

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 7, 2024

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXIV No. 316

AGRAHAYAN 22, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUS SANI 4, 1446 HIJRI

16 PAGES: TK 15.00

JOYDEBPUR-ISHWARDI DOUBLE LINE Project cost to shoot up by 80pc

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The cost of the Joydebpur-Ishwardi rail line expansion project may increase to Tk 26,000 crore, over 80 percent higher than the original estimate, mainly due to long delay in starting work after China decided not to fund the project.

In November 2018, the Tk 14,250 crore project was taken up to turn the 165km Joydebpur-Ishwardi line, vital for Dhaka's link with the country's north-west, into a dual-gauge double line.

But work on the ground could not be started after China in March 2021 declined to fund it, more than five years after it agreed to finance it.

Japan, following Bangladeshi's request, agreed to finance the project and reviewed its feasibility study. Japanese consultants estimated that it would now take Tk 25,949 crore to build the line, which is Tk 11,698.59 crore or 82 percent more than the original estimate.

ORIGINAL COST	REASONS FOR COST ESCALATION
TK 14,250.61CR	Jump in costs of materials
DEADLINE	Depreciation of taka against dollar
DECEMBER 2024	Use of Japanese sophisticated technology
PROPOSED COST	Inclusion of a new railway station
TK 25,949.2CR	
DEADLINE	
JUNE 2030	



China had pulled out four months after the Prime Minister's Office ordered reducing the cost of the project by Tk 1,495 (10.49 percent) crore, saying the project cost was inflated.

Now, the project would cost 82 percent more and its deadline would be June 2030.

Because of the delay, Bangabandhu Railway Bridge over the Jamuna, which cost Tk 16,781 crore and is expected to be opened in January, will remain underutilised for at least the next five years, as the double-line bridge will be fed by a single line.

Railways Ministry Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, however, said, "This [line expansion cost] is an estimate by Japan and has not been finalised yet."

"We will discuss the cost with them," he told The Daily Star on November 30.

Fouzul said when Japan International Cooperation Agency officials met him, he appreciated Japan's support

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Members of Naripokkho light candles at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday evening to commemorate those who went missing during the Liberation War. This event, titled "Let the Darkness Fade in the Remembrance of Light", is organised every December to pay tribute to their memory.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

REGIONAL RESISTANCE

PART 5

During the 1971 Liberation War, dozens of regional forces emerged across Bangladesh. Just as the freedom fighters trained under the sub-sectors and the Bengal Regiment fought valiantly, these regional forces also put up tough resistance against the Pakistan army. In the month of victory, we bring you the stories of some of these heroic forces.

Halim Bahini of Manikganj

AHMAD ISTIAK

Through swift mobilisation, strategic brilliance, and devastating attacks against the Pakistani army, the Halim Bahini of Manikganj distinguished itself as one of the most effective regional forces that fought in the Liberation War.

Immediately after the March 25 massacre, Abdul Halim Chowdhury, a retired captain of the Pakistan Army, wasted no time and began forming the force, training recruits, and overseeing the overall war effort in the region.

The force's comprehensive recruitment campaign allowed it to eventually grow to about 2,000 freedom fighters strong.

According to the book "Bangladesher Swadhinota Juddho - Sector Bhittik Itihas (Sector-2)", the Halim

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Star INTERVIEW

Govt must improve law and order fast Says president of AmCham

SOHEL PARVEZ

Improving law and order has become imperative in recovering Bangladesh's global image that took a beating for domestic politics over the past decade, said a top chamber leader.

"Due to political instability and corruption, there has been significant damage to Bangladesh's reputation globally -- we need to work on rebuilding trust with international partners," Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Factors such as law and order and political instability discourage foreign investors.

To attract foreign direct investment, demonstrable evidence of an improving business climate and

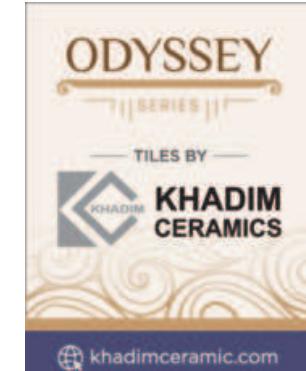


Syed Ershad Ahmed

49 Indian media outlets spread fake reports
Finds Rumor Scanner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 49 Indian media outlets spread at least 13 false reports about Bangladesh in



around four months after the fall of the Awami League government, according to Rumor Scanner.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

baby

Dove Now in
Bangladesh



+100%
skin-natural
nutrients



prebiotic
moisturizer



Shop from: unimart

minibazar

Agora

U SHOP

SHAJGOJ

SALUTING THE BRAVEHEARTS
36 days of JULY

PHOTO EXHIBITION
DECEMBER 1-7, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM
Venue: The Daily Star Centre

STORYTELLING WEEK
Time: 3:00 PM-4:30 PM

WRITE TO PROTEST
Writers and poets on their
experience
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

Young Tigers crush Pakistan

FROM PAGE 12
unbeaten on 61 off 42 balls with seven fours and three sixes to guide his to the target in just 22.1 overs.

Skipper Tamim credited his pacers for their sensational bowling performance against their Pakistani counterparts.

"Today [yesterday] everything was in our favour. All the bowlers did really well, especially Emon, Maruf and others as well. That's why we could dismiss them for 117 [116] runs," Tamim said in a video message after the match.

Meanwhile, pacer Emon was elated with his performance and happy to contribute to the team's winning cause.

"The wicket was really good, it was a pace-friendly wicket. I bowled in good areas and got success. I am very excited and happy to get the player-of-the-match award. My performance was very vital for the team," said Emon, who also said he wants to bowl in good areas in Sunday's final against India, who beat Sri Lanka by the same margin in the day's other semifinal in Sharjah.

Meanwhile, Tamim was hopeful of retaining their title, saying, "Inshallah, we will try to give our best in the final."

Last year, Bangladesh beat hosts UAE by 195 runs to clinch their maiden U-19 Asia Cup title.

Project cost to shoot up by 80pc

FROM PAGE 1
for development projects "but I told them that the projects have to be cost-effective."

He said a Japanese delegation is expected to visit Bangladesh later this month, and they would discuss the railway project, particularly its cost in detail.

WHY TRAINS TAKE SO LONG

Trains between the capital and the north-west region being late has become all too common over the last few years.

Dhaka and those regions are linked by the single-line section between Joydebpur and Ishwardi.

Twenty-two trains can smoothly run every day using the single line, but the line is being used by around 40 trains. As a result, most of the trains, except a few, have to wait at nearby stations to make way for oncoming trains, officials said.

This is made worse by the fact that the distance from one station to another between Joydebpur and Bangabandhu Bridge (East) Station is relatively long, causing each train to wait even longer.

PROJECT DELAY

To fix this, the government in November 2018 took up the Tk 14,250.61 crore project to turn Joydebpur-Ishwardi section into a dual gauge double line.

This was among the projects for which Dhaka and Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during Chinese President Xi Jinping's Dhaka visit in October 2016.

China was supposed to provide Tk 8,756.75 crore for the line expansion and BR completed negotiation with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation for implementing the project.

Between March 2019 and January 2021, the railways ministry wrote to the Chinese government several times requesting the signing of a deal.

But, China in March 2021 declined to finance the project citing several reasons, including "a lack of in-depth preliminary work and insufficient feasibility study".

Sources claimed that China's backtracking may have something to do with geo-politics. Bangladesh's rail communication, especially the operation of freight trains with India, would have got a boost once the double-line project was completed. The PMO's directive to cut costs also played a role, they said.

Amid allegations of inflated project cost, the PMO in October 2020 formed

Halim Bahini of Manikganj

FROM PAGE 1

Bahini was spread over an area of about 800 sq km, which covered 22 upazilas, including Sadar, Singair, Ghor, Shibaloy, Daulatpur, and Harirampur in Manikganj; Dohar, Nawabganj, Dhamrai, and Savar in Dhaka; and Sreenagar in Munshiganj.

In June this year, The Daily Star spoke to over 50 freedom fighters of Halim Bahini during a visit to five upazilas of Manikganj and two upazilas of Dhaka.

ARMS AND TRAINING

On March 27, a group of freedom fighters led by Abdul Halim raided the Manikganj treasury, looting a number of rifles and a large cache of ammunition.

Speaking to this newspaper, freedom fighter Awlad Hossain said later that day, a meeting was held in Shibaloy, chaired by Abdur Rouf Khan, director of operations, where it was decided to set up training centres in every union of the upazila. The initial training began in Manikganj town using weapons looted from the treasury.

On April 8, when Pakistani troops entered Manikganj town, Abdul Halim divided his arsenal and dispatched 26 rifles and 200 bullets to arm the unit to be led by Matin Chowdhury, associate director (general), in Azimgarh.

From the first week of April, training of freedom fighters commenced in Manikganj's Sadar, Shibaloy, Ghor, Harirampur, and Singair under the supervision of the Halim Bahini.

In the second week of April, the Halim Bahini established its headquarters on the banks of the Padma in Harirampur.

FIRST OF BATTLES

In mid-May, the Pakistani army, aided by Razakars, set up a camp in Harina, Harirampur, triggering a series of battles between the Halim Bahini and the Pakistani forces across Manikganj.

According to the book, the Halim Bahini engaged in over 40 battles against the Pakistani forces, inflicting heavy casualties on Pakistani soldiers and Razakars.

One of the most notable battles fought by the Halim Bahini against the Pakistanis was the Charigaon Launch Ghat operation in Singair on June 17.

On June 17, freedom fighters, led by unit commander Tabarak Hossain, ambushed two Pakistani launches at Charigaon, located on the banks of the Kaliganga River in Singair.

Yakub Hossain, a freedom fighter who participated in the battle, said,

SCAN
THE QR
CODE TO
WATCH
VIDEO



The two launches, unaware of our ambush, were easy targets. Our attack was swift and decisive, resulting in the deaths of around a dozen soldiers on board.

"We then looted the launches of their arms and ammunition before sinking them in the river."

The Halim Bahini also attacked multiple enemy vessels on the Dhaleshwari and Padma rivers.

In September, a group of eight freedom fighters, led by Abdul Halim, attacked a Pakistani launch on the Padma near Harirampur, resulting in the deaths of 11 Pakistani soldiers and 3 Razakars.

The freedom fighters later recovered a significant amount of arms and ammunition from the launch, said Khandaker Abdul Baten, who took part in the attack.

HALIM'S INDIA TRIP

As the series of battles against the Pakistani army continued, the Halim Bahini's ammunition supply dwindled.

In September, Abdul Halim travelled to Melaghar in Tripura, India, to seek additional arms support. During his visit, he met with Sector 2 Commander Major Khaleed Mosharraf, according to the book.

He would go on to stay in India for two months and return in November with additional fighters.

In his absence, Abdul Matin, associate director, Abdur Rouf, director of operations, and Awlad Hossain, additional director, conducted the operations.

TURNING POINT

October marked a turning point, with the Halim Bahini dealing heavy blows on the Pakistani forces in various parts of Manikganj.

On October 13, the Halim Bahini launched a fierce attack on the Pakistani army's Harina camp in Harirampur. Freedom fighters, along with Baloch soldiers who deserted the Pakistan army, successfully captured the camp.

Awlad Hossain said, "Four Baloch soldiers, enraged at the Pakistani army's transgressions, reached out to

City

us to join our cause.

"On October 13, we encircled the Pakistani camp and launched an attack. The assault resulted in the deaths of 53 Pakistani soldiers."

Freedom fighter Mahfuzur Rahman Khan was seriously injured in a grenade attack by the Pakistanis during the

ambush.

Acting on a tip-off that a group of Pakistani soldiers on 10-12 boats was approaching their camp at Golaidanga School, Tabarak Hossain quickly led the freedom fighters in setting an ambush.

Freedom fighter Lokman Hossain said, "There were only 30 of us. Armed with few weapons, we forced the Pakistani soldiers into the muddy waters. We scattered their force, which was more than twice our size. The bravery displayed by our forces was broadcast by Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra."

Among other battles fought by Halim Bahini are the battle of Baira village in July, the battle of Machain Bazar on July 18, the ambush at Maluchi village on August 9, the battle of Narchi and Kustagram in Ghor on November 28, and the battle of Daskandi village in Shibalay on December 8.

RETURN OF FORCE CHIEF

The book reads that after spending two months in India procuring weapons, Captain Halim was appointed regional commander of 22 upazilas across Dhaka, Manikganj, and Munshiganj in November.

In the third week of November, Captain Halim returned to Bangladesh with a sizable force and weaponry. The freedom fighters under his command fought valiantly on the battlefield until the ultimate victory.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

According to its members, the Halim Bahini was organised into three units. Rouf Khan led the forces operating in the Harirampur-Shibaloy-Ghor-Daulatpur area. Tabarak Hossain Ludu commanded the forces in the Singair-Manikganj-Saturia and Savar areas. Sirajuddin led the unit operating in the Nawabganj-Dohar-Keraniganj region of Dhaka.

Initially, the Halim Bahini consisted of four companies. However, after the martyrdom of freedom fighter Mahfuz in October, a fifth company, named the Mahfuz Company, was formed in his honour. The company commanders were Abdur Razzak (Alpha Company), Abul Bashar (Bravo Company), Mainuddin Chowdhury/Sipahi Abdul Hakim (Charlie Company), Abul Khalek (Delta Company), and Rezaur Rahman (Mahfuz Company).

The Halim Bahini's achievements during the Liberation War were made possible by the support of the local people. "We couldn't have done anything without the help of the local villagers," said Awlad Hossain. "We relied on donations from affluent community members to fund our operations. Moreover, the villagers provided us with food and shelter all the time."

Translated and edited from Bangla by Subrata Roy.



Force chief Abdul Halim Chy (1928-1987) PHOTO: COLLECTED



File photo of Patgram Anath Bandhu High School in Harirampur, Manikganj from 1975. Next to the school was the Harina camp, where Halim Bahini freedom fighters trained in 1971. PHOTO: TOYEBUL AZHAR



Recent photo of the Padma river in Harirampur, Manikganj. On the banks of this river, Halim Bahini set up its headquarters in the second week of April in 1971. PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

battle. He died on October 15.

The most devastating defeat inflicted on the Pakistani army by Halim Bahini was the Battle of Golaidanga in Singair on October 28, when 82 Pakistani soldiers were killed

The Pakistani soldiers entered the school grounds and found it to be void of freedom fighters. As they began heading back to their boats, the freedom fighters, hiding in plain sight, swooped on them.

confirmed they remain operational, as verified by the information ministry and the Cable Operators Association.

Another claim suggested that the Bangladesh Air Force, with Chinese support, planned Asia's second largest airbase near the so-called Chicken Neck, aka the Siliguri Corridor. However, Rumor Scanner identified this news as false. Lalmonirhat airport, which has been unused for over six decades, saw no such activities as claimed by the report.

The fact-finding organisation identified a viral video claiming to show a temple attack in Bangladesh as fake. The video was taken in India during idol immersion.

Reports of anti-India slogans following a bus accident in Brahmanbaria were also identified as rumours by the Rumor Scanner.

UK travel advisories were falsely portrayed as Bangladesh-specific, whereas they applied to multiple countries, including India, with no heightened warnings for most of Bangladesh.

49 Indian media outlets spread fake reports

FROM PAGE 1

In a report titled "Spread of Fake News About Bangladesh in Indian Media Outlets" on its website yesterday, the Bangladeshi fact-checking organisation revealed the findings on the false news published between August 12 and December 5.

Republic Bangla topped the list of Indian media outlets with most false reports about Bangladesh by broadcasting five rumours. The Hindustan Times, Zee News, and Live Mint each spread three false reports. Meanwhile, Republic, India Today, ABP Anand, and Aaj Tak each broadcast two false reports. The remaining 41 media outlets spread one false report each.

The debunked claims included: a fake letter from Sheikh Hasina after her resignation; a video of a Muslim man falsely claimed as Hindu during a search for his son; false reports about Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammed Yunus's health and location; baseless claims of withdrawal of bans on militant groups; arms smuggling via a ship from Pakistan; misrepresentation of lawyer Saiful Islam's murder; and

As per the review report, the cost of the project will be Tk 25,949.2 crore, of which JICA will lend Tk 19,103 crore and the government will bear the rest, show documents.

BR sources attribute three major reasons behind such a big escalation of project cost.

When the project was approved in 2019, the cost was estimated following the rate schedule of 2013 but the new estimate was made following the rate schedule of 2023. Rate schedule is the rate or charge for a particular classification of product or service, a BR official said.

Besides, when the project was approved, the dollar-taka exchange rate was around Tk 85 but now it is around Tk 120.

"These two are the major reasons behind the cost escalation," the official said, wishing anonymity.

Moreover, an additional station will be built under the project, which will increase cost, the official said.

BR sources said the railways ministry was informed about the cost escalation and the ministry asked officials concerned to try to lower the cost while drawing the detailed design.

BR has already taken up a Tk 146 crore project to prepare a detailed design for the project.

