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CYBER PROTECTION ORDINANCE Draft fails to shake off ghosts of the past

ZYMA ISLAM and MAHMUDUL HASAN

The newly approved draft Cyber Protection Ordinance retains many of the clauses of its predecessors that drew flak from across the world for stifling freedom of expression.

The ordinance, approved by the interim government's advisory council on December 24, replaces the Cyber Security Act (CSA), and its more draconian precursor, the Digital Security Act (DSA).

The DSA had gained notoriety for having been used as a tool by the Awami League government to muzzle dissent and journalists by arresting and incarcerating them.

The DSA's watered-down version, the CSA, kept clauses that criminalised free speech and just removed stringent and non-bailable jail terms.

Much like its antecedents, the newly drafted ordinance limits free speech online and disregards the right to freedom of expression as a universal right.

The draft penalises "hurting religious sentiment" with a jail term of two years and a fine of Tk 10 lakh. Both CSA and DSA had this provision.

The Daily Star obtained data from Centre for Governance Studies' DSA Tracker and found that 44 percent of the cases filed under the DSA for "hurting religious sentiment" were against the religious minorities, particularly the Hindus.

Last year, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Irene Khan wrote to the then Awami League government, criticising this clause.

"International human rights law protects individuals from intolerance, violence and discriminations based on their religion or



PHOTO: STAR/FIRE SERVICE

Smoke billows out of a building of the Secretariat as firefighters battle the fires that broke out early yesterday. Security personnel stand guard outside. Inset, firefighters inside the building.



FIRE AT SECRETARIAT

Documents of 5 ministries, divisions burned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Documents of at least five ministries and divisions have been burned as fires ravaged part of Building-7 of the Secretariat for almost 10 hours.

The fires were seen around 1:52am in two parts of the nine-storey building within the highly secured Secretariat complex.

Around 2:15am, a firefighter setting up hose pipes was run over and killed by a truck on Abdul Gani Road, which had not been closed to traffic then.

As officials are trying to determine the cause of fires, many have expressed suspicion that it was an act of sabotage.

In the morning, Adviser Asif Mahmud wrote on Facebook, "We were working on uncovering the embezzlement and corruption that happened in the past at the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives. Evidence of a misappropriation of several thousand crore taka had been found. The extent of damage caused by the fire is not

known. Those involved in this conspiracy to undermine our efforts will not be spared."

Asif told reporters in the evening that documents of those financial irregularities had been burned, adding that those records could still be found at the administration offices in the districts.

Documents at the ministries of local government, labour, and sports and the divisions of telecommunications and highways were fully or partially damaged, he said at the Foreign Service Academy.

THE FIRES

Seven firefighters from the Secretariat Fire Station were the first responders.

"We reached the spot after being informed... and found the scissor gate of the building locked. We cut the padlock and rushed to the fifth floor where the fire was burning. There, we saw another locked scissor gate. We cut that padlock too and saw the fires burning at three places.

"We started spraying water on the west side of the building as that fire was larger. Later, other

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The risk of such clauses being misused or abused remains. It is very important for the political settlement to be such that the implementation of the law happens based on civility and human rights.

FAIZ AHMAD TAIYEB

policy adviser of the Information Communication Technology Division

belief, but it does not allow restriction of criticism of religious belief or sentiment," she wrote.

A clause criminalising defamation, which was heavily used for incarcerating journalists and politicians, has been removed in the draft and replaced with a "cyber-bullying" clause.

The section states that it is a criminal offence to use any website or any electronic medium to insult, harass, blackmail or humiliate a person. The offence carries jail terms of up to two years and a fine of Tk 10 lakh. Use of slurs and offensive words is deemed a violation under this section.

It states that the content that defames someone or causes mental trauma would be under the purview of this law.

The data from Centre for Governance Studies shows that of the over 5,000 accused under the DSA, nearly half were prosecuted for social media posts deemed critical of the government, officeholders, or elected representatives.

One in three accused under the DSA and one in four sued under the CSA were journalists, the data shows.

Saimum Reza Talukder, a prosecutor at the International Crimes Tribunal who specialises in digital rights and cyber laws, said, "The vague wording of 'cyberbullying' and the broad scope of the definition might also be abused in future, because the notion of defamation is also there. Therefore, this needs to be elaborated.

"... Journalistic freedom might be hampered or affected in this draft."

He added, "I understand the importance of curbing hate speech or

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Firefighter Nayan, a family's only hope, gone too soon

KONGKON KARMAKER

Sohanur Zaman Nayan's father, Akhtaruzzaman, a 60-year-old farmer from Chhoran Atkunia village in Rangpur's Mithapukur upazila, had pinned all his dreams on his only son.

Nayan's job as a firefighter brought a world of expectations for his family, who have long been suffering from poverty and the trauma of losing their home to river erosion.

Just as Nayan's career had begun bringing a sense of security to his family, tragedy struck. The 24-year-old was killed after a truck hit him when he and his colleagues were working to douse the fire at the Secretariat early yesterday.

Nayan has one elder sister, who is married off. Despite their limited means, his parents, Akhtaruzzaman and Nargis Akter, 53, ensured he completed higher secondary education.

In 2022, he secured a job as a firefighter with Fire Service and Civil Defence -- a turning point for the family.

Numb with grief, Akhtaruzzaman said, "A father carrying his son's body on his shoulders is the heaviest burden in life. I had so many dreams for him, but they are all gone now. His untimely death has plunged my family back into hardship."

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1932-2024

Manmohan Singh no more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Manmohan Singh, the former Indian prime minister whose economic reforms made his country a global powerhouse, has passed away in New Delhi last night.

He was 92.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed Singh's death, posting on X that India "mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished leaders".

Singh was taken to a hospital in New Delhi after he lost consciousness at his home yesterday evening, but could not be resuscitated and was pronounced dead at 9:51pm local time, according

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Farmers harvesting matured cucumbers, locally known as kheera, from a farm in Barishal Sadar's Bukhainagar area. The seeds of these cucumbers were sown in the month of Agrahayan, and it took around a month for them to be fully grown. The farmers usually sell them to local village markets at Tk 20-30 per kilogram. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

PURBACHAL PLOTS ACC to probe Hasina, family

ACC sues Nasrul, family over Tk 3,222cr shady transactions, Tk 64.23cr illegal assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has started investigation into the allegations of abuse of power to obtain plots of land against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her close family members.

Aktar Hossain, director general (prevention) of the ACC, yesterday confirmed this development to journalists at the ACC headquarters in the capital.

He said, "The ACC has decided to look into allegations of irregularities in the allocation of plots in Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha's Purbachal New Town project in the names of six members of Hasina's family."

According to the ACC documents, Hasina, in collaboration with Rajuk senior officials, had six plots of land allotted to herself, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed Putul, younger sister Sheikh Rehana, her son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and her daughter Azmina Siddiq.

The six plots, each measuring 10 kathas, are in the diplomatic zone of sector-27 in the Purbachal New Town project.

This is the fourth probe by the ACC against Hasina, after her fall on August 5. For the first time, Saima, Rehana, the son Radwan, and her daughter Azmina are

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Bangladeshi teen ‘shot by Indian Khasias’ dies

STAR REPORT

A 16-year-old Bangladeshi teenager died yesterday after being shot allegedly by members of India’s Khasia community along the Bangladesh-India border near Jaintiapur upazila of Sylhet.

The incident occurred around 12:30pm near the upazila’s Minatila area.

The victim was identified as Md Maruf Mia, son of Md Shahabuddin of Jhingabari village in Jaintiapur upazila.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB 48) Sylhet Battalion confirmed the matter at a press brief following the incident, reports Prothom Alo.

According to the BGB, Maruf was shot by the Khasia people while he, along with several others, attempted to cross the border illegally into India in the afternoon.

He was later rescued and taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College, where he died from his injuries around 3:00pm, reports UNB.



Ignoring the nearby footbridge, jaywalkers cross the busy Satmasjid Road in the capital’s Dhanmondi, putting themselves and other road users at risk. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Four held over arson attack on houses of Tripura community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four people over the incident of arson, in which houses of Tripura community in Bandarban’s Lama were torched early Wednesday.

The arrestees are Stephen Tripura, Joachim Tripura, Mong She Ma Tripura, and Md Ibrahim, said Shahidullah Kawser, superintendent of Bandarban police.

An elderly person of the Tripura community filed a first information report (FIR) accusing six rival Tripura Christian community members and a Bangalee over the incident, said a press release of the Chief Adviser Office’s press wing.

Preliminary police investigations have found that the arson could be linked to a long-running rivalry between two groups of Tripura community members, the release said.

Police are seriously probing the incident and have stepped up efforts to arrest the culprits, it said.

CHT Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma is scheduled to visit the affected community in Notun Tongjhiri Tripura Paratoday.

The district authorities have provided immediate food and relief materials to the families. They said the affected families have permanent homes in a nearby village in Lama upazila, and the torched homes were their makeshift “Tong” homes, said the CA press wing.

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Govt issues

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gather around the Kakrail Mosque today (Friday).

The home ministry has issued two gazette notifications to that end, both signed by Deputy Secretary Israt Jahan.

According to the gazettes, the instructions are aimed at maintaining peace and security at the Kakrail Mosque, the centre of Tabligh activities in Bangladesh.

Kazi Mohammad Saiful Islam, joint secretary (political-2 branch) of the Public Security Division of the home ministry, told The Daily Star, “The restrictions have been issued only centring the Kakrail Mosque.”

Earlier on Tuesday, Zubair followers announced they would hold an indefinite sit-in in Kakrail area from yesterday to press home three demands, including a ban on Tabligh activities by Saad followers. They also announced they would not allow Saad followers to carry out any activities at the Tongi Jitema ground and the Kakrail Mosque.

Tension has been brewing since three people were killed in a clash between the two factions of Tabligh Jamaat in Tongi on December 18.

That day, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retired) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury held separate meetings with the leaders from both groups. The Saad group was led by Reza Arif and several others, while the Zubair followers were led by Mamunul Haque, secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis.

This year, the first phase of the Biswa Jitema is set to be held from January 31 to February 2, and the second phase from February 7 to 9.

State intelligence agency

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Rizvi said former prime minister Sheikh Hasina used intelligence agencies to intimidate opposition figures from the grassroots to the national level.

“She tried to eliminate the BNP from politics to pave the way for forming another political party. For 16-17 years, Sheikh Hasina used intelligence agencies to weaken and break the BNP.”

The senior BNP leader also raised concerns about the recently passed Cyber Security Ordinance 2024, viewing it as an extension of the controversial Digital Security Act.

He criticised the law for granting excessive powers to law enforcement agencies, posing a significant threat to freedom of speech.

Senior BNP leader Nazrul Islam Khan expressed his displeasure with the interim government’s criticism of political parties.

He questioned the legitimacy of such criticism from individuals who are not actively involved in politics.

Rizvi also raised concerns about a fire that broke out at the Secretariat while the government was seeking documents related to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her associates.

He suggested that the fire was suspicious and may have been an attempt to destroy evidence.

In a separate statement, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir expressed deep concern over the Secretariat fire and demanded a thorough investigation to bring the culprits to justice.

He emphasised the importance of compensating the families of the deceased and injured in the incident.

Draft fails to shake off ghosts of the past

FROM PAGE 1

harmful speech against religion. Hate speech must be well-defined in the law so that it does not get combined with any other issues, and it does not get abused.”

The draft also enables a supervisory body, National Security Agency, to block any content that poses a threat to national solidarity, the nation’s economic activities, national security, defence, religious values, public order, or incites racial hatred or animosity.

Law enforcers can also request the agency to block such information.

Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer at Robi Axiata Ltd, said, “It is unfortunate to observe that several recommendations from the industry stakeholders have not been accommodated in the draft. Expanding the capacity of content blocking through organisations under the ICT division will create the scope for misuse of power.”

Under the proposed law, a National Cyber Security Council led by the chief of the government is to be formed. The council will include relevant ministers and law enforcement agency heads as its members.

The council can directly issue instructions to the agency to take action.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, the policy adviser of the Information Technology Division, and one of the authors of the ordinance, said, “The risk of such clauses being misused or abused remains.

“It is very important for the political

settlement to be such that the implementation of the law happens based on civility and human rights.”

Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, executive director of Tech Global Institute, said, “... These provisions legitimise surveillance and transnational repression, both of which were disproportionately abused by the Awami League government for extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

“The ordinance fails to address any structural issues around censorship, surveillance, consolidation of state powers, and discretionary powers given to law enforcement and intelligence agencies.”

Taiyeb argues that the draft includes checks and balances to ensure that overreaches are challenged. “The ordinance allows search and arrests without warrants, but they [accused] have to be produced before a court within 24 hours. This is to protect against enforced disappearance.”

As per the draft, the accused can go to court and declare their lack of trust or confidence in an investigating officer.

In addition, the draft mandates that it is up to a magistrate to decide if a case has the merit for a judicial process.

This is a departure from the previous two laws under which cases could be filed against individuals and arrests made without the involvement of a magistrate, and all cases would end up at court.

The draft recognises that women and children are particularly vulnerable in cyberspace and proposes

harsh penalties for those perpetrating crimes against them.

Sexual harassment in cyberspace now carries a jail term of three years and a fine of Tk 20 lakh.

Taiyeb said, “We have also included a provision allowing aggrieved persons to seek compensation from the person who has harmed them. There is no upper ceiling on the compensation that can be sought, and the cyber tribunal can decide on the amount depending on the severity of the harm caused.”

The draft includes a section that penalises e-commerce websites for extorting money from customers and defrauding them. This offence is non-bailable.

Bail would be denied in cases filed in connection with hacking, data theft, or destroying critical infrastructure.

The draft ordinance defines “cyber-terrorism” as illegal access to any system that threatens the country’s diplomatic relations with another state, acts intended for espionage or for serving the interests of any particular group or individual.

This offence is non-bailable.

Cryptocurrencies remain outlawed.

Critics pointed out that no real stakeholder engagement happened before this draft was approved.

Sabhanaz said that allowing only three days to comment on the draft, not holding any meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, and not ensuring transparency on decision-making reflect poorly on the government the mandate of which is to make critical reforms.

Documents of 5 ministries, divisions burned

FROM PAGE 1

units started arriving. We also saw flames in the electric cable duct,” one of them said.

Before daybreak, 19 fire engines rushed to the spot, but only 10 could work simultaneously because the remaining trucks could not enter the premises.

The blazes were put out around 11:45am, officials said.

Firefighters who visited the building later in the day said water and ash were everywhere.

Most rooms on the top four floors had been fully or partially destroyed, said several officers who are not authorised to talk to reporters.

Everything inside most of the rooms has been reduced to ashes, and in places, wall plasters had come off.

Ministries and divisions on the five bottom floors were partially damaged only by the water sprayed by firefighters, not the fire itself.

Director General of Fire Service and Civil Defence Brigadier General Muhammad Jahed Kamal told reporters at the scene that most of the rooms were locked, making the firefighters’ job harder.

The fire service had earlier urged the authorities to widen the entrance

to the Secretariat complex, said an official, adding that the plea fell on deaf ears.

Four firefighters were injured at the scene, officials said.

Many officials and employees of the Secretariat arrived early in the morning after learning about the fires.

Most of them left after 12:30pm. Only Gate-5 was opened for them.

“There is no electricity in most of the buildings. Although the work hours have not ended, we are leaving,” said an officer of the disaster management ministry.

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said the cause of the fire can be confirmed after probes are done.

PROBE BODIES

A seven-member committee headed by Mohammad Khaled Rahim, additional secretary (district administration) of the Cabinet Division, was formed to find the cause of the fires, whether anyone was responsible, assess the damage, and make recommendations to prevent future incidents.

The committee has been asked to come up with a report in seven days.

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan told a press conference at Foreign Service Academy that another high-powered committee,

headed by the home secretary, had been asked to investigate and make a primary report in three days.

The final report will be made public, she said, “We will have to wait for the probe report to know whether it was a human made disaster or not.”

Home Adviser Jahangir said around 560 people, including law enforcers, work in shifts to ensure security at the precinct.

Several advisers visited the building. Students Against Discrimination, a platform that spearheaded the July mass uprising, termed the fires an act of sabotage orchestrated by corrupt bureaucrats who are allies of the previous regime.

This was an attempt to undermine the goals of the uprising and stall ongoing reforms, it said in a statement.

Bangladesh Administrative Service Association called the fire an act of unprecedented arson.

Supporters of Sheikh Hasina’s regime still work at the Secretariat. An investigation should be undertaken to find out if they were involved in any way, said a press release from the association.

It must be investigated whether the fires were caused by those trying to destabilise the government.

In the second case, Nasrul’s wife, Seema Hamid, is accused of possessing illegal assets worth Tk 6.99 crore and conducting unusual and suspicious transactions of Tk 12.78 crore via 20 bank accounts.

