



March for Unity today

Announce student coordinators following govt move for a declaration on July uprising

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students Against Discrimination has announced that it will hold a March for Unity programme at the Central Shaheed Minar today in support of the interim government's initiative to prepare a declaration of the July uprising based on national consensus.

As of 2:30am today, the student leaders had not made it clear whether they would formally proclaim the July uprising as they had announced on Sunday.

"Our heartfelt appeal to the people of Bangladesh, spontaneously participate in this programme," Arif Sohel, member secretary of the platform, told reporters after a near four-hour meeting at the office of Students Against Discrimination at the capital's Banglamotor.

Hours after the students made the announcement on Sunday, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam told reporters that the government had no involvement in the student leaders' proclamation event.

However, the interim government last night said it took an initiative to prepare a declaration of the July uprising based on national consensus.

After the government announcement, there was uncertainty about whether the students would hold their event. They then began the meeting.

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Sand traders have encroached upon the Shitalakhya in the Ichakhali area of Narayanganj's Rugganj upazila, narrowing down the width of the river. Although the authorities set up demarcation pillars along the river, their efforts to protect it from encroachers have been in vain. A demarcation pillar is seen next to the arm of an excavator. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Cops complicit in crimes must be brought to justice: Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus yesterday said that police personnel found guilty of crimes must be held accountable while the innocents have nothing to fear and should be allowed to perform their duties.

He instructed the field-level administration and police officials from 33 districts of Dhaka, Chattogram, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions to work on maintaining law and order, fostering communal harmony, and

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Disagreements must not harm the nation Says Tarique, hopes to return to country soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said that there might be



differences of opinion but it should not reach a point where it harms the country.

"We must be careful not to create a situation in which desires of the people get ignored," he told a rally in Nilphamari.

The BNP, other political parties, and the people from all walks of life ousted the autocrat, Tarique said, urging everyone to unite to rebuild the country.

He also underscored the need for bringing back

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TURMOIL IN MOZAMBIQUE

Bangladeshis' homes, shops being attacked

Many go into hiding fearing for their lives as country engrossed in post-polls violence

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Law enforcers only watch as some Mozambicans loot shops and set fire to homes belonging to Bangladeshis. Sometimes, the groups extort money from Bangladeshis by threatening to attack them, their homes or businesses.

This is what over a dozen Bangladeshis said over a conference call between this paper and them on December 25. They joined from different provinces of the country.

Ziaul Islam, a Bangladeshi living in Zigi of Zambezia, told The Daily Star, "We have to pay around 20,000 metical [over Tk 37,300] to ensure our security. We have to pay them [natives] whenever they discover our hideouts."

Ziaul claimed that almost every Bangladeshi involved in business has been attacked, and they are now moving from one hideout to another after leaving their homes behind.

Mozambique, an eastern African nation, has been engrossed by violence and anarchy following its presidential election and the contentious results.

The unrest spread after Mozambique's top court on December 23 declared Frelimo party presidential candidate Daniel Chapo the winner of October's elections, prompting opposition supporters to make good on their promises to continue protests.

Amid the turmoil, 5,000 to 8,000 Bangladeshis in Mozambique are living in fear, insecurity, and uncertainty.

Ziaul is among the worst affected. The man from Cox's Bazar went to Mozambique in 2019 on a tourist visa and started working in the shop belonging to his elder brother.

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Mozambique, an eastern African nation, has been engrossed by violence and anarchy following its presidential election and the contentious results.

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Nation sees tectonic shifts in politics

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Seismic. That is perhaps the one word close enough to describe Bangladesh's transformation in 2024. The year will remain etched in the nation's annals as a watershed. A deeply entrenched despotic regime had crumbled in the face of a mass uprising that traces its roots back to a fledgling student campaign against government job reservations. With an interim government in charge until the next elections, the nation feverishly awaits a raft of reforms that will finally usher in the much-vaunted Bangladesh 2.0.

The year had begun with the national elections -- which even hardcore Awami League enthusiasts would agree -- had become meaningless after the heavily one-sided and rigged editions of 2014 and 2018. Designated opposition parties and independents were blatantly keen to have the blessings of the ruling Awami League before taking the field. There was little doubt that without the ruling party's endorsement, no one would win the elections. Bangladesh had become a de facto single-party state. Political diversity and opposition existed only on paper. It was no surprise that the 2024 election appeared to have further cemented the Awami League's grip on power.

The student protests began like faint trickles leaking through a sturdy dam that held for years. There was no indication of a strong current on the other side. What began in July as a few hundred students protesting against government job quotas on a handful of university campuses, expected to fizzle out within a few weeks, if not days, turned into a deluge that would sweep away the dam.

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Jimmy Carter passes away at 100

World leaders offer condolences

REUTERS, Washington

Jimmy Carter, the earnest Georgia peanut farmer who as US president struggled with a bad economy and the Iran hostage crisis but brokered peace between Israel and Egypt and later received the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian work, died at his home in Plains, Georgia on Sunday. He was 100.

US President Joe Biden directed that January 9 will be a national day of mourning throughout the United States for Carter, the White House said in a statement.

"I call on the American

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Women try to warm themselves by the fire at a camp for displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Inset, a man holds the body of his newborn son, who reportedly died due to hypothermia, ahead of the funeral at the Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in central Gaza Strip on Sunday. Israel's war on Gaza has displaced almost all of the enclave's 2.4 million residents who are bracing for another bitter winter without electricity and adequate food.

PHOTO: AFP



What makes Dhaka-Mawa expressway so deadly?

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31 Kurdish, Turkish-backed fighters killed in Syria

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Australia win MCG thriller

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গণমাধ্যম বিষয়ে জাতীয় জনমত জরিপ

গণমাধ্যম সংস্কার কমিশন-এর চাহিদার ভিত্তিতে বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরো কর্তৃক দৈবচয়ন পদ্ধতিতে দেশব্যাপী নমুনা এলাকাসমূহে ০১-০৭ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫খ্রিঃ 'গণমাধ্যম বিষয়ে জাতীয় জনমত জরিপ' পরিচালিত হবে। রাষ্ট্রীয় গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এ জরিপে তথ্য দিয়ে সহযোগিতা করুন।



বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরো
পরিসংখ্যান ও তথ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা বিভাগ
পরিকল্পনা মন্ত্রণালয়

Russia, Ukraine exchange over 300 POWs

AFP, Moscow

Russia and Ukraine swapped more than 300 prisoners of war yesterday in an exchange brokered by the United Arab Emirates ahead of New Year's Eve, officials from both countries said.

The two sides have exchanged hundreds of captive soldiers since Russia began its military assault on Ukraine in February 2022, in one of the few areas of cooperation.

"On 30 December, as a result of the negotiation process, 150 Russian servicemen were returned from territory controlled by the Kyiv regime. In return, 150 Ukrainian army prisoners of war were handed over," the Russian defence ministry said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv received 189 people as part of the deal, including soldiers, border guards and two civilians from the Russian-occupied city of Mariupol.

"We are working to free everyone from Russian captivity. This is our goal. We do not forget anyone," Zelensky said.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

With underground iron rods sticking upright and no safety barrier in between, an elderly man walks on a wooden plank placed on a dug-up side of the Shaheed Captain Mansoor Ali road in the capital's Kakrail. The situation has been like this for over a week as Dhaka South City Corporation has been carrying out development works there, posing risks to pedestrians and vehicles alike.

Nation sees tectonic shifts

FROM PAGE 1
The peaceful protests quickly gathered momentum to morph into a nationwide movement that forced Sheikh Hasina to flee Bangladesh on August 5 and seek refuge in India, where she has been staying until now.

The interim government, headed by Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunus, has been at the helm since the transition and focused on reforming democratic institutions that had been systematically destroyed by the Awami League's self-seeking interests throughout the 15 years it had been in power. On top of that, the incumbent was saddled with a crumbling economy, spiralling inflation, high unemployment and widespread corruption at every pore of public administration and the police, which were in fact the main factors behind strong public discontent.

The initial task, therefore, for the non-partisan interim government, was to stabilise the economy, restore law and order and help build back public confidence in government institutions -- each task more challenging than the next. In addition, there were a string of protests across the country from almost every section of the people who felt wronged during the last 15 years and, although short-lived, intense floods along the eastern flank of Bangladesh.

A month into office, the interim government established six reform commissions -- covering elections, constitution, judiciary, anti-corruption, police and administration -- which are expected to submit reports in January. Their recommendations, some of which have already been reported, are meant to become the initial building blocks of a truly democratic dispensation of this republic.

These recommendations will then be discussed among political parties striving to strike a national consensus. In fact, in a recent development, the chief adviser has said he would be heading a national consensus commission that will presumably hold discussions with all the political parties, leading to a concrete timeline for polls.

This idea of elections after reforms has already divided the political establishment into two streams. One prioritises reforms over elections. A student-led party, which is still in the making, will presumably champion the idea of cementing the reforms before even thinking about elections. The student representatives in government and other student leaders of the July uprising have indicated as much.

