with nature is a meaningful life aspiration we all share -- yet that remains elusive for many.



or floods. These water-based grains thrived in summer rain and monsoon water.

Rural Bangladesh was once upon a time all about natural agriculture and farming. The farmers knew their land and crops.

They gradually shifted from indigenous farming methods to modern artificial practices as the state advocated for hybridisation to significantly boost crop yields, to meet the country's food demand and supply chain.

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The Natural Agriculture Research Centre has launched a nature-saving and safe agriculture movement. This initiative focuses on farmer-to-farmer education and sustainable production practices, and safeguards seed varieties. And the profit it makes is reinvested in research to expand its horizon.

Ultimately, living in harmony with nature is a meaningful life aspiration we all share -- yet that remains elusive for many.

Genetically modified food lacks the much-needed micronutrients like zinc, magnesium, iron, iodine, folate, vitamins B12 and A, and other minerals in grains. The overuse of chemical fertiliser compromises the soil fertility. It also contaminates the nearby brooks and ponds killing the aquatic life. It directly affects the health of farmers because they do not use any protective gear while spraying chemicals and fertilisers. They mostly work barefoot and without a mask.

"We are aware of the detrimental effects of chemical farming, yet we do not take any action against it. In the process, the farmer becomes the real victim. As he eyes maximum production, he ends up spending more on fertilisers and chemicals, putting his and his soil's and future generations' wellbeing on the line. We are here to just point these issues to them.

"In my opinion, the state's promotion of chemicals including fertilisers for enhanced production to feed its people is a scam game of profit and greed. In Bangladesh, almost 40 percent of food is wasted for miscellaneous reasons during the process of bringing the food from the field to the table," he says.

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ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

## FICTION

## At the birth of death

**The one who laughs keeps laughing. Sometimes it goes on and on, and sometimes she pauses to take a breath. Others don't join her. Her laugh doesn't sprinkle light like a diamond. It spreads all over the room but makes no sound; it hits the cruel wall and returns to her as a rock. And she smiles the same smile back and forth.**

MOJAFFOR HOSSAIN

One sits silently. Her eyes blink sometimes. Sometimes her lips tremble a little, or they don't tremble at all. A lizard climbs up her shoulder thinking she's a statue. It's only the memories that break the silence in her mind and body—memories of losing her father, mother, and brother, and her house, burning. There is no other recollection either before or after that. Only a few minutes of her 15-year past remain in her memory, and someone seems to play that nonstop on her mind.

One talks nonstop. She says whenever or whatever comes into her mind; sometimes she hurls the words from the tips of her lips before they have even reached her mind. Sometimes she picks up words that are not supposed to come to her. She says nothing about herself though. Not about people either. Only about monsoon, a few rivers, a couple of kittens, jam-jar fruits, a few sour berries. The sun shower, the evening star playing with dolls. In short, she brings up a new topic every day, forgets it and then comes up with another one the next day.

One cries, she keeps crying. She cries when

she is awake or asleep; when she sits or lies down. She cries when she speaks, eats, or laughs. It seems as if she lives not by breathing, but by crying.

The one who laughs keeps laughing. Sometimes it goes on and on, and sometimes she pauses to take a breath. Others don't join her. Her laugh doesn't sprinkle light like a diamond. It spreads all over the room but makes no sound; it hits the cruel wall and returns to her as a rock. And she smiles the same smile back and forth.

There is one who does not laugh or cry or speak; she does not sit at ease either. She looks anxious, restless. She fidgets relentlessly like a headless chicken. It seems as if someone put her in a fire or left her in the water without teaching her how to swim. Or someone forced her to walk on slippery ice. At times, it seems as if she is sleeping on a bed of broken glass or sitting surrounded by snakes and worms.

Their eyes are open. Their eyes are closed. Their legs are spread. There are blood clots on their legs, fresh blood, dry blood. Their legs are lifeless like wood, as heavy as stone. If they use all their strength, they can move only a little as if they are pushing tons of loads. They have no

strength left in their bodies. They wait in the camp—but what are they waiting for? They don't know themselves. Those who become pregnant are dragged outside and pinched to death. Or they will be killed by inches—by raping, beating, or starvation.

But what will happen after the war?

No one dares to ask the question. Not even to each other. If it peeks into someone's mind, others huddle in fear. Such is life here that death seems more kind and inviting.