Cost of the project may change a little after the detailed design, for which appointment of consultants is now at the final stage, sources said, adding that the design work and preparation of the bidding documents could take 15 months.

The sources said a JICA delegation is expected in Dhaka later this month and, if everything goes well, a loan deal is expected in March, they added.

Amid allegations of inflated project cost, the PMO in October 2020 formed

a committee to review negotiated contract prices related to three rail projects, to be implemented with Chinese loans under government-to-government initiative.

Under such initiative, the loan-providing country selects the contractor from its country without any competitive bidding.

Following the committee's report, the PMO in November 2020 directed BR to slash Tk 14,250.61 crore from the project's contract price.

After China pulled out of the project, Japanese authorities reviewed the feasibility study. A JICA delegation also held a meeting with railway authorities about different aspects of the project in October this year.

As per the review report, the cost of the project will be Tk 25,949.2 crore, of which JICA will lend Tk 19,103 crore and the government will bear the rest, show documents.

Institutions like the Public Service Commission and the Election Commission and the regulatory agencies such as the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the police were compromised.

"This led to widespread disorder in the country and everything became politicised."

Institutions like the Public Service Commission and the Election Commission and the regulatory agencies such as the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the police were compromised.

"What I think is that our institutions were severely damaged in those years."

Institutions like the Public Service Commission and the Election Commission and the regulatory agencies such as the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the police were compromised.

CJ calls for justice as universal right

UNB, Dhaka



"Whether in the courtroom, the classroom, or the community, let us remain committed to building a society where justice is not a privilege but a universal right," he said.

He made this call while addressing the Rajshahi University Law Alumni Association (RULAA) Council held at the Shaheed Shafiqur Rahman Auditorium of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

"Together, we have the power to transform challenges into opportunities and to pave the way for a future defined by equity and integrity," he said.

Pointing at the alumni, he said they carry the responsibility of upholding the ideals of justice, equality, and human rights. Their work as legal professionals, educators, and advocates plays a pivotal role in shaping a society rooted in fairness and the rule of law.

"It is imperative that we continue to use our

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Indian propaganda won't cause harm to us' Says Sakhawat

BSS, Benapole



Adviser to the interim government for shipping, labour and employment Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said Indian propaganda will not cause any harm to Bangladesh.

"We have everything including medical facilities and huge market. So, we will not suffer from any Indian propaganda against us," he said while visiting cargo yard and immigration at the customs and land port station in Benapole.

Mentioning a huge number of Bangladeshis visit India for various purposes which India benefited economically, Sakhawat said, "If India is reluctant to provide these facilities, then Bangladeshis will not go there."

The adviser said, "There is no such divide among us. People of all faiths are living here with equal status."

"We are historically equal irrespective of all creeds and casts," he also said.

Once the lifelines of Dhaka, the city's canals are now mere shadows of their former selves—clogged with pollution, suffocated by encroachment, and neglected due to flawed urban planning. In this seven-part series, The Daily Star explores the current condition of the capital's canals, botched restoration attempts, and how the sorry state of these waterways is exacerbating the city's waterlogging woes. Together, these stories reveal what it will take to bring Dhaka's dying canals back to life. Here is the third part of the series:

The breach in Dhaka's FLOOD DEFENSES

Water retention ponds shrinking due to urban sprawl

HELEMUL ALAM

Designed to rescue Dhaka from floods, water retention ponds are now in need of rescue themselves. These basins, meant for stormwater management, are shrinking rapidly due to encroachments, unplanned urbanisation, and government neglect.

Just like the capital's canals, these lifelines are now being choked, one illegal grab at a time.

WHAT ARE RETENTION PONDS?

Retention ponds serve as reservoirs for stormwater runoff, preventing flooding and downstream erosion while maintaining water quality. By acting as buffers, they ensure that urban areas can cope with heavy rainfall, particularly during the monsoons.

Retention ponds act like giant bowls that collect and store excess rainwater during downpours, preventing nearby areas from flooding.

Imagine this: during a storm, instead of rainwater overwhelming streets and homes, these ponds hold the water temporarily.



Over time, they release it slowly into nearby rivers or canals, reducing the risk of sudden flooding.

For example, in Dhaka's Mirpur area, stormwater from nearby roads, homes, and markets flows into the Kalyanpur retention pond through Kalyanpur main canal and its branch canals, which is then pumped out to the Buriganga river, said a Wasa official. If this pond didn't exist, the water would pool on the streets, causing severe waterlogging.

Retention ponds also improve water quality by filtering out pollutants from the runoff before it reaches rivers.

"Retention ponds are indispensable for reducing Dhaka's flood vulnerability. Protecting them is critical for the city's sustainability," said Akter Mahmud, a member of the advisory council of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners.

WESTERN RETENTION PONDS

The western part of Dhaka is home to three key pump stations – Kalyanpur, Goran Chatbari, and Dholai Khal – each designed with designated retention ponds. However, over the years, these ponds have been encroached upon, drastically reducing their capacity.

At Dholai Khal, a box culvert constructed in the 1990s by the Dhaka city corporation destroyed the retention area. The pumping station, which requires at least 105 acres for optimal operation, now has just 3.5 acres.



Illegal structures now stand at the Kalyanpur retention pond area. Retention ponds like these are essential to prevent waterlogging, but unchecked urbanisation, jurisdictional overlaps, and negligence threaten their survival, endangering Dhaka's resilience against floods.

There are three pumps at the Dholai Khal station, each with a capacity of 7.4 cubic metres per second. They are struggling to manage the growing burden.

At Kalyanpur, the situation is equally dire.

A study by the Japan International Cooperation Agency in 1990 recommended a pumping station with a 20 cumec capacity and 514 acres of retention pond area. However, in over three decades, the government has managed to acquire only 53.004 acres, far short of the requirement.

Despite acquiring only 53.004 acres, the DNCC has designated 178.82 acres as retention space. This includes 98.35 acres owned by BADC, 6.36 acres by WDB, 11.40 acres of government khash land, and 62.71 acres belonging to Dhaka Wasa. A substantial part of this land is under encroachment.

The BADC recently attempted to fill 11 acres of retention land for a four-storey tissue culture building, violating the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010.

"What could have been done for Tk 50 crore then would now require an exponentially higher budget."

When asked about BADC filling up 11 acres of land, Md Mahmudul Hasan, administrator of Dhaka North City Corporation, said BADC still owns significantly more land than what has been filled. BADC uses the land as seed beds.

Rajuk has designated the area as a waterbody in the Detailed Area Plan.

Meanwhile, Goran Chatbari's retention pond, once 619 acres, has also lost 40 acres to the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry to implement one of their projects. Although additional pumps have been installed to compensate, the loss of retention area has

strained the system.

EASTERN RETENTION PONDS

Dhaka's eastern retention ponds are also struggling to survive.

Two critical areas – one at the confluence of the Gobindopur and Bouthar canals at the Uttar Khan and Dakkhin Khan areas on the bank of Balu River, and another at the ending points of the Dumini and Norai canals at Nagdarpara and Kayetpara – are also being filled up in the name of housing projects.

"These areas are earmarked in the Drainage Master Plan, Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP), and Detailed Area Plan (DAP)," said Akter Mahmud.

Without intervention, the government risks losing these crucial areas, jeopardising future drainage projects, he said.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

Encroachment, negligence, and a lack of coordinated government action are at the heart of the crisis, according to experts.

Overlapping jurisdictions between Wasa, DNCC, and the Ministry of Agriculture have resulted in a lack of accountability and enforcement, they added.

"The government must take immediate steps to protect these areas," said Iqbal Habib, an urban planner. "Canals and retention ponds are integral to the city's drainage system. Any disruption could lead to a total collapse."

Despite the grim outlook, there are, however, some promising initiatives.

DNCC Chief Engineer Brig Gen Md Moin Uddin revealed plans for a hydro-eco park at Kalyanpur. The project envisions a retention pond surrounded by trees to increase water carrying capacity while maintaining ecological balance.

However, a large portion of BADC's land is essential for this project.

Meanwhile, administrator Mahmudul Hasan said both the DNCC and LGRD Ministry support the project, but an inter-ministerial decision is required for the land.

An escape from 'hell'

25-year-old tells story of being confined by traffickers in Myanmar

SHARIFUL ISLAM

What began as a promising opportunity towards a better life turned into a harrowing ordeal for Junaid Hossain Parvez Ariyan, 25, of Narsingdi's Belabo.



He fell prey to an international human trafficking syndicate and was forced to work for an online scam gang operating in Myanmar's Karen State.

Ariyan was among approximately 300 individuals, including women, held captive in at least 10 confinement centres near the Thai-Myanmar border. Thirteen of these victims are Bangladeshi.

The captives are subjected to work under inhumane conditions and tortures.

On October 18, Ariyan managed to flee from one of those confinement centres, which are guarded by armed members of Karen insurgent groups and criminal gangs. He jumped into a river, surviving an arduous trek through hills and forests.

He returned home on November 14 and shared his harrowing experiences with this newspaper recently.

DREAM TURNS INTO NIGHTMARE

Ariyan had previously been working in Dubai's hospitality sector.

In August, he was enticed by the promise of a lucrative computer operator job in Thailand, offering a salary of US \$1,200-\$1,500 -- twice his salary in Dubai.

Convinced by a broker, Noman, a Dubai expatriate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION 'Inqilab Mancha' places 6 demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inqilab Mancha, a Dhaka University-based organisation, yesterday submitted a memorandum to the High Commission of India with six demands.

The Indian government must ensure the safety, security, and protection of Bangladesh's diplomatic missions, the officials, and their family members and properties, said the organisation.

It also said the Indian government must ensure that no Bangladeshis are killed at the border in the future, and must prosecute the perpetrators of the previous border killings through transparent and credible investigations.

The memorandum signed by its spokesman, Sharif Osman Hadi, said, "Discrimination against

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

LAWYER MURDER IN CTG Two accused put on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday placed two suspects on remand in connection with the murder of Saiful Islam Alif, a lawyer, who was hacked to death during a clash in the court premises on November 26.

The duo Chandan Das and Ripon Das were produced before the court amid tight security measures.

Chattogram Metropolitan Magistrate Kazi Shariful Islam passed the order after Kotwali police produced them before the court.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



3 more die of dengue, 186 patients get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three dengue patients died while 186 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

All the deaths were reported from Dhaka North City Corporation areas.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, with the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths rose to 517 while the number of cases rose to 95,070.

Currently, 2,354 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in different hospitals, of which 1,401 are from outside Dhaka. A total of 92,199 patients have been released till yesterday.



With jubilation in her eyes, a girl looks at butterflies with her father at the daylong Butterfly Fair at Jahangirnagar University yesterday. The Zahir Raihan Auditorium of the university turned into a vibrant hub during the fair, showcasing hundreds of live butterflies and captivating photographs.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A celebration of colours Butterfly Fair held at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Zahir Raihan Auditorium at Jahangirnagar University transformed into a vibrant hub of activity yesterday during the daylong Butterfly Fair, showcasing hundreds of live butterflies and captivating photographs.

The colourful fluttering of butterflies, combined with engaging activities, delighted visitors of all ages. "I've never seen so many butterflies together before. They're of so many colours -- red, blue, purple, yellow -- and absolutely stunning," said five-year-old Faiyad Ahmed Aditya from Savar.

Approximately 35 butterfly species, including Striped Pierrot, Blue Tiger, and Painted Lady, were displayed near the auditorium, Butterfly Park, and Botanical Garden.

The event, organised by JU's Zoology Department with Cute as the title sponsor, carried the theme "Urle Akashe Projapiti, Prokriti Pay Notun Got" (If butterflies fly in the sky, nature gets rejuvenated). Its goal was to

promote conservation and raise awareness about nature.

"In 2013, JU hosted 110 butterfly species. However, urban development has caused habitat loss, reducing the number to just 70 species," shared Prof Monwar Hossain, the fair's convener.

The Butterfly Award 2024 went to Sabuj Chakma, founder of Plantation for Nature, while Sabbir Ahmed of Jagannath University received the Young Enthusiast Award 2024.

Inaugurating the fair, JU Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan emphasised butterflies' role in preserving biodiversity, urging everyone to foster harmony in nature and society.

"Let today's Butterfly Fair inspire a commitment to protecting diversity," he said.

The fair also featured puppetry by Kaktarua Puppet Theatre, art competitions, quizzes, kite flying, photography, debates, and a butterfly identification contest, making it a memorable celebration for nature enthusiasts.

CWasa to install 55 deep tubewells despite falling groundwater levels

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWasa) has sent a proposal to the Planning Commission to install 55 deep tube wells in Chattogram city in a bid to tackle the water crisis during the dry season.

The state agency has made the move at a time when port city's groundwater level has been receding alarmingly, alongside intrusion of salt water during dry season, posing a significant threat to water security of the country's second largest city.

According to a study published in 2021, titled "Modeling of groundwater level changes in an urban area", the port city's groundwater level receded by 4.75 metres per year from 2009 to 2016.

The study, conducted by Dr Aysha Akter, a professor of Civil Engineering Department at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet), found extraction of water without any planning a prime cause of groundwater depletion.

CWasa supplies around 45 46 crore litres of water, most of it collected from surface sources, to consumers daily, except during the dry season.

Of this, around 41 crore litres

of water are supplied after being collected from Halda and Karnaphuli rivers, according to CWasa sources.

As salty sea water enters into Karnaphuli and Halda rivers during the dry season due to the decrease in water flow from upstream, the port city faces an extreme water shortage every year, causing suffering to city residents.

Now, the CWasa is extracting water through at least 45 deep tubewells, contributing to lowering groundwater levels of Chattogram.

"The CWasa's water production decreases 1.5 to 2 crore litres per day in the dry season. So, we have been forced to take the decision to install more deep tubewells to address the water crisis," said Md Rezaul Ahsan Chowdhury, project director and an executive engineer of CWasa.

As per project documents, CWasa will install these tubewells, each of 16-inch diameter, in Kalurghat area at an estimated cost of Tk 80 crore.

Asked why the initiative is being taken despite the depletion of groundwater level, Maksud Alam, chief engineer of CWasa, said, "We have no option except installing deep tubewells to ensure water supply during the dry season."

He, however, claimed that these tubewells will be set up for an interim period to tackle the crisis.

Experts said the new initiative will

put further deplete Chattogram's groundwater level.

"The CWasa took an unscientific approach to solving the water crisis. Instead, they could have increased the production capacity of its existing plants, or by constructing new treatment plants in areas without salinity problem," said Dr Sudip Kumar Pal, a professor of Cuet's Civil Engineering Department, who conducted several studies on groundwater depletion in Chattogram.

Meanwhile, residents of rural areas under 15 upazilas in Chattogram have been facing an acute water crisis as tubewells in many areas can no longer extract groundwater and are left dysfunctional.

Syed Nur, a resident of Hathazari upazila, installed a tubewell with 200 feet of depth in 2019. However, within just two years, it stopped working.

"The tubewell can't extract any water as the water level receded," she said.

According to a recent report of the Department of Public Health Engineering, the groundwater table has been declining by two-five metres yearly.

Of the total 1,00,423 tubewells installed by DPHE in Chattogram district, only 76,368 are currently functional.

CJ calls for justice as universal

FROM PAGE 3

knowledge, influence, and resources to champion the causes of the marginalised, strengthen the legal framework, and promote access to justice for all," he said.

Pointing at the Supreme Court lawyers, the Chief Justice said they also act as bridges between the judiciary and the people as their role extends beyond the courtroom.

"You educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities, empowering them to engage with the legal system. Your work ensures that the law is not an abstract concept but a living promise of fairness and equality for all," said the Chief Justice.

Refaat Ahmed said when he took the oath as the 25th Chief Justice of Bangladesh, he was acutely aware of the immense responsibility placed upon his shoulders. "This role is not merely a position of leadership, but

a solemn trust bestowed by the people of this nation to uphold fairness, equity, and ensure access to justice for all, irrespective of their status or circumstances," he said.

"From the very moment of my appointment, I recognised the urgency of addressing the challenges that have long impeded the full realisation of our judiciary's potential," he said.

"To this end, on September 21, I unveiled a comprehensive roadmap for judicial reform. This initiative is a cornerstone of my vision to strengthen our judiciary and its capacity to serve the people with integrity and efficiency," said the Chief Justice.

"I have declared and initiated the process of creating a separate Secretariat for the Judiciary, a pivotal measure to ensure the judiciary's administrative autonomy," he said.

Alongside this, he has

proposed the formation of a Judicial Appointment Council to institutionalise transparency and meritocracy in the appointment process of apex court judges, as well as Posting and Transfer Guidelines for District Judiciaries, aimed at fostering consistency and fairness in judicial postings.

"These proposals have been formally submitted to the government for necessary action, marking a significant step toward the complete institutional separation of the judiciary from the executive branch," he said.

Moreover, in reinforcing the judiciary's independence from the legislative branch, they have restored and strengthened the Supreme Judicial Council following the disposal of the 16th Amendment review case, he went on.