The other stream wants elections quickly after only the reforms necessary for the polls. Led by the BNP, the main political rival of

the AL regime, this stream is of the opinion that reforms are an ongoing process, not a one-off event, and reforms can truly be implemented only by political parties with the people's mandate.

The discord between the streams is becoming starker with time. Barely a couple of weeks ago, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman emphasised the need for quick and decisive action so far as reforms were concerned. He stressed that the people had a right to know the interim government's intentions about the timeline of these reforms. His remarks betrayed a growing impatience after the chief adviser indicated that the elections could be held by late 2025 after minimal reforms, but might take a little longer and be scheduled by mid-2026 if desired reforms were carried out. The BNP has called for further clarity on the election schedule and a concrete roadmap.

Of the two most significant reform commissions, one has been tasked with making recommendations for the elections, including the next one, to be free and fair. The other one is going to suggest major constitutional changes like limiting the prime minister's terms, bicameral parliament and a bar on prime ministers from heading their party.

Political analysts have pointed out that a timeline for implementing the reforms is critical. They argue that

if key reforms, particularly those related to elections and the constitution, are not finalised before the elections, the political situation may remain unstable, and the promised reforms might never be fully realised. They warn that without clear progress on these fronts before elections, lasting and meaningful changes would remain difficult to achieve. At the same time, the endorsement of the political parties is also essential for these reforms to take root in essence.

Eminent political analyst Al Masud Hasanuzzaman told The Daily Star that there was no doubt about the necessity of a political consensus for meaningful reforms. "Without it, the process will likely be futile," Stressing consensus, he said, "In the absence of unity, the political landscape may face significant fractures in the coming days."

He indicated that given Bangladesh was sailing into uncharted waters, there was bound to be some "trial and error" in the process before finding the right course. He explained this complex and challenging situation necessitated a political compact for proper planning and implementation of these reforms.

Due largely to the significant transitions of 2024, which earned it the Economist's Country of the Year crown, Bangladesh's future is as fraught with challenges as it is filled with possibilities.

Jimmy Carter passes away

FROM PAGE 1
people to assemble on that day in their respective places of worship, there to pay homage to the memory of President James Earl Carter," Biden said.

World leaders and former US presidents paid tribute to a man they praised as compassionate, humble and committed to peace in the Middle East.

"His significant role in achieving the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel will remain etched in the annals of history," said Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in a post on X.

Chinese leader Xi

Jinping told his American counterpart Joe Biden that he was "deeply saddened" by the death of former US president Jimmy Carter, Chinese state media said yesterday.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of former USA President Mr Jimmy Carter. A statesman of great vision, he worked tirelessly for global peace and harmony. His contributions to fostering strong India-US ties leave a lasting legacy. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the people of the US," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a statement.

Carter, a Democrat,

became president in January 1977 after defeating incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford in the 1976 election. His one-term presidency was marked by the highs of the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt, bringing some stability to the Middle East.

But it was also dogged by an economic recession, persistent unpopularity and the Iran hostage crisis that consumed his final 444 days in office. Carter ran for re-election in 1980 but was swept from office in a landslide as voters embraced Republican challenger Ronald Reagan,

the former actor and California governor.

Carter lived longer than any US president and, after leaving the White House, earned a reputation as a committed humanitarian. He was widely seen as a better former president than he was a president -- a status he readily acknowledged.

The Carter Center said there will be public observances in Atlanta and Washington. These events will be followed by a private interment in Plains, it said.

Final arrangements for the former president's state funeral are still pending, according to the center.

Cops complicit in crimes

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ensuring preservation of agricultural products and smooth supply of fertiliser.

The chief adviser addressed the officials via videoconference from his office in the capital's Tejgaon.

He instructed the field-level officials to work tirelessly to keep the prices of essentials at a tolerable level and ensure their smooth supply during the upcoming Ramadan.

"Ramadan is approaching, and special attention have to be paid to market prices. You will have to work not only on the market prices but also on exploring ways to ease the transportation of goods.

"Paying special attention to rising commodity prices it is crucial now to ensure that they are not causing difficulties to the people. We must focus on controlling the prices

and make every efforts to address the situation effectively," he said.

Yunus directed the administration officials to remain vigilant to ensure reforms are completed smoothly.

He mentioned that several of the 15 reform commissions will soon submit their reports. Following this, the government will engage in talks with political parties and citizens, paving the way for creating an electoral atmosphere in the country.

The chief adviser said the morale of the police had been affected by widespread criticism of their role during the mass uprising.

"It is important to rebuild their confidence.

Those guilty must be held accountable, while the innocents should be allowed to perform their

duties without fear.... This will help restore the credibility of law enforcers."

Yunus advised the administration officials to ensure that new school textbooks are distributed efficiently.

He noted that some students might not receive their new books on the first day of the new academic year. If books don't arrive on time, or if some students receive them while others do not, handling the matter in an orderly manner and keeping everyone informed will help maintain calm.

The chief adviser also urged the administration officials to work upholding the spirit of the July uprising so that people realise a missive change had taken place.

Yunus also called upon the administration officials to remain prepared for unforeseen events, such as

floods, which often catch the government off-guard. The local administrations should be empowered to identify and address potential issues swiftly before the government in Dhaka becomes aware, he added.

A total of 19 officials, including divisional commissioners, police commissioners, range police chiefs, deputy commissioners and superintendents of police spoke at the event.

The chief adviser said the feedback and opinions shared by the officials would help the government make better decisions.

Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Rashid, who moderator of the event, said the chief adviser will soon hold a similar videoconference with the officials from the remaining 33 districts.

Iran confirms arrest of Italian journo

REUTERS, Dubai
Iran confirmed the arrest of Italian journalist Cecilia Sala for "violating the laws of the Islamic Republic", Iran's official IRNA news agency reported yesterday.

Sala, 29, who works for the newspaper Il Foglio and the podcast company Chora Media, was detained in Tehran on Dec. 19, according to the Italian foreign ministry.

Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani on Saturday declined to say whether the case might be linked to the arrest of an Iranian in Italy this month at the request of the United States.

The case of the Italian journalist being held in Iran is "complicated", but Rome hopes to bring Sala home quickly, Tajani said.

Bangladeshis' homes, shops

FROM PAGE 1
He then converted his visa to business visa and opened a grocery store.

"My warehouse was looted. They also damaged the tin roof by throwing stones," Ziaul said, adding, "I watched the whole thing on CCTV as they looted my shop, but I was powerless."

"Since the October election, we spent at least Tk 5 lakh to bribe the local administration for ensuring security of ourselves and our businesses. But now we are not getting any support despite repeated appeals," Ziaul said.

He said, "We have bought land and a house in the country, but now we want to return to Bangladesh. We do not know how long we will be able to survive here"

During the conference call with those living in Mozambique, Md Ayub, a Bangladeshi living with his family in the Matola suburb of Maputo city in the southern tip of Mozambique, said he has to go (disconnect the call) as some people attacked his home.

This paper later learnt that Ayub's home had been attacked and that he sought help from the Bangladeshi community

there.

Another Bangladeshi, Enamul Haq, from Maputo said he has been living in Mozambique with family since 2007. "I have four superstores in four provinces and all them have been looted. Now I am hiding in the homes of the natives paying them handsome amounts for safety."

Anisur Rahman, a Bangladeshi community leader there, told this newspaper that there are around 8,000 Bangladeshis, including about 500 women and 800 children, in Mozambique. He said Bangladeshis do not directly migrate to the country. Most convert their tourist visas to investors' visas and set up grocery stores in rural areas. These shops are mostly being looted by people who come out of forests.

He said, "We are caught in the conflict between the ruling and the opposition parties. We are in different hideouts now."

"Since there is no Bangladeshi embassy, we want a solution through the intervention of the interim government. We are helpless here. In one province alone, more than 90 percent shops were

looted."

Asked about seeking help from local police or the army, Anisur said, "The army is observing as silent spectators. We do not get any help from the police."

He said many Bangladeshis have lost their passports and other necessary documents in the chaos and some do not have the money to fly home.

"We are communicating with the Bangladesh embassy in Lisbon and seeking help. Please help us, save the lives of these people," Anisur said.

Thousands of miles away, Laila Muntajeri Deena, charg   d' affaires of the Bangladesh embassy in Portugal, responsible for Mozambique, told The Daily Star, "We are continuously communicating with the Bangladeshi community leaders in Mozambique, and sending reports about the conditions to the foreign ministry in Dhaka."

"We have advised the Bangladeshis not to panic and to stay safe as the situation is not good."

"We have asked the community leaders to make an area-wise list, including the locations and number of women and children, so that we can provide support in case of

any emergency."

Asked about sending aid to those in danger now, Deena said, "It may not be possible to go there right now. But we will update our ministry about the situation from time to time."

"... Our South Africa mission is also collecting information as they are close [to Mozambique] in terms of distance."

On December 25, Al-Jazeera quoting local authorities reported that a suspected riot inside a jail in Mozambique's capital has left at least 33 people dead and 15 injured, and more than 1,500 inmates escaped.

According to a DW report on Sunday, thousands of families are crossing the border into Malawi as political violence in Mozambique continues. The DW quoted an official saying that situation is "dire".