Thus, by spreading their legs apart, they live in the midst of death and die in the midst of life.

*This story has been translated by Marzia Rahman.*

**Mojaffor Hossain** is a fiction writer and literary critic of contemporary Bangla literature. He has published seven anthologies of short stories from Dhaka and Kolkata.

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

## POETRY

## Of longings, of belongings

SNATA BASU

*Women and the earth have to tolerate a lot.*

—Kaajal (1965)

I heard it when my last light bulb cracked, the other night, blurring and retiring into invisible chemtrails, to a familiar pit stop of rage doting on me, turning inside me writhing, even, in anger, stilling against the salving cannonade of screaming girls by 14th street park posts. I saw them emerge first with flash lights, then the air dimmed on them. NO! They resisted, holding over each other—armed with flambeaus, armed with nothing, armed with bodies used to the touch of the yellow-bellied night thieves. They romance

with our wounds and come to collect names—she didn't have to be Nirbhaya, when she was scared to death.

I will not say I was made to bear through these fractures,

I will not keep in silence; in plaintive silence

that maims every enduring gut in my

incorporeality

seeping into the riot, seeping into the rot, aligning together like constellation discs before the paling blue of the night, like oysters spread open and hewn away from the dulling shells that once housed them safe. The pith of our survival despairs in contempt, one thin glow of memory each, cram full—cutting us belly up as we read the headlines of girls in boats, and girls in scraps and girls on the roofs in burlap sacks; Girls that teeth to split apart like tearing flesh from a vulture's cadaver. It's not their story, but they have bled too, It's not my story, but I am scathed too,

What do you know about longing for a small place

on this earth, of prosaic yearnings no quieter than what you have said too.

Have you ever belonged to nobody

swallowing beneath the night like a lion, blousing your vulnerability

out into the dark streets, bathing and

whispering

into a clean, untainted wind like a free bird?

Have you ever belonged at all, Have you ever?

**Snata Basu** is a writer based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her poetry has appeared on numerous literary platforms including The Opiate, Visual Verse: An Online Anthology of Art and Words and Small World City.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## CREATIVE NONFICTION

## Something smells fishy

K.M. AREFIN

The large green pond of Dhanmondi Lake was probably the first source of natural water that I had witnessed. It sheltered a huge number of people who have lived, breathed, and grown up beside this lake; the entire Dhanmondi area is intimately connected with its source of life. While half its neighbours lived in the mysticism of the lake, the other half was living in labour.

I was 5 years old when my family had shifted to Dhanmondi. A week after our relocation, I went to see Dhanmondi Lake with Abbu. Never having witnessed a lake or river before, my poor little urban soul was quite excited. As we were approaching Street 32, which was adjacent to the lake, my nose picked up a strange mossy scent.

Sensing something unfamiliar, my small fingers tightly clutched into my father's hand. But Abbu started roaming the lakeside with me and my microscopic brain took in the environment surrounding the lake. My four-foot body was left in wonder and the mysterious lake appeared to me with the ocean's might. My little eyes could not even see the end of the lake and suddenly, I started believing the stories of 'mechhabhoot' Dadi used to tell me. I thought, monsters like the mechhabhoot must be hiding under this olive lake.

Eventually, our mindless roaming, the cacophonous crowds of Dhanmondi Lake, and the spicy smell of chotpoti infused with the mossy scent became part of my

childhood memory.

After I graduated primary school, Apu brought me a small turtle and we named him Sobuj Mia. Rather quickly, Sobuj Mia became my best friend, though the friendship was quite one-sided. Running back from school, I used to pick him out of his bowl and place him on the table. He seemed perplexed, suddenly finding himself out of the jar. Angrily, he used to run non-stop left and right and bit anything he could with his toothless mouth. During my school days, that was just another one of my heartless entertainment schemes.

While I cherished every second with Sobuj Mia, he didn't seem to enjoy my companionship at all; it seemed he was happier on the days I was late from school. He became more solemn as days passed, and within weeks, I found Sobuj Mia becoming unplayful.

Like all brown parents, at first, I thought he was hungry. I gave him an abundance of food and tried to kill him by overfeeding. Still, I just could not get his attention. In my childish annoyance, I complained to Apu. She smirked and said that food was not the solution to all our problems.