RULAA convenor Barrister Bodruddoza Badal presided over the

function moderated by its member secretary Kamal Ziaul Islam Babu.

Inqilab Mancha

FROM PAGE 3

the indigenous tribal populations of Manipur must be stopped. The Indian government should seek interventions from the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) of the United Nations to resolve the intensifying conflicts in Manipur."

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Gulshan Zone) Rakib Hassan told The Daily Star that an organisation under the banner of Inqilab Mancha gathered near the office of the Indian High Commission at Gulshan in Dhaka around 4:30pm.

Later on, three of the leaders and activists of the organisation went inside the office and handed over the memorandum. The event took place peacefully, ADC Rakib Hassan added.

from Feni, and recruited after an online interview with a Chinese recruiter, Aryan and four of his Bangladeshi roommates left for Thailand on August 12, hoping for a better life.

Upon arriving in Bangkok, they were taken to Mae Sot, a Thai town near the Myanmar border.

The six-hour drive ended abruptly when they were transferred into pickup vans, escorted by armed men, and driven through hilly roads and dense forests.

"For the first time we realised we have made a grave mistake," Aryan said.

Then the group was made to cross the Moei River on a boat, and they reached Karen, a region plagued with insurgency.

The victims were taken to a compound operated by Chinese syndicates. Their mobile phones were confiscated, and they were coerced at gunpoint to sign contracts obligating them to generate US \$200,000 each through online scams within 18 months, or face prolonged

servitude.

The captives were forced to work 17 hours per day.

Their task was to create fake social media IDs using cellphone numbers of different countries and befriend targets worldwide, posing as attractive women, to scam them.

Upon arriving in Bangkok, they were taken to Mae Sot, a Thai town near the Myanmar border. The six-hour drive ended abruptly when they were transferred into pickup vans, escorted by armed men, and driven through hilly roads and dense forests.

"For the first time we realised we have made a grave mistake," Aryan said.

Then the group was made to cross the Moei River on a boat, and they reached Karen, a region plagued with insurgency.

The victims were taken to a compound operated by Chinese syndicates. Their mobile phones were confiscated, and they were coerced at gunpoint to sign contracts obligating them to generate US \$200,000 each through online scams within 18 months, or face prolonged

families and relatives. They sought the government's help but to no avail.

"Seeing no light at the end of the tunnel, I got frustrated and attempted to commit suicide several times," Aryan said in tears.

A DARING ESCAPE

On October 18, while escorting a Pakistani victim to a clinic near the Moei River, he saw an opportunity to escape.

Aryan said he alone generated US \$25,000 before his escape.

Each of the captives is given a target to befriend 80 targets a day. Failing to meet quotas resulted in brutal punishments.

"We were beaten, subjected to electric shocks, and burnt with hot frying pans. Some women endured additional horrific treatment, such as being forced to stand for hours with heavy water drums on their shoulders," Aryan said.

He said at one point he gained the confidence of a Chinese boss and got his mobile phone back and secretly informed their terrible conditions to

home with the assistance of the Thai government, NGOs, and the Bangladesh Embassy.

He urged the government to take action to rescue other Bangladeshi victims still trapped in those centres.

OTHER VICTIMS SEEK GOVT INTERVENTION

Another victim, Mehedi Hasan Shanto, managed to call his sister around a month ago from one of those centres and requested to contact the government to rescue him.

Sonia Akhter Kona, his sister, said they contacted foreign and expatriate welfare ministries requesting to rescue Shanto and others.

Meanwhile, amid the increasing number of such incidents, the expatriates' welfare ministry has issued warnings against travelling to Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

The circular highlighted how individuals and organisations lure Bangladeshis with false promises of high-paying jobs, only to trap them in scam centres.

RU medical centre brings no benefit

FROM PAGE 5

centre are largely limited to primary treatments only, said officials.

Students also complained that they have not been getting proper medicines from the medical centre. The medicines available at the centre are of low quality.

Each RU student has to pay Tk 100 yearly as a health-related fee, which generates a substantial revenue for the medical centre. However, its officials claimed to have three drafts of their budget still pending with the RU administration.

On-duty doctors are often unable to provide proper medicines and other facilities to the students due to insufficient budget deficit, the officials added.

"Lack of manpower is a big obstacle for us. Whenever we approached the

university administration in this regard, they only gave us assurances, but made no visible effort to resolve the issue," said Mafruha Siddiqua Lipi, chief medical officer at the centre.

Referring to the November 24 notice, Lipi said, "We are somehow managing to cover the morning shift with the number of doctors we have, but it is not possible to run the afternoon shift."

"Currently, each doctor has to attend hundreds of patients daily. Recruitment of more manpower is desperately needed to provide services properly,"

she added. Contacted, RU Vice-Chancellor Saleh Hasan Naqib said they are working to resolve the issues pertaining to the medical centre.

"We have arranged to appoint an Ophthalmologist on an urgent basis. Steps are on regarding the other issues. There has been some delay in recruitment over transparency and scrutiny in the process. All the problems will be resolved by January," he added.

RU Pro VC Mohammad Mainuddin, however, could not specify any deadline to resolve the issues.

Flat For Sale
6 UN Road Baridhara Diplomatic Area
Size-4381sft., 4 Bed, 2 Car Park
Keep & Quiet Locations
01844600353 01891782762

NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 1511 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF:
Grameen Knitwear Ltd. —Versus— Petitioner.

The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & FirmsRespondents.
Please take notice that an application under Section 151 read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 for condonation of delay in filing of the Return of allotment of shares dated 24.07.2010 of Grameen Knitwear Ltd. and to relieve from the liability to pay fine has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon hearing his Lordship Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to admit the application on 27.11.2024. Any person interested in the matter may appear before the Hon'ble Court on the date of hearing either personally or through duly appointed Advocate.

(Chowdhury Tanzim Karim)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
C. T. Karim & Partners, Suite No. 7D-1, Paramount Heights (7th Floor), 65/2/1 Box Culvert Road, Purana Paltan, Dhaka - 1000, Bangladesh. Phone: 01710-641779

মুক্তি বিজ্ঞান
বাংলাদেশ নোবাহিনী, খুলনা

০১৮৯৮-০৯৮৩৬০

পরিবহন কার্জের বিজ্ঞান

নথি নথি

US State Dept targeting India: BJP

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has accused the State Department and "deep state" elements in the US of trying to destabilise India in conjunction with a group of investigative journalists and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi.

The accusation comes as a surprise as New Delhi and Washington have forged a strong relationship in the last two decades and both have vowed to further strengthen ties despite some differences and irritants.

Gandhi's Congress party used the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)'s articles that "singularly focused" on the Adani Group and its alleged closeness to the government to undermine Modi, the ruling party said on Thursday.

Group chair Gautam Adani and seven others were indicted last month in the US for being part of a \$265 billion scheme to bribe Indian officials - allegations the group has termed "baseless".

OCCRP's articles have also accused state sponsored hackers in India of

US 'deep state' elements, media group, George Soros, Rahul Gandhi working together: BJP

using Israeli-made Pegasus spyware to target government critics.

The government has previously denied both allegations.

The BJP has previously accused Gandhi, the OCCRP and 92-year-old billionaire financier-philanthropist George Soros of attacking Modi.

On Thursday, it cited a French media report that said that OCCRP was funded by the US Agency for International Development and "other deep state figures" like Soros.

"The Deep State had a clear objective to destabilise India by targeting Prime Minister Modi," the BJP said in a series of messages on X.

"It has always been the US State Department behind this agenda... OCCRP has served as a media tool for carrying out a deep state agenda," it said. Sambit Patra, a BJP national spokesperson and lawmaker, repeated the accusations at an official media briefing by the party on Thursday.

"A French investigative media group...has revealed that... 50 percent of OCCRP's funding comes directly from the US State Department," Patra said.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

As the alleged smugglers attacked the BSF troops, the Indian border guards first charged stun grenades and later fired three to four rounds of bullets, the press release said, citing the BSF sources.

A Bangladeshi was killed in the gunfire, and the BGB later learnt from locals that the deceased was Anwar.

The BGB also fired warning shots after hearing the sound of gunfire, the press release added.

The Bangladeshi border force strongly condemned the killing in a protest note handed to the BSF at a flag meeting, said Lt Col Sheikh Md Badruddoza, commander of Nilphamari 56 BGB Battalion.

Locals found the body at the Mominpara border around 7:30am and informed the BGB about the matter.

On information, police went to the spot and recovered the body, said SM Masud Pervez, officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Sadar Police Station.

A deep injury mark was found on the deceased's collarbone, the OC said.

OC Masud also said the body would be handed over to the family today after a post mortem.

Anwar's brother Arif Hossain filed a murder case at the police station against unidentified individuals over the incident.

Won't tolerate

FROM PAGE 12

The Jamaat chief also touched on the issue of the Pilkhana killings, where 57 military personnel lost their lives.

He demanded a fair investigation into the killings, pointing out that "no trial has yet been held" for those responsible. He called for a thorough investigation into the incident.

Jamaat leader Abu Taher Mohammad Masum, Assistant Secretary General Abul Hasanat Mohammad Abdul Halim, and Central Executive Committee members Mohammad Abdur Rob and Mohammad Mobarak Hossain were also present at the event chaired by Kazi Din Mohammad, ameer of Cumilla City Jamaat.



Palestinians wait in a queue to receive food outside a distribution centre in Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip yesterday, amid the ongoing Israeli offensive in the enclave.

PHOTO: AFP

Goal of offensive is to overthrow Assad

Says Syria rebel leader; thousands flee Homs as rebels advance further south; Jordan closes border crossing

AGENCIES

Rebel forces pressing a lightning offensive in Syria aim to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad's rule, their Islamists leader said in an interview published yesterday.

After wresting other key cities from government control, the Islamist-led rebels were at the gates of Syria's Homs, a war monitor said, though the defence ministry denied claims it had withdrawn its troops.

In little over a week, the offensive has seen Syria's second city Aleppo and strategically located Hama fall from Assad's control, for the first time since the civil war began in 2011.

Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) rebel alliance, said the goal of the offensive was to end Assad's rule, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, thousands of people fled Homs overnight and into yesterday morning, a war monitoring group and residents said, as rebel forces sought to push their lightning offensive against government forces further south.



The head of the Syrian faction leading the sweeping assault told CNN that his group - a former Al-Qaeda affiliate now known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - aimed to "build Syria" and bring Syrian refugees back home from Lebanon and Europe.

Iran will send missiles, drones and more advisers to Syria, a senior Iranian official said yesterday. Russia's embassy in Syria has urged Russian nationals to leave the country on commercial flights.

Jordan has closed its border crossing with Syria, the kingdom's interior minister said.

Hezbollah sent a small number of "supervising forces" from Lebanon to Syria overnight to help prevent anti-government fighters from seizing the strategic city of Homs, two senior Lebanese security sources told Reuters.

In another alarming development for Assad, the head of the US-backed Syrian Kurdish force said the radical Islamic State group, which ran a reign of terror in large swathes of Iraq and Syria until it was defeated by a US-led coalition in 2017, had now taken control of some areas in eastern Syria.

Billionaires' wealth more than doubles in 10 yrs: UBS

AFP, Zurich

Billionaires have seen their combined wealth shoot up 121 percent over the past decade to \$14 trillion, Swiss bank UBS said Thursday.

Switzerland's biggest bank said the number of dollar billionaires increased from 1,757 to 2,682 over past 10 years.

The 10th edition of UBS's annual Billionaire Ambitions report found that billionaires have comfortably outperformed global equity markets over the past decade.

The report documents "the growth and investment of great wealth, as well as how it's being preserved for future generations and used to have a positive effect on society", said Benjamin Cavalli, head of strategic clients at UBS global wealth management.

Indian foreign secy

FROM PAGE 12
minorities in Bangladesh. Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal held the weekly media briefing in New Delhi that the Indian Foreign Secretary will travel to Bangladesh on December 9 for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) with his counterpart.



Vikram Misri

position that his [Das] legal rights will be respected and he will be allowed to exercise those rights and he will be given a fair and transparent trial."

The visit by the Indian foreign secretary was agreed on at a meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain

on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 23.

The Jaishankar Hossain interaction was the first since Hasina stepped down in the face of widespread protests and the caretaker administration led by Yunus came to power on August 8.

Ducsu election likely by next February

FROM PAGE 12

challenges are."

Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha, DU pro VC (admin), said that forming the committee, initiating discussions, and addressing administrative and logistical procedures naturally took them some time.

"Since this process has already begun, and they [committee] have also prepared their plan for consultations, we can hope that they will provide us with concrete recommendations within a reasonable time," she told this newspaper.

"Based on the recommendations, it will become easier for us to hold the election and carry out other related tasks. Accordingly, an approximate deadline for the polls has been set," she added.

With the university authorities preparing for the Ducsu polls, student organisations gave mixed reactions to the plans.

During a meeting on Wednesday, leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and 29 other student organisations demanded elections to Ducsu and student unions at other universities and colleges across the country by late January or early February.

Resist communal forces in your country

FROM PAGE 12
of attacks on minority communities happen repeatedly."

The signatories say that they never equate the Indian people with the Indian government.

"We know that the people of India are also fighting against 'Hindutva' forces and communalism. We [Bangladeshis] fought for a long time against the 'fascist' Awami League regime and brought it down."

When the Bangladeshi people fought against tyranny in July and August, the people of India took to the streets in solidarity. For a long time, people on both sides of the border stood in solidarity with each other.

When the AL was in power, homes of Hindu people were attacked, properties grabbed, temples desecrated, and people were injured and killed. But after

"We have reached an agreement that elections to student councils at all universities and colleges, including Ducsu, should be held by the last week of January or the first week of February," Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, told reporters after the meeting.

"For over a decade, campuses were dominated by Chhatra League through a type of authoritarian political culture. This created a sense of fear among a generation about student politics. Also, debates have surfaced across educational institutions since August 5 about whether to allow student politics and in what form," Hasnat said.

He added that the student leaders agreed to address the negative aspects of past politics to establish non-partisan, student council-based politics on campuses, ensuring representation of students.

However, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the pro-BNP student body, opined that elections to Ducsu and students' unions at other educational institutions should not be held hastily.

Nasir Uddin Nasir, general secretary of the JCD central committee, said, "Student council elections should be held on all campuses, but not hastily. Student organisations should work on

the charter mandates supreme power to the university VC, who can make any decision at will, which is an undemocratic practice. This must be changed before the polls," said Rafikuzzaman Farid, coordinator of the Jote.

DU VC is the ex-officio president of Ducsu.

which is a right for everyone. However, it is astonishing how swiftly the Indian Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement in his favour."

On the day he appeared in court, a chaotic situation ensued, leading to the murder of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif. Thanks to the collective efforts of the people of this country, no major unpleasant incident occurred in the wake of that event.

Signatories to the statement include Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Salimullah Khan, Prof Sayeed Ferdous, Prof Swadhin Sen, Prof Gitiara Nasreen, Prof Kamrul Hasan Mamun, Prof Tuhi Wadud, Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua, writer and journalist Altaf Parvez, writer Rahnuma Ahmed, musician Shayan, central member of Jatiya Nogorik Committee Pritom Das, and Associate Professor Samina Luthfa.



NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

Center of Excellence in Higher Education

25th Convocation || 7 December, 2024



PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
DHAKA

Message

On the auspicious occasion of the 25th Convocation of North South University (NSU), I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the graduating students, their parents, faculties and university authority for their hard work, dedication and efforts.

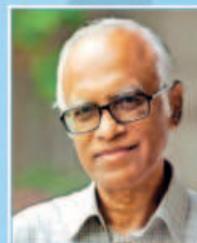
Education is the most important element for building a knowledge-based, equitable and just society. It plays a pivotal role in building up knowledge and ideals among the youth who represents the future of a country. Keeping that in mind, present government has to undertake various measures to ensure quality at every level of education. Universities also have a crucial responsibility in imparting quality education, and nurturing future leaders imbued with patriotism, integrity, and ethical values. I hope NSU will continue their efforts to promote quality education, research and innovation in the process of preparing the students to face the evolving challenges of the millennium.

Convocation marks a unique milestone in the lives of students, recognizing their achievements and the dedication of their alma mater. I hope the graduates would apply their acquired knowledge for the betterment and prosperity of the masses. I wish them a bright and successful future.

I wish the 25th convocation of NSU a grand success.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Mohammed Shahabuddin



Adviser
Ministry of Education and Planning
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

On the occasion of 25th Convocation of North South University (NSU), I offer my warmest congratulations to the graduates. I also congratulate faculties, officials, guardians and others in this occasion.

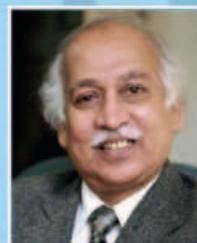
Like much of the world, Bangladesh stands at the crossroads of profound economic, social, and technological transformations. As graduates of one of the country's most prestigious institutions, NSU students are uniquely positioned to drive progress, foster sustainable development, and lead in areas where new ideas and solutions are needed.