In the third case, his son, Zareef Hamid, possessed assets worth Tk 20.88 crore that is inconsistent with his declared sources of income. Additionally, suspicious transactions of Tk 27.71 crore were discovered through 20 bank accounts under Zareef’s name during the ACC investigation.

The ACC launched its inquiry against Nasrul on August 22. Nasrul went into hiding after August 5.

Firefighter Nayan, a family’s only hope, gone too soon

FROM PAGE 1

Since the news of her son’s death reached her ears, Nargis has been inconsolable, unable to come to terms with the loss of her only son.

In their village too, a pall of gloom had taken over.

Local Union Parishad Member Ziaul Haque Jewel told The Daily Star, “They [Nayan’s family] had little to their name after losing their home to river erosion. With great difficulty, they supported Nayan’s education. His job had brought a glimmer of hope, but it didn’t last long.”

Tarikul Islam Sarkar, chairman of the parishad, said Nayan’s death has devastated the family. “They are very poor. I strongly urge the government to extend all possible support to them in this time of need.”

On duty to extinguish the fire at the Secretariat, Nayan, a firefighter of the special team of Teigaon Fire Station, was crossing the road to connect a water pipe to a pump when the speeding truck hit him from behind. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

After attending Nayan’s funeral at the Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters in the capital’s Bangabazar area yesterday afternoon, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said Nayan was

transferred to Dhaka from Sylhet’s Bishwanath Fire Station because of his exceptional skills.

“Allah will grant him the status of a martyr. He was an outstanding firefighter, which is why he was selected for the special team in Dhaka. Let us pray for him.”

Before the ceremony, the advisor and fire service officials placed floral wreaths on Nayan’s coffin.

After the fire broke out at the Secretariat, traffic on adjacent roads was halted and law enforcers were stationed. The truck, however, managed to access the area and sped through the road, fatally injuring Nayan in the process.

“That the truck was there at that time was a failure on our part. It shouldn’t have been allowed on that road,” Jahangir said.

The driver, Belal Hossain Suman, 35, and his assistant, Farhad, 20, were apprehended by locals and handed over to police. A case has been filed under the Road Transport Act in this regard.

The adviser promised justice and support for Nayan’s family.

“One of our own men has died. This is indeed my failure. Many may forget this incident, but his parents never will. We’ll ensure they are looked after and given support in this difficult time.”

Manmohan Singh no more

FROM PAGE 1

to a statement by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

Singh was twice prime minister in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government from 2004 to 2014.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her mother Sonia Gandhi reached the hospital soon after the news of Singh’s hospitalisation broke.

Singh, who was the finance minister under the then prime minister PV Narasimha Rao, was the architect and the brainchild of economic reforms in 1991 that pulled India from the brink of bankruptcy and ushered in an era of economic liberalisation that is widely believed to have changed the course of India’s economic trajectory.

Singh is credited with having overseen an economic boom in Asia’s fourth-largest economy in his first term, although slowing growth in later years marred his second stint.

Born in 1932 in the mud-house village of Gah in what is now Pakistan, Singh studied economics to find a way to eradicate poverty in the vast nation and never held elected office before taking the nation’s highest office.

His life was a testament to service, scholarship, and leadership.

He earned a Master’s degree in Economics from Panjab University, Chandigarh, and obtained a doctorate from the University of Oxford.

Singh’s village, where he was born, lacked a school, healthcare, and electricity, forcing him to walk miles to an Urdu-medium school and study by kerosene lamp at night.

He attributed his rise to the “system of scholarships” for poor students that existed at the time.

Singh worked in a string of senior civil posts, served as a central bank governor and also held various jobs with global agencies such as the United Nations.

Amid one of the worst financial crisis in India’s modern history,

Congress PM Narasimha Rao appointed him as finance minister to pull the country back from the brink. And he did exactly that.

Later, in his first term as PM, Singh steered the economy through a period of nine-percent growth, lending the country the international clout it had long sought.

He also sealed a landmark nuclear deal with the US that he said would help India meet its growing energy needs.

Known as “Mr Clean”, Singh nonetheless saw his image tarnished during his decade-long tenure when a series of corruption cases became public.

Several months before the 2014 elections, Singh said he would retire after the polls, with Sonia Gandhi’s son Rahul earmarked to take his place if Congress won.

But Congress crashed to its worst-ever result at that time as the Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Modi, won a landslide.

Singh – who said historians would be kinder to him than contemporary detractors – became a vocal critic of Modi’s economic policies, and more recently warned about the risks that rising communal tensions posed to India’s democracy.

Singh paid an official visit to Dhaka in September 2011, a trip that was overshadowed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s opting out of it at the eleventh hour opposing the Teesta river water-sharing accord which, as a result, could not be signed.

Singh contested Lok Sabha elections only once from the South Delhi constituency in 1999 and suffered defeat. After that, he never again ran for the Lok Sabha poll.

However, Singh has been a member of the Rajya Sabha since 1991, where he was the Leader of the Opposition between 1998 and 2004.

In April this year, he retired from Rajya Sabha, the upper House of parliament.

BDR MASSACRE

Commission to uncover domestic, foreign conspiracies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The commission formed to reinvestigate the 2009 BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) massacre yesterday said it will identify local and foreign entities and conspiracies behind the carnage during its probe.

The commission chief and former director general of BGB Maj Gen (retd) ALM Fazlur Rahman made the remarks while briefing reporters following its first meeting at the BGB Headquarters.

He said, “We have been tasked with identifying the individuals and entities – both domestic and foreign – responsible for the BDR massacre.”

When asked if the commission will identify any specific country, he said they will not single out any specific country; but will conduct an impartial investigation.

“If anyone is found responsible, we will provide our opinion accordingly,” he added.

The commission aims to identify individuals, groups, organisations, institutions, departments, or associations responsible for the killings, those who aided the crimes, conspired, or tampered with evidence.

“We will remain impartial and uninfluenced by any external factors. I express my gratitude to the chief adviser for addressing this issue and attempting to resolve it,” he said.

Seeking media cooperation, he said, “We request that you interpret our statements positively. Any misrepresentation may harm the national interest.”

Fazlur stated that the commission's office will initially operate out of the BGB Dhaka Battalion office. It will soon write

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Workers dismantling parts of old and abandoned vehicles to separate metals for recycling. The entire process takes place near a workshop, occupying the footpath and road. This photo of a truck being loaded with the materials was taken at Dholaipar recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

AL destroyed national unity, economic stability

Says Jamaat ameer

UNB, Dhaka

The fallen Awami League government had prioritised self-interest over the nation's progress during its 15 years in power, said Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman yesterday.

Speaking at a rally in Dumuria upazila's Atharo Mile area, he highlighted several issues, including rising unemployment, economic mismanagement, and the erosion of communal harmony under the previous administration.

“Our country has always been a land of peaceful coexistence, but the Awami League's 15-year rule has destroyed this unity, focusing on personal gain instead of national development,” he said.

Dr Rahman accused the former government of failing to address economic challenges, leaving millions unemployed. “Rather than creating jobs, they exploited the nation's resources, leaving long queues of jobless people as a proof of their failure,” he added.

He also criticised the state of education, claiming the government had armed criminals instead of empowering students. “Pens were replaced by weapons, and the wealth of ordinary citizens was smuggled abroad by Awami League leaders,” he said.

The Jamaat leader condemned the previous

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Free judiciary from political influence

Proposes BLAST at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A separate “Law and Justice Affairs Ministry” can be established by replacing the existing “Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs” in order to better safeguard judicial independence and law officer accountability, proposed Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) yesterday.

They also proposed the creation of a Supreme Judicial Council, composed of retired judges and impartial lawyers, to oversee judicial work and ensure it meets expected standards. A separate committee under this council would review various aspects of the judiciary.

The draft proposal was presented at a discussion meeting titled “Draft Proposal on Judiciary Reform,” held at the Arbitration and Conference Room of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

BLAST's honorary executive director, Sara Hossain, a senior Supreme Court lawyer, said the organisation plans to finalise the proposal after receiving feedback from legal experts.

The final version will then be submitted to the Judiciary Reform Commission, which is currently led by Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman, for further recommendations to the government.

At the meeting, several legal experts emphasised the need to ensure that the

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Establish supreme judicial council
- » Form judicial appointment committee
- » Formulate clear appointment guidelines
- » Expand Appellate Division, increase number of judges
- » Set up safety box for harassment allegations
- » Introduce pre-action protocol, judicial activism



Additionally, BLAST suggested forming a Judicial Appointment Committee within the Supreme Judicial Council to ensure transparency and impartiality in the selection of Supreme Court judges. This committee would establish clear guidelines for judge appointments based on impartiality and competence.

Further recommendations include the establishment of a “Safety Box” on court premises to allow victims to report sexual harassment by court officials anonymously. BLAST also stresses the importance of providing adequate facilities for women and children at court premises, including suitable seating, toilets, and baby feeding areas.

judiciary remains free from political influence and corruption to deliver justice impartially.

Among the key points raised were the need for an increased number of judges and the protection of the fundamental and human rights of litigants, accused individuals, and witnesses.

Experts also highlighted the importance of a convenient and hygienic court environment, including proper seating and toilet facilities.

Barrister M Sarwar Hossain, a Supreme Court lawyer, raised concerns about the political involvement of some lawyers and law officers, which he argued hindered the appointment of competent professionals. He

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Four more die of dengue

Experts call for early action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four dengue patients died and 153 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths rose to 569, while the total number of cases rose to 1,00,711, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Currently, 804 dengue patients are undergoing treatment, of which 486 are from outside Dhaka.

A total of 99,338 patients have been released till yesterday across the country.

As Bangladesh braces for another year with the threat of dengue looming, experts have urged the government to adopt comprehensive and year-round strategies to curb the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

Experts emphasised the need to be proactive and said waiting until the monsoon season to combat dengue is no longer viable.

Entomologists like Manzur A Chowdhury stress initiating anti-mosquito drives as early as January to eliminate Aedes mosquito populations before they proliferate.

“Authorities must identify dengue hotspots and implement targeted interventions such as larviciding, adulticiding, and public awareness campaigns,” said Manzur.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University highlighted the urgent need to address issues like inadequate protection for hospitalised patients and the increasing number of cases outside Dhaka.

“The government must strengthen mosquito control efforts in districts like Barishal, Chandpur, Manikganj, and Gazipur, which are likely to see a rise in cases next year,” he warned.



PILING UP BODIES ON VAN Police burnt one of them alive: ICT probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Investigation Agency of the International Crimes Tribunal has found proof suggesting that six young protesters were shot and subsequently burned on August 5 by the police.

Initially, the police opened fire on a group of protesters, resulting in the deaths of five individuals at the scene, while one survived for a short time.

The six bodies were then placed on a rickshaw van, wrapped in a carpet, and transported near a police vehicle. The police subsequently poured petrol over the bodies and set them ablaze, and the surviving youth was burned alive while still suffering from gunshot wounds, as per the agency's findings.

ICT Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam said, “Eyewitnesses testified that when the bodies were burning, one boy was still alive. He was burned after the police poured petrol on him.”

“Our investigation focused on the most brutal incidents. The police officers involved acted with extreme ruthlessness under instructions from the then government,” he said.

“This is clear evidence of crimes against humanity carried out during the July-August mass uprising, ordered by the then government and its higher officials,” he added.

In connection with the incident, two police personnel have already been arrested. One of them is Constable Mukul Chokder.

Nearly a month after Sheikh Hasina fled, a video emerged on social media, showing several partially covered bloodstained bodies on a van with some policemen standing guard.

Bodies covered with bedsheets with hands stretched out could be seen in the nearly two-minute video, which The Daily Star verified was taken from near Ashulia Police Station in Savar.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Eyewitnesses testified that when the bodies were burning, one boy was still alive. He was burned after the police poured petrol on him.

Mohammad Tajul Islam
ICT Chief Prosecutor

Family reunited after 18 years

Stranded in Malaysia, man finally comes back home

MD ABBAS

When Dollar Mahmud was 10, his father, Robiul Karim, left for Malaysia, hoping to secure a better future for his family.

Robiul, a resident of Bholahat upazila in Chapainawabganj, went on a visit visa. However, complications with his visa and passport left him stranded, unable to return home.

Over time, he lost his passport, and all attempts to reunite with his family failed.

For 18 long years, Robiul remained stuck in a foreign land, far from the family he had left behind.

Dollar, alongside his siblings Abdul Hanif and Dali Ara Khatun, gradually lost hope, believing they would never see their father again.

But after nearly two decades, the siblings finally reunited with their father yesterday.

The long-awaited reunion




The three siblings hug their father tight at Dhaka airport yesterday as they got reunited with him after 18 long years.

PHOTO: COURTESY

took place when Robiul landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on a US Bangla flight at

5:45pm and Dollar and his siblings finally got to embrace their father

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8




গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট (আমাই)
www.imli.gov.bd

লিঙ্গুইস্টিক অলিম্পিয়াড-২০২৫
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট

মহান শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস-২০২৫ উদযাপন উপলক্ষে আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট দ্বিতীয়বারের মতো দেশব্যাপী লিঙ্গুইস্টিক অলিম্পিয়াডের আয়োজন করতে যাচ্ছে। এ আয়োজনের মাধ্যমে শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে মাতৃভাষা চর্চা, প্রচার ও প্রসার ঘটানো ইনস্টিটিউটের মূল লক্ষ্য। আগামী ০৪/০১/২০২৫ তারিখ থেকে লিঙ্গুইস্টিক অলিম্পিয়াড আরম্ভ হবে। প্রতিযোগিতা অনুষ্ঠিত হবে ২টি ক্যাটেগরিতে। ক-ক্যাটেগরি: ৬ষ্ঠ থেকে ৯ম শ্রেণি এবং খ-ক্যাটেগরি: ১০ম থেকে দ্বাদশ শ্রেণি। এ লক্ষ্যে অনলাইনে রেজিস্ট্রেশনের জন্য Android মোবাইল ফোন থেকে <https://forms.gle/JWLGHm1dnsvioad7> লিংকে প্রবেশ করে অথবা QR Code Scan করে Form পূরণ করতে হবে।

প্রতিযোগিতার অঞ্চল: ঢাকা, চট্টগ্রাম, রাজশাহী, সুলনা, বরিশাল, নারায়ণগঞ্জ ও সিলেট।

রেজিস্ট্রেশনের সময়সীমা: ২৭/১২/২০২৪ থেকে ০১/০১/২০২৫



(অধ্যাপক ড. মুহাম্মদ আসাদুজ্জামান)
পরিচালক
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট (আমাই)



Akbar Sheikh debarks his date palm tree, preparing it for juice extraction -- a cherished winter tradition. The sweet juice is transformed into date palm molasses, a seasonal favourite, now selling for Tk 350-400 per kg. The demand for molasses peaks during the chilly months. The photo was taken in Khulna's Dumuria upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Biman aircraft seized after 20 gold bars found on flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

National Security Intelligence, Customs Intelligence and Investigation Department, and security personnel of Chattogram Shah Amanat International Airport yesterday seized 20 gold bars from a passenger seat of a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight.

CIID seized the aircraft, as there is a possible involvement of airline officials in this regard, said Minhaj Uddin, additional director general of CIID, Chattogram Office. "We seized the aircraft as per the law, but its operational activities, including carrying passengers, will continue as scheduled," he said. "We have informed all airline companies that any aircraft found with hidden gold inside will be seized."

The gold carrier, identified as Atia Samia, 35, was handed over to the police, he said.

Md Ibrahim Khalil, spokesperson of the airport, stated that the gold bars, weighing 2.33 kg and worth around Tk 2.60 crore, were recovered from a passenger seat of BG 148, a Biman flight that landed from Dubai around 9:25am.

"Wrapped in black tape, the gold bars were smuggled from Dubai and hidden under seat 9J," he said.

Group Captain Shaikh Abdullah Alamgir, director of the airport, said, "We have no information about the aircraft being seized. After the gold was recovered, the plane departed the airport for Dhaka."

RMG workers block highway for arrears

UNB, Gazipur

Workers of a readymade garment factory blocked the Chandra-Nabinagar highway in Gazipur yesterday, demanding two months' arrears.

The blockade disrupted vehicular movement, but traffic between Dhaka and northern districts remained operational via another route.

The agitated workers of Hardy Associates Ltd alleged that the factory authorities promised to pay their arrears but failed to do so. On December 23, the factory was closed without settling the unpaid wages, leaving workers with no choice but to take to the streets.

Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of Gazipur Industrial Police, said workers were driven to protest as the management did not pay their due wages.

Free judiciary from

FROM PAGE 3

also pointed out that some lawyers continue to resort to bribing bench officers to ensure their cases are heard properly.

"These are the realities that must be stopped to uphold the spirit of the July revolution," Hossain said.

He also proposed two significant reforms: the introduction of a "Pre-Action Protocol" and judicial activism.