"I think you should set him free. You are still not ready to have a pet, I guess," she said.

"Let him go! Where? Where will Sobuj Mia go?" I screamed in terror.

"Don't panic. He is suffering for his family. All of us do. You must let him go home."

"But he will die...and...and, what will I do without him?"

"I am not asking you to flush him down the

toilet. I suggest you free him in Dhanmondi Lake. He may swim back to his family. You must understand that we do not own Sobuj Mia."

"Okay," I replied in sheer pessimism.

A week later, I went with Apu to the Lake ghat, just beside Taqwa Masjid. With my right arm, I tightly held a plastic jar full of water, and inside, Sobuj Mia swam aimlessly. I opened the jar and took out Sobuj Mia for the last time. Slowly, I placed him in the olive water of the lake, and I could swear his face turned joyful

instantly; slowly, he began to swim in the "ocean" of my childhood. In minutes his dark green shell had become invisible in the olive water. He never even said goodbye.

Spring and

hand in hand and I never saw Sobuj Mia again. But as I grew up, my connection with the lake grew deeper and I developed an almost mystical link with the Tilapias and Ruis, and the plankton. The Shalik and Doel became my pals, while the Mahagoni and Mango trees were my hide-

outs on the days that I bunked school. Even after all this time, I liked to believe that Sobuj Mia finally swam across the lake, found his family, made friends with the Ruis and Tilapias, and like all other fairy tales, lived happily ever after. In this almost religious belief, I grew up in solace and serenity.

27 monsoons had passed since that time and countless raindrops had flown into the green waters

of the lake. In the endless cycle of the planet, my small fingers grew heavy and strong. In so many ways, they were also scarred and harsh like the rainless dry fields of summer. I grew busy and heavy; my life stuck in the mindless rotation of time. Now,

every evening after office, I ran along the lakeside with my swollen body, keeping a strict eye on the pedometer.

\*\*\*

On an unusual August evening, I was running around the lake when I smelled something fishy. The odour spread fast and my nose couldn't help but scrunch up. Over the hardcore metal song blaring in my ears, I

heard shouts that the fish were dead.

"Look! The lake is floating with dead tilapias and ruis. Someone poisoned the entire water bodies," the crowd stated in panic.

Street kids jumped inside the lake to collect the dead fish for their families and within minutes, the place turned into a snake-pit. The last light of dusk revealed the sparkle of a thousand glimmering silver bellies floating around the lake. It was the evening of the Fish Massacre of August and it left with a rotten fishy smell floating in the air.

The lean child inside me hopped a little and I hurriedly started to look for any floating dead turtles in the lake. But I saw only the dead fish—no sign of any turtle. As a rational adult, however, I knew that Sobuj Mia was probably dead long before the massacre. Even if he had lived all this time, he probably died from the poison that killed thousands of his friends. Yet, the child inside me was adamant. The way my brain deceived me for the last 27 monsoons, the inner child tricked me again into believing that Sobuj Mia somehow survived all the same—he was alive and well, gathering his friends and family to lead a revolution against the Fish Massacre of August in Dhanmondi Lake.

**K.M. Arefin** is a passionate writer and poet. He is a faculty member at Bangladesh University of Professionals and is a researcher of Postcolonial Bengali Literature. Reach him at khanmohammadarefin@gmail.com.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

# FILM CERTIFICATION BOARD

## Ambitious plans, lingering challenge

**Nawshaba also suggested requiring producers to provide a clearance certificate confirming full payment to all cast and crew members, which is a standard practice globally.**

SHARMIN JOYA

The newly formed Bangladesh Film Certification Board, established just two months ago, has already sparked critical debate. Central to the discussion are concerns about its ability to implement the Bangladesh Film Certification Act, 2023, and the specific guidelines it follows in decision making. While its formation is seen as a progressive step, a lack of clarity in its operational framework hampers its work.

In an effort to understand the challenges and tentative guidelines, The Daily Star reached out to board members and stakeholders. Their insights highlight the complexities of transitioning from the long-standing censor board to a modern certification body.

**From censorship to certification: A historical context**

The announcement of the Film Certification Board on September 22 this year marked a significant milestone in Bangladesh's cinematic landscape. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting replaced the Bangladesh Film Censor Board with the Bangladesh Film

of the Film Certification Board, confirmed the development, stating, "The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has already formed a technical committee, which will be responsible for reviewing the draft we have submitted."