After the student-peoples uprising in August this year, the interim government led by Professor Muhammad Yunus is working relentlessly to maintain discipline in the education sector. We have appointed vice-chancellors in public universities by judging their academic excellence and quality of leadership. We are trying to enrich textbooks and curriculum aimed at improving the quality of school education, to equip students with real-world skills. We have taken other steps in the education sector to develop human resources aligned to the needs of our socio-economic development.

The students have a crucial role in fostering a respectful and conducive learning environment. I urge all stakeholders to help maintaining the integrity of educational institutions and thereby benefit the broader community.

I wish the 25th Convocation of NSU a grand success.

Wahiduddin Mahmud



Professor Dr. S.M.A. Faiz
Chairman
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

Message

I am pleased to know that North South University (NSU), the first private university in Bangladesh, is going to hold its 25th Convocation on 7th December 2024. On the auspicious occasion, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating students and their parents, faculty, university staff, members of the Board of Trustees and all concerned.

It is no longer a debate that a era of positive changes has occurred in Bangladesh's tertiary education. The number of university students has increased to around 4.5 million in 2022 which was 31,000 in 1972. In a span of 53 years, the number of public universities in the country has risen from 6 to 61. A total of 114 private universities are being run under private management in the country. Despite such rapid growth and quantitative improvement in tertiary education, in recent years, many questions have been raised about its quality and its linkage with employability. I think the improvement of the quality should now be the prime focus of our higher education institutions.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has consistently demonstrated its commitment to promoting quality education and fostering a knowledge-driven society. As the principal regulatory body for higher education in Bangladesh, the UGC collaborates closely with universities, including NSU, and other higher education institutions to ensure the delivery of high-quality education. Serving as a vital link between the state and universities, the UGC acts as a catalyst for educational advancement in the country.

I am aware that the NSU is committed to academic excellence and has earned its reputation as a premier educational institution due to its relentless pursuit of providing a superior learning environment. NSU consistently provides its students with an exceptional learning experience, focusing on academic rigour and creating a nurturing environment to develop well-rounded individuals ready to tackle global challenges.

The faculty members at NSU deserve special recognition for their unwavering dedication and expertise, which are essential to the university's success. These educators bring valuable knowledge and experience to the classroom, nurturing intellectual curiosity and academic excellence.

Once again, congratulations to the graduates of North South University's 25th Convocation. Your journey is a testament to your resilience, determination, and hard work. I wish the 25th Convocation of North South University a grand success.

Prof. Dr. S.M.A. Faiz



Professor Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, PhD
Vice-Chancellor
North South University

Message

I am pleased to welcome you all to the 25th Convocation Ceremony of North South University (NSU). Today, we celebrate our graduates' achievements and the beginning of an exciting new chapter in their lives. As the Vice-Chancellor of this esteemed institution, I am deeply honoured to stand before you on this momentous occasion. To our graduates, today is the culmination of your hard work, determination, and perseverance. You have earned the right to wear caps and gowns and proudly hold the degrees that reflect your commitment to excellence.

North South University has always been steadfast in its mission to provide a world-class education and prepare our students for success. Over the years, our university has earned recognition for academic excellence and cutting-edge research—becoming the top private university in Bangladesh as well as jointly top university of the country and fostering international solid collaboration. Our students and faculty have garnered accolades in national and international arenas, showcasing their talents and making us proud.

We have witnessed remarkable progress in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in recent years. Many of our students have launched successful startups and ventures that highlight their creativity and contribute to societal advancement. At NSU, our focus extends beyond academic achievements; we are committed to shaping well-rounded individuals with the values and skills necessary to make a meaningful difference in their communities and the world.

As you embark on the next phase of your journey—whether it involves pursuing further studies, advancing your career, or dedicating yourself to community service—please uphold the values instilled in you at North South University. Use your education as a force for good to promote peace, understanding, and sustainable progress.

On behalf of the entire NSU family, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of you. As you enter the future, I encourage you to remain connected to your alma mater and become active members of our global alum network. Strive for excellence, embrace challenges, and be the agents of positive change in the world.

Once again, congratulations on your remarkable achievements. We are proud of you and excited to see the heights you will reach. Thank you, and best wishes for a bright and prosperous future.

Prof. Dr. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, PhD

A Brief History of NSU

North South University (NSU), the first private university in Bangladesh, was established in 1992 by the then Foundation for Promotion of Education and Research (FPER), a charitable, non-profit, non-commercial and non-political organization. The FPER was renamed as the NSU Foundation. Later as per Private University Act-2010 formed North South University Trust. The Trust is comprised of a group of eminent industrialists, prominent patrons of education, notable philanthropists, widely experienced academics and senior civil servants of the country. In the early 1990s, they had a dream to set up a world-class university as a center of excellence in higher education in the private sector. Their dedication, tireless efforts, and hard work paved the way for the approval of the establishment of NSU.

Since, at that time, there was no relevant law in the country to set up and operate a university in the private sector, the Founders took the initiative and extended their best efforts in assisting the then government in formulating the relevant law and enacting it. Subsequently, the government amended the Private University Act (PUA)-1992 (repealed by PUA-2010), approved the establishment of NSU. The University formally started its journey in a very modest way in February 1993. Later in 2012, the NSU Foundation, in the light of the PUA 2010 and as instructed by the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission, formed the NSU Trust with the same group of people in the Foundation as Trustee Members and vested the entire management and administration of NSU in its Board of Trustees (BOT). The Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is the Chancellor of NSU.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) is the apex policy making and approving body of the university. Mr. Azim Uddin Ahmed is the current Chairman of the Board of Trustees and a Founder Life Member of the NSU. The other members of the BOT are Mr. M. A. Kashem, Mr. Benajah Ahmed, Mr. Aziz Al Kaiser (Tito), Mr. M. A. Kalam, Mr. S. M. Kamaluddin, Mr. Abdul Kashem, Mrs. Yesmin Kamal, Mrs. Rehana Rahaman, Mr. A. S. F. Rahaman, Mr. Mohammed Shahjahan, Mrs. Farzila Naaz, Mr. Tanveer Herun, and Dr. Junaid Kamal Ahmed. All of them are also the members of the NSU Trust. Professor Dr. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, the Vice-Chancellor of NSU, is the Ex-Officio Member of the BOT.

The Syndicate is next to the BOT and is headed by the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the University. He is responsible for managing the administrative and academic affairs of the university as per the Private University Act (PUA) 2010, and implementing the policy guidelines set by the BOT. The Vice-Chancellor is assisted by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and a Treasurer. All of them are appointed by the Honorable Chancellor on recommendation of the BOT.

In general, NSU is modeled on US universities and follows their academic features such as semester systems, credit hours, letter grades, etc. When first introduced, its curricula of undergraduate programs such as Economics, Business, and Computer Science were largely modeled on the curricula of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and were duly approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh, the highest accrediting authority of higher education of the country. NSU has an International Advisory Board, comprised of scholars from all over the world, to counsel and to suggest improvements on academic matters of the university.

The university is delivering a substantial general education curriculum, has a strategic plan, and has initiated and implemented student instructional learning assessment for degree programs and courses and is in the process of developing the infrastructure for evaluation of institutional effectiveness for its institutional accreditation.

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY Board of Trustees 2024-2025



Mr. Azim Uddin Ahmed
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Chairman, Mutual Group of Companies



Mr. M. A. Kashem
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Former President, PBCCI
Chairman, Mutual Group of Industries



Mr. Benajah Ahmed
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Former President, DCCI
Managing Director & CEO, Raymond Group of Industries



Mr. M. A. Kalam
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Managing Director, Concord Engineers & Constructors Ltd.



Mr. S. M. Kamaluddin
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Managing Director, Abu Koir Group



Mrs. Yesmin Kamal
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Director, Mithas Group of Industries



Mrs. Rehana Rahaman
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Managing Director, Bengal Tradeways Ltd.



Mr. A. S. F. Rahaman
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Chairman, BEXIMCOCO Group of Industries



Mr. Mohammad Shahjahan
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Chairman, Shah Fethulah Textile Mills Ltd. and Jolai Ahmed Spinning Mills Ltd.



Mr. Aziz Al Kaiser (Tito)
Member, Board of Trustees
Life Member, NSU Trust
Vice Chairman, Parice Star Group



Mr. Tanveer Herun
Member, Board of Trustees
Life Member, NSU Trust
Managing Director, Maynard Group, Vice Chairman, Incorporated Group



Dr. Junaid Kamal Ahmed
Member, Board of Trustees
Founder Life Member, NSU Trust
Senior Economist, World Bank, Washington DC, USA
Ex-Officio Member, Board of Trustees
North South University, Vice-Chancellor



Prof. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, PhD
Ex-Officio Member, Board of Trustees
North South University, Vice-Chancellor

2022

CHANCELLOR'S GOLD MEDALIST



Kazi Mosaddequr
(ID# 1815143 0 42)
CGPA: 4.00



Fahim Ahmed
(ID# 1825025 0 60)
CGPA: 4.00

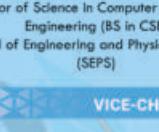


Alf Ilyam Khan
CGPA: 3.98
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Engineering (BS in CSE)
School of Engineering and Physical Sciences (SEPS)



Namrith Ahmed Bushra
CGPA: 4.00
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
School of Business & Economics (SBE)

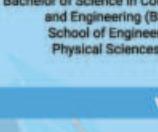
VICE-CHANCELLOR'S GOLD MEDALIST



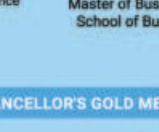
Mahir Foyzel
(ID# 1821887 0 15)
CGPA: 3.92



Adiba Nowaz
(ID# 1813062 0 20)
CGPA: 4.00



Shahzadi Sharmin
CGPA: 3.94
Bachelor of Arts in English (BA in ENG)
School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS)



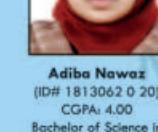
Sofrina Kamal
CGPA: 3.98
Bachelor of Science in Economics (BS in ECO)
School of Business & Economics (SBE)

2023

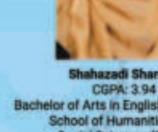
CHANCELLOR'S GOLD MEDALIST



Afsana Binte Rakib
(ID# 1811629 0 42)
CGPA: 3.98



Samrin Nawer
(ID# 1821702 0 47)
CGPA: 4.00



Sanjana Rahman Nijhu
CGPA: 3.95
Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Engineering (BS in CSE)
School of Engineering and Physical Sciences (SEPS)



Zawata Afan Sharara
CGPA: 3.96
Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and Biotechnology (BS in Biochem)
School of Health & Life Sciences (SHLS)

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S GOLD MEDALIST



Md. Mashrurul Islam
(ID# 1935018 0 55)
CGPA: 3.95

Workers deserve more in new Bangladesh

Honour their sacrifices in July uprising through labour reforms

It is no secret that the July mass uprising was made possible by the sacrifices of many individuals, particularly workers and underprivileged communities. Without them putting their bodies in the line of fire, alongside students, this uprising would not have succeeded in bringing down the autocratic Awami League regime. It is, thus, unfortunate to see that their contributions are still not receiving the recognition they deserve. Instead, as speakers pointed out during a discussion organised by *The Daily Star* on the sidelines of a photo exhibition titled "36 Days of July," these individuals risk being "erased" from the narrative.

The lack of recognition is evident not only in the failure to properly document their contributions but also in the continued disregard for their needs and rights—as evidenced by the plight of the injured seeking treatment and rehabilitation, as well as workers in various sectors. Part of the challenge is that a comprehensive list of those injured or killed has yet to be finalised, even after four months. This is affecting the fund disbursement efforts of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation, which earlier promised to deliver all the funds by December. While the compensation amount itself has been criticised as inadequate, its prompt disbursement could address some, if not all, of the issues facing the injured. The continued delays and hurdles reported in accessing treatment and medication also need to be resolved.

The fact is, these people, including rickshaw-pullers, garment workers and other marginalised individuals, paid a heavy price for their involvement in the July uprising. Many families lost their primary breadwinners. Many survivors suffered life-altering injuries. Beyond treatment or compensation, what they need is proper rehabilitation to rebuild their lives, in which the government must help. An accurate victim list is also essential to prevent a repeat of the flawed listing of 1971 freedom fighters, which remains a cautionary tale of exploitation.

That said, the most meaningful tribute to these unsung heroes of the uprising would be to build a pro-worker business ecosystem where their rights and dignity are guaranteed. We have an obligation to ensure that these individuals are not only remembered for their sacrifices but also given their due through tangible improvements in their lives. In the past, workers' demands for fair wages, safe workplaces, and reasonable working hours were frequently dismissed in favour of appeasing powerful industrial groups. Workers have long been treated as disposable—whether it's the appalling treatment of migrant workers, exploitation of RMG workers or invisibility of sanitation workers. The change promised by the head of the Labour Reform Commission recently makes us hopeful. But it must be backed by structural reforms in labour laws and practices.

Bangladesh finally has an opportunity to address decades of inequities and ensure the dignity and rights of all. The sacrifices of our workers demand nothing less. Let us not fail them.

DAP must enhance Dhaka's liveability

Govt should not bow to pressure from real estate developers

We are concerned about the newly proposed amendments to the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) 2022-35 of Dhaka by the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirpakkha (RAJUK). According to city planners and environmentalists, these amendments prioritise the interests of real estate developers over the city's liveability, environmental protection, capacity, and civic amenities. In the proposed revisions, RAJUK has only suggested increasing the size and height of buildings, while issues such as protecting flood flow zones, wetlands, and agricultural land have largely been overlooked. Clearly, RAJUK's proposals serve the interests of real estate businessmen who seem to be primarily interested in the floor area ratio (FAR), increasing which would result in higher profits for them. It is due to their pressure that efforts have been made to revise the DAP twice within two years of finalising it.

Over the past decades, Dhaka has developed without proper city planning. While real estate developers have often constructed buildings without adhering to necessary guidelines, many water bodies have also been filled in by developers as well as government and non-government agencies, leading to various environmental consequences. After the first DAP was formulated in 2010 under the Town Improvement Act of 1953, we saw how the government gave in to developers' demands, leading to over 200 amendments to the plan. Through these amendments, the filling of wetlands was legalised, among other things.

When the second DAP was developed by RAJUK, we hoped for a change in direction. Sadly, since DAP 2022-35 was passed in August last year, it has also been the subject of debate and criticism. Many leaders of the real estate developers' organisation, REHAB, as well as city planners believe the new DAP is discriminatory and unclear. One of the reasons cited for it is that the FAR ratio set in the second DAP varies across different areas, benefiting the wealthy while depriving middle- and low-income groups. While this issue must be addressed by the authorities in consultation with all stakeholders, they must also ensure that flood flow zones, wetlands, and agricultural land—all vital for our collective existence—are protected from developers' encroachment.

DAP was formulated to make Dhaka a better place to live, not to serve the interests of any specific group. Therefore, RAJUK must revise it with a focus on public interest, liveability, and environmental sustainability. To achieve this, we need well-planned, sustainable strategies and approaches.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Pearl Harbor attack

On this day in 1941, Japanese bombers launched a surprise aerial attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, precipitating the entry of the United States into World War II.

EDITORIAL

A new vision for social protection in the face of climate change



Fazley Elahi Mahmud is a social protection specialist, and international consultant on social protection. He can be reached at fazleyelahi.mahmud@gmail.com.

FAZLEY ELAHI MAHMUD

Bangladesh is witnessing a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of climatic events, leading to substantial losses in lives, assets, and livelihoods. A recent report by *The Daily Star* highlighted that the country endured 15 climatic events between May 2023 and September 2024. These included four cyclones, nine floods, several episodes of heavy rainfall, and extreme temperature events like heat waves and cold waves. In response to these escalating challenges, advancing adaptive social protection (ASP) has emerged as an urgent priority, complementing ongoing climate mitigation and adaptation efforts to address the growing impacts of climate change.

ASP enhances the resilience of climate-vulnerable households by strengthening three capacities: preparing for, coping with, and adapting to climatic and other shocks. [i] Its development is driven by several complementary factors: i) the proven success of social protection measures, particularly cash transfers, in reducing poverty and building resilience; ii) the shared objective of resilience building across social protection, disaster risk management (DRM), and climate adaptation; iii) the increasing use of cash transfers in disaster response over the past two decades; and iv) the potential to leverage social protection mechanisms, such as beneficiary registries and digital payment systems, for rapid cash delivery to disaster-affected individuals.

Despite their complementarities, social protection, DRM and climate adaptation have distinct objectives. Social protection primarily focuses on poverty reduction, with resilience-building as a secondary outcome. However, its reliance on poverty-based indicators for beneficiary selection often excludes climate-vulnerable households who fall outside these criteria. In contrast, DRM prioritises resilience through interventions such as infrastructure development, preparedness, and disaster response. After a shock, DRM aims to restore livelihoods and help communities "bounce back" to their pre-shock state. Climate adaptation takes a broader approach, enabling communities to "bounce forward" by addressing climate vulnerabilities and fostering sustainable development through strategies like improving economic conditions, promoting human

capital, and facilitating migration to safer areas. ASP leverages the complementarities among these approaches while addressing their gaps to establish a comprehensive framework for addressing the impact of climate change.