The Pre-Action Protocol, which was introduced in the UK in 1995, requires a settlement discussion before filing cases related to accidents, medical negligence, and other civil matters.

According to Hossain, implementing this system in Bangladesh could reduce case backlogs by up to 80 percent.

The second proposal, judicial activism, aims to prevent false or nuisance cases by imposing fines, thereby reducing the number of cases unnecessarily brought to court.

This approach, Hossain argues, could help resolve execution cases swiftly through civil court judgments.

Several other legal experts, including SC

lawyers Shameem Haider Patwary, Qazi Zahed Iqbal, Tabarak Hussain, Ayesha Akter, Hamidul Misbah, and Shah Md Babar, also spoke at the meeting, offering further suggestions for judicial reform.

The Judiciary Reform Commission, which is tasked with reviewing and recommending changes to the judiciary, has already submitted a preliminary report to Environment,

Forest, and Climate Change Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

This report recommends a constitutional amendment to ensure that the senior-most judge of the Appellate Division is appointed as the chief justice, thus curbing presidential discretion in the matter.

The report also proposes the formation of a nine-member commission, led by the chief justice, for the appointment of SC judges to ensure the selection of qualified individuals.

The commission also advocates for the expansion of the Appellate Division, proposing a minimum of seven judges, up from the current five.

Further, the report calls for permanent attorney services for government cases at both the apex and district courts, independent investigation bodies in the criminal justice system, and swift and cost-effective justice for citizens.

The commission is expected to submit its final report by January 15, 2025.

Police burnt

FROM PAGE 3

Of the policemen standing beside the van, two were wearing police vests and seen throwing another body onto the piles.

In the video, Dhaka District North Detective Police (DB) inspector (investigation) Arafat Hossain was seen walking unarmed. Masudur Rahman, officer-in-charge (investigations) of Ashulia Police Station, was also seen in the video.

Arafat is now behind bars.

A canal or trash bin?

FROM PAGE 5

3,000 tonnes of waste daily, of which 249 tonnes (8.3 percent) are plastic and polythene.

Alarming, 140 tonnes of this waste go uncollected, ending up in canals and drains, choking the city's drainage systems.

Prof Swapan Kumar Palit of Cuet's Civil Engineering Department highlighted the lack of adherence to the "Mandatory Jute Packaging Act, 2010" and "Mandatory Jute Packaging Rules 2013," which require jute-based packaging for a range of essential goods.

"Despite these regulations, we see no implementation in the market," he said.

"Around 90 percent of carry-bags used in grocery shops and kitchen markets are still plastic and polythene."

Pranab Kumar Sharma, deputy conservation

officer of Chattogram City Corporation, said, "We're removing waste from the canal, but resource limitations prevent us from addressing all canals simultaneously."

Experts emphasise that banning polythene bags isn't enough without viable alternatives.

Prof Sekandar Khan of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan said, "Polythene use will decline naturally when affordable alternatives become widely available. The government must provide incentives to support alternative packaging industries."

Meanwhile, kitchen markets near the canal continue to flout the ban.

Vendors argue they have no choice.

"Customers demand polythene bags. If they don't bring their own, how can we pack their purchases?" asked Md Ismail, a vendor.

Family reunited

FROM PAGE 3

after 18 years of separation. For Dollar and his siblings, the reunion was more than just having their father back -- it marked the end of an 18-year journey filled with struggle, longing, and hope.

Dollar, now 28, told The Daily Star, "I often asked myself if I would ever see my father again."

Overwhelmed by emotion, he struggled to say much more.

For years, Dollar and his siblings visited countless offices and sought help from numerous people to bring their father back, but each attempt ended in heartbreak.

Two months ago, however, hope was reignited when a person provided Dollar with the address of the BRAC Migration Welfare Centre.

Without delay, he went to BRAC, where his journey to reunite with his father finally found a ray of hope.

BRAC gathered the necessary details and started working to resolve the complexities surrounding Robiul's return. Their efforts bore fruit yesterday, bringing an end to the 18-year-long wait and struggle.

AL destroyed

FROM PAGE 3

administration's "state-sponsored atrocities", alleging that it had used state-owned weapons to kill citizens in order to maintain power.

"Such actions disqualify them from participating in politics. Even after being ousted, they continue to conspire against the country's stability," he said.

He reiterated Jamaat's commitment to building a corruption-free society, where young people could find jobs based on merit, and women could move freely and safely.

"We seek justice for all, without forcing people to beg at the doors of the courts," he said.

PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 27				
	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN	5-25	12-30	3-45	5-24 7-00
JAMAAT	6-00	1-15	4-00	5-27 7-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				

Commission to uncover domestic

FROM PAGE 3

to relevant authorities, including the chief adviser, to secure necessary secretariat support.

It will request additional facilities, such as security for its members and their families, transport, secretariat and office resources. It will also propose granting the commission chief a position equivalent to an adviser to effectively deal with domestic and foreign stakeholders.

Additionally, the commission will suggest that its other members receive a status equivalent to that of judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, said the commission chief.

After securing these

provisions, the commission has a plan to hold its next meeting and begin taking statements.

"After every meeting, if necessary, we will update the media to ensure transparency and keep the nation informed," the Fazlur Rahman said.

When asked about aligning the commission's investigation with the International Crimes Tribunal, he stated that they will seek the inclusion of four legal experts specialising in civil, criminal, military, and international law.

He said the commission will consider measures to prevent individuals involved from leaving the country, following discussions with commission members.

Regarding extradition, he said efforts will be made to contact individuals living abroad through the foreign ministry.

If extradition proves impossible, a team will be sent to record their statements.

On December 23, the government formed the seven-member commission to reinvestigate the BDR massacre and uncover the nature of the crimes committed during, before, and after the killings.

The commission has been tasked with submitting a report within 90 days.

"We hope to complete our report within the designated time. If delays occur for valid reasons, we will seek an extension," he concluded.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Press Information Department (PID)
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka

Memo No. 15.52.0000.012.07.007.18/1387 Date : 24.12.2024

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the national portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods as stated below:

S. No.	Tender ID, Reference No.	Procurement Nature, Title	Type, Method	Publishing Date, Closing Date
1	1055833, 15.52.0000.012.07.007.18-1387	Goods, Procurement of desktop and laptop computer	NCT, OTM	26-Dec-2024 11:00:00, 15-Jan-2025 17:00:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no hard/ offline copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP portal is required

Md. Jubayer Hossain
Information Officer
255101065

GD-1281

ফ্র্যাট বিক্রয়
আপার্পীও জনতা হাউজিং-এ ১৩২৫
বর্গফুটের দক্ষিণমুখী নির্মানাধীন ফ্র্যাট।
ম্যাজিক ব্রিকস হোল্ডিংস লিঃ।
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮

ফ্র্যাট বিক্রয়
বঙ্গবন্ধা টি-ব্লকে একই বিল্ডিং এ ১৫২০
বর্গফুটের ৩ টি রেডি ফ্র্যাট।
ম্যাজিক ব্রিকস হোল্ডিংস লিঃ।
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৭
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮

ফ্র্যাট বিক্রয়
বঙ্গবন্ধা টি-ব্লকে ২০৫০ বর্গফুটের দিলে
ইউনিটের সেনি ফ্লোরারফেস নির্মানাধীন ফ্র্যাট।
ম্যাজিক ব্রিকস হোল্ডিংস লিঃ।
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮
০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৬

TUITION WANTED
15 years of experience Maths teacher wants to teach O-A Level (Edexcel, Cambridge) Q/P solve, Mock test.
B.Sc (Hons), M.Sc (Math), DU.
DIPAK BARMAN
01712018889, 01777846252

EGM 2025
St. Joseph Old Boys' Foundation (SJOBF)

The Executive Committee of St. Joseph Old Boys' Foundation (SJOBF) requests the members to join the Extraordinary General Meeting of 2025 to be held at Gulshan Club, Dhaka on Friday, January 24, 2025 at 4:00PM.

Agenda has been sent to all registered life members through email. In case if any life members missed the email notifications, please sent an email for requesting the agenda at "sjofb.2025@gmail.com"

Extraordinary General Meeting
Venue: Gulshan Club
NWJ-2/A, Bir Uttom Sultan Mahmud Road, Gulshan Ave, Dhaka
Date: January 24, 2025 (Friday)
Time: 4:00 PM onwards

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ

সড়ক বিভাগ, গোপালগঞ্জ

টেলিফোনঃ ০২৪৭৯৯৬১৬৭৮

ইমেইলঃ eegopal@rhd.gov.bd

স্মারক নংঃ ৩৫.০১.৩৫০০.৪২৮.১৮.০০১.২৪-৩২৪৪ তারিখঃ ২৬/১২/২০২৪

জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, গোপালগঞ্জ সড়ক বিভাগাধীন টুঙ্গিপাড়া-কোটালীপাড়া(মারাবাড়ী) (জেড-৮৪৩০) সড়কের চেইনেজ ১৩+৬৭৯ কিলোমিটার কোটালীপাড়া উপজেলাধীন বর্ষাপাড়া নামক স্থানে নতুন একটি ব্রিজ নির্মাণের জন্য ডাইভার্সন নির্মাণ করা হয়েছে। এখন পুরাতন ব্রিজটি ভাঙ্গা শুরু করা হবে। ব্রিজ নির্মাণকালীন সময়ে সতর্কতার সঙ্গে ডাইভার্সনটি ব্যবহার করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

সরকারী কাজের স্বার্থে জেলা প্রশাসন, গোপালগঞ্জ এর নির্দশনা মোতাবেক এ বিজ্ঞপ্তি জারী করা হলো। সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য আন্তরিকভাবে দুঃখিত।

২৬.১২.২৭
মোঃ আজহারুল ইসলাম
পরিচিতি নংঃ ৬০২৩০৬
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (চ.দা.), সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, গোপালগঞ্জ

GD-1278

PATUAKHALI DIALYSIS CENTRE
A year after completion, facility lies unused

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A 10-bed kidney dialysis centre at Patuakhali Medical College Hospital remains non-operational, despite its construction being completed in June 2024. The centre's delayed opening has forced local kidney patients to travel out of the district for treatment, causing immense financial strain.

The facility is part of a Tk 300 crore project launched in January 2020, aiming to establish dialysis centres in 40 hospitals across the country.

In Patuakhali, the Public Works Department issued a work order in June 2023 for the centre's construction at a cost of Tk 17.16 lakh. Eventually, the building was completed a year later.

However, a fully functional dialysis centre requires more than just doors and windows. From beds to essential equipment such as dialysis machines, water treatment systems, and monitoring devices, all have yet to arrive.



Besides, only six technicians were hired in August 2023, against a need for at least 16. The recruited technicians are currently working in other hospital departments.

The delay has been particularly difficult for families like that of Suman Halder, whose son has required dialysis since birth. "We've been travelling to Barishal weekly for dialysis and eventually sought treatment in India, costing us Tk 14 lakh. A local dialysis centre would have eased our suffering and saved us from this financial burden," he said.

Dr Ratan Das, project director, acknowledged the delays and said the recruitment of additional staff and procurement of equipment for the first phase of centres are underway.

The hope is to have the Patuakhali centre operational by April or May 2025, but for now, local patients continue to suffer.



Sabita Sarker taking care of a calf on a field near her home in Khulna's Dumuria area yesterday. With winter's chill in the air, she wrapped the animal in a cloth, ensuring it stayed warm and cozy.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

A canal or trash bin?
Jamal Khan canal choking on plastic

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

A sea of non-biodegradable plastic waste has engulfed Jamal Khan canal in Chattogram, threatening the port city with severe waterlogging during monsoon.

Despite a government ban on polythene bags dating back to 2002, the canal serves as a grim reminder of lax enforcement and the pervasive use of single-use plastics.

During a recent visit, the canal appeared more like a landfill, clogged with plastic waste primarily discarded by nearby residents.

Locals alleged that tenants of buildings along the canal toss household waste, including polythene bags, directly out their windows.

Others reportedly choose the canal as their dumping ground to avoid going to dustbins.

Upal Barua, a resident of Jamal Khan area, said, "The government banned polythene bags in kitchen markets from November 1, but where is the action? People still bring home vegetables and fish in these bags, then dump the waste into the canal."

According to a 2022 study by the Civil Engineering Department of Chattogram University of Engineering and Technology (CuET) produces



SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

GUMANI RIVER
50,000 Pabna residents struggle without a bridge

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Around 50,000 residents from 10 villages along the Gumani River in Pabna are suffering due to the absence of a connecting bridge.

The river flows through the Chatmohar and Vangura upazilas, but in the absence of a bridge, locals are forced to rely on boats, facing daily commuting challenges.

In 2006, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) initiated a Tk 2.74 crore project to build a 158-metre bridge at Mirzapur Ghat.

However, the contractor abandoned the work after completing just 20 percent of the project, leading to its cancellation the same year. All that remains are a single pillar and a broken foundation stone.

The bridge would connect residents to vital facilities, including the Nimaichora Union Parishad office, the union land revenue office, Mirzapur Degree College, banks, and markets on the north bank. On the south bank, farmers and workers rely on the crossing for agricultural and other necessities.

Md Jillur Rahman, a resident of Mirzapur village, said, "During the dry season, the river dries up, making boat navigation difficult. Makeshift bamboo bridges are often constructed, causing delays, especially for students heading to classes."

Abul Kalam Azad, from Ashtomonisha village, said children, the elderly, and patients cross the river by boat with great difficulty and significant risks.

"A bridge would save critical time in transporting patients to hospitals," he added.

Md Sultan Mahamud, upazila engineer of LGED in Chatmohar, said the original project failed due to the contractor abandoning it in 2007.

"We have redesigned a 150-metre bridge with an estimated cost of Tk 8 crore. The proposal awaits approval," he said.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD),
Tangail Road Division,
☎: 0921-64043
E-mail : ectan@rhd.gov.bd/ee.rhd.tangail@gmail.com

Memo No:35.01.9395.474.07.001.24-1077

Date: 23-12-2024

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concern that e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following Package.

Tender ID No.	Name of works/Package description	Tender Method	Last Selling & Closing date
1048937	Periodic Maintenance Programme of Nagorpur (Duburia)-Solimabad-Chouhali (Z-4009) Road from 0+000 to 8+000 (Dhuburia to Vuter Mour) & 12+910 to 17+000 (Dewangonj to Bablatola) by providing Strengthening, DBS wearing course & Rigid Pavement under Tangail Road Division during the year 2023-2024.	OTM	22-01-2025 at 17.00 & 23-01-2025 at 12.00
1049069	Periodic Maintenance Programe of Strengthening & DBS wearing course work at Mirzapur (Pakullah)-Delduar-Elasin Road (Z-4007) (Ch: 0+000 to 7+000) (Pakulla to Delduar) under Tangail Road Division during the year 2023-2024.	OTM	22-01-2025 at 17.00 & 23-01-2025 at 12.00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (01715-777778, 017625528-31)

(Dr Shinde Azmeri Khan)
ID No- 602214
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division Tangail.

GD-1279

MILITARY INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MIST)
Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka-1216
Website: www.mist.ac.bd

Admission Notice: Undergraduate Programs - 2025

1. Applications are invited from Bangladeshi citizens who have passed HSC/GCE 'A' Level or Equivalent Examination (Science Group) from home and abroad for admission in **MIST Undergraduate Programs** (Engineering and Architecture).

Online Application Submission Begins	30 Dec 2024 at 11:00 am
Online Application Submission Ends	20 Jan 2025 at 23:59 pm
Shortlist of Examinees to be Published	10 Feb 2025
Admission Test Date	22 Feb 2025
Tentative Admission Start Date	16 Mar 2025
Tentative Class Start Date	08 Jun 2025

2. **Admission Test:** Two Units - Engineering (Unit A) and Architecture (Unit A+ Unit B). **Architecture applicants need to appear in examinations of both units.**

3. **Admission Test Duration:**
Engineering - 10:00 am to 01:00 pm.
Architecture - 10:00 am to 01:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

4. **Admission Centre:** Dhaka (Details will be circulated on MIST website).

5. **Qualifications to Apply:**

a. **SSC or Equivalent:** The applicants who passed in **2022 or 2021** in Science Group obtaining a minimum GPA 4.00 (without fourth subject) on a scale of 5.00.

b. **HSC or Equivalent:** The applicants who passed in **2024 or 2023** obtaining a minimum **total Grade Point 18 in four subjects** (Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English) with a **minimum Grade Point of 4.0 in each of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.**

c. **GCE ('O' and 'A' Levels) or Equivalent:**

(1) The applicants who passed in **2022 or 2021** with **minimum 'B' grade or equivalent** in any five subjects including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English in GCE 'O' Level.

(2) The applicants who passed in **2024 or 2023** with a **minimum of three 'B' grades or equivalent** in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in GCE 'A' Level.

d. Applicants interested in Biomedical Engineering, must have Biology in HSC or equivalent level with a minimum grade point of 'A minus' / GCE 'A' or equivalent level with a minimum grade point of 'C' or equivalent.