Actress Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, board member and animal rights advocate, emphasised the need for stricter regulations on using animals in films. "Many remain unaware of the silent suffering endured by animals during productions," she explained. "Amidst the chaos on set, who notices the fear, pain, or thirst of a waiting animal? Unlike actors, they cannot call for help."

She proposed mandatory on-set veterinary professionals to certify the welfare of animals before granting a film clearance. If implemented, this regulation would be a landmark in the country's film certification system.

Nawshaba also suggested requiring producers to provide a clearance certificate confirming full payment to all cast and crew members, which is a standard practice globally. "Our industry struggles with payment issues," she noted. "Requiring a No Objection Certificate

tools for censorship," Khijir warned.

Another one is Section 14 which empowers district magistrates to halt a film's release if deemed contrary to the public interest. Khijir argued that such provisions are incompatible with a professional film industry aspiring to meet international standards.

Another issue raised by Khijir concerns collaborative projects. He emphasised the need for equitable collaboration in joint productions, ensuring equal involvement of technicians and cast from both participating countries to ensure fairness and mutual benefit.

**A ray of hope amidst challenges**

Despite the concerns and criticisms, some stakeholders remain optimistic. Film critic Dr Zakir Hossain Raju, who is also a board member, highlighted the shift's potential. "The censor board deemed all cleared films suitable for all ages. The certification board introduces age-specific ratings, vital for protecting younger audiences," he explained.

While acknowledging the limitations of the Film Certification Act, 2023, Dr Raju expressed hope that these issues would be addressed promptly. "We have requested the concerned ministries to implement the guidelines as soon as possible," he said.

**Legal and political considerations**

The implementation of new guidelines for the Film Certification Board also raises governance-related concerns. Stakeholders worry that the absence of an elected government could stall progress.

However, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, who is also a human rights activist, clarified the legal process.

"The standard procedure requires at least a two-thirds majority in voting to pass an amendment in the parliament. Once passed, it requires the president's approval after being gazetted. If the president fails to respond within 15 days, the law would be enacted by default. In the absence of a parliament, the president can enact laws through direct approval," he stated, suggesting that the procedure would require even less time in the current situation and political uncertainties should not hinder its implementation.

The establishment of the Film Certification Board is a turning point in the country's cinematic history. Its efforts to adopt international best practices and address longstanding issues—such as animal welfare, fair payment practices, and environmental awareness—are commendable. However, structural reforms and the removal of restrictive provisions in the Film Certification Act, 2023, are critical for success.

A comparative analysis of past censorship laws and the current act—such as among Censorship of Films Act, 1963, Censorship of Films Act, 1977, and the Bangladesh Film Certification Act, 2023—reveals striking similarities, with some new provisions being even more restrictive. The analysis indicates that the majority of the sections in the certification act pertain to censorship and bear no relevance to certification or rating.

In essence, censorship hinders cinema's capacity to portray society authentically. Therefore, it's crucial to establish a robust system that classifies films by age appropriateness while ensuring artistic freedom. With clear guidelines, reduced bureaucratic influence, and effective legal mechanisms, the certification board has the potential to transform Bangladesh's film industry and elevate it to international standards.

Certification Board, reshaping decades-old regulatory practices.

Tracing the history of film censorship in Bangladesh reveals a long journey—starting with the East Bengal of Film Censors (1952) during the pre-independence era, evolving into the Central Board of Film Censors (1963), and eventually becoming the Bangladesh Film Censor Board (1972) post-independence. Now, the newly formed Bangladesh Film Certification Board aims to modernise film regulation and align it with international standards.

Since its formation, the board has cleared over 10 films, including *Voyal*, the country's first A grade film. While this milestone represents progress in age-based classification, the journey toward the system's refinement remains a work in progress.

**Tentative guidelines and challenges**

The certification board has been striving to establish a comprehensive framework. However, a board member, who wishes to remain anonymous, revealed that the draft guidelines submitted to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting remain undisclosed even to board members. This opacity fosters uncertainty regarding the standards the board is expected to uphold.

Meanwhile, Md Abdul Jalil, vice chairman

(NOC) from technicians and cast would ensure accountability."