Since adopting the National Social Protection Strategy (NSSS) in 2015, Bangladesh has established a life cycle-based social protection system that addresses risks faced at different stages of life, including pregnancy, early childhood, school age, disability, and old age. Key programmes under

and DRM-related programmes are well-developed, featuring extensive coverage, substantial funding, digital beneficiary registries, and mobile-based payment systems, strongly positioning Bangladesh for a transition to ASP.

Bangladesh may explore the following pathways to establish a robust ASP framework.

First, implement universal coverage for life cycle programmes in climate-vulnerable areas. Providing ongoing and long term cash transfers to vulnerable groups (e.g. children, persons with disabilities, widows, and the elderly) would significantly enhance their resilience. Currently, over 70 percent of deserving poor people are excluded from social protection due to a flawed selection process based on proxy poverty indicators such as housing conditions and visible assets. International evidence shows that these methods exclude 29-96 percent of eligible poor. Transitioning to

and mobile banking-based payment systems. Funds for these top-ups can be sourced from DRM-related programmes and climate adaptation funds, without burdening social protection budget and fostering synergy among these approaches.

Third, support other vulnerable households by the DRM-related programmes. DRM schemes would deliver cash or in-kind assistance to households not covered by life cycle programmes, in anticipation of or after climate shocks.

Fourth, invest in sustainable livelihoods and graduation programmes. Climate funds can support livelihood development and graduation programmes to enhance economic resilience and adaptive capacity to enable vulnerable households to "bounce forward."

Fifth, establish institutional arrangements for ASP. Effective implementation of ASP requires robust institutional frameworks, including



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

this framework include the Mother and Child Benefit Programme (MCBP), the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP), the Disability Allowance programme, the Widow Allowance programme, and the Old Age Allowance Programme (OAA). These are complemented by several DRM-related schemes such as Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), the Employment Generation Programme for the Poor (EGPP), Food for Work, Work for Money, Test Relief, and Gratuitous Relief. Both life cycle

universal coverage would ensure that no climate-vulnerable individual is left behind. Given the already high programme coverage, expanding to universal access in climate-vulnerable areas would be both strategic and affordable.

Second, strengthen coping and adaptive capacity through top up cash (or in-kind) transfers. Top-up cash or in-kind transfers can be provided to beneficiaries of life cycle programmes in anticipation of or following climate shocks, using existing beneficiary lists

revised policies, updated operational guidelines, and formal agreements on financing, collaboration, and coordination mechanisms among relevant ministries and agencies.

While full-scale ASP implementation will take several years, Bangladesh is well positioned to embark on this transformative journey. By pursuing these pathways, the country can strengthen the resilience of most vulnerable populations, enhance adaptive capacity, and establish itself as a global leader in ASP.

Traffic problem, no problem!



Dr Sayeed Ahmed is a consulting engineer and the CEO of Bayside Analytix, a technology focused strategy and management consulting organisation.

SAYEED AHMED

My wife's car has artificial intelligence, which I realised while returning from the BRTA office after renewing its fitness certificate, the annual ritual for every motor vehicle in Bangladesh.

Thanks to an agent, we went there at 8am and were finished by 2pm. I felt relieved because it was two weeks overdue. What happened next could be any Hollywood sci-fi movie sequence. As we hit the expressway, the engine growled, and the car pounced, weaving through the traffic, frequently changing lanes to overtake them. "Rubel, why are you driving so fast? Slow down, for God's sake!" I yelled at my driver. He looked puzzled, glanced at the speedometer nervously while trying to manage the steering wheel, and mumbled, "It's speeding up all by itself. I haven't done anything!" Baffled, I frantically tried to comprehend our bizarre situation. After a few minutes of racking my brain, it occurred to me like an epiphany: the newly obtained fitness document! The car, looking quite innocent and rather dumb, sensed its presence, felt "fit as a fiddle," and sprinted at the first opportunity. Somehow, we managed to steer it home safely.

Rubel stepped out, staggered towards a water tap, and put his head

under flowing water in full view of grinning onlookers, both baffled and bemused. I calmed my nerves with a double-shot espresso. We had to confine the culprit in a double-locked garage until its excitement waned.

I revisited the fitness-checking process to satisfy my curiosity. The inspector scanned the barcode on the windshield with a hand-held device, signed a few papers, and was off. That's it! The car got a clean bill of health for another year. Nobody opened the engine hood or checked the emission. Not even a glance at the tyres or the lights. Now I know how the 40-something buses and trucks get their fitness certification and run with more vigour every year. Don't let their rickety and rusted bodies, black exhaust, peeling paint, and absence of lights fool you. They are all certified fit and road-worthy. I feel savier as I sit inside the air-conditioned car and watch people boarding or getting off running buses in the middle of busy intersections, covering their mouths with Covid-era masks. Who will tell them there is no need for masks because all vehicles are fit, and the emissions are perfectly healthy?

But why are those people crossing the road through such heavy traffic

when a perfect foot overbridge is nearby? Some escort uniformed children, hold babies, or carry heavy bags. A grown-up was recently photographed crawling through a narrow hole in a road divider on the ever-busy Aricha Road. Isn't that illegal and dangerous? I kept pondering as the car started moving again. Suddenly, my whole body jerked briefly as if struck by lightning. Rubel looked at me quizzically. The purpose of the foot overbridge was not what I thought! They were for shopkeepers and beggars to set up businesses, people without homes to sleep at night, and perhaps drug peddlers. How mistaken I was!

The train of thought kept going as I stopped at another congestion. Pedestrians don't need footpaths; they can use any part of the road. Footpaths are for hawkers and fish sellers (who will also process it for you right there), motorbike users and, astonishingly, relieving oneself.

Dhaka's roads have many unique aspects that no other city can match. You can drive in any direction—there is no right or wrong. You turn on your hazard lights (or flash headlights), honk, and keep driving in whichever direction and at whatever speed you want. Other drivers will give way with reverence. Learn from the rickshaw drivers. They take the shortest path to the destination, like crossing a farmland diagonally, stopping and greeting people at will along the way. Some roads have signs saying, "It is forbidden to drive in the wrong direction." But how would others know which direction is wrong for me? My direction is always the right one! And

who are you to tell me which direction I should travel?

I gradually came to realise that Dhaka has no traffic problems. Shake your head in disagreement all you want, but I will tell you why it is so. Nothing is stuck forever; slowly and grindingly, things move along, though often it takes hours. People get to work every day. Children go to schools. Stay-at-home parents carry on with their daily chores. Late into the night and early mornings, trucks, pickups and rickshaw vans carry fresh produce to the markets. Shoppers complain about the rising prices but still buy things. Days roll into weeks, weeks into months, then into years, and so on for decades, while life gets more arduous. Where is the problem, then? It lies among those who habitually complain about everything from their air-conditioned cars, homes and offices.

May I also propose another unique offering Dhaka could make to the world? A motor rally from Sadarghat to the Gazipur intersection and back in full traffic. It would start at 4pm on a Thursday. The Paris Dakar rally would look like a toddler's game. Imagine the enormous tourism development opportunity it would bring.

So, dear residents of Dhaka, stop complaining and continue with your daily endurance in this city of ever-increasing traffic congestion. And dear experts and policymakers, find out why rural workers migrate to cities in droves. Decode the economy of people's travel demands and the unending supply of rickshaws. And, finally, step out of your air-conditioned SUVs to use public transport. That's the minimum you could do.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Pearl Harbor attack

On this day in 1941, Japanese bombers launched a surprise aerial attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, precipitating the entry of the United States into World War II.

Female youth voices from Bangladesh at COP29



PHOTO: REUTERS

Highlighting the impact and advocacy of young Bangladeshi women leaders at COP29 as they fight for climate justice on the global stage.

ALIN MOHANA BISWAS

The voices of young women from Bangladesh resonated powerfully at the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), bringing stories of resilience, advocacy, and determination to the global stage. Representing diverse communities and experiences, Saina Sobnom Richi, Farzana Farak Jhumu, and Fariha Aumi embodied the spirit of youth leadership in addressing climate justice.

Saina Sobnom Richi, ICCCAD Delegate

Saina Sobnom Richi, an undergraduate student from the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies at Dhaka University, began her journey in climate activism with a deep connection to her community in Barishal where she was born and



brought up. Her path to climate leadership started with YouthNet for Climate Justice, where she became a Youth Climate Ambassador and Media and Movement Coordinator, advocating for gender and climate justice for over four years. Reflecting on her work, Saina shared, "I have seen how

vulnerable our people are to climate change. If we don't act now, our future is at stake."

At COP29, Saina brought stories of vulnerable Bangladeshi communities to the global stage, highlighting the urgent need for climate finance and addressing the realities faced by people displaced internally due to climate impacts.

Speaking at the "Youth Gathering" event hosted by the Government of Bangladesh, Saina posed a critical question: "Are youth voices genuinely being empowered, or are they merely tokenised?" Her words resonated with many young attendees grappling with similar doubts.

Representing Bangladesh at COP29 came with its own challenges. Saina candidly reflected on her reliance on a foreign international non-governmental organisation (INGO) badge and funding from another country's embassy to attend, questioning the authenticity of national support for youth empowerment. Despite the hurdles, Saina remained undeterred, participating in movements such as demanding climate finance at the COP29 Action Zone. She also launched her documentary, *INFLUENCERS - The Path Led by Knowledge*, at the Share Hub Pavilion, showcasing the power of youth-led initiatives.

Saina expressed her frustration at the insufficient allocation of USD three hundred billion instead of the required USD one trillion for climate finance. Yet, she maintained her optimism, emphasising the need for the youth to be included in decision-making processes and not just as symbolic representatives. Reflecting on her first COP experience, Saina said, "This is just the beginning for me. I will continue fighting for my country to have a stronger voice on the global stage."

At COP29, Farzana Faruk Jhumu was moved by several powerful moments. She spoke at an event advocating for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to address climate change and human rights. Reflecting on the experience, she said, "It was empowering to

Farzana Faruk Jhumu, UNICEF Youth Advocate

Farzana Faruk Jhumu's journey in climate activism began in 2018 when she co-founded KaathPencil, an organisation focused on educating underprivileged children. Through her interactions with climate-displaced families, Farzana realised the profound human impact of environmental disasters.



"I remember speaking to a mother who had lost her home to river erosion. Her pain became my purpose to fight climate change," Farzana recalled. This experience inspired her to go deeper into the intersection between climate change, child rights, and justice, eventually joining the global "Fridays for Future" movement – an international movement of school students who skip Friday classes to participate in demonstrations to demand action from political leaders to prevent climate change.

At COP29, Farzana was moved by several powerful moments. She spoke at an event advocating for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to address climate change and human rights. Reflecting on the experience, she said, "It was empowering to

demand accountability from states for the harm they have caused to vulnerable communities." Listening to youth stories from around the globe reinforced her belief in the collective power of young people to challenge states on their climate obligations.

One of her most significant achievements at COP29 was giving an intervention in a negotiation room, representing women, gender constituencies, and youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Her demands, delivered with conviction, were reflected in the COP29 presidency text.

"That moment showed me that our voices can truly shape decisions, even in spaces dominated by power and politics," Farzana said.

Despite her successes, Farzana faced challenges as a young woman navigating a patriarchal system. She described moments of "mansplaining" and being tokenised on panels to ensure gender balance. However, these experiences only strengthened her resolve. "Being underestimated only fuels my determination to prove them wrong," she remarked.

Farzana also found inspiration in her interactions with global leaders and fellow activists. Representing the youth in a meeting with Dr Muhammad Yunus, she proposed creating an official youth mechanism to enhance their involvement in multilateral processes. Reflecting on her overall COP29 experience, Farzana said, "Sea levels are rising, but so are we. We have no choice but to fight harder for our future."

Fariha Aumi, ICCCAD Delegate

Fariha Aumi's activism was inspired by her upbringing in southern Bangladesh, where she witnessed firsthand the impacts of climate change. Her passion deepened in

2018 when Greta Thunberg's "Fridays for Future" movement ignited global awareness, prompting her to join the fight for climate justice.

"Growing up, I saw how cyclones devastated my community. It's not just statistics for us; it's our lives," Fariha shared.

At COP29, Fariha participated in a panel discussion with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) that brought together youth from Bangladesh, China, and Nepal. This exchange of regional perspectives was a highlight for her, as it built deeper connections among peers facing similar challenges. She also recounted a conversation with a representative from Tuvalu, a small country in the Pacific Ocean made up of nine coral islands, who described the severe water crisis in their capital. This harsh narrative struck a chord with Fariha, as she envisioned a similar future for Dhaka.

"When he described the struggles of the people dealing with the water crisis, I could see my own city in his words. It was heartbreaking," she said.

Navigating societal expectations as a young female leader presented its own



challenges. Fariha acknowledged the resistance she faced but emphasised how persistence and gradual acceptance helped her overcome these barriers.

"At first, many didn't take me seriously. But with every step forward, I earned their respect," she reflected.

For Fariha, the most inspiring aspect of COP29 was the shared commitment to climate justice among attendees, from heads of state to young activists. This unity reaffirmed her belief in the collective strength of the Global South. However, she described the conference as a "compromising COP" due to the lack of substantial progress on critical issues.

Looking ahead, Fariha intends to share her insights with her peers, encouraging them to engage in global climate discussions. "We have to be the change we want to see. It's our responsibility to amplify our voices and demand justice," she said.

As COP29 drew to a close, these young leaders left the conference with a pressing question on their minds: will their voices spark the change needed, or will they be drowned out in the politics of inaction? The fight for climate justice is far from over.

A master procrastinator's guide on how not to procrastinate

MAHPARA FAATIN

Procrastinating may be a guilty pleasure or even a coping mechanism for many of us, one that has a tight grasp on our daily lives. Many people, including myself, simply work better under the pressure of finishing things in the eleventh hour. However, it is undeniable that the guilt of procrastination devours us from within and is detrimental to our mental well-being. So, how exactly can we untangle ourselves from its sticky threads?

Strict time management

Habits are deeply ingrained in our brains. They compel our bodies to carry out certain actions almost automatically. That, in turn, makes it difficult for our minds to override these habits. This makes it all the more important for us to adhere to a to-do list that outlines when we ought to perform a chore and for how long. By sticking to the list and turning it into a habit, our minds might just spare us from procrastination.

It is, of course, important that you make a realistic routine that is open to changes. As someone who has to juggle work and academics with multiple extracurricular activities, I would suggest utilising your time as best as you can. For instance, maybe read a book or listen to a lecture when you are stuck in traffic, provided you are in the right headspace for it.

Know what to prioritise

You may not be able to fully complete your to-do list, and that's absolutely fine. But make it your goal to complete at least three productive tasks every day. Get the hardest things done when you have more energy. You should also try and prioritise tasks according to their deadlines.

Identify and remove distractions

What are some things that easily distract you? Is it your social media or streaming services? If it's the allure of social media that makes you procrastinate, keep your phone stashed

away in a drawer or place it in a nother room. Do anything you can to make it inconvenient for you to start scrolling.

Motivate yourself

Use sticky notes to remind yourself what it is that you're working so hard for. Make use of positive reinforcement. Tell yourself that if you finish just this one task, you can watch an episode of your favourite show.

What I do when I need to urgently get something done late at night is light a scented candle. This is a hack I will never stop blabbering about. Not only do the smell and the fire hazard keep you awake, but they are also too expensive for you to waste procrastinating. The best part: depending on the size, these candles need to stay lit for a

minimum of two hours to prevent caving, so you can't just blow them out either. Finish whatever you were (or weren't) doing and start procrastinating again once you're done.

Procrastinate, but on a schedule

When making a routine, it is crucial to allocate some free time if you simply cannot stop procrastinating. It's better to waste an hour if it makes you feel better, instead of



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

wasting the entire day because you weren't in the mood to get things done.

Also, remember to be kind to yourself. Procrastination happens to the best of us, so don't beat yourself up over it. Forgive yourself and move on. Experiment with these tips a bit, and you might just be able to free yourself from the sticky threads of procrastination.



Starc far from 'TOO SLOW'

Australia's left-arm wrecking ball Mitchell Starc won the Adelaide round of his duel against India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal in the day-night second Test on Friday. Jaiswal smashed 161 in India's comprehensive win in the series opener in Perth and was caught on stump mic telling Starc he was bowling "too slow". However, Starc was far from being too slow as his onslaught saw Australia bundle India out for 180 before the hosts made 86-1 at close, with Nathan McSweeney not out 38 from 97 balls and Marnus Labuschagne on 20 off 67 deliveries.

• Mitchell Starc had India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal lbw in the very first ball yesterday, becoming only the second bowler to take a wicket with the first ball of three Test matches. West Indies' Pedro Collins had also done this, at Dhaka in 2003-04, and at Gros Islet and Kingston in 2004 – with Bangladesh's Hannan Sarkar the victim on each occasion.