6. **Short Listing for Written Test:** Two separate short lists of applicants (current year and last year) will be published for selection purposes to appear in the written admission test only.

7. **Examination and Marks Distribution:**

a. Questions will be in both English and Bangla. Applicants may answer either in English or Bangla. The marks distributions for both units are as follows:

Ser	Unit	Subject	Marks	Remarks
1.	Unit A (Engineering and Architecture)	Mathematics	90	Examination Duration: 3 hours Syllabus: Syllabus of HSC 2024/ Equivalent
2.		Physics	70	
3.		Chemistry	30	
4.		English	10	
5.		Total	200	
6.	Unit B (Architecture)	Freehand drawing and Visual-Spatial Intelligence	200	Examination Duration: 2 hours

b. **Minimum qualifying mark in the written test is 40% for both Unit A and Unit B separately.**

c. **Merit list will be prepared based on:**

(1) Total marks obtained in Written Test - **60%,**
(2) Total marks obtained in Higher Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in HSC/ equivalent - **20%,**
(3) Total marks obtained in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in SSC/ equivalent - **20%.**

d. Deduction of **5% marks** will be made from the written test for the candidates **passed HSC in 2023.** Thereafter, a **Combined Merit List** will be prepared for admission and department allocation. For English medium and equivalent similar rules will be applicable.

8. **Admission Form Fee:** Tk 1000 (Engineering), Tk 1200 (Architecture).

9. **Application Form Submission:** Application to be submitted online through MIST website only. After successful submission of the application, the applicant will receive a USER ID online. With that USER ID, the applicant needs to send an SMS to **16222 from Teletalk** pre-paid mobile phone with the required balance. On successful completion of payment, the applicant will receive a password through SMS. Using the password, an eligible applicant will be able to download and print the Admit Card. Detail instructions for e-application and fee submission are given on MIST website (www.mist.ac.bd).

10. **Required Documents for Quota Applicants:** Following original or attested documents (hardcopy) must be submitted to the MIST Admission Help Desk Office by **23 January 2025 (2:00 pm)** for authentication/verification:-

a. **Valiant Freedom Fighters (Children Only):** Relationship certificate with the valiant freedom fighter and document downloaded from the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs website (<http://mis.molwa.gov.bd/freedom-fighter-list>).

b. **Military Ward (Children of Military Personnel):**

(1) **Serving:** Certificate from organization head / authorized officials.

(2) **Retired:**

(a) **Officers:** Certificate from CORO / Naval Secretariat / Air Secretariat.

(b) **JCO/ OR/ NC(E) of Army/ Navy/ Air Force:** Certificate / Service Record Book from respective Arms / Service's Record Offices / BASB/ Drafting Office.

c. **Children of Serving Permanent Employees of Ministry of Defence (MoD) at Agargaon, Dhaka only and MIST:** Certificate from the appropriate authority of the respective organization.

d. **Ethnic Minority:** Certificate issued by local Upazila Chairman and countersigned by District Commissioner.

11. For **GCE or Equivalent** applicants, an attested copy of the **Transcript/Certificate** (hardcopy) must be submitted to the MIST Admission Office by **23 January 2025 (2:00 pm)** for authentication/verification.

12. Candidates will be considered disqualified for any incomplete or false information at any stage of the admission process.

13. For further clarification:

a. Please contact Admission Help Desk: 01769024054/ 01769024056/ 01769024094 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm).
Location: **MIST Tower 1, Level 2, Old Tea Room.**

b. Visit MIST Website (www.mist.ac.bd).

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১৯/১২/২০২৪

Registrar
MIST

GD-1277

LOOKING BACK

Compelling Bangladeshi films of 2024



VISUAL: DOWEL BISWAS

Amidst a political upheaval lies a decent number of good films this year: be it in genres of action, romance, political satire or historical reimagining. We look back at some of the films that deserve a watch – if not in halls, then from the comfort of your home.

SAEED KHAN SHAGOR

2024 is nearing its end. Much like every other sphere, the Bangladeshi film industry, too, has been both lauded and criticised throughout this eventful and controversial year. A variety of films have graced the silver screen—some commercially successful, others not quite so. Let's bid adieu to the year, as we look back at some of its film offerings.

Priyo Maloti
Priyo Maloti marks the theatrical debut of the versatile Mehazabien Chowdhury, directed by Shankha Dasgupta. Released at the tail end of the year, the film recounts the story of a Hindu family reduced to ashes in a fire outbreak in Dhaka. In this catastrophe, Maloti loses her husband. Centering on a widow's arduous quest to retrieve her late husband's documents, the director explores multifaceted aspects of societal structures. Through this narrative, the audience is invited to

confront issues like misogyny, religious bias, and the bureaucratic quagmire of our administrative system.

Maloti's journey is fraught with dilemma, oscillating between staying righteous and succumbing to compromise. In her battle against overwhelming odds, even the traffic signals of Dhaka seem to turn antagonistic—a nuanced metaphor captured brilliantly by Shankha. Mehazabien's poignant and nuanced single-take performance evokes memories of Vidya Balan in *Kahaani*.

840
In 2007, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *420* chronicled tales of extortion, corruption, and land-grabbing under the previous regime. Characters like Montu and Kisloo became household names. Fast-forward to 2024, following the uprising of August 5, Farooki delivers *840*—the cinematic double-up of *420*.

The director also poses a provocative

question: how might the country have flourished if politicians had adhered to ethical governance? Nasir Uddin Khan's portrayal of Mayor Dablu unveils a hitherto unseen dimension of his acting prowess. The film also features stellar performances by Zakia Bari Mamo, Nader Khan, Marzuk Russell, Zayed Khan, Fazlur Rahman Babu, and Shahriar Nazim Joy.

Toofan
When discussing the biggest blockbuster of the year, *Toofan* is the unanimous choice. Released during Eid-ul-Azha, this magnum opus, directed by Raihan Rafi, stars Shakib Khan, Kolkata's Mimi Chakraborty, Masuma Rahman Nabila, Chanchal Chowdhury, and others. Remarkably, this film also marks Shakib's 250th appearance as an actor.

This big-budget extravaganza made its lavish production evident through

Courtney Coffey, alongside Tariq Anam Khan, Mahiya Mahi, and others.

The plot follows Shamsu (Shakib Khan), a young man who dreams of emigrating to America but faces repeated failures. However, the real obstacle emerges with the visa application. Shamsu, being desperate, seeks help from a middleman who proposes a path involving a contractual marriage with an American woman. But why is Shamsu so desperate to go to America? Beneath his fervent determination lies a poignant mystery woven with emotional undertones.

Kajol Rekha
Adapted from the timeless *Maimansingha Gītika*, *Kajol Rekha* brings to the screen a 400-year-old tale through the masterful lens of Gias Uddin Selim. This song-driven film, built on a linear storytelling structure, intricately weaves suspense, holding

recreation of Rangoon's 400-year-old marketplace for a scene lasting merely a minute.

Deyaler Desh
Directed by the budding filmmaker Mishuk Moni, *Deyaler Desh* debuted during an Eid season crowded with 11 simultaneous releases. Despite lacking a superstar cast, the film resonated with audiences, owing to its gripping storyline and the naturalistic performances of Sariful Razz and Bubly.

The narrative begins in a morgue, where morgue worker Boishakh encounters a corpse bearing a peculiar mark. This discovery sends a chill down his spine, unlocking a floodgate of memories filled with joy, regret, and longing. The specter of an unfulfilled life—a dream of a modest, happy home—haunts Boishakh. In a desperate bid to reclaim what was lost, he clings to a love from eight years prior, wasting not a moment in pursuit of redemption.

Though director Moni struggles to fully establish some pivotal characters, this narrative shortcoming is overshadowed by the potency of the story. The film's emotional depth compensates for its flaws, making *Deyaler Desh* a testament to storytelling over spectacle.

Fatima
Fatima chronicles the journey of a solitary girl who stands as a lone warrior against the crushing weight of reality. Every step she takes towards self-reliance is met with harsh opposition from the world around her, yet her indomitable spirit refuses to waver.

The film, directed by Dhrubo Hasan, features stellar performances by Tasnia Farin, Yash Rohan, and Manosh Bandopadhyay.

Additionally, *Fatima* won an award at Iran's Fajr International Film Festival.



The craftsmanship is evident in 'Kajol Rekha,' particularly the recreation of Rangoon's 400-year-old marketplace.

its craftsmanship, music, and VFX. While questions may arise regarding the storyline's relevance, *Toofan* delivers entertainment in spades. The film's tracks, such as *Laage Ura Dhura* and *Dustu Kokil*, made waves globally upon release.

Rajkumar
Directed by Himel Ashraf, *Rajkumar* is another 2024 release that revolves around Shakib Khan. The dynamic duo of Shakib Khan and Himel Ashraf, who previously won audience acclaim with *Priyotoma*, continued their collaboration with this project. The cast also features American actress

the audience's intrigue until the very end.

What sets the film apart is its character arcs; nearly every role experiences dramatic highs and lows, each receiving equal narrative weight. A standout element is Azad Abul Kalam's portrayal of five distinct characters, a performance that is nothing short of riveting. The supporting cast, including Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Sadia Ayman, Iresh Zaker, and Sariful Razz, captivates in their myriad looks, offering an entirely novel viewing experience.

The craftsmanship is evident in every frame, particularly the painstaking

COUNTRYWIDE

BARGUNA'S TIAKHALI COLLEGE Two decades old, yet not under MPO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Even after 24 years of its establishment, Tiakhali College in Barguna's Amtali upazila has not been included under the government's nationalisation scheme due to unknown reasons.

As a result, 38 teachers and staffers, who did not opt for any other jobs, have been deprived of their monthly salaries for over two decades now.

While talking, a number of teachers of the college alleged that despite good academic results in public exams, Tiakhali College has not been enlisted under MPO (Monthly Pay Order) system only because of political revenge since the founding principal of the college was a BNP leader.

During a visit to Tiakhali College this correspondent found almost all the teachers and staffers of the college living a subhuman life as they are not getting their salaries since the establishment of the institution.

Moreover, in order to run their families most of them have sold their properties and other valuable belongings and become destitute.

Local educationist Mohammad Delwar Hossain built Tiakhali College on about 2.25 acres of land in 2000. In 2001, the college received recognition from the education board to run its academic activities.

The average pass rate was nearly 72 percent since 2002 till this year, while the institution had a 100 percent pass record in 2019.

Currently, the college has a total of 322

students, but despite implementing all the directives of the ministry concerned the college was not included under the government's MPO scheme due to unknown reasons, teachers and staffers said.

Although, hundreds of non-government educational institutions were nationalised in the last 15 years, Tiakhali College has been deprived of getting the government facilities even after making such good results, they alleged.

However, a four-storey academic building was constructed at the college premises in 2017, but till then its founding principal had already retired.

Boni Amin, an 11th grader, said the number of students will surely increase if the college is nationalised as the quality of education is quite good here.

Shahanur Fakir, a peon at the college, said he cannot run his family anymore due to non-payment of the salary.

Sometimes, he and his family members pass their days half-starved as he does not have any alternative.

Mosharof Hossain, a lecturer, said, "I have given all my valuable times in this college and now it is very difficult to return home empty handed."

Retired Principal Delwar Hossain said they established the college in 2001, but failed to enlist it under the government's MPO scheme due to political reason.

"Till now all the teachers and students of the college have been deprived of their rights, but I hope the present government will bring the college under nationalisation scheme soon," Delwar said.



The four-storey academic building of Tiakhali College in Barguna's Amtali upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Textbook distribution

FROM PAGE 12

awarding contracts, and send all the textbooks in the first week of January. But we expect all primary-level books and three secondary-level books – Bangla, English, and mathematics – to be delivered by the end of this year."

The rest of the textbooks are expected to be handed over by mid-January, Prof Riad added.

However, a leader of the Printing Industries Association, speaking to this newspaper on condition of anonymity, said, "Although press owners have assured the NCTB of delivering three major secondary books by the end of this year, it is not feasible in reality."

"It will take at least 15 more days, meaning students will receive those three books only by mid-January next year."

When asked how much time would be needed to complete the printing of all textbooks, he said, "We are trying our best, but I don't see this being completed even by February. It may take until the first week of March."

Contacted, Tofael Khan, president of the Bangladesh Textbook Printing and Marketing Association, said

"Considering the situation, we won't be able to print and send all the textbooks in the first week of January. But we expect all primary-level books and three secondary-level books – Bangla, English, and mathematics – to be delivered by the end of this year."

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Contacted, Tofael Khan, president of the Bangladesh Textbook Printing and Marketing Association, said

all the textbooks for classes 1 to 3 have already been printed, and the books for classes 4 and 5 are nearing completion.

However, there is uncertainty regarding the secondary-level books, as the process for printing these books started late.

"We will try our best to deliver a maximum of three secondary-level books by the end of this year," he added.

Last year, the government printed around 31 crore textbooks for the current academic year. However, due to changes in the curriculum, the number of books has increased to 40 crore for 2025.

Distributing the books on time had been a challenge for the then-Awami League government for the past three years.

It failed to deliver over 3 crore textbooks for classes 8 and 9 on time this academic year, as well as in 2022 and 2023, causing students to wait until March for all their textbooks. In 2021, the pandemic caused delays in the textbook distribution process.

Primary and secondary students have been getting free textbooks at the start of each academic session since 2010.

Law and order

FROM PAGE 12

control but at a tolerable level."

When asked about the fire at the Secretariat, Col Intekhab said, "The incident just happened. An investigation will be conducted, and then it can be said whether it was an accident or there was someone behind the fire."

Responding to another query, Col Intekhab said the army is working to maintain discipline as per the government's decision and it depends on the government how long the army will serve on the field. "Therefore, the army will be withdrawn at the decision of the government."

Responding to a question about whether there is a security risk in Cox's Bazar due to instability in Myanmar, he said, "There is no risk to the security or sovereignty at the moment. The army is always on alert in the area. If there is ever a security risk, the army is ready to take action accordingly."

"Besides, the BGB, the Coast Guard, and other law enforcement agencies, and the RRRC (Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner) are working on Rohingya infiltration and other security matters," he said.

Referring to an arson attack on houses of the Tripura community in Bandarban, he said, "It was a land dispute. There was no other reason."

At the beginning of the briefing, Col Intekhab highlighted the activities of the army in maintaining law and order over the last four weeks since November 28.

He said that the army recovered 28 illegal weapons and 424 rounds of ammunition during this period.

The army also played an active role in bringing under control blockades to main roads on 13 occasions arising from 67 unstable situations, and similar situations in different industrial areas of the country. It took steps in coordination with the owners, workers, concerned ministries, Industrial Police,

the BGMEA and all concerned to keep the factories open.

As a result, of the 2,093 garment factories in the industrial areas, all but one are currently in operation.

In addition to the industrial areas, army personnel brought under control 45 different types of chaotic situations, of which, five were related to educational institutions, three to government agencies or offices, seven to political conflicts and 30 other various types of incidents.

Notable among them was to control the clash between two groups of Tablighi Jamaat at the Jitama ground in Tongi on December 18.

From there, the army rescued 92 children and 66 affected people.

In addition, members of the army provided direct assistance to the police in the incident of a robbery attempt at a Rupali Bank branch in Keraniganj on December 19.

In the last month, 200 drug dealers or drug-related individuals have been arrested in joint drives while a significant amount of illegal drugs, such as yaba, phensedyl, illegal liquor, etc. were recovered.

A total of 1,405 people were arrested from different parts of the country for their involvement in various crimes.

4 of a family

FROM PAGE 12

at around 5:00pm after receiving the news of the accident.

Moslem Uddin, the younger brother of Bidya Miya, said the family had travelled from Gazipur to Mymensingh in a lorry and then boarded two separate CNGs. When the other CNG carrying his sibling failed to arrive, they grew concerned.

"The news of the accident and the deaths of their family members proved too much for my already frail father."

The truck driver fled the scene after the accident, said OC Shafiqul, adding that a case has been filed over the incident at Kotwali Police Station.



Posters of missing people hang on a monument in the centre of Marjeh Square in Damascus, Syria yesterday. Some 157,000 people disappeared into Syria's prisons and other government facilities according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

PHOTO: AFP

EU MIGRANT CRISIS 10,457 lost at sea bound for Spain in 2024

Report says victims were from 28 nations

AFP, Madrid

At least 10,457 migrants died or disappeared while trying to reach Spain by sea in 2024, an NGO said yesterday, 50 percent more than last year and the most since it began keeping a tally in 2007.

The 58-percent increase includes 1,538 children and 421 women, migrants rights group Caminando Fronteras or Walking Borders said in a report which covers the period from January 1 to December 5, 2024.

It amounts to an average of 30 deaths per day, up from around 18 in 2023.

The group compiles its data from hotlines set up for migrants on vessels in trouble to call for help, families of migrants who went missing and from official rescue statistics.

It blamed the use of flimsy boats and

increasingly dangerous routes as well as a lack of resources for rescues for the surge in deaths.

"These figures are evidence of a profound failure of rescue and protection systems. More than 10,400 people dead or missing in a single year is an unacceptable tragedy," the group's founder, Helena Maleno, said in a statement.

The victims were from 28 nations, mostly in Africa, but also from Iraq and Pakistan.

The vast majority of the fatalities -- 9,757 -- took place on the Atlantic migration route from Africa to Spain's Canary Islands, which has received a record number of migrants for the second year in a row.

Seven migrant boats landed in the archipelago on Christmas Day, Spain's maritime rescue service said on social media site X.



Israeli air raids target airport, air base in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

Multiple air raids targeted an airport, military air base and a power station in Yemen yesterday, witnesses and the Iran-backed Houthi rebels said.

Sanaa airport and the adjacent Al-Dailami base were targeted along with a power station in Hodeida, in attacks that the Houthis' Al-Masirah TV channel called "Israeli aggression".

On Wednesday, Houthi rebels said that they had fired a ballistic missile and two drones at Israel.

Israel's military said it intercepted the missile and that one drone "fell in an open area" after sirens sounded in the country's south, near the Gaza Strip.

The attack was carried out "using a hypersonic ballistic missile, type Palestine 2", Houthis said in a statement.

Kremlin cautions on 'hypotheses' over plane crash

AFP, Astana

The Kremlin yesterday cautioned against "hypotheses" over the crash of an Azerbaijani plane which had been due to land in Russia as experts pointed to possible evidence of a missile explosion.

The Azerbaijan Airlines jet crashed near the Kazakh city of Aktau, an oil and gas hub, on Wednesday. Thirty-eight of the 67 people on board died.

"It would be wrong to make any hypotheses before the investigation's conclusions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The Embraer 190 aircraft was supposed to fly northwest from the Azerbaijani capital Baku to the city of Grozny in Chechnya in southern Russia, but instead diverted far off course across the Caspian Sea.

An investigation is underway, but some aviation and military experts said the plane may have been accidentally shot by Russian air defence systems as it was flying in an area where Ukrainian drone activity had been reported.

Russian military expert Yury Podolyaka said holes seen in the wreckage of the plane were similar to the damage caused by an "anti-aircraft missile system".

"Everything points to that," he wrote.

A former expert at France's BEA air accident investigation agency, also said there appeared to be "a lot of shrapnel" damage on the wreckage.

Trump wishes 'Merry Christmas' to 'left lunatics'

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden and his incoming successor Donald Trump issued starkly contrasting Christmas messages Wednesday, with the latter doubling down on recent comments about seizing the Panama Canal, buying Greenland and annexing Canada.

While Biden posted a short, traditional seasonal message about "kindness and compassion," Trump fired off a rapid volley of three dozen posts through the day, with his Christmas messages directly addressing "radical left lunatics" and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "whose Citizens' Taxes are far too high."

"Merry Christmas to the Radical Left Lunatics, who are constantly trying to obstruct our Court System and our Elections," the president-elect said in one message, using his characteristically erratic style of capitalisation.

He spent Christmas day firing off on his Truth Social website about his own perceived political persecution -- a contrast to Biden's holiday wishes "to all Americans."

The Republican's comeback electoral win in November came on the back of heightened political polarization and division across the country, which Trump leaned into in his posts.



This handout image, received yesterday from the State Control Centre of the Victoria Emergency Services, shows officials on a road near a bushfire in the Grampians National Park in Victoria, Australia.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia blames Ukraine for wave of attacks

Arrests 44 suspects

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday accused the Ukrainian security services of instigating a spate of 55 arson and bomb attacks on banks, post offices and police cars across the country.

The interior ministry said in a statement that 44 suspects had been arrested, many of them elderly people and minors "looking for easy money".

It said perpetrators faced up to 20 years in prison. "Suspects acted on the instructions of anonymous supervisors received by telephone or messengers," it said.

Assad loyalists kill 14 members of Syrian police

REUTERS, DAMASCUS

Fourteen members of the Syrian police were killed in an "ambush" by forces loyal to the ousted government in the Tartous countryside, the transitional administration said early yesterday, as demonstrations and an overnight curfew elsewhere marked the most widespread unrest since Bashar al-Assad's removal more than two weeks ago.

Syria's new interior minister said on Telegram that 10 police members were also wounded by what he called "remnants" of the Assad government in Tartous, vowing to crack down on "anyone who dares to undermine Syria's security or endanger the lives of its citizens."

Earlier, Syrian police imposed an overnight curfew in the city of Homs, state media reported, after unrest there linked to demonstrations that


residents said were led by members of the minority Alawite and Shia Muslim religious communities.

Some residents said the demonstrations were linked to pressure and violence in recent days aimed at members of the Alawite minority, a sect long seen as loyal to Assad, who was toppled by Sunni rebels on December 8.

Spokespeople for Syria's new ruling administration led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, a former al-Qaeda affiliate, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the curfew.

State media said the curfew was being imposed for one night, from 6:00 pm local time (1500 GMT) until 8:00 am yesterday morning.

The country's new leaders have repeatedly vowed to protect minority religious groups, who fear the former rebels now in control could seek to impose a conservative form of rebel government.



Bangladesh Bank
Common Services Department-2
Head Office
Dhaka
Website: www.bangladeshbank.org.bd

Invitation for Tender Through Web

Tender No. CSD-2(CEW):01(03)/2024-165

Date: 23/12/2024

Tenders through Electronic Media (e-Tender) are invited from the bonafide Contractors/Construction firms for Making Director, Additional Directors Chamber, JD/DD Low Height Chamber, AD/Officer Work Station, Supply & Fixing False Ceiling, Floor Tiles for Payment Systems Department at 3rd floor of 30-storied Building, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka. Necessary information and terms & conditions are given below:

1	Procuring entity	: Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
2	Source of funds	: Bangladesh Bank's own-fund.
3	Invitation for Tender No.	: CSD-2(CEW):01(03)/2024-165
4	Method of procurement.	: Open Tendering Method (OTM) (National)
5	Qualification of tenderers	: This Invitation for Tender is open to all eligible Contractors/Construction Firms of Bangladesh who have: i) Business experience at least 10 (Ten) years and satisfactorily completed at least 01 (one) work of similar nature worth not less than Taka 30.00 (thirty) lac in a single contract, in any government/semi-government/autonomous organization of Bangladesh during the last 05 (five) years. The Tenderers shall have to furnish certificates in this respect from officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer or equivalent. ii) Minimum Average Annual Construction Turnover in the last 05 (five) years preceding the date of submission of the Tender shall not be less than Taka 30.00 (thirty) lac only. iii) Minimum liquid assets/credit facilities shall be Taka 26.00 lac (twenty-six lac only). In case of credit facilities Bank shall ensure that the abovementioned credit limits will be given if the said work is awarded to the contractor. iv) The tenderer shall have to submit VAT, up-to-date trade license and up-to-date income tax clearance certificate. v) Tenderers shall have to fulfill the qualification criteria stipulated in the Tender Data Sheet & other Terms and Conditions of the Tender Documents.
6	Address of the web receiving tender document	: www.bb.org.bd (e-Tender).
7	Name & address of the offices -Receiving tender security & other documentary evidence	: Director (Engg.-Civil), Common Services Department-2 (6th Floor of 30-storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
8	Last date and time for submission of tender document through web	: 08/01/2025 up to 2:30pm.
9	Last date and time for receiving original Tender security, Tender submission letter as per format PW2a-1 and Price of Tender Documents Tk. 1000 (Taka one thousand only) (non-refundable) shall submit in the form of Pay Order	: 08/01/2025 within 2:30pm.
10	Date, time and place for tender opening	: 08/01/2025 at 3:00pm., Common Services Department-2 (6th Floor of 30-storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka. (Intending Tenderers or their authorized representatives are allowed to attend the tender opening with authorization letter).
11	Brief description of works	: The Works consist of Brick works, plaster, glass partition, work station, clear glass, glass paper, Aluminium Metal board false ceiling, plain particle board ceiling, emulsion paint etc.
12	Time for completion of the works	: 03(three) months from the date of issue of Award of Contract.
13	Tender security	: Tk. 75,000.00 (Taka seventy-five thousand only) in the form of PO/BD/BG.
14	Special instructions	: i) Price of Tender Documents Tk. 1000 (Taka one thousand only) (non-refundable) shall submit in the form of Pay Order (PO) from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh on or before 2:30pm dated 08/01/2025 as hard copy; Otherwise the tender will be considered as non-responsive. ii) Original PO/BD/Bank Guarantee as Tender Security along with Original Tender submission letter as per format PW2a-1 and price of tender document in the form of Pay Order shall reach at Director (Engineering-Civil), Common Services Department-2, within stipulated date and time mentioned in TDS. iii) Tenderer shall provide all documentary evidence (original or attested whichever necessary) when requested, failing which the Tender shall be considered as non-responsive. iv) PW2a-1 & PW2a-2 form shall be completed and signed by the Authorized Signatory on the Letter-Head Pad attached by Scanning during submitting tender and original will be sent to the Director (Engineering-Civil), Common Services Department-2, within scheduled time as per TDS. v) Furnishing of any false, misleading documents shall result in rejection of tender and shall lead to action under Rules 127 of PPR 2008. vi) All sorts of security & safety measures shall be carried out by the Contractor during execution of the work. vii) The work shall be done without interrupting the normal activities of the office. viii) Bangladesh Bank reserves all rights to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. No claim will be entertained in this regard.

ডিসিপি: ৪৮/২০২৪-৩৩২৬
তারিখ: ২৬/১২/২০২৪

ব্যক্তিগত ও আর্থিক সেবা থেকে সহায়তার শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

MD. Tafazzal Hossain
Director (Engineering-Civil)
Phone: 88-02-9530099
Fax: 88-02-9530321

GD-1288

Christmas terror for Tripura community

Bring criminals to book, help arson victims rebuild lives

We are deeply disturbed by the arson attack on the minority Tripura community in Lama, Bandarban, in which 17 homes were reportedly reduced to ashes on Christmas Eve. Seemingly rooted in local disputes over land, the assault reflects a disturbing trend of exploitation and impunity that has often endangered the lives and properties of minorities in Bangladesh. The symbolism of this incident—occurring on what should have been a day of joy—is also chilling, and heartbreaking, underscoring the urgency of acting decisively to ensure the safety of minorities.

One may recall a similar attack on December 3, when a mob targeted Hindu residents at Manglargaon village in Sunamganj, following allegations of blasphemy against a young Hindu man who apparently posted an offensive comment about Islam on Facebook. Despite his arrest under the Cyber Security Act, the mob ransacked about 40 houses, several shops, and temples. In Lama, the victims happened to be Christian. According to a report, the attack occurred at the Notun Tongjihiri Tripura Para of Sarai union when the families were attending Christmas prayers and celebrations in a neighbouring village due to the absence of a local church. There were 19 bamboo-and-thatch houses; of them, only two were left unscarred when the families rushed back upon hearing the news. As of writing this editorial, the authorities have yet to arrest any perpetrators, although an FIR has been filed.

Locals say the Tripura community had lived in the area for generations before being forcibly evicted a few years ago by individuals claiming that the land had been leased to the wife of former IGP Benazir Ahmed. After the fall of the Awami League regime on August 5, the evicted families returned to rebuild their homes, only to lose them again, highlighting a troubling intersection of political influence, land rights, and minority vulnerabilities. It's evident that land disputes—long a source of tensions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts—are still being used as a pretext for violence against Indigenous communities. The Sunamganj attack, on the other hand, highlights how religious sensitivities can be exploited to incite such violence. In many cases, such incidents are orchestrated by vested interests for personal or political gain.

We urge the authorities to thoroughly investigate the Lama attack and bring the perpetrators to justice. Swift, visible action is particularly important in light of the ongoing disinformation campaign about the safety of minorities in Bangladesh. Moreover, the authorities must extend comprehensive support to the victims so that they can rebuild their homes and lives. The assistance provided so far—two blankets and one sack of rice per family—is grossly inadequate, and so must be enhanced. Given the vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities in CHT, it is also crucial to strengthen the institutional framework for protecting their rights, especially land rights.

Ensure inmates' health rights

Investigate AL leaders' deaths in Bogura jail custody

The deaths of four pre-trial inmates associated with Awami League, allegedly from heart attacks, within just 29 days while in the custody of Bogura District Jail have understandably raised concerns. According to a report by *Samakal*, the Bogura district administration has formed an inquiry committee to investigate the deaths after the families of the deceased accused jail authorities of negligence. The four deceased—Shahidul Islam Ratan, 58; Abdul Latif, 67; Shahadat Alam Jhunu, 57; and Abdul Matin Mithu, 65—died on November 11, 25, 26, and December 9, respectively. On Wednesday, another inmate, former Awami League MP Ragebul Ahsan Ripu, also suffered a cardiac arrest before he was transferred to the National Heart Institute in Dhaka.

Bogura jail authorities have attributed the deaths to pre-existing conditions and stress from the new environment. They also insisted that all of the deceased were “seniors”, and that they were not “tortured or neglected.” However, the fact that the prison's permanent medical officer position remains vacant is telling. A doctor from the civil surgeon's office is usually summoned when an inmate's condition becomes critical. Following those deaths, however, a doctor reportedly visits the prison regularly—a step that should have been standard practice long ago.

In this column, we have often emphasised the importance of upholding prisoners' rights, including access to proper medical care. Regardless of the charges or convictions, every prisoner is entitled to adequate healthcare. The responsibility lies squarely with the state to ensure access to medication, timely medical attention, and qualified physicians. Yet, in our overcrowded prison system—housing over 90,000 inmates with only six doctors against 141 sanctioned posts—this right is too often neglected. The issue is being compounded by inadequate security measures, particularly for AL leaders being taken to hospitals for medical tests or court trials. Such shortcomings jeopardise not only the prisoners' health and safety but also the credibility of ongoing legal proceedings after the mass uprising.

If the health of a pre-trial detainee deteriorates due to the subhuman conditions of our prisons, it effectively serves as a premature and unjust punishment for someone yet to be proven guilty. We hope the Bogura inquiry committee will deliver its report soon and hold to account those responsible for any negligence. At the same time, we urge the government to undertake systemic reforms—including by addressing issues like overcrowding, insufficient medical staff, and poor infrastructure—to ensure the rights of inmates and prevent further tragedies. A just society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable members, including those behind bars.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Dutch transfer of Indonesian sovereignty
On this day in 1949, four years after nationalist revolutionary leader Sukarno had declared Indonesia's independence, formal sovereignty over the country was transferred from the Dutch to the United States of Indonesia.

Why the energy and power master plan must be reviewed

Shahriar Ahmed Chowdhury
is director of the Centre for Energy Research at United International University (UIU).

Dr Shakila Aziz
is assistant professor in the School of Business and Economics at United International University (UIU).

SHAHRIAR AHMED CHOWDHURY and SHAKILA AZIZ

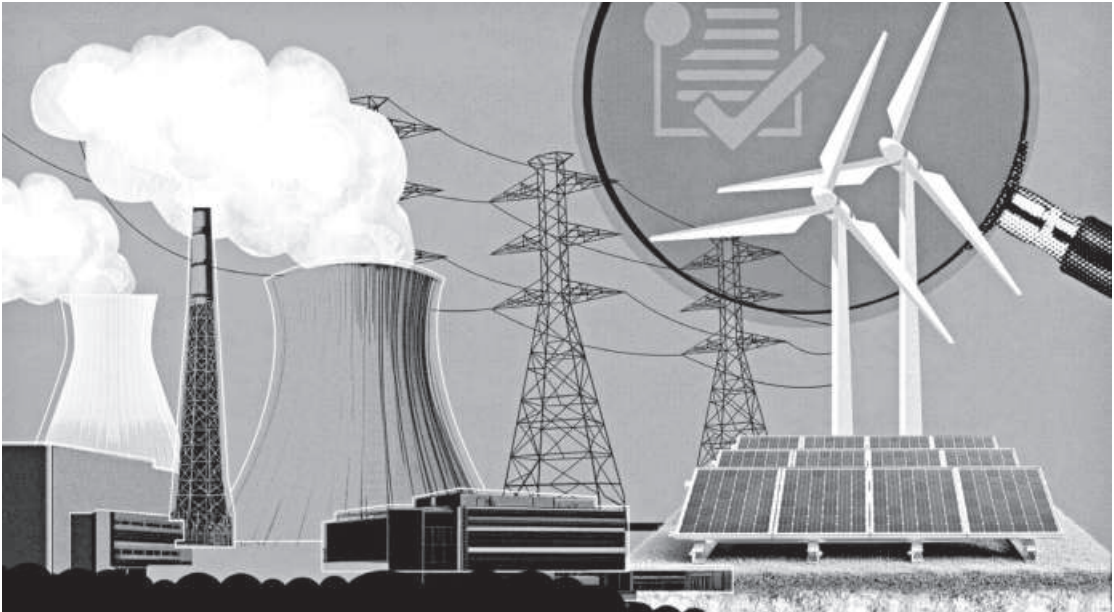
The Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) of Bangladesh, aiming to outline a strategy for the country's energy and power sector up to 2050, was approved in 2023. In addition to the overall supply and demand scenario in the sector, this document outlines the role of renewable energy and clean energy in the electricity mix for the planning period. This forecast of the electricity mix has updated the Power System Master Plan of 2016, where the role of renewable energy was kept at a minimum. Projecting that renewable energy and other modern clean energy sources will play a bigger role in the country's power mix, the IEPMP outlines three different scenarios: reference scenario (REF), advanced technology scenario (ATS), and net-zero scenario (NZS). The plan forecasts that in the ATS and NZS, contributions from solar and wind technologies will be substantial, there will be an expansion of nuclear capacity, coal-fired power plants will be converted to ammonia co-firing, gas will be replaced by hydrogen, carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology will be incorporated, and oil and captive power will be minimised.

However, the projections of introduction of future technologies and their prices have been challenged by various research. The assumptions about the costs and feasibilities of renewables and their prices relative to fossil fuels are based on past trends, which may not continue into the future. The development of renewable energy is still in the early stages in Bangladesh, but it is gaining momentum exponentially. The estimates of the costs and prices of renewable energy technologies in the IEPMP do not reflect actual current values for Bangladesh. Moreover, the forecasts of fossil fuel generation shares are based on the price forecast of fossil fuels up to 2041 by the International Energy Agency (IEA). IEA forecasts have been proven wrong in the past; the current prices of fossil fuels like gas and coal can rise to several orders of magnitude greater than the forecasted prices due to the global changes in energy markets and international political developments, like wars. The IEA projections of the growth and costs of solar PV and wind energy have also been grossly underestimated. The impact of fossil fuel price increases on foreign exchange reserves and inflation and the consequent impact on macroeconomic variables have not been anticipated, but recent developments in the Bangladesh economy have revealed that these are crucial considerations.

According to the IEPMP, the share of fossil fuels is to decrease to at least 60 percent by 2041 and at least 45 percent by 2050 in the Advanced Technology Scenario, and clean energy is supposed to make up the balance. However, per the plan, clean energy includes not only solar and wind, but also nuclear, hydrogen, ammonia co-firing with coal, and CCS technology incorporated into fossil fuel power plants. For example, it is projected that towards 2050, the

ratio of wind power and hydrogen-fired thermal power in the power mix will increase, amounting to 15 percent and 16 percent, respectively. This type of projection implies a role for fossil fuels to remain in use in the future, with provisions to mitigate their polluting effect through still technologically or commercially unproven technologies like ammonia co-firing and CCS. It has been mentioned that CCS, nuclear and hydro will be the chief sources of clean energy, as there are limited wind and solar resources

wind and solar in Bangladesh, but no such studies have been done about hydrogen. The potential to make more land available for solar projects has been extensively discussed in policy documents such as the climate prosperity plan, the draft National Solar Energy Roadmap 2021-2041 (SREDA), and also in some academic research. Here, rooftop solar, solar irrigation and various land reclamation strategies are discussed, in order to allocate more land for solar projects. Furthermore, strategies to accommodate



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

in the country and limited land for developing solar power plants. The share of solar and wind are projected to remain below 20 percent even in 2050.

The IEPMP plans an energy mix with yet unproven technologies, like liquid hydrogen and ammonia. And yet, the share of variable renewable energy in the final energy mix is projected to be small (less than 20 percent). Hydrogen ends up having a significant share in electricity production installed capacity (around 22.4 percent by 2050 of PP2041 scenario). This is unexpected, as hydrogen is a much less mature technology for electricity production and is currently not applied globally on a commercial scale, whereas solar and wind constitute significant shares of electricity generation in many countries. The IEPMP projects that ammonia co-firing at coal-fired thermal plants will start from 2035 and will reach significant levels in the electricity mix by 2040. However, if this plan is to be realised, Bangladesh will have to become a pioneer in using ammonia co-firing in the power sector to such a large extent, as the plan to incorporate ammonia into the electricity generation mix is perhaps unprecedented in other countries (REN21, 2022). At present, the ammonia co-firing technology remains at the research level and is limited to demonstration projects (IRENA, 2022).

Although it is mentioned that solar and wind have limited scope for expansion due to the variable nature of the power as well as the scarcity of land in Bangladesh, there is no discussion to prove how hydrogen can be obtained at such a high quantity to comprise more than a fifth of the total installed capacity of electricity generation. Some research has been done on the potential to incorporate more

variable renewables are also discussed, including storage capacity installation, sector coupling, transmission networks and demand response management. Storage and demand response management are already proven technologies and are commercially viable (REN21, 2022). Yet, such promising and emerging technologies are conspicuously absent in the IEPMP. There is only a brief proposal to perform a feasibility study for pumped storage in Bandarban, where the capacity is insignificant in comparison to Bangladesh's needs, and there is no discussion of using grid-tied battery storage.

The IEPMP goals do not reflect the targets of Bangladesh's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), nor the SDG 7 on clean energy access. The pace and direction of energy technology is changing fast, and new disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence and smart grid are evolving. The future may, therefore, bring many new opportunities and threats, which will involve the power and energy sector of a country. Hence, a power sector master plan like the IEPMP should be forward-thinking, dynamic and adaptive and should also follow the world trends.

The power sector has been undergoing a review in Bangladesh with a view to eliminating financial and technological inefficiencies. The interim government recently said it was revising the IEPMP and reevaluating the renewable energy policy. This is indeed a step in the right direction. The revision must reflect the new financial and technological realities and chart a realistic pathway for the country's power and energy sector.

For a climate-resilient urban future, we need empowered women



Farah Kabir
is the country director of ActionAid Bangladesh.

FARAH KABIR

Bangladesh, as a low-lying deltaic country with a high density population of over 17 crore, faces severe impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels, increased flooding, and more frequent natural disasters. These challenges disproportionately affect women, who comprise over half of the population and face compounded vulnerabilities due to poverty, gender inequality, and limited resources.

Women are generally more vulnerable to climate change than men because they make up the majority of Bangladesh's poor, with over 50 percent of women living below the national poverty line. Moreover, their vulnerability is exacerbated due to existing gender inequalities and socioeconomic factors. Women are particularly impacted in urban slums and informal settlements, where inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, and lack of essential services exacerbate their struggles.

According to certain studies, women are more likely to migrate than men due to the loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, and lack of adaptation options in their villages. The communities migrate to urban settlements, and this is not new: a major influx occurred after the cyclones in 1970 and 1991, Cyclone

Sidr in 2007, Cyclone Aila in 2009, and post floods. Yet, we struggle to find a clear plan for developing infrastructures and services in the cities/urban settings, which is why we find inadequate temporary shelters in the cities.

Climate change drives migration from rural to urban areas, stressing urban resources and infrastructure. This scenario is true not only in Dhaka but also in Chattogram, Khulna and Gazipur, to name a few cities. Women, often engaged in low-wage labour, face wage discrimination, health issues, malnutrition, and inadequate access to healthcare, particularly during pregnancy. The lack of safe water, sanitation, and affordable menstrual hygiene products further compounds their difficulties. Men in these settings also suffer from poor mental health, malnutrition, and drug addiction, indirectly impacting women's burdens.

On a strategic level, decision-makers and political experts have to pay attention to experts who have suggested that to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we have to put an end to new fossil fuel projects. Reports have highlighted that the fossil fuel industry is exploiting women in low-income countries, violating their rights and causing

unimaginable climate destruction. These negative impacts will continue unless countries like Bangladesh, from the LDC group, and small nation states work collectively for a just transition to renewable energy pathways.

It is important to remind ourselves that adaptation strategies and pathways will not work unless global leadership is serious about meeting

Women are generally more vulnerable to climate change than men because they make up the majority of Bangladesh's poor, with over 50 percent of women living below the national poverty line. Moreover, their vulnerability is exacerbated due to existing gender inequalities and socioeconomic factors.

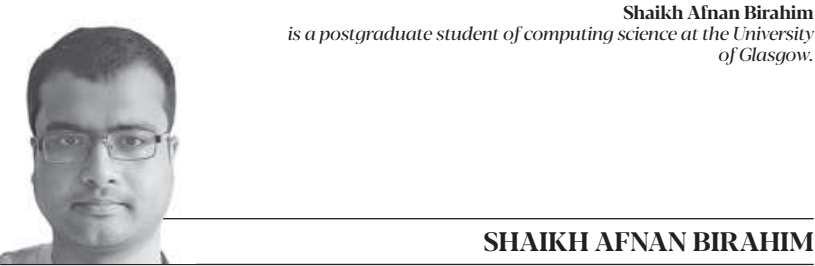
the emission reduction target. In 2024, the average global temperature rise has already been perilously close to an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. As things stand, current emissions reduction commitments put the world on track for a global temperature rise of 2.6-2.8 degrees Celsius this century, and the actions needed to meet these commitments are insufficient. An urgent phase-out of fossil fuels is essential to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In urban spaces, heat-related issues have become a major concern as the poor have limited resources and knowledge to deal with it. Efforts at a national level to address these issues must include gender-responsive climate adaptation pathways. Urban institutions and authorities need to be empowered, decentralised, and provided with a separate budget to serve their constituencies. First and foremost, the policymakers require disaggregated data.

Empowering women through education, resource access, and participation in decision-making processes enhances community resilience. Policies like the Bangladesh Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (CCGAP) provide frameworks to integrate gender considerations, but they require improved implementation and monitoring. Women's leadership in local governance and climate initiatives, such as women-led emergency response groups and Reflect Circles at community levels, demonstrates the potential for inclusive and effective disaster response. Sustainable solutions demand gender-sensitive urban planning, enhanced access to climate finance, and community-based interventions to build resilience and equity.

It is critical to enhance and increase access of women, youth, and marginalised communities to climate finance, DRR and humanitarian funding, including by supporting women's organisations to access funding from national and international funding bodies and other multilateral mechanisms generally and those focusing on urbanisation and development.

How can Bangladesh improve its waste management?



Shaikh Afnan Birahim is a postgraduate student of computing science at the University of Glasgow.

SHAIKH AFNAN BIRAHIM

Sufia is a middle-aged woman working for ZeroWaste Tech, a startup in Dhaka. Every morning, she wears her safety jacket, gloves, boots, and helmet with the powered air-purifying respirator. After checking her smartphone in her allocated region, where the garbage is full and needs to be managed, she goes out with her other mates, collects garbage, and puts it in their targeted dump site near the city. The dump site has also classified areas such as plastics, biowaste, glass, e-waste, etc. Her team then divides the waste accordingly and puts them in each place. Then, the waste is processed further to minimise carbon emissions and can be converted into renewable energy.

This scenario, with the character and the startup, is imaginary, but it can be a reality.

Bangladesh has been facing severe problems in waste management for decades. Several initiatives have been taken, but they have not been effective due to their irregular implementation. The above-mentioned scenario can be made real especially in Dhaka, the most overpopulated city in Bangladesh, where garbage and waste can be seen everywhere, from main roads to narrow alleyways. In the rainy season, the problem intensifies tremendously because of poor drainage systems.

According to projections, the country's daily waste generation

rate is expected to reach 0.80 kg per capita per day by 2030 and 1.19 kg per capita by 2041. So effective measures should be taken right now.

Electronic gadget usage is rising around the world, and Bangladesh is no different. This rising usage leaves a vast amount of electronic waste, which should be appropriately discarded. At the same time, most of it should be recycled and used for new purposes. The challenges in recycling e-waste in Bangladesh include the lack of formal collection systems, insufficient recycling infrastructure, and limited public awareness about the environmental impact of improper e-waste disposal. Informal recycling practices often involve hazardous processes that frequently exacerbate the process and harm both the environment and workers.

Ideas from various countries can be adopted and implemented in Bangladesh to reduce as well as to manage waste in a better way. For example, any citizen can deposit waste into certain places proposed by government or private organisations and get cash or various credits. Those credits can be used for discounts on utility bills. Also, designated dustbins can be used for general and recyclable waste. This waste can be collected as soon as the bins are full, sending notifications to the waste management companies as the whole system will be based on IoT with the bins having sensors.

Japan, Canada, and the European Union have implemented Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which holds producers (manufacturers, importers, sellers) accountable for making their products for the entire lifecycle, even after the consumer stops using them. This means that the producers are not only responsible for making the products but also must

renewable energy sectors to produce biogas. For instance, South Korea has implemented a mandatory food waste recycling programme where food waste is collected separately and processed into biogas and animal feed. Such a system not only reduces landfill usage but also contributes to renewable energy production and agricultural sustainability.

organic waste, into valuable fuels and energy can make a huge impact and significantly reduce waste.

Public campaigns to educate citizens about waste segregation, recycling, and the environmental consequences of improper waste disposal are crucial. Effective methods could include integrating waste management topics into school

plastic bags has largely been replaced with eco-friendly alternatives like jute and paper bags, but this practice should be implemented more strictly. Modern landfills equipped with gas recovery systems can also reduce the environmental impact of plastic waste and other non-recyclables. These systems capture methane, a potent greenhouse gas typically released from decomposing waste in landfills, which can be converted into renewable energy and reduce air pollution.

Additionally, setting up innovation hubs and providing access to research facilities could foster the growth of sustainable businesses and enrich the research sector for this cause. For instance, exploring methods like bioleaching, a process where bacteria safely extract valuable materials from electronic waste, can be a game-changer. This technique not only minimises environmental harm but also provides a sustainable approach to recycling and resource recovery. By encouraging such advancements, Bangladesh can pave the way for a more sustainable and efficient waste management system.

While many initiatives are being undertaken to reduce waste, a more cohesive and systematic effort is needed to overcome the flaws of the current waste management system. The government should establish clear and enforceable guidelines and strong legislation, and ensure practical policy implementation, which are essential to drive meaningful change in this respect. By learning from global best practices, fostering innovation, and raising public awareness, Bangladesh can transform its waste management system into one that is more sustainable, efficient, and environmentally responsible.



VISUAL : REHNUMA PROSHOON

be a part of the waste management of their products. They have some policies, like the take-back policy, which provides facilities for the consumers to return used products. They also have recycling obligations. These schemes encourage them to reduce waste by contributing to the government or third-party waste management initiatives.

Food waste can be redirected to

Bangladesh could adopt a similar model by establishing dedicated food waste collection and processing centres in urban areas.

Startups focusing on areas like waste-to-energy technologies, recycling infrastructure, and eco-friendly alternatives to plastics should be encouraged. For example, companies that focus on converting waste materials, such as plastic and

curricula to instil habits from an early age and organising interactive workshops in communities. Social media campaigns using influencers and local celebrities can also raise awareness and encourage sustainable practices. These approaches can ensure that the message reaches a diverse audience and promotes active participation.

Indeed, the widespread use of

Rethinking our labour market challenges



Dr Shamsul Arifeen Khan Mamun is a professor of economics and is currently attached to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) under the Ministry of Education.

SHAMSUL ARIFEEN KHAN MAMUN

In a recent report on the labour market of Bangladesh published in *The Daily Star*, one of the key issues highlighted is the mismatch in the labour market, particularly between the oversupply of tertiary graduates and sufficient job creation. However, the concept of a "labour market mismatch," in my view, has become an overused and overly simplistic explanation. This narrative diverts attention from deeper economic challenges, allowing policymakers and employers to shift the blame for unemployment and underemployment onto workers' supposed lack of skills, rather than addressing the systemic issues at play. Education institutions—both colleges and universities—are responsible for the skill mismatch among graduates.

It is well understood that labour market mismatch may occur because of a lack of investment in key industries. When formal sector industries fail to grow or modernise in line with the demands, it is easy to claim that there is a shortage of skilled workers

rather than admit that the industry itself is lagging behind in innovation or that the economy has not created enough high-quality jobs. It is asserted that except for the ready-made garment (RMG) industry, other industrial bases such as the information and communication (ICT) sector are still weak in this regard. To be specific, the Asian Development Bank's tracer study on ICT graduates in the country has found that job placement rate is as low as 57.6 percent.

The term "labour market mismatch" is often used as a blanket explanation, which can obscure more critical factors such as low wages and poor working conditions. Even when job vacancies exist, positions remain empty because they fail to meet workers' expectations in terms of pay, benefits and/or job security. This is not a mismatch of skills, but a mismatch between what workers' expectations are and what the employers are willing to offer.