She also highlighted the need to enhance disclaimers regarding smoking and drinking in films. She pointed to practices in neighbouring countries, where films begin with advertisements highlighting the dangers of tobacco and alcohol. "These disclaimers should also appear during intermissions and at the film's conclusion," she added.

Another proposed rule addresses the environmental impact of filmmaking, specifically the use of plastic on set and during the production process and the actress stressed the importance of raising awareness about it.

**Structural concerns and criticisms**

Director Khijir Hayat Khan, another Board member, expressed dissatisfaction with the board's composition, particularly the 50 percent representation of government officials. "This ratio should be reduced to 20 percent to ensure impartial decision-making," he asserted.

Khijir criticised certain sections of the Bangladesh Film Certification Act, 2023, as restrictive and outdated. For instance, Section 12 allows the board to reject a film based on subjective criteria like incoherent storytelling or poor cinematography.

"These subjective criteria can easily become

tools for censorship," Khijir warned.

Another one is Section 14 which empowers district magistrates to halt a film's release if deemed contrary to the public interest. Khijir argued that such provisions are incompatible with a professional film industry aspiring to meet international standards.

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# From gravel beds to tourists' treasure

Tourism transforms Panchagarh's economy

**Panchagarh has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into a prime destination for tourism and trade, attracting travellers from Bangladesh and beyond.**

A couple of decades ago, Panchagarh, the northernmost district of Bangladesh, was primarily known for its abundance of gravel beds. With thousands of acres of land devoted to digging for the resource, the backbone of the region's rural economy was based on those natural resources.

However, memories of those days are now found largely in the history books. Panchagarh has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into a prime destination for tourism and trade, attracting travellers from Bangladesh and beyond.

Historically, the region did not appeal to visitors due to limited infrastructure and long travel times from the capital of Dhaka.

However, significant developments in the past



While the mountain is about 160 kilometres away, its snow-capped splendour can be seen from various spots in Panchagarh between October and November, when the skies are clear.

Every year, thousands of tourists gather along the banks of the Mahananda River in Tetulia, one of the best vantage points, to catch this stunning view.

Beyond the mountain views, Panchagarh is now known for another unique sight: tulip fields.

The favourable climate has allowed farmers to cultivate these vibrant flowers, a rarity in Bangladesh.

Since the first tulips were harvested in 2022, blooming fields have drawn visitors from across the country, marking yet another achievement in the district's growing tourism appeal.

Tea cultivation is also a major part of the local economy.

Panchagarh is the only place in Bangladesh with flatland tea gardens, a feat made possible by the region's elevation from sea level. Tea estates began developing in the 90s, and the district now boasts over 50 estates spanning approximately 10,000 acres.

The tea industry here not only generates revenue but has also bolstered Panchagarh's identity as a producer of world-class, organic teas.

However, although the focus has largely shifted, stone and sand extraction remain a

part of the economy, supporting the livelihoods of around 50,000 people.

Sand collected from the rivers, especially fine sand from Bhajanpur, is in high demand for construction projects nationwide, providing a steady source of income for local families.

The region's pride in its humble roots and affinity for geology also shine through in the fact that Panchagarh is home to Bangladesh's only rock museum, which houses ancient rocks as well as artefacts.

For history buffs, the region offers numerous old sites, including the Mirza Shah Mosque, Golodhama Temple, and the ruins of Vitorgarh, an ancient fort city built around the 5th century.

Panchagarh's transformation has been supported by the expansion of accommodations and transport options.

With direct bus services from Dhaka, a journey now takes around 8-10 hours.

The addition of trains, along with the government and private sector's interest in hospitality, has significantly improved lodging facilities in the area.

Entrepreneurs and NGOs have opened new hotels, restaurants, and homestays, creating more options for tourists and allowing them to experience local cuisine and the

rural landscape.

The district's economic and cultural transformation has made it more than just a viewing point for Kanchenjunga.

It has become a rich blend of scenic beauty, historical significance, and economic opportunity.

As Prof Tuhin Wadud, head of the Bangla department at Begum Rokeya University, noted: "Panchagarh's blend of history, culture, and natural beauty is a hidden gem that has yet to reach its full potential."

He emphasised the need for a comprehensive master plan from the government to develop the region's tourism and tea sectors, making them even more attractive to international visitors.