• The Australian quick had struck with the first ball twice before – against Sri Lanka at Galle in 2016 and against England at Brisbane in 2021-22, dismissing Dimuth Karunaratne and Rory Burns. In fact, the Burns wicket was the last incident of a wicket falling off the first ball of a Test.

• Starc claimed career-best figures of 6-48 – his 15th five-wicket haul in Tests. It was also Starc's

maiden five-wicket haul against India in Tests, after 51 wickets in his first 19 matches against them.

• Starc is also the leading wicket-taker in day-night Tests, with 72 scalps to his name. The second-best in this regard is his Australia teammate Nathan Lyon, who took 43 wickets in as many matches as Starc (13).

• It was also Starc's fourth fifer in day-night Test matches. No other bowler has taken more than two.

• Meanwhile, India's Jasprit Bumrah got the only wicket for India on the day when he dismissed Australia opener Usman Khawaja (13 off 35). That wicket saw Bumrah become only the third India fast bowler to get 50 wickets in a calendar year in Tests after Kapil Dev (74 in 1979 and 75 in 1983) and Zaheer Khan (51 in 2002).

Tigresses look to bounce back against Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team will be eyeing to bounce back in the ongoing three-match WT20I series when they take on Ireland in the second match at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today.

The hosts are currently trailing the series 1-0, having lost the high-scoring opener by 12 runs at the same venue on Thursday.

Bangladesh looked to have things under control in chase of a massive 170-run target in that game. Dilara Akter and Sobhana Mostary stitched together a 103-run opening stand – the highest for Bangladesh in the format – but the Tigresses lost impetus once Mostary departed in the 12th over.



"We scored 100 runs within 10-11 overs. It was a big score for an opening partnership. Still, we were hopeful," pacer Jahanara Alam recounted how Bangladesh were in a favourable position in a video message yesterday.

The Tigresses, however, saw a dip in the scoring rate in the latter part of the innings and lost way, needing 18 runs off the final two overs – a task that proved too much for Nigar Sultan Joty's side.

"We lost the contest for some faults. Four of our batters were on song so we are very hopeful about our next matches," Jahanara hoped to not make the same mistakes in today's game, mentioning that she believed they could still win the series.

Meanwhile, Ireland will be looking to clinch their first-ever series against Bangladesh in this format.

Both the teams previously played in only one bilateral WT20I series in 2018 where Bangladesh won by a 2-1 margin in Dublin.

An anomaly that can make Tigers hopeful

SPORTS REPORTER

If given a choice between playing an ODI at home or away, the Bangladesh cricket team, like most other teams in the world, would almost always prefer playing as the hosts.

But in international cricket, schedules are not shuffled around just to accommodate the preferences of a team. However, it probably bodes well for the Tigers that they will be taking on the West Indies in the Caribbean islands in their forthcoming three-match series, beginning with the first ODI in St Kitts on Sunday.

Playing away from home in a format where they have lost their mojo in recent times, with defeats in four of their last five ODI series, seems like a disadvantage. However, statistically speaking, the Tigers are actually better off taking on the West Indies in the Caribbean than in home conditions.

Bangladesh have the reputation of being a better side at home than abroad and stats show that this assumption is not without merit as their win percentage in home ODIs – 45.22 percent – is much better than their success rate as a touring team – 26.03 percent.

However, there is always at least one exception to any rule and for the Tigers, playing ODIs against the West Indies seems to be just that as they are the only opponents against whom Bangladesh have a better win percentage while touring than as hosts.

Bangladesh have so far played 20 ODIs at home against the Caribbean side, winning nine, losing 10 with one match ending as a no result.

But in the West Indies, Bangladesh have a 50-50 record against the hosts in one dayers, with eight wins against eight losses in 16 encounters.

• West Indies are the only Test-playing nation against whom Bangladesh have a better win percentage while touring (50 percent) than as a host (45 percent). Bangladesh also have a better success rate against Afghanistan in abroad (66 percent) than at home (50 percent) in the 50-over format, but they are yet to play a match in Afghan soil.

• Bangladesh have won the last four ODIs they have played in the Caribbean.

• The Tigers have played three ODIs at the Warner Park in St Kitts, venue for the first ODI of the forthcoming series, winning two and losing one.

One may be prompted to write this off as three of those wins came against a second string West Indies team back in 2009. However, one also has to consider the Tigers' recent ODI record in the Caribbean islands, as they have come out victorious in their last four 50-over games over there.

Bangladesh had clean swept the West Indies in three-match ODI series in Guyana in 2022 and also won the third ODI of the 2018 series at the Warner Park, the venue where the first ODI of the upcoming series will take place.

Now, the difference in Bangladesh's home and away record against the West Indies may seem minuscule, but at a time when everything is seemingly going wrong for the side in what used to be their most favoured format, any and every positive, however minuscule, is worth taking note of.

Footballer Shakib Al Hasan grabs the spotlight

SPORTS REPORTER

Even though captain Souleymane Diabate scored the decisive goal to power Mohammedan to a 1-0 win over holders Bashundhara Kings in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter in Cumilla yesterday, it was substitute goalkeeper Shakib Al Hasan who stole the show with a valiant display.

Shakib came on to the pitch in the 25th minute of the game after first-choice goalkeeper Sujan Hossain was given marching order following a foul on Kings forward Rakib Hossain just outside the box. The 20-year-old goalkeeper then turned himself into a wall under the Mohammedan bar, denying numerous efforts from the Kings forwards.

Shakib, who has been with Mohammedan for five seasons now, frustrated Bashundhara Kings by foiling efforts from Mohammad Sohel Rana in the 45th minute, Jonathan Fernandes in the 55th minute, Jared Khasa in the 83rd minute and Miguel Ferreira in the 90th minute.

Mohammedan could have widened the margin but Kings goalkeeper Mehedi Hasan Srabon also made a couple of good saves including a spot kick from Diabate.

"No doubt, everyone has contributed in this important victory as all players gave their best in a bid to win the match following a defeat against them in the Challenge Cup. However, goalkeeper Shakib played really well coming from the bench and making some brilliant saves. He is our second-choice goalkeeper and has good potential if he can carry on this performance," Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed told The Daily Star over phone on way back to Dhaka after the match.

"Shakib, who was picked from BKSP through a trial, was our real hero in our 1-0 win over Kings in a league match last season. I think he performed better in that match compared to this one," said Alfaz, adding that Shakib has been improving under goalkeeping coach Syed Hasan Kanon.

"Before entering the pitch, coach Kanon bhai told me that a goalkeeper could turn a match by keeping his cool and performing well. I tried to implement the instructions of my coach," Shakib told The Daily Star over phone.

Shakib, who only played for BKSP in 2nd Division Football League, has so far played nine league matches since 2021-22 season as a substitute goalkeeper but is now looking forward to cementing his place in the starting eleven of Mohammedan and get a call from the national team after being part of Bangladesh U-23 team in 2023.

When asked about his name being identical to a celebrity cricketer, how the goalkeeper informed: "My original name was Mohammad Shakib Hossain, but my school teacher changed it to Shakib Al Hasan during the registration for PSC exams. Since then I'm known as Shakib Al Hasan."



Following on from his match-winning 171 in the first Test at Hagley Oval, Harry Brook smashed a century to help England score 280 in their first innings on the opening day of their second Test against hosts New Zealand at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Friday. England were on top by 86-5 at stumps.

PHOTO: AFP

Mourinho hits back at Guardiola

REUTERS

Jose Mourinho said the Premier League trophies he won at Chelsea were achieved fairly, responding to Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola's comments that he had six English top-flight titles while the Portuguese coach only had three.

Guardiola, whose team lost 2-0 at Liverpool on Sunday, held up six fingers to home fans to indicate the number of league titles he won in response to chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning."

Mourinho, while managing Manchester United, had similarly held up three fingers to opposing fans during an underwhelming league campaign, before being sacked in December 2018 after a loss to Liverpool.

Guardiola was asked at a press



conference whether he could face a fate similar to Mourinho.

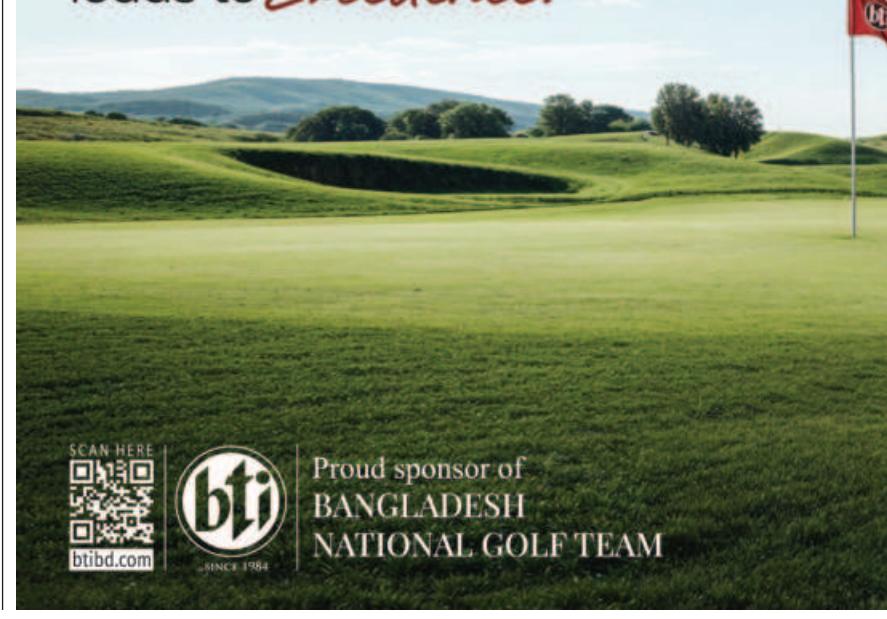
"I hope not in my case... he won three, I won six, but we are the same like that," Guardiola answered.

In his response to the Spaniard, Mourinho alluded to City's charges over alleged violations of the Premier League's financial rules ranging from 2009 to 2018, which the club has always denied.

"Guardiola said something about me... he won six trophies and I won three, but I won fairly and cleanly," Turkish outlet Hurriyet quoted Mourinho as saying on Friday, ahead of his team Fenerbahce's clash with Besiktas.

"If I lost, I want to congratulate my opponent because he was better than me. I don't want to win by dealing with 150 court cases."

Every step on the green leads to Excellence!



Proud sponsor of
BANGLADESH
NATIONAL GOLF TEAM



THE NATION'S
LARGEST ROD
MANUFACTURER
★★★★★

WITH MORE CAPACITY, WE ARE MORE READY
TO BUILD TOMORROW'S BANGLADESH

BSRM
building a safer nation

Terminal 3,
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

Proud
Construction
Partner

SHAH
CEMENT

Ducsu election likely by next February

DU proctor says preparations underway

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU and
SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

After a six-year gap since the last Ducsu polls in 2019, the Dhaka University authorities are now gearing up for an election early next year.

The authorities have got the go-ahead from the interim government to hold the election by the end of January or early February.

"The university administration aims to complete the groundwork for the election by December and prepare to conduct the polls either at the end of January or mid-February next year," DU Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He added that DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan met Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus recently where the latter assured of extending all possible cooperation for conducting the polls to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu).



Prof Saifuddin said the election is essential to facilitate communication between the university administration and students and to ensure students' rights.

"If there is no formal platform for students, who will the administration consult while making important decisions? Having a common platform is crucial for this."

The last Ducsu election was held on March 11, 2019, breaking a 28-year hiatus.

A special committee, formed by the DU authorities to make recommendations and give the university administration guidance on the nature of political activities at DU, is now talking to the stakeholders to speed up the process of the polls.

Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq, a member of the committee, said, "We are working on how the polls can be held and what the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Bangladesh captain Azizul Hakim clenches his fist in celebration after guiding his side to a seven-wicket win against Pakistan with an unbeaten 61 off 42 deliveries during their Men's U-19 Asia Cup semifinal in Dubai yesterday, setting up a final against India on Sunday.

PHOTO: ACC

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PANCHAGARH BORDER Bangladeshi man shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi man was killed by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the Mominpara border in Panchagarh's Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Anwar Hossain, 40, son of Rafiqul Islam of Debnagar Amjani village in Panchagarh's Tentulia upazila, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and police said.

Citing BSF sources, BGB Battalion 56 in Nilphamari said in a press release that some troops from Chanakia BSF camp stopped a group of alleged Indian and Bangladeshi cattle smugglers in the Singpara area on the Indian side of the border around 5:25am.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



BTRC recalls bandwidth export bid to India

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The internet regulator is abandoning its plan to allow Bangladesh to be the transit point for bandwidth supply to India's northeastern states on concerns that it could weaken the country's potential to become a regional internet hub.

Last year, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) sought the telecom ministry's permission after Summit Communications and Fiber@Home applied to supply bandwidth from Singapore via the Akhaura border to the northeastern region of India through Bharti Airtel.

Summit Communications's chairman is Muhammad Farid Khan, the younger brother of Awami League presidium member Faruk Khan, also a five-time member of parliament from the

Gopalganj-1. Farid is also a close friend of Sajeeb Wazed Joy, the son and ICT affairs adviser of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Fiber@Home was a major beneficiary during the AL regime from 2009 to 2024, ranking second to Summit Communications in terms of major government contracts and licences won.

Before the two international terrestrial cable operators sought the BTRC's approval, Bharti Airtel applied to the foreign ministry the previous year for permission to connect Agartala through Akhaura to Bangladesh's submarine cable landing stations in Cox's Bazar and Kuakata to reach Singapore.

Under this arrangement, Bangladesh would serve as the transit route -- enabling faster internet connection for India's northeastern

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Won't tolerate any aggression
Says Jamaat ameer pointing at India

UNB, Cumilla

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman has said Bangladesh will not tolerate any aggression.

"We will not give away even an inch of Bangladesh's land to anyone. We will not tolerate any aggression," he said, referring to India.

Shafiqur was speaking at Cumilla City Jamaat activists' conference at the Town Hall ground yesterday morning.

"Reforms are needed to hold a free and fair election free from muscle power. Elections must be held on time," he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

NORTH GAZA HOSPITAL Israeli strikes kill 29 Palestinians

AFP, Beit Lahiya

Gaza's civil defence agency said 29 people were killed by Israeli strikes around a major hospital in the northern city of Beit Lahiya yesterday.

Kamal Adwan Hospital, one of northern Gaza's last functioning health centres, was hit by several strikes in the morning, the agency and the hospital director said.

"There was a series of air strikes on the northern and western sides of the hospital, accompanied by intense and direct fire," said hospital director Hossam Abu Safieh, adding that four staff were killed.

Mahmud Bassal, the civil defence agency's spokesman, said, "At least 29 people were killed and dozens were wounded... since dawn on Friday as a result of the continuing Israeli shelling around Kamal Adwan Hospital."

Bassal told AFP that the Israeli army entered the hospital, evacuated patients and arrested several Palestinians.



Garo dancers perform at the Wangala festival at Lalmatia Housing Society School and College in the capital yesterday. The celebration of Wangala, a harvest festival of the Garo people, marks the end of a period of toil and the arrival of a bountiful harvest.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DHAKA-DELHI TALKS Indian foreign secy to fly in December 9

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday confirmed the visit by its Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri to Dhaka on December 9 in the first top diplomatic contact with Bangladesh since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as prime minister of Bangladesh in August.

The meeting also comes at a time when ties between Dhaka and Delhi are under considerable strain over various issues, including allegations of attacks on

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

PAKISTAN UNREST

Imran threatens civil disobedience movement

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has called on his supporters to hold a rally next week and threatened to start a civil disobedience movement days after his party led a deadly protest march in Islamabad.

In a post on X on Thursday, Khan asked supporters to converge on December 13 in the northwestern city of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which is ruled by his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

He demanded a judicial probe into the crackdown on the November 25 protest march which he said killed at least 12 of his supporters and violence on May 9 last year which killed 8. All arrested political workers should also be released, he said.

"If these two demands are not met, a civil disobedience movement will start from December 14, and the government will be held responsible for any consequences," Khan said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Brigadier General (Retd.) Md. Masih Ud Dowla (1932-2024)

WE DEEPLY MOURN

Brigadier General (Retd.) Md. Masih Ud Dowla, son of Khan Bahadur Mohammad Ismail and Kawkabunessa Begum, brother of M. Anis Ud Dowla and Mohammad Asafuddowla died on 5th December 2024 at 7:15 pm at his residence.

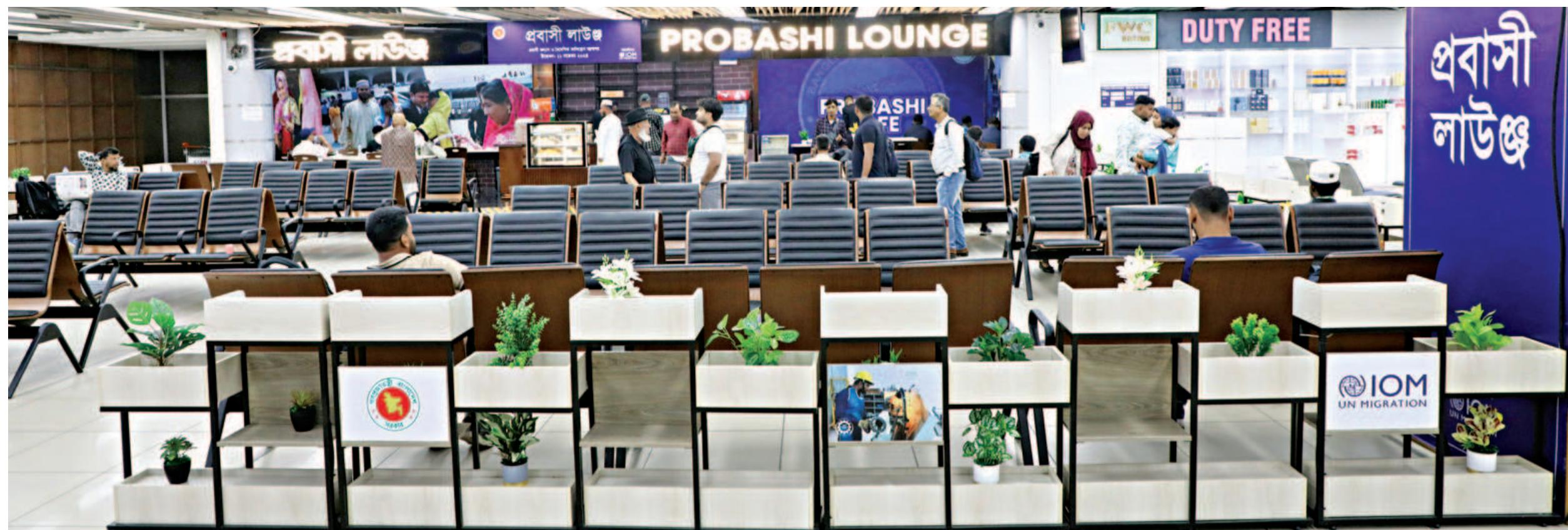
He was Brigade Commander of Independent Engineering Brigade in Bangladesh Army, former Defense Attaché in Saudi Arabia, former Chairman, CDA and former Operation Director, ACI Formulations Ltd.

He was 92 years old. He left behind his wife, two daughters Dr. Rumana Dowla, Rubaba Dowla and only son Fahim Dowla, five grandchildren, two brothers and one sister to mourn his death.

He has been buried in the Army Graveyard.

Please pray for the departed soul.

BEREAVED FAMILY



A dignified welcome

Dhaka airport finally opens lounges dedicated to migrant workers and their families

Migrant worker
Md Sumon, who has been in Oman for 17 years and usually comes home every two years, said he had no idea about the new facilities before arriving at the airport. When he reached the arrival area volunteers told him about the waiting room and guided him and his family members there.

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

A quiet revolution is underway at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka. For years, Bangladeshi migrant workers — one of the main pillars of the nation's economy — endured long hours of discomfort and humiliation at the airport, often standing for hours in overcrowded spaces with nowhere to rest before boarding their flights. Their families, who came from far-flung districts to bid farewell, shared similar hardships. But now, a wave of change has swept through the country's busiest airport. Two newly inaugurated facilities — the Waiting Lounge and the Probashi Lounge — are transforming the travel experience for migrant workers and their loved ones, offering them the comfort, respect, and dignity they deserve.

Both the facilities are the first of their kind at the Dhaka airport.

Waiting Lounge: No more standing around

Rozina Begum recalls her first trip to HSIA two years ago when her husband was flying to Saudi Arabia. "There was no proper place to sit, let alone rest. I stood outside the departure gate for two hours, waiting for him to go through the formalities," she shared. Like Rozina, many families of migrant workers faced similar ordeals, loitering around the airport in heat or rain, with no access to basic amenities.

But when Rozina returned to the airport recently to see off her son heading to Saudi Arabia, she was greeted by a vastly improved

their wait.

Abul Kashem, supervisor of the café, said his team works round the clock in three shifts at the café to serve "our honourable migrant workers and their families". He said traditional meals like biryani and rice will be added to the menu soon, providing more affordable food options for visitors.

Additionally, efforts are underway to further enhance the lounge's facilities based on feedback from users.

For Anisur Rahman, who came from Brahmanbaria to see off his son, the lounge was a lifesaver. "We arrived seven hours before the flight. Without this space, the wait would have been unbearable. Here, I

volunteers to help the migrant workers at the airport.

Voices of Gratitude

The changes at HSIA have been met with widespread appreciation from the migrant community.

Monirul Islam, who has been working in Malaysia for five years, was visibly moved by the facilities. "Earlier, we were treated like orphans at the airport — no one cared about us. Now, everyone here treats us with respect, calling us 'sir'. It's such an honour," he said, expressing his gratitude to the interim government.

Nazrul Islam, another migrant worker, echoed these sentiments. "This



could rest, eat, and even take a shower," he said.

Migrant worker Md Sumon, who has been in Oman for 17 years and usually comes home every two years, said he had no idea about the new facilities before arriving at the airport. When he reached the arrival area volunteers told him about the waiting room and guided him and his family members there.

"The changes are assuring. The place is relatively hustle-free, secured and comfortable for spending some hours with family members before boarding the plane," he said.

Probashi Lounge: An exclusive area for migrant workers

Inside the departure terminal, another facility — the Probashi Lounge — caters exclusively to migrant workers.

Sponsored by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), this lounge was inaugurated by the chief adviser on November 11. Accessible only after completing immigration formalities, it offers outbound workers a comfortable space to relax before their flights.

The lounge features 144 comfortable chairs, charging stations for electronic devices, and free Wi-Fi. There are also three large monitors inside the lounge to display flight information and other important messages to the migrant workers.

A subsidised café serves affordable meals and snacks, with items sourced from the Bangladesh Air Force bakery.

For workers like Humayun Kabir, who was waiting for his flight to Malaysia, the lounge was a welcome surprise. "The food prices here are reasonable, and the Wi-Fi allows me to stay connected with my family. It's a great way to pass the time before boarding," he said.

IOM is also sponsoring nearly 100

is the first time I've felt recognised for my contributions. The facilities here make me proud to be a remittance earner for my country," he said.

For many workers this correspondent talked to, it's a sign that their sacrifices are being acknowledged. "We work hard to support our families and the nation. These changes show that the government values our efforts," said Anwar Hossain, who was waiting in the Probashi Lounge for his flight to Saudi Arabia.

Building a Better Future

As Bangladesh continues to rely on remittances to stabilise its economy, it is only fitting that those driving this lifeline are given the respect they deserve. The Waiting Lounge and Probashi Lounge are a promising start to treating our overseas heroes right.

While these facilities bring much-needed comfort and pride to people like Rozina Begum, their late introduction highlights the long-standing neglect that the migrant workers faced. And a lot is yet to be done to make their stay overseas and travelling hassle-free.

Kamrul Islam, Executive Director of HSIA, agreed and said, for years, these "nation builders" were overlooked, their needs ignored in the very spaces they frequented most.

"We want to ensure that our migrant workers feel respected and valued. These lounges are just the beginning. Our goal is to make their travel experience as smooth and comfortable as possible," he said, emphasising the airport authority's commitment to honouring these workers.

And for workers like Md Sumon, these changes are meaningful. "This lounge is a symbol of respect. It's a reminder that we matter to the country we work so hard for," he said adding that the lounges mark a step in the right direction.

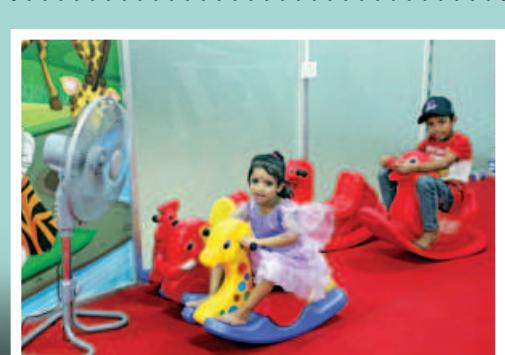


The Impact of Remittance Warriors

Remittances remain a lifeline for Bangladesh's economy, contributing around 6-7 percent to GDP, according to financial reports. In FY24, remittance inflows reached \$23.91 billion, a 10.66 percent increase from the previous year, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

The trend continues upward, offering relief amid external payment pressures and declining foreign reserves. In October, remittances rose 21.31 percent year-on-year to \$2.39 billion, following sharp jumps of 40 percent in August and 80 percent in September. From July to October, inflows totaled \$8.93 billion, up 30 percent from \$6.87 billion during the same period in FY24.

Meanwhile, in FY24, 11.42 lakh Bangladeshis went abroad for work, slightly surpassing FY23's 11.37 lakh, according to Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) data. Currently, over 1.49 crore Bangladeshi migrants work in 176 countries, contributing significantly to the nation's economic resilience.



Earlier, we were treated like orphans at the airport — no one cared about us. Now, everyone here treats us with respect, calling us 'sir.' It's such an honour.

Monirul Islam
a migrant worker





ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

On invisibilised VIOLENCE

During a recent class discussion on violence against women (and girl children) portrayed in South Asian literature, talk turned to the spectacularised nature of violence seen in literary texts.

NAZIA MANZOOR

From Sadat Hasan Manto's visceral depiction of physical trauma inflicted upon women's bodies in Partition-era India to Bapsi Sidhwa's offhand, normalised mention of sexual violence against women in their homes and outside, to the explicit, haunting rape of the central character in Shahidul Zahir's work on 1971, violence against women and girls is often portrayed in classic South Asian literary texts through a spectacularised, gratuitous, and one might even say, indulgent lens.

Such renderings of explicit violence can be linked with one of colonisation's foundational traits itself—the colonial mission at its core is an enterprise to conquer land. Consequently, theorists of postcolonial studies draw an unavoidable parallel between women and land as both embody the colonial desire to possess, exploit, dominate, violate, and own. Perhaps it is this land/women analogisation that leads to such portrayals in literature—of ripping away of skin, of vicious rapes, of molestation, of battered and bruised bodies.

Yet there are other, more quotidian forms of violence inflicted upon women

and girls and literary representations of such violence—fleshly and bodily—deserve close inspection.

As a reader of this genre of literature, I cannot help but find myself drawn more to the erasures and absences of minorised, everyday acts of violence. Without a doubt, the spectacle of gendered violence—such as Momena's raped body being discovered by her brother in Zahir's work—serves a specific, important purpose. But increasingly, the sort of violence that does not get the spectacularised treatment, that hides in between lines, that is withheld, that gets the ambiguous treatment and is left to the imagination—intrigues me more. Those effacements compel me to ask: What does such absence of everyday violence in literary representation tell us about violence against women in general?

Take, for instance, the violence of debilitating, all-consuming hunger and how it disproportionately affects women, especially when we consider the nexus among patriarchy, the gendered notion of shame and self-sacrifice, and caregiving. Abu Ishaque's *Surjo Dighal Bari* (1955), set in the immediate

aftermath of the 1943 Bengal famine, painstakingly and evocatively captures the horrors of hunger through the protagonist Jaigun. That Jaigun refuses to bow down to the strictures of purdah after the death of her husband undoubtedly marks her as a resilient, uncompromising female figure. Yet, Jaigun chooses to work because she refuses to let her children go hungry, establishing her as someone who abides by the sanctioned, accepted codes of Bengali motherhood.

A different but notable treatment of hunger from the female perspective can be seen in Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's *Pather Panchali* (1929) through the adolescent Durga. One perhaps recalls Satyajit Ray's film version depicting a white sari clad Durga rummaging through wild bushes searching for fresh fruit, roots, and practically anything that is edible to help her mother cook one decent meal for the poverty-stricken family. Durga however, is routinely shamed by her mother for wanting more food whereas Apu, her brother, in line with our conventions, gets the first pick of food. Here we must recall

another powerful visual medium, the Bangladeshi cartoon *Meena* and its compelling critique of such gendered food inequalities within the household where the titular Meena gets a single slice of a mango whereas her brother Raju gets the rest of it. Importantly, it is Raju who expresses his delight in the mango, commenting "aamta khub e moja", not Meena. The episode ends with the family serving two identical plates to their children as the boy child experiences a day of household work from the perspective of his sister.

In other words, fictional women experience hunger much in the same way women in real lives do—in private and in silence. Their joy in consuming food or relishing an item is also muted. Too often, women and girls are caregivers who want to satiate others' hunger—husbands, men they love, and children. Gendered hunger caused by systemic inequality such as man-made famine or patriarchal practices within the domestic space thus is a form of violence that affects women in both fictional and real worlds.

One curious way in which feminine hunger presents itself within our cultural landscape is through female ghosts or petnis. From shakchunni, dakeeni, mecho petni, and rakkhoshi—female supernatural beings are hungry, and their hunger is often addressed with relish as well as ridicule in our tales. Interestingly, hunger is permissible in the supernatural world—a petni can boldly claim "toke khabo", making her more comfortable in expressing her desires in contrast to her worldly counterparts. The mecho petni's craving for fish can easily be interpreted as a commentary of society's strict food codes imposed on women. Consider, for instance, the widowed ghost in Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's *Goynar Baksho* (1993) who wanted to taste fish—an action that bears witness to the complete denial of fish to her from the age of 12 when she became a widow. Rakkhoshi's all consuming hunger is code for shame and derision and

A further appearance of gendered food ethics is noticeable in novels about 9/11. In at least two prominent novels in the subgenre, fasting during Ramzan is portrayed with much fanfare but from the male perspective. In both *The Submission* (2011) by Amy Waldman and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, the protagonists Mo and Changez—diasporic subjects residing in post-9/11 New York—respectively have a complexity about Ramzan.

women whose loved ones die are often derogatorily termed rakkhoshi—she who eats it all, lives included. It appears that only in death can women and their ghostly alter egos express hunger or fondness for food as their living, corporeal beings are expected to serve, starve or both.

A further appearance of gendered food ethics is noticeable in novels about 9/11. In at least two prominent novels in the subgenre, fasting during Ramzan is portrayed with much fanfare but from the male perspective. In both *The Submission* (2011) by Amy Waldman and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, the protagonists Mo and Changez—diasporic subjects

and bring joy to herself and her loved ones.

Ultimately, much in the same way in which what women can or cannot wear is socially dictated, what women consume, at which stages of their lives, in what way is also designed and dictated by society, albeit in a more muted, invisibilised way. These underrepresented forms of violence thus deserve deeper engagement from us.

Nazia Manzoor teaches English at North South University. She is also Editor, Star Books and Literature. Reach her at nazia.manzoor@gmail.com.

POETRY

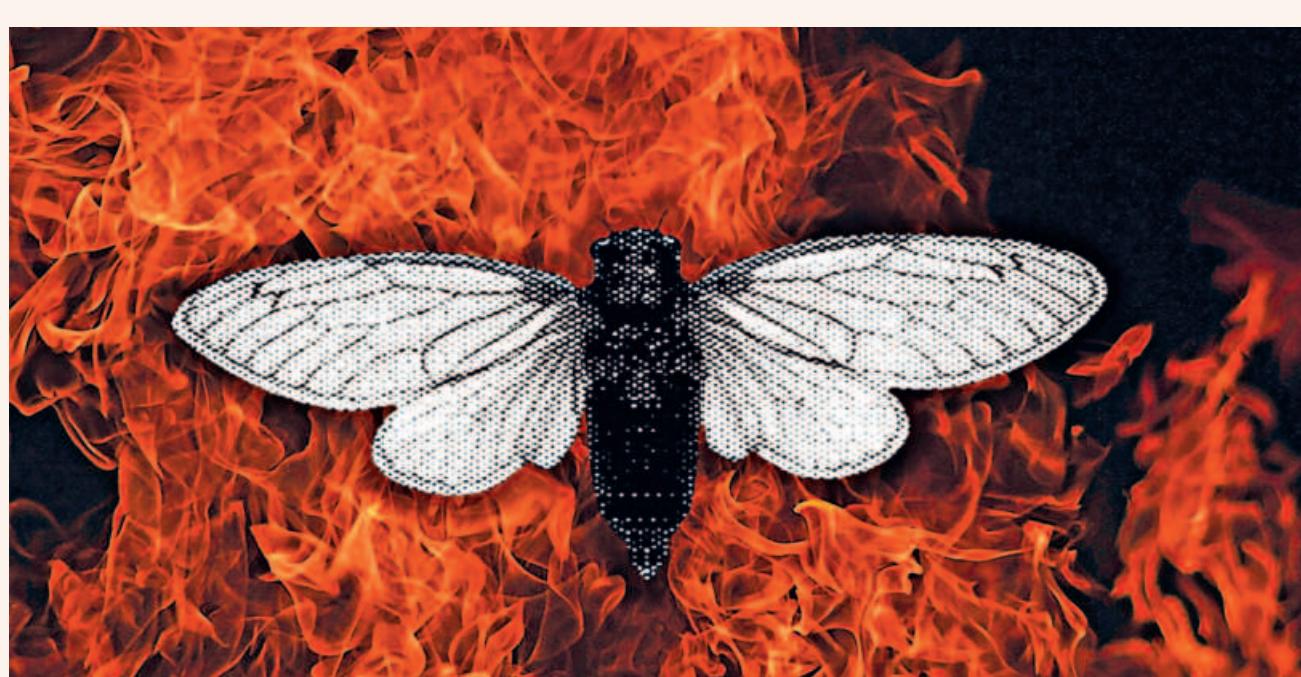
Remnants of a burning home

MALIHA TRIBHU

I fell asleep to the chatters of cicadas on a quiet summer night;
Half indulged in a delirium, half a dreamless sleep—with an unutterable desire clung to my chest like a safety-pillow,

Let the nightmare end, let me sleep till then.
And yet,
I woke up at the crackling noise of a burning home,
The fire, reaching up to the ceiling with no escape doors left to carry myself out.

A home that I had once thought to be my own
Suddenly caught fire that night—and I packed no bags
And left no goodbye letters at the dining table,
Only a handful of freshly-cut apples and a jar full of my father's favorite cookies,
A bread with strawberry jam spread on it
And a last cup of tea in my father's big-old ceramic mug—I am sorry, for I can no longer carry on standing under the roof that you set on fire, pretending to be your perfect daughter
Who doesn't scream at the sight of a waking nightmare,
I can no longer carry on being in a burning home,
And consider myself as grateful for my failing health and a wrecked heart.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

I am sorry, but I have forgotten what it feels like to be a daughter
Without having to prove my worth for it every once in a while,
And now I am an empty glass jar that has nothing left to offer—I am sorry,
For I do not have the strength in me to burn any longer
Just to keep you warm.
So, I fell back into a deep, dreamless sleep,
To the sounds of stars falling over my head
Like bullets crashing over my wearisome bones,
Like flocks of migrating herons quietly dropping dead,
And after the end of an unfathomable winter, when I finally awake—the house was no longer burning.
There was nothing left to burn, nor to mend.
The tea has gone cold, the apples all rotten—the cookies eaten by fungus, And the fungus spreading over my lungs.

I woke up to the sound of silence hovering over my room, with the sunlight splashing over my face and the dragonflies fluttering over the blues. Another winter has made its way to

this home now—in between my crushed bones,
like a wretched memory of an unwanted childhood.

And I cannot tell if I have awakened from a long, lost dream
Or am I still dreaming of a yet-to-be-found life?
I cannot decide if the war is over yet, and whether the fire has finally been put out.
I can no longer tell the difference between all the befores and afters of survival.
And whether I am safe once and for all without catching up to a burning home again.

All that I can truly think of is this—what about after all this survival?
What do I do with all this grief? Where do I put it? Where do I bury it?
Tell me, father, what do I do with the memories of once-a-burning-home clung to my throat?
Where shall I bury the remnants of a home that no longer exists?
Where shall I bury myself?

Maliha Tribhu is currently an undergraduate majoring in Marketing at the University of Dhaka. During her leisure hours, she likes to talk to moths and plants and soak under the winter sun.



Electrifying, eclectic, EZ

Ershad Zaman discusses new projects, possibility of Artcell return

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

"I sat at home for two years, restricted by nothing but my ego. I was in a dark place back then," said Ershad Zaman, taking a sip from his coffee cup. The seasoned guitarist, known for his stint with the iconic band Artcell, still commands a dedicated fan following who appreciate his remarkable contributions to music.

"Music in 2024 is a completely different game – a game of marketing, reels, streaming platforms, and whatnot. Unfortunately, I let my ego hinder my adaptation to this game, but that won't be the case anymore."

The musician, renowned for his fluid, mellifluous solos and roaring riffs, was one of the core contributors to Artcell's seminal albums *Onno Shomoy* and *Oniket Prantor*.

After periodically releasing singles like

Fight Back, Shobdahoron, a n d G a a n ,

embarking journey composed energetic musicians. As we took his pictures, he proudly displayed his Music Man guitar. "Times are different now. I recorded my first album (*Onno Shomoy*)

with a guitar I borrowed from Ranjan of Arbovirus. Kids nowadays – and I don't mean to sound like a boomer (*laughs*) – have all the instruments, tones, and software at their disposal!"

Ironically, the musicians in EZ are all talented artistes from the upcoming generation. The lineup includes Ajoy Banik, Mahin Irtisum, Rezwan, and Dipalok Dip. The band is gearing up to release their first single. "Mahin, our guitarist, was born when Onno Shomoy was released," remarked an amused Ershad Zaman with the beaming smile of a proud mentor. "That said, I've been nurturing this lineup for the past two years, so EZ isn't exactly a new band. However, we've only recently started performing regularly."

How does this lineup differ from his previous efforts?

"Completely different. We were lucky enough to peak together in Artcell and define an entire generation," commented the guitarist. "We didn't produce music people wanted; rather, we made music we loved and taught people to love it. We aim to do the same with EZ – because

music has evolved, and so have I."

The veteran guitarist elaborated, "We used to perform the 16 minute *Oniket Prantor* live in one go, but obviously, our bodies might not allow that now. What we can do is use our experience, expertise, and, most importantly, our souls to reach within and offer something new to listeners."

No matter how you look at it, the future seems bright for Ershad and his projects. He has already secured a tour in the USA in 2025. However, fans reading this article likely have just one question in mind.

The split between Artcell and Ershad Zaman was far from amicable, and the rather public fallout has been well documented.

Still, fans across the country yearn to see them perform together again. Could a reunion be possible?

"It's difficult to say at this moment, but I do believe time heals all wounds. So, I won't rule it out," said Ershad. "Wherever I go to perform, fans ask me to play Artcell songs – they are my creations, after all. I haven't faced any restrictions from the members of Artcell so far. A band is nothing less than a family, and I have never spoken ill of my former bandmates. They are still like family to me. A reunion is very much possible."

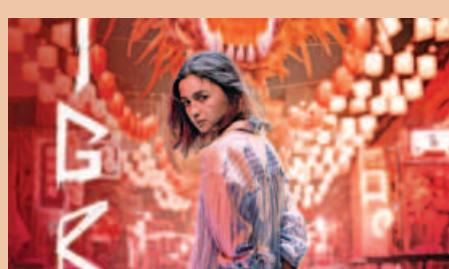


TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
A Nonsense Christmas with Sabrina Carpenter



Prime Video
Jigra



Hulu
Sugarcane



Disney+
From the World of Inside Out



HBO MAX
Creature Commandos



GOLD DUST Woman

Fleetwood Mac's *Gold Dust Woman*, the haunting closer of the album *Rumours*, is a masterclass in capturing emotional chaos. Stevie Nicks' ethereal vocals weave through bluesy guitar riffs, creating a spectral soundscape. The song's layered textures – heightened by eerie phaser effects and Mick Fleetwood's experimental percussion – build an atmosphere of mystique and despair.

Lyrically, Nicks explores themes of addiction, heartbreak, and resilience, painting a vivid portrait of a woman trapped in self-destruction. The autobiographical undertones add an aching vulnerability, reflecting the band's turbulent personal dynamics during *Rumours*' creation.

The recording process, marked by late night takes and emotional rawness, shaped the song's intensity. *Gold Dust Woman* remains timeless, a chilling reminder of Fleetwood Mac's ability to transform pain into transcendent art.

Out and about in Dhaka



Diversity of Nature

December 6-14 | 11am-7pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka, Gulshan



Cine Carnival 3.0

December 17 | 6pm
ULAB



Moar-e Jabo Comedy Night

December 18 | 7:30pm
Moar Gulshan Link

Spotify Wrapped mapped

Spotify Wrapped 2024 is out now! Taylor Swift continues her reign as the most-streamed global artiste, while Bad Bunny and Billie Eilish follow close behind.

This year's Wrapped introduces a "Music Evolution" feature, tracking how listeners' moods shifted



through their playlists, alongside AI-generated podcasts offering deeper insights into individual listening habits.

Popular tracks like Benson Boone's *Beautiful Things* and Billie Eilish's *Birds of a Feather* topped global charts, while the most-streamed album was Taylor Swift's *The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology*.

WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

Ariana Grande

Ariana Grande, enchanting fans with her 'wicked' smile at the premiere of Wicked in New York City, embodied her inner Glinda in a custom-made pink satin gown from Louis Vuitton. The strapless creation, with its sweetheart neckline and sculpted, corset-like bodice, fit her like a dream.

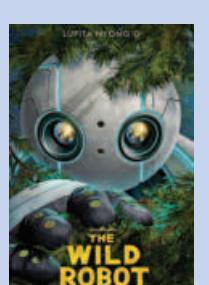
The gown was further elevated by a peplum detail at the waist, which gracefully transitioned into gathered fabric, forming a dramatic bubble hem. Her ensemble was completed with an elegant bun and a chic diamond necklace, adding a touch of refined glamour that left her looking absolutely stunning.



1-MINUTE REVIEW

A heartfelt tale of parenting and circuitry

Dream Works' *The Wild Robot*, directed by Chris Sanders, is a heartfelt exploration of humanity through the eyes of an outsider. Rozum Unit 7134, or Roz, voiced impeccably by Lupita Nyong'o, begins as a task-oriented robot washed ashore on a remote island. As Roz bonds with a misfit community of animals, particularly a gosling she adopts, her emotional evolution captivates.



With stunning animation blending photorealism and impressionism, the film explores themes of parenting, connection, and ecological responsibility. Notable performances, including Pedro Pascal's wily fox and Catherine O'Hara's world-weary possum, bring humour and depth.

Backed by Kris Bowers' emotive score, *The Wild Robot* is a modern animated classic, inviting tears and reflection on the power of love and adaptation in unexpected places.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Is Motijheel losing its glory as commercial hub?

AHSAN HABIB

Vacant commercial floors have been a common sight in Motijheel for years. Many building owners said they are not getting commercial tenants despite offering lower rents.

Motijheel, once the pulsing heart of Dhaka's trade and commerce, has become a shadow of its former self. Empty office floors now whisper tales of abandoned ambitions.

For example, take the Ittefaq Mor-Dilkusha-Naya Paltan stretch. The two kilometre patch has some 40 commercial buildings standing by one side of the road. Around 22 of them now have "to let" signs dangling.

Their yearslong wait for tenants speaks of a commercial exodus that has drained the lifeblood from what was once Dhaka's most vibrant business hub.

Most buildings have not found tenants since the previous occupants left in the past five years. Besides, existing businesses, banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) are moving to Gulshan, Banani or Baridhara.

New businesses are also hesitant to assume a business address in the old town area.

Take Adamjee Court Annex Building 2, located next to Motijheel park, as another example.

Once a busy 12-story building rented by a bank, it was full of people and activity.

After the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020,

Consequently, it was one of the busiest buildings in the area during trading hours. But now it is deserted in the middle of the day.

After the DSE relocated its office to its own building in Nikunja, thousands of square feet of space have remained vacant in the commercial structure.

Two brokerage houses and an insurance company have posted relocation signs, stating that they are also departing for greener pastures.

A similar sight was found at the Jibon Bima Tower in Dilkusha, where the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) rented space for its office since the 1990s.

Two floors, each boasting 6,200 square feet, now remain vacant in the building after the BSEC shifted to its own building in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in 2017.

Banks, whose headquarters once dominated Motijheel, earning it the status as the capital's downtown area, have mostly relocated to Gulshan.

A number of building owners in Motijheel said they are not getting commercial tenants despite offering comparatively lower rents.

Md Delwar Hossain, the owner of a building in Dilkusha, said he has been searching for

they have thousands of square feet of vacant spaces across their properties.

According to them, although vacant commercial floors have been a common sight in Motijheel for years, rents have not reduced. However, the increase in rent is slower than in other areas.

The average rent per square foot in this area ranges from Tk 60 to Tk 90, depending on location and amenities.

This is still lower than the rent one would expect to pay in newer commercial hubs like Gulshan and Banani.

According to bdproperty.com, a website for renting and selling real estate, the average rent in Gulshan range from Tk 180 to Tk 250 per square foot. In Banani, it ranges from Tk 70 to Tk 150.

Alongside the shift in commercial offices, cinemas in the area are also suffering.

Modhumita Cinema Hall, located on Toynebee Road, was once a top-rated movie theatre. But now it opens irregularly amid a dearth of visitors.

The situation is even worse for Ovishar Cinema Hall, which has been closed since the pandemic.

Md Liton, owner of Ovishar Store located next to the cinema hall, said he started his shop in the 1990s. Back then, he and his three brothers used to sell snacks.

The area surrounding the cinema hall was once swarming with people, who gathered to watch movies. As the cinema business declined, his three brothers left the store in search of other jobs.

Liton said that people once bought cinema tickets from the black market at prices three times higher than the official rate. Now, the hall building has become a ghost palace, having been closed for years. People now flock to the multiplexes in large shopping malls to enjoy movies.

Motahar Hossain Masum, who grew up near the Old Dhaka area and visits Motijheel frequently, said although banks have relocated their offices, several top food sellers remain and continue to attract a large number of people.

The self professed gourmand shared some insights into the cuisine scene.

Established in 1958, Deshbandhu Hotel continues to serve food that evokes nostalgia for many.

Other popular hotels in the area include Ghoria and Hirajheel. These hotels welcome a large number of diners daily.

In the 1980s, when the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) building was constructed, its cafeteria attracted white-collar officials with its upscale design and quality food, Masum said.

Purbani Hotel also has a long history of attracting white-collar people, he added.

Motijheel's transformation into a different place at night is striking.

As people rush home after work, the area becomes eerily quiet. On weekends and public holidays, the streets in Motijheel host cricket, football, or badminton for children.

Banks shun old-time Motijheel for glitzy Gulshan

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Motijheel is losing its historic lustre as Dhaka's commercial hub, with Gulshan, among the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the capital, stealing its thunder.

Nearly half of the country's 61 banks and 35 non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) have shifted their head offices from Motijheel to Gulshan in the past decade while many others harbour aspirations of moving to what has quickly become the most appealing zip code.

Not only that, but even newly licensed banks, NBFI and insurance companies have established head offices in Gulshan despite the fact that the Bangladesh Bank is still situated in Motijheel.

For example, Bengal Commercial Bank, awarded a Bangladesh Bank licence in 2020, established its head office in Gulshan. The same is true for Community Bank Bangladesh, licensed in 2018.

Industry people said major factors for this trend include changing business and economy, proximity to the offices of some of the largest corporations in the country as well as hotels and shopping malls, and a lack of modernisation of the Motijheel area.

"Most factories are situated in Gazipur, Ashulia, Tongi and Uttara. So it is punishing for our clients to visit Motijheel. Most of them feel Gulshan is more convenient. That is why banks are so keen to shift their head offices to the area," Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Shahjalal Islami Bank, told The Daily Star.

Ahmed outlined another key reason for the Sharia-based lender shifting its head office from Motijheel to Gulshan Avenue in 2014, saying: "Most luxury hotels and shopping malls are located in Gulshan, making it convenient for foreign buyers who visit banks with our local customers."

He added that a major portion of clients now reside in Uttara, Gulshan, Banani and Dhanmondi, making it easier to visit Gulshan compared to Motijheel, adding that the latter offered only one benefit.

"Bangladesh Bank is located in Motijheel, which is the only convenient factor for banks and financial institutions."

The senior banker added that the Motijheel area has been stagnant in terms of development while Gulshan and Uttara were prospering through the expansion of infrastructure and industries.

M Khurshed Alam, deputy managing director of Eastern Bank, which now also boasts a Gulshan address, told The Daily Star that most banks want to be in the vicinity of big corporate houses and businesses, a majority of which are situated in Gulshan and Uttara.

"Similarly, a majority of manufacturing units are located in Gazipur, Bhaluka and Mymensingh. So, banks are shifting their head offices to Gulshan," he said.

Alam added that foreign buyers also prefer Gulshan and Banani instead of Motijheel since those areas are closer to the Dhaka airport.



the bank began to relocate its head office to Gulshan area in phases. Now, most floors in the building remain empty, leaving it gloomy even in daylight.

The scene is similar at the DSE Annex Building, roughly a 15-minute walk from Adamjee Court building. During a visit there recently, the 11-story structure was found eerily quiet at 1:00 PM, with only two or three people in the elevator.

This was beyond anyone's wildest imagination just a few years ago.

In the 2010s, when the building was full of stock brokerage firms, people had to queue just to enter the elevator. All the main activities of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) were also handled inside the building from 1959 until 2019.

tenants for four years as one floor remains vacant.

This area was highly sought-after in the 90s, with commercial spaces fetching the highest rents across all of Dhaka. But few people now call him to inquire about the floor.

"While the building itself is now old-fashioned, there are many vacant spaces that are not that old. The problem is that large conglomerates, banks, NBFI and new-generation corporations are not coming to this area," Hossain said.

Most businesses were concentrated in Motijheel due to easy communication and proximity to public offices, he added.

Officials at Sadharan Bima Corporation, which has several buildings in Motijheel, said