Dominic Mwandira, commissioner for Malawi's southern border district of Nsanje, said around 2,500 families had reached there.

"About 11,000 people crossed the Shire river to enter Malawi, while an additional 2,000 crossed the Ruvo river," the AFP quoted him as saying.

Repair possible for damaged building
Says PWD about secretariat fire

UNB, Dhaka

Building No 7 of the Secretariat, damaged by a devastating fire last week, can be repaired and made usable, according to Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Sub-Assistant Engineer of the Public Works Department.

“Our team responded promptly and assisted the Fire Service,” Bhuiyan said yesterday. The four-storey building housed six ministries, with extensive damage across its 40-50 rooms per floor.

The building’s future use depends on expert committee recommendations, he added. Meanwhile, the investigation committee will submit its preliminary report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Tuesday, revising its earlier timeline, said CA’s Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad.



These battery-run auto-rickshaws not only violate the ban on operating on Dhaka’s main streets but also drive in the wrong direction, creating obstacles for oncoming vehicles. Moreover, some remain parked to pick up passengers, adding to the traffic chaos. This photo was taken on Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ACC to probe BB reserve heist

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh is set to initiate an inquiry into allegations of corruption linked to the 2016 cyber heist that stole \$101 million from Bangladesh Bank’s account.

The investigation will also target key individuals within the bank’s leadership, including then governor Dr Atiur Rahman.

Several senior ACC officials confirmed this development to The Daily Star, saying that the inquiry will begin in the coming days, following the preparation of an investigative file by the ACC’s scrutiny cell.

A director general of the ACC told The Daily Star, “We have gathered specific information on corruption through media reports and the ACC’s intelligence unit regarding the incident.”

Apart from Dr Rahman, the ACC will also seek to investigate at least 10-12 former and current senior officials of Bangladesh Bank, including an executive director, a general manager, four joint directors, three deputy general managers, and two deputy directors.

In February 2016, international hackers orchestrated the heist, stealing \$101 million from Bangladesh Bank’s account at the Federal Reserve Bank using fraudulent instructions. Their intended target was \$1 billion.

Of the \$81 million transferred to the Philippines, approximately \$18 million has been recovered so far. Investigations later suggested that Dridex malware may have facilitated the attack.

On March 15 in 2016, 39 days after the incident, Bangladesh Bank Deputy Director Zubair Bin Huda filed a case with the Motijheel Police Station against unknown individuals under the Money Laundering Prevention Act.

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RECKLESS DRIVING OR SYSTEMATIC FAILURE?
What makes Dhaka-Mawa expressway so deadly

TANJIL HASAN

The nation watched in horror as footage emerged of the latest tragic accident on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway. On Friday morning, six lives were lost in a devastating chain collision when a bus rammed into a private car parked at a toll plaza. The bus’s momentum then carried it into a motorcycle and a microbus, leaving the private car mangled and resulting in the deaths of five people, including women and children, on the spot, with another succumbing later. Five others were injured.

This incident followed closely on the heels of two other deadly accidents on the same expressway. On Sunday morning, dense fog contributed to a 10-vehicle pile-up involving a bus, truck, private car, pickup van, and covered van in the Hasara area of Sholaghar, Sreenagar upazila.

A driver, Md Farhad Hossain, 40, lost his life, while several others were injured.

The very next day, Panna Banik, 35, travelling with family in a private car, was killed in yet another collision when a covered van hit their vehicle.

The numbers paint a grim picture. According to the Sreenagar Fire Service, 63 accidents occurred on the



The mangled remains of a car at the Dhaleshwari toll plaza on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway in Keraniganj, Dhaka. The accident occurred on Friday morning when a Bepari Paribahan bus rammed into the stationary car, a microbus and a motorcycle from behind at the toll plaza, resulting in six fatalities.

PHOTO: STAR

AT A GLANCE

- 63 accidents in last one year
- 16 deaths in last one year
- At least 3 fatal crashes
- 8 fatalities in last week alone

Dhaka-Mawa Expressway between December 2022 and December 2023.

These accidents resulted in 16 deaths and left 80 people injured. However, the actual casualty count could be higher, as some victims reportedly leave accident sites before emergency services arrive.

The 55-kilometre Dhaka-Mawa Bhangra Expressway was

designed as a symbol of modern infrastructure, constructed at a cost of £11,000 crore. It aimed to ensure safe and rapid transit, connecting Dhaka to Faridpur in record time.

Yet, despite the smooth surface and reduced travel time, accidents have surged.

Experts and officials are now scrutinising the factors behind this troubling trend.

Efforts to curb speeding, such as speed gun monitoring and case filings, face limitations.

“If everyone is speeding, how many cases can we file?” he asked rhetorically.

Manpower shortages exacerbate the problem. The highway police operate only two patrol teams on the expressway, which, according to Bosunia, are insufficient.

While public awareness campaigns, including microphone announcements at toll plazas and leaflet distribution, are ongoing, these measures alone cannot address the root causes, he added.

Dr Md Asif Raihan, associate professor at Buet’s Accident Research Institute, said, “No accident occurs due to a single factor. It is a systemic failure involving road conditions, vehicle maintenance, and user behaviour.”

For instance, fog-related accidents could be mitigated with improved lighting, clearer pavement markings, and adjustable speed limits tailored to specific sections of the expressway.

He also advocated for modernising toll collection systems.

“Replacing manual toll collection with automatic

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Women rights groups condemn gang rape, murder of UP member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Samajik Protirodh Committee, a coalition of 66 organisations advocating for women’s rights, human rights, and development, has expressed outrage over the gang rape and murder of a female Union Parishad (UP) member from Narail.

In a statement signed by Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, the platform condemned the attack as “medieval barbarism” and raised concerns over the increasing threat to the safety and dignity of women representatives in local government.

The statement, referencing media reports

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Country safer under the youth
Says Jamaat ameer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday expressed optimism about the country’s future, claiming Bangladesh is now safer for the younger generation following the August 5 uprising that led to the removal of the Hasina-led Awami League government.

Speaking at a rally in Birganj, Dinaipur, he highlighted the youth’s role in building a fairer society, calling them the torchbearers of the nation’s future. Shafiqur also outlined his vision for a corruption-free Bangladesh, vowing to eliminate bribery and promote equality for all citizens.

At another meeting in Nilphamari, he rejected allegations that Jamaat-e-Islami had seized control of Islamic banks, accusing the Awami League government of corruption and mismanagement.

Maintain peace
Home ministry issues directive for two Tabligh groups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday instructed both factions of Tablighi Jamaat, led by Maulana Zubayer Ahmed and Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi, to continue operating in the mosques where they have traditionally been based.

“It is hereby informed that the followers of Maulana Zubayer Ahmed and Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi are instructed, in the interest of maintaining peace and order, to continue their respective activities in the mosques at the district and upazila levels where they have traditionally operated,” the order, signed by Deputy Secretary Dr Mohammad Abdul Salam said.

Previously, on December 26, the ministry restricted Maulana Saad’s followers from overnight stays

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BFIU seeks bank account details of 12 journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit has requested information on the bank accounts of 12 journalists within three working days.

The BFIU has written to banks, asking for details of all the bank accounts held by the journalists.

The journalists include Subash Chandra Badal, former managing director of the Journalist Welfare Trust; Arifur Rahman Dolan of The Dhaka Post; Nurul Islam Hasib, special correspondent of Bangladesh Post; Dip Azad, chief news editor at Nagarik TV; Abul Kalam Azad, former chief editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha; Md Omor Faruque, deputy chief news editor of BSS; Zafar Wazed, former director general of the Press Institute of Bangladesh; Hossen Ara Mamata Islam Soma, special correspondent at Channel-i; Obaidul Kabir Molla, deputy editor of the Daily Janakantha; Abed Khan, editor of the Daily Jagaran; Ajoy Dasgupta, former deputy editor of the Daily Samakal; and Syed Ishtiaque Reza, chief editor of Global TV.

Banks and financial institutions have been instructed to provide relevant information or documents, including account opening forms, KYC details, and transaction statements, within three working days of receiving the letter from the BFIU.



Burnt and abandoned vehicles remain inside the premises of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, damaged during the protests on August 4 amid the July uprising. Although several months have passed, the charred remains have yet to be removed, occupying space inside the hospital premises. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Journalists
regain access
to Secretariat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 60 journalists were allowed to enter the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday, after being barred for two days. Entry was granted at 2:00pm, following a fire at Building 7 that severely disrupted access. Journalists had been unable to perform their duties on Thursday and Sunday due to the restrictions.

The government had announced on Sunday that temporary passes would be issued from Monday, but journalists had to wait until the afternoon to gain entry. Access was granted via the visitors' gate, with journalists listed by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum (BSRF).

Vehicle entry remained restricted, with only specific government cars allowed inside.

A massive fire had devastated four floors of Building 7 on December 25, affecting several ministries.

The probe report on this incident is expected to be submitted to the chief adviser's office on Tuesday. Earlier, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan on Thursday said the high-profile probe committee formed by the government to investigate the fire incident would submit its primary report within the next three days.

BARISHAL DOE OFFICE

Water testing equipment out
of order for 4 months

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

All the water testing equipment at the lone laboratory of the Department of Environment in Barishal division have been lying out of order for past four months.

As such, testing facilities for water samples from different areas across the division are currently suspended.

Health experts and environmental activists have raised concerns over public health in the region, especially regarding spread of water-borne diseases like typhoid, cholera, dysentery, diarrhoea, among others.

They demanded prompt steps to make the repair or replace the equipment to turn the laboratory operational.

According to DoE sources, the lab was set up in 2010 to conduct tests for determining dissolved oxygen levels, dissolved salts, and presence of bacteria, among others, using samples from different sources. This enabled DoE to identify water sources with possible contamination or other health risks.

While relocating the DoE divisional office in Nathullabad area of Barishal city in 2022, different water testing equipment of the lab were partially damaged. The testing facilities at the lab continued on a small scale till last August. Since then, all tests have been suspended for past four months, the sources added.

As such, DoE authorities have been unable to test the water samples of hotels, motels and restaurants, as well as water sources including rivers, canals and other waterbodies across the division.

"While about one crore people in six



districts of Barishal division are at risk of drinking contaminated water, it is a matter of concern that the lone water testing laboratory is lying non-operational. We have repeatedly spoken to the DoE in this regard. However, they are yet to take any visible measures," said Lincoln Bayen, Barishal divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Physician Dr Mizanur Rahman said water testing should be done regularly; otherwise public health will be at risk.

Contacted, Golam Kibria, senior chemist at the DoE Barishal divisional office, said steps are on the resolve the issue soon.

Muhammad Mujahidul Islam, director of DoE, Barishal division, said the issue of setting up of a lab was not under the scope of the project when the new building for the DoE office was built.

"The contractor or the Public Works Department handed over the building without setting up the lab. As a result, the lab equipment have not been installed yet. The problem has been reported to higher authorities to resolve it," he also said. "Since the lab is not operational at present, water samples from industrial areas have been sent to Dhaka for testing four times in the last four months," he added.

'Deputy secretary'
found unconscious
on Dhaka-Ctg bus
Dope gang link suspected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A deputy secretary was rescued in an unconscious state from a bus early yesterday and was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police suspect that Dilip Kumar Debnath of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs fell victim to a dope gang that uses sedatives to rob victims when he was travelling from Chattogram to Dhaka.

Sub-inspector Shukhorhi Modhu of Teigaon Police Station said a bus from Hamza Express stopped at a checkpoint around 1:30am, and a bus staffer reported that a passenger was found unconscious on his seat.

Police immediately took him to DMCH, he said. Quoting the bus staffer, the SI said the victim was supposed to disembark at Sayedabad. When the bus reached Sayedabad, the supervisor called Dilip, but he did not respond.

Then, the bus was heading towards Mohakhali, and at the checkpoint they informed police, the SI said.

The victim's belongings included only a button phone and a visiting card. Using the card, police identified him as a deputy secretary and informed his wife about the incident.

The victim's wife arrived at the hospital and said the victim had been returning to Dhaka from a trip to the hill tracts, the SI said, quoting her.

His phone was missing, along with other unspecified items. "We suspect he fell prey to a dope gang," said the SI.

Parvez Ahmed, supervisor of the bus, said the victim and the alleged dope gang member boarded the bus together from Chattogram and sat side by side.

Both had informed the staffer they would get off at Sayedabad.

However, the other man got off in Chittagong Road area, the supervisor said.

Demand for clay plates,
pots surges in winter



PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, Bagerhat

In Kathipara village under Morrelganj upazila of Bagerhat, the chill of winter brings a flurry of activity as artisans craft traditional clay plates and pots. These handmade items are in high demand, particularly for making pithas.

Clay plates used for steamed pithas like chitai and bhapa are especially popular during the season. Wholesale prices for 100 chitai plates start at Tk 1,500, while 100 bhapa plates fetch Tk 3,000. Sales peak during Agrahayan and Poush months, when these items become indispensable for celebrating winter's culinary delights.

Clay pots for collecting date and palm juice are also sought after, with 100 pots selling for Tk 3,500. Despite the growing use of plastic bottles for juice storage, traditional clay pots remain a staple in regions such as Bagerhat, Taleshar, and Morrelganj.

Gobinda Paul, a 61-year-old artisan, said their clay products travel across the region, from Morrelganj to Patharghata. His wife, Arati Pal, detailed the labourious process of meeting the seasonal demand, working from dawn until late evening.

"We begin work as early as 6:00am in the morning and continue till around 9:00pm at night to keep up with the orders," she said.

The challenges faced by these artisans are immense. Labourers like Arati Kundu, 43, and Gouri Pal, 62, earn Tk 75 for every 100 plates or pots they craft, often working two weeks to produce 1,000 items.

Despite the hard work, they struggle to make ends meet.

While the artisans take pride in their work, knowing their products are integral to local traditions and festivals, they are also calling for better wages and support to sustain their craft.

Prothom Alo staffer abducted,
released after ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Prothom Alo staff member in Mymensingh was abducted and subjected to ransom demands by a group of miscreants on Thursday night.

The victim, Abul Bashar, is the regional circulation manager of Prothom Alo in Mymensingh.

Bashar filed a case with the Kotwali Model Police Station on Saturday evening, said Md Shafiqul Islam Khan, officer-in-charge of the police station, yesterday.

According to the case statement, around 7:45pm on Thursday, Bashar was returning to his Gazipur home. After reaching the Digharkanda Bypass on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, three unidentified men approached him. The men, aged between 30 and 35,


initiated a conversation to confirm his employment at Prothom Alo. They then lured him to a nearby private car under the pretence of discussing newspaper sales with someone inside the vehicle.

As Bashar approached the car, the assailants forcibly pushed him inside. The car had a driver and one passenger in the backseat. Two of the three men entered the car, while one stayed behind.

In the statement, Bashar said that the perpetrators blindfolded and bound him with a muffler, attempting to strangle him. They beat him severely with a metal object, inflicting injuries on his hands, legs, knees, head, and other parts of his body.

The kidnappers allegedly searched his pockets and bag, seizing his wallet, which contained 15,700 Tk, an ATM card, driving licence, motorcycle documents,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Bangladesh Bank
Common Services Department-2
(Mechanical Engineering Wing)
Head Office, Dhaka-1000

Invitation for Tender (Goods & Related Works) Through Web

01.	Procuring entity	Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
02.	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
03.	Invitation Ref. No. & date	SCD-2(MES): 11/2/2024-79 Date: 29/12/2024
04.	Source of funds	Bangladesh Bank's own fund.
05.	Name of the work	Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of 40 (forty) Nos. 1.5Ton (17000-18000 BTU/hr) Capacity Split Type Wall Mounted Air Conditioning Machine at Officers' Dormitory of Bangladesh Bank, Rajshahi office.
06.	Address of the web for submission e-Tender	From web: www.bangladeshbank.org.bd www.bangladeshbank-bank.org (e-Tender)
07.	Last date & time e-Tenders through web	15/01/2025 on or before 3:00pm.
08.	Last date & time and name & address of the office for receiving original tender security and other documents	15/01/2025 on or before 3:15pm. Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor of 30th storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
09.	Tender opening date & time	15/01/2025 at 3:30pm.
10.	Name and address of the office opening tender	Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor of 30th storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000. (Intending tenderers or their authorized representatives are allowed to attend the tender opening).
11.	Eligibility of the tenderer	a) The minimum of years of general experience of the tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be 10 years. b) Tenderer shall have minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of Proposed brand Air conditioner machine in any govt/semi-govt/autonomous organisation in single contracts having total value not less than Tk 30.00 lakh successfully completed within the last 05 years. c) Tenderer shall have agency /distributorship of the proposed brand Air conditioner machine. Scanned copy of original distributor/agencyship certificate shall be enclosed with the offer. d) The tenderer shall have to furnish the certificate in this respect from an officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer or equivalent and shall meet all other criteria, terms and conditions as specified in the tender documents without which the tender will not be considered. e) The minimum amount of liquid asset i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the tenderer shall be Tk 35.00 lakh 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.
12.	Tender security	Tender security amounting BDT 1,02,000.00 (Taka one lakh two thousand only) will be required in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft/Bank Guarantee in favour of the Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
13.	Works completion time	45 days from the date of the Award of Contract.
14.	Address of official inviting tender	Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker, Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 (7th Floor of 30th storied Building), Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
15.	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 88-02-9530490, Fax: 88-02-9530321.
16.	Special instructions	(i) The tenderer shall submit the tender through Bangladesh Bank website (e-Tendering) and shall have a valid email address for participating in e-Tendering. (ii) Original PO/BD/BG as tender security has to be sent to Director (Engineering-E/M), Common Services Department-2 within stipulated date and time of TDS. (iii) Scanned copy of the tender security shall be submitted with the tender through web. (iv) Tenderer shall submit all documentary evidence (attached or original), failing which the tender may be considered as non-responsive. (v) Tenderer shall duly fill in the Form PG3-1 (Tender Submission Letter) and Form PG3-2 (Tenderer Information Sheet) as per format given in tender document. (vi) PG3-1 Form shall be completed and signed by the authorised signatory on the letterhead pad and scanned copy of it shall be attached during submitting tender and original will have to send to Director (Engineering-E/M), CSD-2 at scheduled time as per TDS. (vii) Furnishing of any false, misleading documents shall result in rejection of the tender and may lead to action under rules 127 of PPR-2008. (viii) All sorts of security and safety measures shall be carried out by the contractor during execution of the work. (ix) Bangladesh Bank reserves all right to accept or reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason whatsoever. No claim will be entertained in this regard.

সূত্র নং-ভিসিপিঃ ৪৮/২০২৪-৩৩৫৩

ব্যার্থকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা
কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

জিডি-১৩০৪

Sudhangshu Kumar Sarker
Director (Engineering-E/M)
Common Services Department-2
Phone: 9530490

US announces \$2.5bn in fresh military aid to Ukraine

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden announced \$2.5 billion in additional security assistance for Ukraine yesterday as he uses his final weeks in office to surge military aid to Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes power.

“At my direction, the United States will continue to work relentlessly to strengthen Ukraine’s position in this war over the remainder of my time in office,” Biden said in a statement.

Biden’s announcement includes \$1.25 billion in military aid drawn from US stockpiles and a \$1.22 billion Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) package. Under USAI, military equipment is procured from the defense industry or partners, rather than drawn from American stocks, meaning it can take months or years to arrive on the battlefield.

Anger in Germany at Musk attempt to ‘influence’ election

AFP, Berlin

Germany’s government said yesterday US billionaire tech baron Elon Musk is trying to sway February elections by praising the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), a move strongly rejected by major parties.

Musk – a key supporter of US President-elect Donald Trump, and his incoming “efficiency czar” – posted on his social media platform X this month that “only the AfD can save Germany”.

He then doubled down on the claim with an opinion piece in a German Sunday newspaper.

Yesterday, German government spokeswoman Christiane Hoffmann said that “it is a fact that Elon Musk is trying to exert influence on the parliamentary election”.

“In Germany, elections are decided by voters at the ballot box,” she told a regular press conference, adding that the country’s “elections are a matter for Germans”.

Europe’s biggest economy will head to the polls on February 23 after the collapse of centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s unruly coalition government last month.



Activists and journalists from the civil society take part in a solidarity stand to demand the participation of displaced Syrians and refugees in the political process and national dialogue in Damascus, Syria, yesterday, after president Bashar al-Assad was ousted. PHOTO: REUTERS

31 Kurdish, Turkish-backed fighters killed

Says Syria war monitor ‘as both sides seek to advance’ during ongoing battles in the country’s north

AFP, Beirut

A Syria war monitor said 31 combatants had been killed since Sunday in ongoing battles between Turkey-backed groups and Kurdish-led forces.

Swathes of northern Syria are controlled by a Kurdish-led administration whose de facto army, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), spearheaded the fight that helped defeat the Islamic State group in the country in 2019 with US backing.

Turkey accuses the main component of the SDF, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), of being affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which both Washington and Ankara consider a terrorist group.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that seven pro-Turkish fighters were killed in clashes yesterday in the northeastern Manbij region, in Aleppo province.

SDF fighters had infiltrated the city of the same name after it was retaken by Ankara-backed groups earlier this month, the monitor said.

Six other pro-Turkish fighters and three members of the SDF were killed the day before in the same part of Aleppo province, it said.

The SDF said yesterday that it



had carried out attacks elsewhere in the province that destroyed “two radars, a jamming system and a tank of the Turkish occupation” near a strategic bridge over the Euphrates.

According to the Observatory, 13 members of the pro-Turkey factions and two members of the SDF “were killed as a result of flaring battles” near the bridge and the Tishreen Dam.

The Britain-based Observatory said clashes in the area had been going on for around three weeks “as both sides seek to advance”.

Turkey has staged multiple operations in SDF areas since 2016, and Ankara-backed groups

71 dead in Ethiopia road accident

AFP, Nairobi

The death toll from a road accident in southern Ethiopia has risen to at least 71, according to a local police official.

In a Facebook post late Sunday, the Sidama Police Commission Traffic Prevention and Control Directorate said that “68 males and three females are known to have died in the accident so far”, citing Chief Inspector Daniel Sankura.

The police commission said the incident occurred at around 5:30 pm local time (1430 GMT) when the vehicle plunged off a road and into a river.

The post added that “two others have sustained heavy physical injuries”, but did not detail any further information about the number of passengers onboard at the time of the incident.

The accident occurred in Sidama state – some 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the capital Addis Ababa – in the Eastern Zone, in Bona Zuria Woreda.

Blurred images shared by the health bureau earlier showed a mass of people surrounding a vehicle, partially submerged in water, with many seemingly attempting to help pull it from the waters.

Pull back from ‘road to ruin’

UN urges world as climate change brought extreme weather, heat in 2024

AFP, Geneva

Climate change sparked a trail of extreme weather and record heat in 2024, the United Nations said yesterday, urging the world to pull back from the “road to ruin”.

The outgoing year is set to be the warmest ever recorded, the UN’s weather and climate agency said, capping a decade of unprecedented heat.

Meanwhile emissions of greenhouse gases grew to new record highs, locking in more heat for the future, the World Meteorological Organization said.

“Climate change plays out before our eyes on an almost daily basis in the form of increased occurrence and impact of extreme weather events,” WMO secretary general Celeste Saulo said.

Russia pledged to punish those responsible

Says Azerbaijan on Dec 25 plane crash

AFP, Baku

Azerbaijan said yesterday that Moscow had promised to punish those responsible for the downing of an Azerbaijan Airlines plane that Baku says was shot at by Russian air defences.

The AZAL Embraer 190 jet crash-landed in Kazakhstan on December 25, killing 38 of the 67 people on board.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has demanded that Moscow accept responsibility for mistakenly shooting the plane as it tried to make a scheduled landing at Grozny airport in south Russia.

AL can join

FROM PAGE 12

voters’ doubts by going door-to-door to include those left out of the voter list. The process of updating the voter list will begin shortly, and strict measures will be taken against anyone attempting to register illegally.”

He further said, “I want to tell you that this election will not be like the previous ones. We will make every effort for this. We will need everyone’s cooperation for this.”

Dentist ‘taken’

FROM PAGE 12

Station, said the father was rescued from the Bhegri area and handed over to his family.

“He told us his daughter was abducted and that he was dumped here [Sholonga] by the criminals.”

Family members said the father then went to Chandrima Police Station in Rajshahi city to file a case in this regard.

Speaking to The Daily Star around 9:30pm, Matiur Rahman, OC of the station, said, “The victim’s father is now at the station to file a case. We are working to rescue the girl and will take legal action upon investigation.”

“We’re currently at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, where my sister is under treatment. We still don’t know where my niece is,” he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sholonga Police

Progress in sport setbacks, and a call for reform

FROM PAGE 12

more by the ongoing drama surrounding the squad. At the centre of it was Shakib Al Hasan, who called it quits from T20Is, and his Test farewell was overshadowed by his political affiliations. This was followed by a bowling ban, adding to the already controversial atmosphere surrounding his career. Fellow stalwart Mahmudullah Riyad also called time on his T20I career; quietly stepping away, much like his well-known predecessors.

The women cricketers, too, showed signs of progress but not without going through trials. A first-ever T20 World Cup victory, which came against Scotland, broke

a long-standing rut for the Tigresses, but getting whitewashed in home series by Australia and India left a bitter taste. Nevertheless, the introduction of the country’s first first-class tournament for women late in the year was a landmark decision.

The youth, meanwhile, kept on giving. Bangladesh footballers claimed both the SAFF U-19 Women’s Championship and U-20 Men’s Championships, while the young cricketers defended their U-19 Asia Cup crown, underlining the potential of grassroots development when executed effectively.

In hockey, 2024 proved to be a pivotal year. Despite its illustrious past in Bangladesh, the sport is hanging by a thread,

and the youth team’s qualification for the FIH Junior World Cup offered a beacon of hope for a sport at risk of fading into obscurity.

On the administrative front, hopes for a more progressive sporting environment were high following the political shift in August, with leadership changes raising expectations for improvements in planning, management, and infrastructure. However, the full impact of these transitions has yet to be seen, although these are still early days.

The year also saw the long-overdue passing of the torch in the leadership of two major sports bodies. Faruque Ahmed took over as president of the

Bangladesh Cricket Board, while Tabitha Awal replaced Kazi Salahuddin at the helm of the BFF. These changes have sparked hopes for a brighter future, and results are expected to be fully realised sooner rather than later.

Alongside these shifts, the sports community in Bangladesh mourned the loss of two legends. Chess grandmaster Ziaur Rahman, a pioneer who inspired generations of players, and Zakaria Pintu, the captain of the Swadhin Bangla Football Team during the Liberation War, passed away, leaving a legacy that will be remembered for generations to come.

Bangladesh’s participation in the Paris Olympics, for the eleventh

time, was again marked by disappointment. The country once again failed to secure its first-ever medal, while the gap between Bangladesh and top-tier sporting nations remains increasingly wide.

As 2024 draws to a close, the year presents both progress and persistent challenges. While there have been achievements in football, cricket, and hockey, the need for comprehensive reform and greater investment in sports infrastructure is more evident than ever.

For now, the sports community continues to wait for the realisation of the long-promised changes that will take Bangladesh sports to the next level in the foreseeable future, if not in 2025.

Hasina sued at ICT for enforced disappearance

FROM PAGE 12

SM Moinul Karim, another prosecutor, said, “ICT’s investigation agency will investigate the complaint before the complaint is filed as a case.”

The UPDF leader also submitted a towel, which

according to him was used to blindfold him when he was kidnapped. Mikel was accompanied by writer and activist Rahnuma Ahmed yesterday.

On December 18, Mikel filed the verbal complaint to the ICT chief prosecutor. He

also told reporters how he was abducted, where he was taken, and what he faced while in detention.

“During interrogation, they asked me about a rally held in Khagrachhari in 2013. Supporters of our organisation had blocked the

road, causing a two-hour delay for the rally attended by Sheikh Hasina. At the rally, Hasina threatened to take action against those who created the obstruction,” he said.

Meanwhile, the ICT investigation agency former

inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, who is accused of crimes against humanity during the July mass uprising.

The tribunal asked the agency to wrap up the investigation by February 20.

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড
Bangladesh Power Development Board
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, WAPDA Building, Dhaka,
Tel.: 02223383081 www.bpdb.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

The Following e-Tenders is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of :

SL No	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of Goods/Works	Last Selling Date and time	Closing Date and time	Opening Date and time
1.	1056293	GR-17 FY 2024-25	27.11.0000.304.25 .422.24 date: 29.12.2024	Procurement of Charge Air Filter and Charge Air Cooler of Faridpur 50MW Peaking Power Plant, BPDB, Faridpur	16-01-2025 13.30	16-01-2025 14.00	16-01-2025 14.00

This is 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.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Band Branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

For more details please contract to the PE’s Support Desk (01755575443).

বিদ্যুৎ/জন-৬১৩(২)/৩০/১২/২৪

(Md. Nafiu Miah)
ID No.1-01304
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka
E-mail:dir.purchase@bpdb.gov.bd

জিডি- ১৩০৩



FLASHBACK 2024

You are not alone if 2024 has you feeling worn down. It has been a trying year on the world scene, as the forces of disarray grew stronger. Ongoing wars ground on, while new ones erupted. Geopolitical competition increased, to the point where meetings between global leaders became news headlines even though their talks yielded little tangible progress. In all, good news has been in short supply.

TRUMP is back

Donald Trump once again stunned the world, and wrong-footed pollsters who had projected a very tight race, to win the US presidential election. He won all seven swing states, keeping control of the House and winning back the Senate. He is also on course to win the popular vote. He beat his Democrat rival Kamala Harris, who had been parachuted into the process just 100 days before the election after the 81-year-old outgoing President Joe Biden pulled out. On December 8, Trump called for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine. He returns to the White House on January 20, 2025.



Jubilant Syrians celebrating Assad's downfall gather at Umayyad Square in Damascus, Syria on December 8.

PHOTO: AFP

NOTABLE DEATHS 2024

FEBRUARY

Alexei Navalny, 47. The fiercest foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests.



APRIL

Peter Higgs, 94. The Nobel prize-winning physicist proposed the existence of the so-called "God particle" that helped explain how matter formed after the Big Bang.



MAY

Alice Munro, 92. The Nobel laureate was a Canadian literary giant who became one of the world's most esteemed contemporary authors and one of history's most honored short story writers.



JULY

Ismail Haniyeh, 62. Hamas' top leader in exile landed on Israel's hit list after the group staged its surprise October 7 attacks.



OCTOBER

Ratan Tata, 86. One of India's most influential business leaders, the veteran industrialist was former chairman of the \$100 billion conglomerate Tata Group.



NOVEMBER

Quincy Jones, 91. The multi-talented music titan whose vast legacy ranged from producing Michael Jackson's historic "Thriller" album to writing prize-winning film and television scores and collaborating with Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles and hundreds of other recording artists.



DECEMBER

Ustad Zakir Hussain, 73. A child prodigy, he was known for his dazzling solo performances and a raft of collaborative work with internationally renowned musicians such as George Harrison of the Beatles.



Jimmy Carter, 100. An earnest Georgia peanut farmer who as US president struggled with a bad economy and the Iran hostage crisis but brokered peace between Israel and Egypt and later received the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian work.



MIDEAST WAR SPREADS

More than a year into the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip, there has been no let-up in the violence. The conflict expanded as Israel turned its focus on the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia and extended its offensive into Lebanon. The conflict has killed at least 3,768 people in Lebanon since October 2023, according to the health ministry, most of them since September 2024.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll from the offensive there has reached over 45,235 people, the majority of them civilians. On December 8, Syrian rebels had ousted President Bashar al-Assad after seizing control of Damascus, forcing him to flee and ending his family's decades of autocratic rule after more than 13 years of civil war.



Ukraine war escalates

After a failed counteroffensive in 2023, following Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, Ukraine in August launched a surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region. Russia has responded with deadly strikes and Kyiv's outgunned and outmanned troops have struggled to hold back steady advances from Russian forces, notably in the eastern Donetsk region. The West, Ukraine and South Korea say thousands of North Korea soldiers are in Russia. In November Ukraine for the first time used Western-supplied long-range missiles against Russia, after getting US and British clearance. Russia responded by hitting Ukraine with an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) without a nuclear warhead.

Social media scrutiny

In 2024 social media titans faced growing scrutiny of their practices. In France in August, Russian-born founder of the controversial Telegram app, Pavel Durov, was arrested and charged with failing to curb extremist and illegal content on his network. TikTok, meanwhile, was in the crosshairs of US Federal Trade Commission, which accused it of violating child privacy laws. But it was arguably Elon Musk and his social media platform X that drew the most fire. In August, X was banned for 40 days in Brazil – its largest Latin American market with 22 million users – in a legal tussle over disinformation.



Russia tightens grip

Vladimir Putin began his fifth term as Russian president in May after winning a presidential election that the West slammed as a sham. His nemesis Alexei Navalny died in February in murky circumstances in the Arctic prison where he had been serving a



19-year sentence for leading an "extremist" organisation. Since his death, Russian authorities have escalated a campaign against the Kremlin critic's backers, allies and family – arresting journalists who covered his court hearings and adding his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, to a "terrorists and extremists" blacklist.



Chinese decline

Beijing launched a salvo of measures aimed at boosting its economy. The world's second-biggest economy has been hit by a property crisis and sluggish household consumption. It has also been locked in bitter trade disputes with the US and the EU after the entry into force of steep increases in US customs duties on electric cars, batteries for electric vehicles. In response Beijing has slapped "temporary anti-dumping measures" on imports from the EU of products including cognac. With Trump's US election win China also fears the imposition of increased customs duties on all its goods imported into the US.

Deadly flooding

The summer of 2024 was the hottest ever recorded on Earth. Relentless global warming provoked heatwaves, droughts and deadly flooding, with the wet weather proving particularly dramatic. An unusually intense rainy season in West and Central Africa unleashed a humanitarian crisis killing hundreds of people. In a September of wild weather, Hurricane Helene pounded the southeast US, Typhoon Krathon slammed into Taiwan and Storm Boris brought floods and devastation to Europe. Typhoons Yagi and Bebinca left a trail of destruction in Asia while deadly floods hit Nepal, Bangladesh, Japan and west and central Africa.



A deadly year for aviation

A string of devastating aviation disasters in 2024 has left hundreds dead and shaken public confidence in air travel safety. The most recent and deadliest crash occurred on December 28, when a Jeju Air



passenger aircraft crashed while attempting to land at Muan Airport, South Korea. The impact ignited a fierce fire that engulfed the aircraft, killing at least 179 of the 181 people aboard. December 25 saw an Embraer ERJ-190AR aircraft operated by Azerbaijan Airlines crash near Aktau Airport in Kazakhstan, killing 38 out of 67 passengers.



Far-right gains in Europe

European elections in June confirmed nationalist and far-right parties rising in France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Italy and the Netherlands. This also translated at the national level. Austria's far-right Freedom Party won a historic victory in legislative elections. In France, a republican bloc prevented the far-right National Rally from coming to power in snap parliamentary elections, but fell out swiftly after the vote. The AFD in Germany won a regional election for the first time. And meanwhile in England and Northern Ireland dozens of towns were rocked by anti-immigration riots fuelled by far-right agitators.

Ensure prompt delivery of books

A strong start to the academic year is crucial after recent disruptions

With the new academic year all set to begin, it is disappointing that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has not yet completed printing a significant number of textbooks for primary and secondary levels, including schools and madrasas. According to *Prothom Alo*, out of more than 40 crore books, only about 4.75 crore have been approved for dispatch at the upazila level as of December 28. Since not all students across the country will receive their books on the first day of the new year, the NCTB plans to initially distribute at least three new books—Bangla, English, and Mathematics—to students of all classes, but even this plan reportedly faces uncertainty.