Panchagarh's journey from a hub of stone extraction to a centre of tourism and trade highlights its potential for growth and development. This shift is not only a testament to the district's resilience but also a promising vision for the future, where nature, culture, and commerce come together to shape a vibrant local economy, he added.

Atiqur Rahman had come to visit Tetulia from Khulna and enjoy the views of Kanchenjunga with his friends.

In what was his third visit in the past 5 years, he finally found success and caught a glimpse of the peak.

He pointed out several reasons for the district's appeal, chiefly a mix of natural and historical attractions.

Besides, Kanchenjunga, the hills of Darjeeling and Siliguri are also visible, he said.

**Traditional scenic spots losing out to modern parks**

**KONGKON KARMAKER**

Stirring archaeological sites and the wonders of nature across the eight districts in the Rangpur division attracted holidaymakers in droves in the past, but a lack of contemporary infrastructure at those spots has made those days a distant memory.

With decrepit facilities in such destinations, the hospitality industry flourished under the private sector in the eight districts under Rangpur division.

Nowadays, a majority of tourists are found lazing away at amusement parks, most offering modern residential facilities built in a planned way.

Rides for children, as well as video games and even planetarium-like experiences, offer plenty of entertainment for visitors, especially given the alternative.

For instance, things are almost the opposite in Ramsagar, one of the biggest tourist destinations just 15 minutes from Dinajpur town.

There is only one guesthouse on its premises and that too only has around 5 rooms. But even these are not accessible to the public as they are usually booked by VIPs.

Besides, the existing structures, including sheds built to protect visitors from sunlight inside the Ramsagar area, have become dilapidated.

Another major factor that keeps tourists at bay is the lack of safety and security.

Prodip Chandra, a local of the Ramsagar area, said, "People thronged to the lake during the winter, taking buses from various districts to enjoy picnics. Sometimes, the number of buses in a single day exceeded 300."

"It was also helpful for local business, but those days are now in the past."

Locals said that not a single attraction had been built for children over the past two decades, adding that although the waterbody and surrounding highlands still make for an attractive spot, a lack of other facilities discourages visitors.

The Kantajew Temple in Kharol upazila of Dinajpur is in a similarly rough state.

Although the 15,000-plus terracotta works installed on the walls of the 18th-century temple remain a sight to behold, the condition of the building is far from perfect.

Only eight years ago, the iconic landmark underwent renovation and site development works. Yet, due to a lack of maintenance, many of the old problems have resurfaced.

The scenario is no different at the Singra Forest in the Birganj upazila.

The Sal forest, an asset of the Dinajpur Forest Department, was among the most attractive destinations for visitors in winter but now fails to draw tourists.

"In the 90s, it was the most desirable picnic spot in the northern part of the country," said Abdus Sattar, a resident of the Alannagar area in Rangpur.

Most of the establishments are under the supervision of either the Forest Department or the Bangladesh Archaeological Department. Besides, a few are under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner's offices and the Water Development Board in their respective districts.

These state-owned sites can also be a huge source of revenue, but given the current state of affairs, that seems like little more than a pipe dream.



three decades, from improved road networks to enhanced connectivity, have reshaped the district's fortunes.

Encircled by India on three sides, Panchagarh's location along the lower foothills of the Himalayas offers unique weather and stunning sights, only contributing to its growing appeal.

The region's unique topography offers breathtaking mountain views, while winter's earlier arrival in the district has also made it a seasonal draw for tourists.

In the cool season, temperatures drop as low as 5 degrees Celsius, a welcome relief from the heat in most other parts of the nation.

In terms of natural beauty, one of the most captivating attractions is the view of Mount Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest peak.



Since the first tulips were harvested in 2022, blooming fields have drawn visitors from across the country, marking yet another achievement in the district's growing tourism appeal.

Tea cultivation is also a major part of the local economy.

Panchagarh is the only place in Bangladesh with flatland tea gardens, a feat made possible by the region's elevation from sea level.

Tea estates began developing in the 90s, and the district now boasts over 50 estates spanning approximately 10,000 acres.

The tea industry here not only generates revenue but has also bolstered Panchagarh's identity as a producer of world-class, organic teas.

However, although the focus has largely shifted, stone and sand extraction remain a



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN