

## GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX 2024 12pc Bangladeshis undernourished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 12 percent of Bangladesh's population is undernourished, according to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2024.

The report, unveiled at a Dhaka hotel, also highlights the need for increased efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goal of zero hunger by pointing out that 2.9 percent of children in Bangladesh die before turning five, 11 percent of the surviving ones are wasted, and 23.6 percent are stunted.

The event, themed "Towards Zero Hunger: Challenges and Way Forward," was organised jointly by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe.

While incremental progress has been made in reducing hunger, the pace is insufficient to meet global commitments, such as the UN's SDG 2, GHI 2024 revealed.

With a score of 19.4, Bangladesh was ranked 84th out of 127 countries in the GHI 2024, falling into the "moderate hunger" category.

In comparison, the report places India at 105th position (score 27.3), Pakistan at 109th (score 27.9), and Afghanistan at 116th (score 30.8).

Meanwhile, Myanmar (15.7), Nepal (14.7), and Sri Lanka (11.3) are placed ahead in the ranking.

While this is a significant improvement from a score of 33.8 in 2000, experts noted that progress is not fast enough to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

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Israeli military forces in the buffer zone with Syria near the Druze village of Majdal Shams in the Israel-annexed Golan Heights yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## CA press wing debunks more misinfo on Indian media

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser's Press Wing yesterday debunked two news stories published by several Indian media outlets and labelled them as misleading and fake.

India.com published an article titled "Bangladesh to get bankrupt like Pakistan!" which claims that many clothing brands are now shifting their focus to India.

The press wing on its Facebook page, The CA Press Facts, called the article misleading.

It said Bangladesh's export earnings for November 2024 grew by 15.63 percent compared to the previous month. The apparel sector earned an extra \$1.77 billion during July-November, a 12.34 percent rise compared to last year's July-November earnings.

The data solidifies the fact that Bangladesh is neither going bankrupt nor losing any international brand's support any time soon, said the post.

Meanwhile, ABP Ananda and Sangbad Pratidin, two other Indian outlets, SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

## Tension, fear on Teknaf frontier

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Faysal Anwar, a resident of Nayapara village, said, "We heard the sound of bombing and shelling coming from across the Naf river in Myanmar for weeks. We worry about the safety of our families."

As per international media reports, there had been intense fighting between the Myanmar junta and ethnic armed group Arakan Army. Locals say there has not been any bombing since Sunday, but military planes were frequently flying over the border.

Abdus Shukkur, a fisherman of Sanrang village, claimed that the Arakan Army detained several fishermen from the Naf estuary a few days ago.

"Sometimes they open fire on the Bangladeshi fishermen, saying that we are in their territory. We cannot risk our lives while fishing," he said.

Maulana Harun Amini, a resident of Ghumdhum area in Naikhongchhari, Bandarban, said he was afraid to go to his farm next to the border.

"Who knows when they will begin fighting again and one of us will become a victim?" he asked.

Contacted, Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sheikh Ehsan Uddin said,

"The estuary of the Naf is used by large trawlers that go to the sea. We restricted the movement of those trawlers through that part."

Abdul Jalil, president of fishing trawler owners' association in Teknaf, said despite risks, around 10 fishing trawlers went to the sea via the Naf.

"We are scared. This is our livelihood. That's why the fishermen are risking their lives," he said.

**BANGLADESH-MYANMAR  
TRADE DISRUPTED**

Jasim Uddin, general manager of Teknaf United Land Port Ltd, said, "The last boat to arrive from Myanmar with goods was a fishing trawler from Yangon on December 7. Currently, four Myanmar trawlers are at the land port jetty. The boatmen are not willing to return."

UNO Ehsan said the BGB and Coast Guards were on alert to prevent illegal entry to Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Rohingya leaders in Cox's Bazar are concerned about the long-awaited repatriation process.

"We want to sit with the Arakan Army and talk about our chances of returning to our homeland," said Kamal Hossain, chairman of the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals Representative Committee in Cox's Bazar.

Mohammad Zubair, chairman of Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, said people of his community were frequently calling him from Maungdaw township and saying that they were in fear of a crackdown on Rohingyas.

Many international media reported that the Arakan Army claimed the capture of the last army outpost in the strategic western town of Maungdaw, gaining full control of the territory along Bangladesh-Myanmar border on Sunday.

AP quoted the Arakan Army as saying that after claiming control over the northern part of Rakhine, it ordered the suspension of transport across the Naf because police and local Muslims affiliated with the army were attempting to escape by boat to Bangladesh.

AP reported, "The rebel group has been accused of major human rights violations, particularly involving its capture of the town of Buthidaung in mid-May, when it was accused of forcing an estimated 2 lakh residents, largely Rohingyas, to leave, and then setting fire to most of the buildings. It was accused of attacking Rohingya civilians fleeing the fighting in Maungdaw in August."

## Aftab Bahini of Kurigram

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camp was relocated to Rajibpur High School in Char Rajibpur upazila, he added.

"The ranks of Aftab Bahini swelled as local students and youths joined the war effort, exceeding 700 members. Subsequently, several additional camps were set up in Kodalkathi in Char Rajibpur, and Tapurchar and Dantbhang in Rowmari," Sabur Farooqi, a prominent freedom fighter of the Aftab Bahini.

"As the scale of freedom fighter training expanded, Rowmari CG High School emerged as one of the largest training camps in the country, where around 30,000 freedom fighters received training over the course of the war."

**DEFENDING MUKTANCHAL**

During this period, the freedom fighters declared a 600 square-mile liberated zone, known as Rowmari Muktantchal, spanning from Dewanganj in Jamalpur to Char Rajibpur in Kurigram via Sundanganj in Gaibandha.

In June and July, Aftab Bahini maintained a strong presence in Kodalkathi Char in Char Rajibpur upazila.

"On August 6, the Pakistani army, aiming to capture Rowmari, launched a heavy attack on Kodalkathi Char, forcing the freedom fighters to retreat to Kartimari Char," freedom fighter Nur Hossain told The Daily Star.

To defend Rowmari for strategic importance, Aftab sought reinforcements from Shafaat Jamil, commanding officer of the 3rd East Bengal Regiment.

In response, a company led by lieutenant Nurunnabi Khan was deployed to Rowmari, said fighter Kafil Uddin, another Aftab Bahini fighter.

The final stand against the Pakistani forces was made near Kodalkathi to prevent access to Rowmari through the Sonabhoori river and Jalchhera canal in Char Rajibpur.

At this time, a 40-mile defensive perimeter, stretching from Char Rajibpur to Ghughumarir Char, was put up by the 3rd Bengal and Aftab Bahini freedom fighters, said Sabur Farooqi.

"On August 8, the Pakistani army attempted to advance towards Rowmari with gunboats and launches through the Jalchhera canal.

"After a day-long battle against fierce resistance from the freedom fighters, the Pakistani forces were forced to retreat," he added.

Despite numerous skirmishes in August and six major attacks between September 21 and 26, the Pakistani



Force chief Aftab Ali (1925 - 2017)

- Area: Kurigram, Jamalpur, and Gaibandha.
- Key feat: Defended 600 square-mile liberated zone in Rowmari.
- Timeframe: March- December.
- Operations: At least 30.
- Members: At least 700.



Recent photo of Rowmari CG Zaman High School ground. During the war, this was the biggest training camp in the country. Here, around 30,000 freedom fighters were trained.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK



Recent photo of Balabari railway station in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram. Here, Aftab Bahini fought the Pakistani army on October 17, 1971.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

## Migrants in KSA, Malaysia to get MRPs

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caused a delay of nearly one and a half years due to resistance and tendering complications," he alleged.

He added that the current government had cancelled the earlier process and implemented the fastest possible solution, apologising for the hardships faced by expatriates.

To ensure such issues do not recur,

he said that a significant number of MRPs have been issued to clear the backlog, with no major disruptions expected in the next two to three years.

Regarding e-passports, Asif said plans are underway to send teams to collect biometric data from expatriates abroad, with further updates to be provided soon.

This newspaper on December

8 reported that over 26,000 Bangladeshis in Malaysia were facing a delay in passport renewal, which made their lives abroad uncertain.

It also reported that a nexus between touts and a section of officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur is allegedly behind the situation surrounding the migrant workers' passports.

## 3 pro-BNP bodies march to Akhaura

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of leaders and activists in minibuses and private cars joined the march from the party's Naya Paltan headquarters in the capital at 9:00am and reached Akhaura around 4:00pm.

The march was organised to protest against the attack on the Assistant High Commission of Bangladesh in Agartala, desecration of the national flag in Kolkata, and an alleged conspiracy to incite communal unrest.

Addressing the concluding rally in Akhaura as the chief guest, Jubo Dal President Monayer Munna said, "The people of Bangladesh want to see India as a friend. But when the question of sovereignty comes, Bangladeshis are ready to take risks if necessary."

"We must strongly resist anyone who looks at Bangladesh with ill intent," he remarked.

"India supported and sheltered the previous fascist government, and it still does," he said, urging the interim government to talk to India about bringing Sheikh Hasina and her accomplices back to Bangladesh for trial over the killings during the July-August uprising. "We demand trial for every life lost. Awami League terrorists hiding in India must be brought back to face accountability," he added.

Swechhchasebak Dal President SM Jilani slammed India for killing Bangladeshis along the border, "repeatedly interfering in Bangladesh's internal affairs and conspiring against its interests."

"We hope this long march will awaken India's conscience. We will stand guard at every part of Bangladesh," he added.

Jubo Dal General Secretary Nurul Islam Noyon alleged India has exploited

Bangladesh since independence. "We send them Jamdani saris and hilsa fish, but in return, they give us Felani's body and phensedyl."

Chhatra Dal President Rakibul Islam Rakib said, "If Sheikh Hasina engages in another conspiracy or if any extremist organisation dares to insult Bangladesh's national flag, we will respond appropriately."

"No matter how much India conspires, nothing will be successful. The student community across the country, under the leadership of the Chhatra Dal, is united to counter India's aggression."

Many leaders from Dhaka missed the Akhaura rally due to a massive traffic jam that stretched for about five kilometres near the venue.

Party members from the three organisations, coming from various districts such as Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Brahmanbaria, Cumilla, Feni, Noakhali, Bogura, Rajshahi, and Sylhet, participated in the rally.

As the convoy made its way through Narayanganj, Narsingdi, and Brahmanbaria, leaders and activists from three organisations greeted them enthusiastically, chanting slogans in support.

The vehicles in the convoy bore stickers labelled "Long March" and displayed Bangladesh's national flag and the BNP's party flag.

The government beefed up security along the India-Bangladesh border and Brahmanbaria to avoid any untoward incident.

Brahmanbaria Superintendent of Police Mohammad Jabedur Rahman said that 200 police personnel were deployed around 350 yards from the Bangladesh-India border.

In addition, Border Guard

Bangladesh's 60 Battalion Commander Lt Col AM Jaber Bin Jabbar said that a large number of BGB personnel were deployed in the land port area and immigration check post during the pro-BNP organisations' long march programme. BGB personnel were also on alert to avoid any kind of chaos at the border.

Traders at the land port said goods would be exported to India until midday.

Akhaura International Immigration Check Post authorities said that passengers holding passports of the two countries would be allowed to cross the border during the demonstration.

While inaugurating the programme in Dhaka, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged that India supported the "bloodthirsty Lady Pharaoh Sheikh Hasina" over the last 16 years.

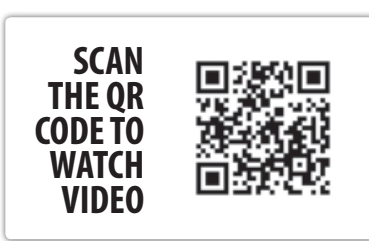
India, despite being a democratic country, does not want its neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka to be governed by the will of their peoples due to its hegemonic attitude, he said.

"Why should they [neighbouring countries] follow Delhi's words?" he asked.

On their way, the participants of the long march held a brief rally at Bhairab intersection in Kishoreganj at 1:00pm.

Earlier on December 8, the three organisations affiliated with the BNP submitted a memorandum to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

[Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent Mashuk Hridoy also contributed to this report]



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forces were unable to reach the Rowmari front due to the vigilance of the Aftab Bahini.

**RECLAIMING KODALKATHI**

In late September, Major Ziauddin, commander of the 1st East Bengal Regiment, ordered Aftab Bahini to capture Kodalkathi Char.

On October 1, nearly 300 Aftab Bahini freedom fighters crossed the Sonabhoori River and set up camp in Shankar Madhabpur village.

The following morning, a fierce clash broke out between the freedom

fighters and two Pakistani patrol teams that entered the village.

"In the confusion of the battle, the two Pakistani teams mistakenly engaged each other in friendly fire," said Sabur.

"Our platoons, led by Riazul and Mansur, seized this opportunity and attacked. The ensuing chaos led to the elimination of both Pakistani companies, resulting in the deaths of over 150 Pakistani soldiers."

Later, the Pakistani forces were compelled to abandon Kodalkathi and retreat to Chilmari upazila. This marked the liberation of an 800 square-mile area east of the Brahmaputra.

Till December, the Aftab Bahini fought and defended the Rowmari Muktantchal.

Translated and edited from Bangla by Subrata Roy.

## IMF offers extra \$1b for reforms

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The policy documents are a memorandum of economic and financial policy of the government, a letter of intent, a technical memorandum of understanding and a memorandum of understanding.

While the IMF is satisfied with the interim government's various reform initiatives, it will impose specific conditions for the next loan tranches, the officials said.

This time, IMF is giving more emphasis on revenue collection, reducing the subsidy for power, energy and fertiliser sectors and banking sector governance.

In case of increasing revenue collection, the IMF wanted to know the government plans regarding tax

exemption in the next fiscal budget.

Besides, the IMF may impose a condition to separate policy and administration at the National Board of Revenue and reduce the multiple VAT rates.

In the case of the central bank and banking sector, the IMF could impose various conditions for the amendments of the Bangladesh Bank Order, the Bank Company Act, and Bankruptcy.

The IMF could also give a condition for bringing down arrears in government subsidy and price adjustment.

As of June, the government's arrears was about Tk 60,000 crore. However, after taking charge, the interim government brought the amount

down significantly, according to finance ministry officials.

The finance ministry is aiming to clear the arrears by half by June next year and the rest in the next fiscal year.

In case of price adjustment, the IMF has suggested raising the electricity tariffs further.

However, the interim government is unwilling to adjust the price this fiscal year because it could fuel inflation further.

The government, however, will cut expenditures of power plants in a bid to reduce subsidies, the finance ministry officials said.

A closing meeting of the IMF mission will take place on December 17 with the finance adviser.