As a consultant for the World Bank, I had

the opportunity to conduct a diagnostic analysis of the tertiary education sector in Bangladesh. As part of this effort, the World Bank conducted a tracer survey in 2017 that asked unemployed tertiary graduates whether they had rejected job offers. According to the findings, 26 percent of unemployed graduates reported being offered jobs but having chosen to refuse them. The reasons for refusal varied, with low salaries being the most common (46

One potential initiative is for the government to establish employment centres at the upazila level, under the Department of Labour. These centres could act as bridges between jobseekers and employers, offering job matching services, as well as running reskilling and upskilling programmes to equip recent graduates with the skills that align with current economic demands.

percent), followed by poor working conditions (16 percent), unsatisfactory job positions (11 percent), inconvenient job locations (13 percent), and other factors (14 percent).

This data highlights that, in many

industries, particularly the informal sector, poor working conditions—such as low wages, lack of job security, and limited benefits—are significant contributors to labour shortage. The issue of low wages is especially pronounced in the informal sector, where there is little standardisation of pay or clear paths for career progression. According to the 2017 World Bank tracer survey, tertiary graduates from colleges were offered an average monthly salary of Tk 15,000, which is insufficient given the rising living costs.

Moreover, many unemployed graduates, particularly those with tertiary education, tend to hold out for public sector jobs, which are seen as more stable and better paying, rather than accepting lower-paying jobs in the informal sector. This preference for public sector employment can extend their period of unemployment, further complicating the job market dynamics.

Therefore, attributing labour shortages solely to a lack of qualified candidates oversimplifies the issue. The real challenge lies in the quality of jobs being offered. Improving labour standards—through wage reforms, better working conditions, and more robust career pathways—could play a crucial role in addressing these shortages and reducing unemployment among graduates.

In my view, the solution to the labour market challenges requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the demand and supply sides of the labour market.

First, both the government and the

private sector should invest in improved labour market information systems that can connect employers with jobseekers in real time. This would help reduce the gap between job openings and suitable candidates by providing timely, accurate data on available positions and the skills required. One potential initiative is for the government to establish employment centres at the upazila level, under the Department of Labour. These centres could act as bridges between jobseekers and employers, offering job matching services, as well as running reskilling and upskilling programmes to equip recent graduates with the skills that align with current economic demands.

Second, the government should consider formulating and enforcing a minimum wage law that reflects the cost of living across different regions. Establishing minimum wage standards, and ensuring they are periodically adjusted for inflation and regional economic conditions, would make jobs more attractive to workers. This would not only help reduce the perception of a labour market mismatch but will also improve working conditions, creating a more motivated and productive workforce.

While some degree of mismatch may exist, the education system should not be held solely responsible for that. To resolve the labour market dysfunction, the underlying systemic issues must be acknowledged and addressed properly.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

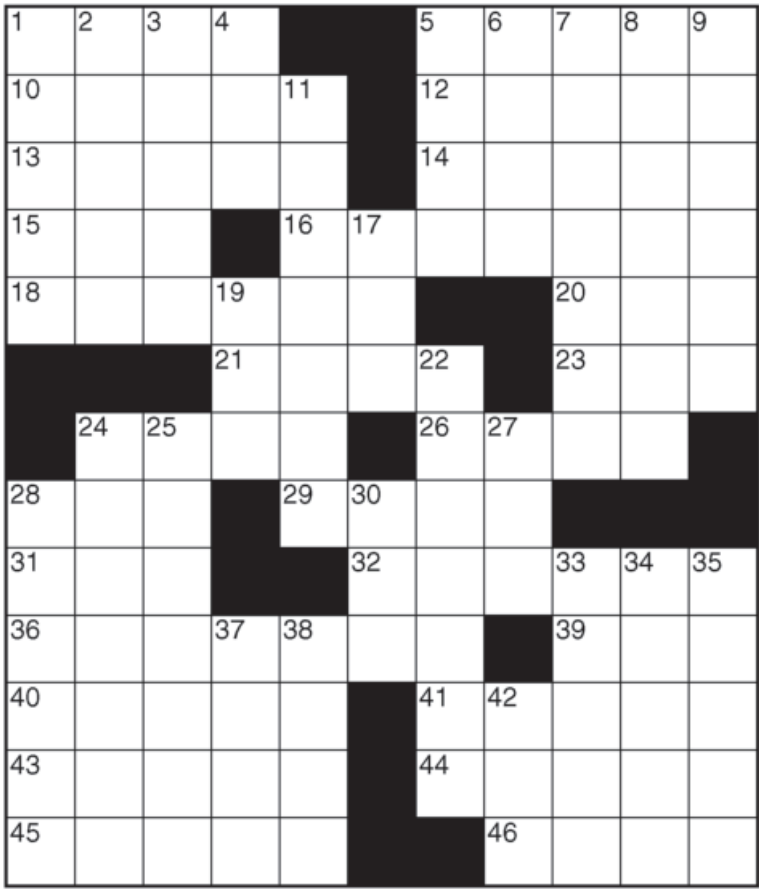
ACROSS

- Grating sound
- Oven feature
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- Horseshoe shape
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- Uncover
- Go boom
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- Job reward
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- Vitality
- Field protector
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- Eyeglass
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- Plant anew
- Sound systems
- Gen —
- Wall climber
- Spot overseers
- Tailless pet
- Become comfortable with
- Game caller
- Songs of triumph
- Mogul Turner
- Missouri tribe
- Shoe box numbers
- Put forth
- Bank offering
- Just
- Gym unit



4-13

MONDAY'S ANSWERS



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dsopinion@gmail.com.

WOMEN AND LAW

Addressing the root causes of
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Comprehensive measures that challenge patriarchal structures, promote gender equality, and empower women economically and socially are essential for reducing violence and ensuring that legal protections are not only theoretical but also practically effective.

DR. SYEDA AFROZA ZERIN and RAWNAK MIRAJ UL AZAM

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh enshrines the principles of freedom, justice, and equality, affirming that all individuals are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under it. Furthermore, the Constitution upholds the principle of non-discrimination, with a specific commitment to ensuring gender equality. Thus, the country's core objective is to establish a society free from exploitation, where the rule of law, fundamental human rights, and political, economic, and social equity are guaranteed for all citizens.

Despite the constitutional commitment and the existence of numerous laws aimed at combating discrimination and violence against women, incidents of such violence in Bangladesh continue to rise at an alarming rate. Ain o Salish Kendra's (ASK) most recent data reveals alarming statistics about the prevalence of violence against women in Bangladesh. Between January and September 2023, 158 women were murdered as a result of violence. According to the non-governmental organisation Light House, a staggering 9,764 women fell victim to violence over a one-year period. This figure includes 4,360 cases of rape and 450 murders following rape. In total,

17,027 incidents of violence against women were reported during this period. These figures not only underscore the urgent need for stronger enforcement of existing laws but also highlight the deeply entrenched societal issues contributing to the patterns of violence. This piece aims to highlight that, in addition to legal shortcomings, there are several other critical factors that contribute to the persistence of violence against women, a grave violation of human rights which need to be addressed.

One of the most significant contributors is the social norms and cultural attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality. These traditional beliefs often position women as subordinate to men, fostering an environment where violence is normalised or even justified. Social norms that promote male dominance and control over women such as those linked to dowry practices, the expectation of women's submission, and the tolerance of domestic abuse create a backdrop in which violence against women is not only accepted but, in some cases, expected. In Bangladesh, the financial dependency of women on men and the social perception of male superiority contribute significantly to the prevalence of violence against women too. These cultural and economic factors create an environment

in which women's rights and safety are continually undermined, even in the face of stringent laws. Thus, while legal reform is important, it is equally crucial to address these underlying societal issues. Comprehensive measures that challenge patriarchal structures, promote gender equality, and empower women economically and socially are essential for reducing violence and ensuring that legal protections are not only theoretical but also practically effective.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes. Teaching children from a young age about mutual respect, equality, and non-violence is essential to breaking the cycle of intergenerational abuse. Schools should incorporate programs on healthy relationships, gender equality, and conflict resolution, equipping future generations with the knowledge and skills to promote respect and prevent violence. To ensure the effective prevention and response to violence, local monitoring bodies should be established in each union or district. These bodies would be responsible for receiving complaints, providing support to victims, and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable. They should have the authority to initiate investigations and take action to address complaints, ensuring that no act of violence goes unaccounted for. The government, civil society organisations, and communities must work together to address both the symptoms and root causes of gender-based violence.

A major cause underlying gender-based violence is gender-based discrimination. In this context, it is important for us to discuss anew the draft Anti-Discrimination Act 2022.

The bill's reactive nature was underscored by experts as one of its main problems. The usefulness of the law in preventing discrimination in the first place was evidently limited because it intended to take effect only after a discriminatory act has taken place. The draft did not deal with the underlying causes of discrimination or take preventive steps to stop it. The bill thus ran the risk of being only a cosmetic tool given the underlying structural and societal problems remained unaddressed. This is high time we enacted an effective law to prevent discrimination which would eventually help effectively combat violence against women in Bangladesh.

The writers are Associate Professor and Head, Department of Law, American International University-Bangladesh and Lecturer, Department of Law, American International University-Bangladesh, respectively.

LAW LESSONS

Should Bangladesh go for “Green tribunals”?

JULIAN RAFAH

Bangladesh has long been prone to the adverse impacts of climate change coupled with environmental degradation and pollution due to the ineffectiveness of the enforcement mechanisms available for environment conservation. In this regard, the case of India instructive. India promulgated the National Green Tribunal Act (NGTA) 2010 establishing National Green Tribunals (NGTs) for the speedy and efficient disposal of cases related to the protection and conservation of the environment, natural resources and wildlife.

Environment adjudication in Bangladesh is dealt with by two laws: the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act (BECA) 1995 and the Environment Court Act (ECA) 2010. The ECA does not entail any expertise that one needs to be appointed in the environment courts in Bangladesh whereas, section 4 of the NTGA provides for such provisions given the scientific and technical nature of environmental violations.

The environment courts, constituted under the ECA, fall short on the question of enforcement. For instance, sections 15 and 16 of the BECA provide that the court can impose a maximum fine of taka ten lac (with or without other punishments)



for both natural and juristic persons irrespective of the gravity of offences. In a bid to ensure compliance with the judicial decisions, section 26 of the NGTA (India), however, provides that non-compliance with any direction of the NGTA or any of its judgments will result in imprisonment for three years or a fine, which may extend to 10 to 25 crore rupees or both. The emphasis on compliance alongside being a full-time civil court judge with a huge backlog of cases in the civil courts. In contrast, the NGTA (India) provides in section 5(3) that the Chairperson and other judicial and expert members of the tribunal are not allowed to hold any other offices during their appointment which makes the NGT judges much more efficient.

The procedural limitation is minimal in the NGTA (India) as it provides in sections 19(1) and 19(3) that the tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 (The Indian Code of Criminal Procedure) or rules of evidence contained in the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 (Indian Evidence Act). In the context of Bangladesh, however, section 14(1) and 14(6) of the ECA have provided for the application of CPC 1908 and CrPC 1898 in the trial and disposal of environmental suits and cases. The NGT works on internationally recognised principles such as the “polluter pays principle” and “sustainable development” as per section 20

Section 4 of the ECA provides that the environment court shall be composed of one Joint District Judge. In reality, s/he plays the role of a part-time judge in the environment courts alongside being a full-time civil court judge with a huge backlog of cases in the civil courts.

of the NGTA (India), which are absent in our law. Another strength of the NGT is that it promotes ADR mechanisms and out of court settlement procedures.

Even though the NGTA (India) is not free from criticism and shortcomings, its successes outweigh its limitations. Some limitations include having no fixed formula for calculating the compensation, lack of judicial independence as the rules of the NGTA (India) allow bureaucrats to be appointed in the tribunal, lack of resources for the judges of the tribunals and insufficient number of benches. Despite the shortcomings, according to reports, around 36,356 cases have been filed and only 2,404 cases stand pending before the NGT. Bangladesh can take lessons from India and establish an improved version of green tribunals and a new Act.

The writer is LLM candidate, University of Dhaka.

LAWS OF WAR

The neglected environmental aspect of armed conflicts

As a result of armed conflicts, communities are left to bear the environmental and human costs of war long after the conflicts end. These impacts, often unseen and unmeasured, deprive future generations of a sustainable environment, healthy food sources, and safe water supplies.

SHAIKH SHOHAG HOSSAIN

It is important to recognise the hidden costs that armed conflicts inflict upon the environment and the communities living in the affected areas. While the loss of human lives and destruction of infrastructures are painfully evident, the environmental devastation result in long-term damage to ecosystems, health, and livelihoods too, that often go unacknowledged.

When conflicts erupt, they do not just affect combatants and civilians directly involved; they also leave scars on the environment that indirectly affect future generations. The destruction of natural resources, pollution of water supplies, deforestation, soil erosion, and biodiversity losses are some of the irreversible impacts of war on the environment. Environmental exploitation during conflict frequently manifests in the form of scorched-earth tactics, uncontrolled waste disposal, and unrestricted mining. These activities not only damage the local ecosystem but also have a significant influence on the communities that rely on these resources for survival.

International law offers some protection to the environment during armed conflicts. Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions explicitly prohibits methods of warfare that may cause “widespread, long-term, and severe” damage to the environment. Additionally, the United Nations Environment Programme has highlighted the need for accountability for environmental destruction during wartime. Despite these provisions, enforcement remains challenging, and many conflicts continue to devastate ecosystems with impunity. Efforts by the International Law Commission to draft principles on protecting the environment in relation to armed conflicts are a hopeful step. However, since these are without binding authority, such initiatives remain largely symbolic.

One of the most pressing examples of environmental exploitation in conflict zones is the ongoing situation in Palestine. Decades of conflict have left Palestine's environment in a state of ruin, impacting everything from agricultural lands to access to clean



water. The Israeli-Palestinian war has led to restrictions on Palestinian access to essential water resources, leaving many communities with grossly limited or contaminated water supplies. The destruction of olive groves and agricultural lands not only disrupts the market economy but also erodes the land, making it difficult for communities to cultivate crops or sustain livestock.

Moreover, pollutants from destroyed infrastructure, discarded ammunition, and military equipment have contaminated Palestinian soil and water sources. According to the UNEP, such environmental degradation disproportionately affects Palestinians, who rely heavily on agriculture and limited natural resources. This ongoing environmental impact represents a form of structural violence, as it continues to undermine the livelihoods and health of Palestinian civilians, especially those in Gaza, where environmental destruction has exacerbated living conditions to critical levels.

Other conflicting regions suffer similarly. In Iraq, years of conflict have turned the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, once lifelines for agriculture and drinking water, into polluted channels. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conflict-driven mineral extraction has resulted in severe deforestation and habitat loss, threatening biodiversity and

the health of communities. Syria's once-fertile lands are now barren, with soils and water sources contaminated by extensive bombings, pushing countless farmers into poverty.

In each of these cases, communities are left to bear the environmental and human costs of war long after the conflicts end. These impacts, often unseen and unmeasured, deprive future generations of a sustainable environment, healthy food sources, and safe water supplies. To address these issues, there must be an international commitment to uphold and strengthen legal protections for the environment during armed conflict. Expanding the scope of the Geneva Conventions and ensuring accountability for environmental harm can offer some relief. An international mechanism for investigating and prosecuting environmental war crimes could act as a deterrent too.

Moreover, rebuilding efforts should prioritise environmental rehabilitation as a critical aspect of post-conflict recovery. The restoration of ecosystems, cleaning of polluted water sources, and reforestation efforts can help communities regain their self-sufficiency and rebuild livelihoods disrupted by conflict.

The writer is Lecturer, Department of Law, National University, Gazipur.

Konstas’ whirlwind debut hogs the spotlight

REUTERS, Melbourne

Cricket coaching manuals probably don't recommend scooping Jasprit Bumrah 11 deliveries into your Test career but Australia's 19-year-old debutant Sam Konstas was working from his own playbook in the Boxing Day Test on Thursday.

His first effort missed the ball, as did his second a couple of overs later, triggering laughter from India's players in front of a huge crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground for day one of the fourth Test.

Unbowed, Konstas's persistence paid off as he shuffled across the crease and flicked Bumrah over the wicketkeeper's head for four on the third attempt.

He then pulled off a reverse scoop that cleared the rope for six on the next ball, wiping the smiles off the visitors' faces. Another reverse scoop three balls later went for four in the same over, sending home fans into a frenzy.

Few batters are able to make India's pace spearhead look silly and hold onto

their wickets for long but Konstas kept bashing away at Bumrah in a 65-ball 60.

He eventually fell lbw to the spin of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja before lunch.

Watching in the crowd, Konstas's twin brother Johnny told host broadcaster Seven Network that the opener had talked about pulling out a ramp shot against India over Christmas dinner on Wednesday.

The player confirmed it was a pre-planned tactic to put pressure back on Bumrah, the most dominant bowler of the series so far, and that he had been practising the shot with his personal batting coach, Tahmid Islam.

"Definitely premeditated, especially with the pace," he told reporters after Australia went to stumps at 311 for six.

"But just trying to keep my head still and just watch it onto my bat. But, yeah, got a few away today and changed the field, which was good."

India were riled by Konstas's youthful exuberance.

Virat Kohli, the team's 36-year-old megastar, bumped shoulders mid-pitch

with the teenager at the end of the 10th over.

Both turned around to exchange words, prompting umpire Michael Gough and opener Usman Khawaja to step in to defuse things.

Konstas responded by slogging Bumrah for four over mid-off on the next ball he faced, then hit the pacer over his head for six as he took 18 runs from the over.

Paceman Mohammed Siraj, who was booed in the second test in Adelaide for giving a send-off to Travis Head after taking his wicket, also tried to intimidate Konstas but got little reward.

After Konstas charged down the wicket and missed the ball, Siraj stared daggers at the teen and offered a few choice words.

Konstas smacked him for three off the next ball and kept up the aggression.

"Obviously it got heated at times, which was good for me," said Konstas.

"(I) just feel like that brings the best out of me. Hopefully it goes well in the next innings."



South Africa pacer Corbin Bosch celebrates after the dismissal of Pakistan batter Aamer Jamal during the opening day of the first Test at the SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday. Dane Paterson took five for 61 — his second five-wicket haul in successive Tests — and debutant Bosch took four for 63 as Pakistan were bowled out for 211. The 30-year-old Bosch made a dream start as he claimed the wicket of Pakistan captain Shan Masood as he came on as second change in a fiery four-man bowling line-up that dominated the day's proceedings. Bosch, playing on his home ground, had been drafted into the South Africa side after a raft of injuries to their regular fast bowlers and made good use of the opportunity with two wickets in the opening session and two more after lunch.

PHOTO: AFP

A LOOK BACK AT 2024

Neer grounded despite ‘dream’ year

IM **Manon Reja Neer** has been the standout performer in Bangladesh's otherwise lacklustre chess scene in 2024. The 15-year-old not only claimed the national chess championship but also became the country's youngest International Master. Currently in New York for the World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships, Neer spoke to **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** about his stellar year, challenges, and future aspirations. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How was the year 2024 for you as a chess player?

Manon Reja Neer (MRN): The year 2024 has been the best year for me. Achieving the IM title and winning the National Chess Championship was a dream come true... I had nothing in 2023; there were no IM norms, and I only had 2200 rating points. But in 2024, I crossed 2400 rating points and secured all three norms needed to become an International Master.

DS: Were you satisfied with participating in 18 FIDE-recognised tournaments at home and abroad in 2024, playing nearly 200 matches, given players often highlight a lack of opportunities?

MRN: I was very satisfied with playing all those tournaments because I performed well overall... I think playing 18 to 20 local and international tournaments each year is good enough to create opportunities and achieve targets.

DS: Did you notice any weaknesses in your gameplay during the year?

MRN: I think everything, except handling mental pressure, was in the right place. For instance, I needed only a

draw in one match to secure a GM norm, and in another instance, I needed a win, but I couldn't hold my nerve. That's how I missed out on two GM norms.

DS: You faced several Grandmasters in 2024, winning six matches and drawing ten. Any memorable moments from these games?

MRN: I think my best win was against Israel's Grandmaster Ido Gorshtein, who had a rating of maybe 2560 or 2570 (actually 2543). I believe I can achieve good results against anyone if I perform well.

DS: How do you view the overall condition of the country's chess in 2024?

MRN: Actually, I don't know much about it. I've always travelled abroad at my own cost or through sponsorships to play in overseas tournaments. Other players performed well, but there were no notable achievements except my IM title.

DS: Did you experience any disappointments in 2024?

MRN: Missing out on two GM norms was definitely sad, and the departure of Zia sir [GM Ziaur Rahman] was unfortunate

for all of us.

DS: What are your expectations from the newly appointed ad-hoc committee?

MRN: I don't have any expectations from committees because I've lost faith in them. However, I do hope the new committee will organise training for promising players, send them abroad for overseas tournaments, and hold all local tournaments on time.

DS: Any specific goals for 2025?

MRN: I don't have specific targets because what will happen, will happen. However, I'll try to give my best, which you could say is my target for 2025. I haven't set a target for securing GM norms either, as I believe that if I perform well throughout the year, the norms will come automatically.

DS: What's your evaluation of Indian GM Gukesh Dommaraju, who became world champion at just 18?

MRN: He didn't become champion by chance... There has been tremendous support for chess in India, and he benefited from that. Of course, he's a talented player, which is why he became world champion. If I also receive financial support or sponsorships, I believe I can aim for such achievements.

DS: What are your expectations at the World Rapid and Blitz Championships?

MRN: My only expectation is to perform well — nothing else.



A LOOK BACK AT 2024

An eventful but predictable year in football

ANISUR RAHMAN

In the year 2024, Bangladesh football followed the familiar beats of the preceding years with a few new developments sprinkled in between.

The women's team excelled once again, winning their second successive SAFF Women's Championship title, while the men's team remained stuck in mediocrity. Age-level teams found success at SAFF level while Bashundhara Kings carried on with their domestic domination.

The change in leadership at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) was the biggest new development at the administrative level while the demise of five members of the Swadhin Bangladesh Football team was the saddest.

The year is ending on an optimistic note with news of England-born Bangladeshi footballer Hamza Choudhury getting the green light to represent Bangladesh at the international level coming in December, something fans had long been waiting for.

Age-level teams triumph at SAFF

Bangladesh strengthened its stronghold in women's age-level football at the sub-continent level in 2024. The Under-19 team was named joint champions of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship alongside India in February after a heated final in Dhaka that ended in a contentious manner.

This was Bangladesh's second triumph at the U-19 Women's Championship and fourth overall including the SAFF U-18 and U-20

Women's Championships. The U-16 team also lifted the title in the SAFF U-16 Women's Championship in March Bhutan in 2024.

In men's competitions, Bangladesh won its maiden SAFF U-20 Championship in Bhutan in August, while the U-17 team finished as runners-up in the SAFF U-17 Championship.

However, when competing at the AFC level, the age-level teams struggled. The women's U-17 team finished bottom of the four-team group in the second round of the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup qualification in September while the men's U-20 team finished third among five teams in the AFC U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

New FIFA sanctions

Last year, FIFA had dropped a bombshell on BFF when it banned the federation's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag for two years for using falsified documents to justify payments made by the BFF with FIFA funds.

In continuation of that investigation, the global football body in May imposed fresh sanctions on Shohag, former chief financial officer Abu Hossain and former operations manager Mizanur Rahman. It also fined senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy, who stepped down from his post on August 9, further diminishing BFF's already dwindling reputation.



Unstoppable Kings

Bashundhara Kings won their fifth successive Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) title this year — becoming the first ever team to do so in the country's domestic football. Kings also bagged the treble in the 2023-24 season — the second Bangladeshi club to do so after Sheikh Russel KC. However, Kings again failed at the international level, losing all four of their matches in the newly introduced AFC Challenge League.

Two top flight clubs withdraw

BPL teams Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC withdrew from the top-flight in the 2024-25 season, citing sponsorship crisis. Their departure reduced employment opportunities for local players. Some top footballers have also reportedly taken a pay

cut this season as many clubs are dealing with financial crunch.

Sabina and Co run it back in Kathmandu

Despite a lack of practice matches and disagreements between senior players and head coach Peter Butler, Bangladesh women's team triumphed in Kathmandu once again and retained their SAFF Women's Championship in October — an unprecedented feat in Bangladesh football.

Men's team continue to disappoint

Bangladesh men's team had another forgettable year as Javier Cabrera's charges lost six off the eight matches they competed in 2024, only winning against Bhutan and Maldives. The men in red and green could score only three while conceding 15 goals in those fixtures.

SHORT CORNER

Shakib's absence from BPL disappointing: Sujon

Dhaka Capitals head coach Khaled Mahmud Sujon said the players will be disappointed if ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan eventually does not participate in the upcoming edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), starting on December 30. "A top cricketer cannot play the biggest tournament in the country. I think all the cricketers are also disappointed [about Shakib not playing in the BPL]. Not everyone can speak in front of the mic. Shakib has a friendly relationship with all the cricketers. He helps everyone in every way. So, it feels bad, that's all. He is known all over the world as a cricketer. He joined politics and I don't know how much injustice he committed. But I'm surprised that we combined his long career with those seven-eight months [in politics]," Mahmud told reporters after his side's first practice session at the National Cricket Academy Ground in Mirpur on Thursday.

Dilara hits maiden ton in WBCL

East Zone opener Dilara Akter Dola notched up her maiden first-class century to put her side on top against Central Zone on the opening day of the second-round match of the ongoing Women's Bangladesh Cricket League 2024-25 at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on yesterday. Dilara scored 102 off 131 balls with 11 fours and two sixes, while Jannatul Ferdus Tithi and Sharmin Akhter Supta contributed with 65 and 62 runs, respectively, as East Zone made 316-8 at stumps after opting to bat first. Dilara and Jannatul shared a 154-run stand for the second wicket which give their side a solid platform after losing opener Shompa early.

***Read full stories on The Daily Star website.*



City pay penalty for Haaland miss

AFP, Manchester

Erling Haaland had a second-half penalty saved as Manchester City's astonishing slump continued with a 1-1 draw against lowly Everton at the Etihad Stadium.

Winners of the last four Premier League titles, the English champions have won just once in their last 13 games in all competitions.

Bernardo Silva put City in front early on before Iliman Ndiaye salvaged a point for the Toffees.

Haaland had the chance to end his longest goal drought at the Etihad but his spot-kick was that of a striker short in confidence as Pickford dived low to his right to make the save.

City climb to sixth but could end the day five points adrift of the top four.



4 of a family killed in road accident

Elderly relative dies after getting tragic news

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

After four members of a family lost their lives in a road accident in Mymensingh yesterday, tragedy struck the family once again when an elderly relative, whom the victims were travelling to visit, passed away after getting the devastating news.

The accident occurred around 7:30am when a CNG-run autorickshaw carrying the victims collided head-on with a truck on the Mymensingh-Netrakona road in Tarakanda upazila.

Bidya Miya, 42, and his wife Laboni Akter, 18, died on the spot, said Md Shafiqul Islam Khan, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mymensingh Kotwali Police Station.

Bidya's sister Bakul Begum, 45, and her husband Abdur Rashid, 55, who were also travelling in the autorickshaw, succumbed to their injuries at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, he added.

The victims, residents of Bahadurpur village in Netrakona Sadar upazila, had started from Gazipur to visit Bidya's ailing father, Khorshed Ali, 85. Tragically, Khorshed Ali, who had been suffering from old-age complications, passed away

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



Mourners pray beside the bodies during the funeral of Palestinian journalists from Al-Quds Al-Youm television channel who were killed in Israeli airstrikes. The photo was taken at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Law and order hasn't worsened statistically

Says Army HQ, acknowledges many 'incidents' taking place

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law and order situation in the country has not statistically deteriorated, but many incidents are taking place, the Army Headquarters said yesterday.

Colonel Intekhab Haider Khan, colonel staff of the Directorate of Military Operations at the Army Headquarters, made the remarks while giving updates on the efforts to maintain law and order over the past four weeks at a press conference.

Facing a reporter's query, Col Intekhab said that along with the police, the army's patrols, and different camp officials are working on law and order.

Area-based cells at different levels were formed for coordination among the police, army, and other law enforcement agencies, he said.

"This coordination is done at the Army Headquarters and the adviser level. All types of law and order issues and the threats to the country are discussed, and decisions about the next course of action are taken."

He said the law enforcement agencies and the army conduct two types of operations. The first is targeted and the second type of operations are conducted immediately after receiving information about any incident.

"We are trying. It may not be possible to keep [law and order] under complete

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Textbook distribution runs into a snag

Only one-third of 40cr books to be handed out to primary, secondary students on Jan 1

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

No secondary school student will get full sets of textbooks on the first day of the next academic year. At the primary level, only about half of the students will get the full sets on January 1.

Top officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) said they would try to provide around 13.5 crore of 40 crore free textbooks by the first day of the new year.

These include around 6.5 crore textbooks out of 28 crore for the secondary level students and 7 crore out of 12 crore for the primary level.

They said students of classes 4 to 9 will only get Bangla, English, and mathematics books on the first day of the academic year.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, NCTB Chairman AKM Reazul Hassan hoped they would be able to provide all the textbooks by January 20.

But printing industry insiders hinted that it would take at least until the first week of March for them to deliver all the textbooks.

Officials and printing press owners said besides the closure during the July-August political changeover and the subsequent decision to return to the old curriculum, various other factors like a delay in re-tendering and a paper shortage caused the hold-up.

Approximately 40 crore books are being printed this year for over 4.4 crore students of the pre-primary level to class 10. Of these, 12 crore books will be printed for around 2 crore students at the pre-primary and primary

Only around 20pc of textbooks printed so far

13.5cr out of 40cr will be delivered by January 1

NCTB hopes to deliver all books by January 20

Printing industry insider says it may take up to first week of March to deliver all books

levels, while the remainder is for 2.24 crore secondary-level students.

As of yesterday, only about 20 percent of the textbooks have been printed, and all of these books are for primary-level students, said sources at the NCTB, printing press owners, and the Printing Industry Association.

For students in the capital, a total of 2.29 crore textbooks are required, while some 11.86 lakh books are printed for English medium school students. But as of Wednesday, no books were delivered to the schools.

When asked about the hold-up in printing the books, NCTB officials cited delays in re-tendering several lots of books for three primary grades, issuance of new tenders,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

PAK UNREST Military court jails 60 more civilians

REUTERS, Karachi

A Pakistani military court sentenced 60 civilians to 2-10 years in prison for attacks on military facilities after former prime minister Imran Khan's 2023 arrest, the military's media wing said yesterday.

Those sentenced include a relative of Khan as well as two retired military officers. Days earlier, 25 others were sentenced on the same charges.

Khan's arrest in May 2023 sparked countrywide protests that saw his supporters attack and ransack military installations in an unprecedented backlash against Pakistan's powerful army generals.

The sentences have sparked concerns among Khan's supporters that military courts will play a more significant role in cases related to the former leader, who is facing multiple charges, including inciting attacks against the armed forces.

The international community has also expressed concerns over the sentencing.

Bald eagle officially becomes America's national bird

CNN ONLINE

The bald eagle, a symbol of the power and strength of the United States for more than 240 years, earned an overdue honour on Tuesday: It officially became the country's national bird.

President Joe Biden signed into law legislation sent to him by Congress that amends the United States

Code to correct what had long gone unnoticed and designate the bald eagle — familiar to many because of its white head, yellow beak and brown body — as the national bird.

The bald eagle has appeared on the Great Seal of the United States, which is used in official documents,

since 1782, when the design was finalised. The seal is made up of the eagle, an olive branch, arrows, a flag-like shield, the motto "E Pluribus Unum" and a constellation of stars.

Congress that same year designated the bald eagle as the national emblem, and its image appears in a host of places, ranging from documents and the presidential flag to military insignia and US currency, according to a US government website.

But it had never been officially designated to be what many had just assumed it was — the national bird. The bald eagle is indigenous to North America.



26 killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza

Five journalists from Al-Quds Today channel among dead

REUTERS, Cairo

Gaza authorities said an Israeli airstrike killed five Palestinian journalists outside a hospital yesterday, though Israel's army said it had attacked a vehicle carrying Islamic Jihad fighters.

Medics said the five were among at least 26 people killed in Israeli air assaults across the enclave before dawn, as Hamas and Israel traded blame over delays in reaching a ceasefire deal after more than 14 months of fighting.

The Palestinian Journalists Union said one strike killed five journalists from the Al-Quds Today channel who were in a broadcast vehicle in front of Al-Awda Hospital in the Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Video from the scene showed the twisted wreckage of a white van with what appeared to be the remnants of the word "PRESS" in red on the back doors.

The union said more than 190 Palestinian journalists have been killed by Israeli fire since the war began in October 2023.

The Gaza-based channel called the strike a massacre and said in a statement on Telegram the five "were killed as they carried out their media and humanitarian duty".

The Israeli military said it "conducted a precise strike on a vehicle with an Islamic Jihad terrorist cell inside in the area of Nuseirat."

Medics in the enclave said eight other people were killed and 20 wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood. The death toll could rise as many people were trapped under the rubble, they added.



MASTERS OF SPIN ... A striking female giant golden orb weaver spotted resting on her web near the Gumai Beel in Chattogram's Rangunia upazila. This fascinating species of spiders are found in all countries of East and Southeast Asia, as well as Oceania. Golden orb weavers spin larger webs than many spiders and it has also been reported that they can adjust their silk composition based on diet and environmental conditions. They are known to spin webs, which shine golden under light, frequently throughout the day. If there's any damage to the web, they take 10-60 minutes to repair it, and if it's irreparable, they consume the web and construct a new one.

PHOTO: KAMOL DAS