The NCTB chairman has expressed hope that students of different grades will receive their books in phases, with full distribution completed by January 20. However, NCTB and printing sources are sceptical of meeting this deadline due to delays in printing books for grades 4 to 9. A report by this daily previously cited printing industry insiders who had suggested that delivering all textbooks might take until the first week of March. In recent years, such delays have become an unfortunate norm, severely disrupting education, particularly in remote areas.

While it must be acknowledged that the interim government has had to deal with significant challenges complicating its preparation and delivery of textbooks—including unrest and chaos caused by the political changeover—ensuring textbook delivery within the first week of January could send a strong signal of a return to normalcy in academic activities. This is especially crucial for the students whose learning took a heavy hit because of the disruptions. Even now, the education sector, including the tertiary level, continues to experience challenges and uncertainties, making the new year an ideal opportunity to rejuvenate academic momentum and support students, particularly in underserved areas outside Dhaka. The faster the textbooks are distributed, the better for all concerned.

Under the circumstances, the government must step up its efforts in printing and distributing the textbooks. If necessary, additional resources and staff should be allocated to accomplish this crucial task. Given the wave of interruptions the education system has faced ever since the pandemic, it is all the more important to get things firmly back on track. Ensuring that schoolchildren receive their books promptly can lay the foundation for a strong academic year ahead.

Address the plight of returning migrants

Many suffering from medical issues, financial challenges

A recent study has offered us another stark glimpse into the harsh realities faced by returnee migrant workers. Many of these individuals, already burdened with hefty loans taken to secure overseas employment, return home to face additional financial strain due to medical expenses. The study, conducted by the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) between 2021 and 2023, reveals that migrant workers who spent two to four years abroad often came back with severe health issues, including back pain, tumours, cardiac and injury-related complications, kidney problems, hypertension, and uterine infections. Among the surveyed, 52 percent reported physical health issues, while 48 percent suffered from mental health problems. Moreover, 57 percent had to borrow an average of Tk 90,000 to cover treatment expenses upon their return.

This shows the inhumane conditions that many migrant workers often endure abroad. One woman, for example, recounted how a broker sent her to Saudi Arabia with the promise of a well-paying job, only for her to experience physical abuse, sexual harassment, and food deprivation at her employer's house. Another worker shared that after paying Tk 4 lakh to migrate to Saudi Arabia, he was left jobless for a month, confined in a room with 20-25 others without access to food, clean water or a bathroom. He eventually developed type 2 diabetes and urinary problems. Neither worker received any compensation for their suffering.

Such incidents are far from isolated. Experts and rights advocates have long highlighted the plight of our migrant workers both before and after migration. Exploited by corrupt and unscrupulous recruitment agents at home, they are often subjected to gruelling workloads, inadequate living conditions, and little or no salary abroad. This cycle of abuse and suffering simply cannot be accepted.

We, therefore, urge the government to take decisive action to address these challenges, including by improving the lives of returnee migrant workers. First, it should provide adequate medical support and assistance for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In this regard, properly utilising the Wage Earners Welfare Fund can be a big help. Second, the government must revise the existing insurance policies for migrant workers to ensure comprehensive health coverage. It must also engage with labour-importing countries to secure better living and working conditions, as well as access to medical treatment when needed. Furthermore, our embassies in those countries should have dedicated help desks to address the grievances of migrant workers promptly. These individuals, who contribute significantly to the nation's economy, deserve our respect and unwavering support.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Wuhan reports pneumonia cluster cases



On this day in 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) first learnt of “viral pneumonia” cases in Wuhan, China. The disease was later determined to be Covid-19, which became a global pandemic the following year.

Cyber Protection Ordinance and our flawed law-making logic



PSYMHE WADUD
teaches law at the University of Dhaka and is in charge of Law and Our Rights in The Daily Star.

PSYMHE WADUD

The interim government has decided to enact the Cyber Protection Ordinance (CPO), 2024. As successor to the controversial Cyber Security Act (CSA), 2023 and the more draconian Digital Security Act (DSA), 2018, the ordinance is now under close scrutiny. Due largely to the government's expressed commitment to human rights, I became quite hopeful following the CSA's scrapping, looking forward to a draft grounded in human rights. However, the draft has failed on multiple counts, including criminalising vaguely defined “cyberbullying” and “hurting religious values and sentiments.” I want to limit my discussion, prioritising depth over breadth, to the criminalisation of the latter.

Freedom of speech certainly is a qualified right and may in fact be regulated, or in legal language, “subjected to reasonable restrictions.” However, as human rights jurisprudence suggests that no restriction is reasonable if the “minimum core” of an otherwise qualified right gets assailed. The draft provision on hurting religious sentiments and values strikes at the very essence of the right to freedom of speech or expression. The provision is not grounded in human rights standards but in the subjective interpretation of extremely vague, uncertain, and indeterminate words and terminologies. For instance, it is not clear what constitutes “hurt” or what comes within the lucid purview of religious values and sentiment. In fact, the broad-based criminalisation also unduly shrinks the scope for critical deliberation and constructive discussions having a bearing on religion. Such a provision can make religious divisions all the more prominent and essentially undercut a tolerant culture, which is both an essential feature and a pursued goal for liberal democracies.

A popular critique of our existing constitution is that it views socioeconomic rights (e.g. shelter, food, medical care) as judicially unenforceable, hence not as rights but as principles. Curiously, however, the constitutional jurisprudence emanating from our higher judiciary is quite saturated with explanations

and expansive interpretations of the socioeconomic rights. Despite the unequivocal assertion of judicial enforcement for civil and political rights (e.g. speech, association, religion), we barely have any jurisprudence on these rights. In absence of any dense normative judicial guidelines, we, therefore, are left with the constitutional provision on free speech (i.e. Article 39), which is to be interpreted in the light of the international human rights standards.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: **BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY**

Interestingly, some rights advocates have routinely critiqued Article 39 of our constitution, too, for enumerating several vague grounds as reasonable restrictions (e.g. security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, decency). Had we had rich constitutional jurisprudence or had there been amendments to Article 39 in line with the international human rights instruments, it could perhaps have evolved into a rights-oriented tool. On a personal note, despite being critical of large-scale top-down reform initiatives of constitutional nature, I was looking forward to changes in Article 39, particularly because actors within the interim government have expressed their commitment, in particular, to free speech and free press multiple times. But with the draft ordinance now on the table, one can barely remain hopeful.

I am mindful that any advocacy in

Discrimination requires state parties to declare as punishable “all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement of violence against any person or group of persons of another race, colour or ethnic origin.” The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” In the domestic context, a sound legal approach arguably is prohibiting speech or communication that potentially exposes a person or persons to hatred, discrimination, violence or incitement of violence, on the bases that they are identifiable by one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination (i.e. race, sex, gender, religion). What constitutes gender-,

ECHOES OF 2024

A year of conflict, resilience and change



Ashish Damle
is the country director of Oxfam Bangladesh.

ASHISH DAMLE

“In the midst of darkness, light persists. In the midst of death, life persists. In the midst of untruth, truth persists.”

—**Mahatma Gandhi**

As 2024 ends, with a week-long festivity and a lull in activity in many places, I find myself introspecting and reflecting over the past year. While annual reflection is a tradition for many, this is the first time I am sharing my thoughts openly, and for compelling reasons.

This year has helped us move past the painful memories of the Covid pandemic, yet without the solace we yearned for. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine intensified, and as if that was not enough, a significant new conflict erupted between Israel and Hamas in October 2023 and continued throughout 2024. The year began under the shadow of these global conflicts and witnessed further turmoil, including significant unrest in neighbouring Myanmar.

Additionally, more than 60 elections were held worldwide, many accompanied by political and civil strife, including one in Bangladesh. The power and influence of youth once again came to the forefront, driving political change and sparking global discourse.

We cycled through feelings of euphoria, fear, anguish, hope, inspiration and anxiety, sometimes all at once. As 2024 concludes, it is hard to pinpoint exactly what our emotional state is. When 2022 ended, it brought a sigh of relief with the decline of Covid. In contrast, 2024 closes with ongoing conflicts, polarisation, environmental crises, policy stagnation, controversial leaderships, civil unrest, widening economic disparities, dwindling humanitarian aid, and the persistent challenges of hunger and food scarcity. The political shifts and changing narratives of 2024 raise more questions than answers.

One stark example of global failure this year was COP29, which failed to secure adequate financial commitments for climate justice. Vulnerable nations like Bangladesh gained nothing from this massive effort of international negotiations, casting doubt on the very purpose of such annual conferences. Bangladesh faced five climate emergencies in 2024, including Cyclone Remal and massive floods that displaced over half a million people. These disasters left communities grappling with loss of livelihoods, damaged infrastructure, and prolonged recovery efforts, highlighting the urgent need for more robust global and local responses

to climate resilience. Yet, the global response fell short of what was needed.

Civil unrest defined much of 2024, with protests erupting in Venezuela, Kenya, Bangladesh, and most recently, South Korea. In many cases, demonstrators demanding civil rights were met with disproportionate violence. In Bangladesh, hundreds of lives were lost—among them students,

The year 2024 closes with ongoing conflicts, polarisation, environmental crises, policy stagnation, controversial leaderships, civil unrest, widening economic disparities, dwindling humanitarian aid, and the persistent challenges of hunger and food scarcity.

children, and workers—while many others remain injured, enduring a painful existence after speaking out against authoritarian rule. This movement, described by some as a “second liberation,” holds the potential for revolutionary change, contingent on future political and social reforms. However, uncertainty looms for many in Bangladesh as they grapple with insecurity, livelihood challenges, and limited growth opportunities.

The 2024 floods were among the most devastating in recent history, affecting millions of lives with unprecedented intensity. In response, youth, communities and people from all stages joined hands and supported

race- or religion-based “hatred” in the context of speech has over the years been negotiated and judicially interpreted both in the international context and across jurisdictions. In fact, by operating within the framework of hate speech and grounding its anchor in the equality/non-discrimination law, the draft provision could easily pass the test of human rights, at least on paper. However, in the current form, the draft does a great disservice to both equality law/anti-discrimination jurisprudence, and the hate speech regime.

One may say, *albeit* for the sake of arguing, that the draft seeks to take a bottom-up approach and start with penalising “hurting of religious values and sentiment” to thereby take an all-encompassing approach. However, criminal law does not normatively work that way. They need to be precise and certain regarding what exactly they criminalise. An important element within the state-people relationship is ensuring that individuals know what conduct will jeopardise their freedom and authorise the state to rightfully curtail their liberty (i.e. by incarcerating them). In my opinion, the words used in the draft in the context of hurting religious values and sentiment are too uncertain, vague, and indeterminate to qualify as reasonable restrictions as per Article 39 of the existing constitution, read with the international human rights standards.

Thanks to our colonial past, we deem passing of criminal laws as a rather *usual* business. The state, the all-powerful *leviathan*, can define at its whims any conduct as crime and one can be easily incarcerated for noncompliance. If anything, “reforms” ought to improve and not maintain something under a different label; as a bare minimum, reform initiatives ought to undo our obsession with criminal laws and with muzzling critical voices. In any case, legal reform initiatives can never operate within the self-same anti-human rights logics that defined our law-making endeavours in the past.

Finally, the Cyber Ordinance Ordinance has to be judged on its own merit and based only on its seemingly “better” provisions, we cannot de-emphasise the potentially grave impact of its problematic provisions. Based on our lived experiences, thanks to the draft ordinance's predecessor cyber security and digital security regimes, the context becomes even grimmer now. In the context of the criminalisation of “hurting religious values or sentiment,” among others, changing the term *security* to *protection* seems cosmetic at best and almost deceiving at worst.

affected communities. This was admirable.

In 2024, the business world witnessed the continued rise of unicorns and billionaires, with wealth accumulating at unprecedented rates. However, this growth brought little meaningful change for the powerless. Despite a global economic growth rate of 3.1 percent, over one billion people remain trapped in acute multidimensional poverty, underscoring systemic failures that widen the gap between rich and poor. While digitalisation and technological integration have transformed many sectors, their benefits have yet to fully reach those living in poverty.

As 2024 ends, the limitations of the traditional humanitarian aid model are clear. To create lasting impacts for the disadvantaged, we must embrace entrepreneurial approaches, review existing frameworks, and develop sustainable strategies with consistent resource flow.

I question our engagement with the new generation on social change. Though equipped with technology and social media, they face unprecedented challenges. Are they prepared for an equitable future? Are we investing enough in their potential? These questions linger as we enter 2025.

Finally, as changemakers and development practitioners, we must rebuild trust, demonstrate accountability, and reconnect with people's aspirations. Over time, we lost touch with communities, but now is the moment to correct course and foster collective ownership of our work. As 2025 begins, let us invest in hope, positivity and collaboration to rebuild lives and create a more equitable, just world. It won't be easy, but it is possible—and essential.

New political settlement and the vision of a democratic state



Nasiruddin Patwary is the convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee.

NASIRUDDIN PATWARY

More than four months have elapsed since the student and public uprising in July. During this time, the newly formed interim government has confronted numerous challenges and has often struggled to demonstrate tangible progress. Nevertheless, the government is resolutely laying the foundation for essential reforms across several critical sectors. Overall, Bangladesh is unmistakably moving forward through a significant transformation.

The July student and public uprising was a powerful call to abolish the fascist system and establish a new political settlement. This movement was not merely about replacing or overthrowing the rulers; it was about fundamentally transforming the system that enables state oppression of the people, rooted in specific socio-economic and political conditions. Nur Hossain bravely sacrificed his life to dismantle the military dictatorship of Ershad, driven by the conviction that democracy must be liberated. Despite establishing an electoral system in post-1990 Bangladesh, true democracy could not be achieved. Had democracy been genuinely realised, the sacrifices of individuals like Abu Sayed and Wasim Akram would have been unnecessary.

A critical issue in discussions about democracy in Bangladesh is the mistaken belief that elections equate to democracy. This prevailing narrative falsely asserts that holding elections is synonymous with being a democratic state. In reality, elections are merely a method for selecting a government for a specific period in a genuine democracy. If the state lacks fundamental democratic principles—such as the rule of law, institutional freedom, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and expression, and the right to assembly—then

conducting elections every five years fails to establish true democracy.

In Bangladesh, we have decisively failed to establish a strong electoral system, severely undermining the continuity of elected governments. Numerous political parties have set a dangerous precedent by seizing power through elections but refusing to relinquish it at the end of their terms. This has created a cycle of coups, countercoups, military rule, a blatant disregard for democracy, and a pervasive culture of political violence.

It is evident that after each major historical event in our nation—specifically in 1947, 1971, and 1990—the resulting arrangements have consistently fallen short. The core issue is a glaring lack of a clear and unified vision for a democratic state. We must confront and resolve this fundamental problem if we are to advance effectively.

The call for the abolition of the fascist system and the establishment of a new political settlement during

Achieving fundamental change in our country requires more than just rushing into elections without necessary reforms. We firmly believe in the importance of elections as a core practice of democracy; however, we categorically oppose electioneering.

the 2024 uprising must be understood in its historical context. The post-uprising student movement, fiercely opposing inequality, along with the determined efforts of the National Citizens' Committee, is firmly rooted in this understanding. The National Citizens' Committee demands a new democratic constitution to ensure that no government can devolve into

a system is determined to eradicate the authoritarian elements entrenched within the state's structure. Our goal is clear: to establish true institutional democracy by creating a democratic constitution through an elected constituent assembly and conducting parliamentary elections under that constitution. This is the undeniable pathway of our democratic revolution.

a cohesive political community through the integration of religion, language, history, and heritage within the framework of self-development.

Many researchers assert that Bangladesh's strategic geopolitical position commands the attention of both global and regional powers. Our geopolitical strategy is anchored in an unwavering commitment

We will ensure that healthcare reaches every citizen, fully committed to the vision set forth by the late Dr Zafarullah. Our emerging political party, focused on engaging the youth, will prioritise increasing funding for education and promoting research and knowledge production. It's time to take bold action for the future of Bangladesh.

Criticism and dissent are vital pillars of democracy. We must unequivocally ensure that no government has the power to harass or torture individuals for their criticisms, nor can they engage in abhorrent acts such as enforced disappearances or imprisoning citizens without trial. It is imperative that we proactively prevent any recurrence of such egregious human rights violations. The recent extrajudicial killings have made it crystal clear that we will not tolerate these injustices. We cannot allow another life to be lost in this way.

The brutal actions of Sheikh Hasina and her party must remain etched in the public's memory. We will honour the martyrs with the utmost respect, and the injured will receive the highest standard of care. Their sacrifices and suffering will fuel the relentless reconstruction of Bangladesh.

We mustn't pit reform against elections. To establish a robust foundation for Bangladesh's democratic system, reform is not just necessary; it is unavoidable. The outcome of these reforms—free and fair elections—must restore our electoral democracy. We refuse to accept the loss of more lives merely for the sake of elections. The will of the people is unmistakably inscribed throughout the country. The message is clear: we demand reform in our nation, society, state, and institutions. While this reform process will not last indefinitely, the government must be given a defined period to deliver results. We must be vigilant to ensure that the urgent call for elections does not compromise the reform agenda. The government has no right to fail. Following these reforms, they must lay the groundwork for a new government to assume power within a strong and democratic framework, and that is our expectation. The youth will undoubtedly lead every sector of future Bangladesh.



FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

The July student and public uprising was a powerful call to establish a new political settlement.

authoritarianism once in power. The 1972 constitution failed to deliver democracy and justice, ultimately paving the way for the oppressive one-party rule of the Baksal regime.

The student movement against inequality demands the declaration of a second republic. These demands from students and citizens cannot be ignored. Achieving fundamental change in our country requires more than just rushing into elections without necessary reforms. We firmly believe in the importance of elections as a core practice of democracy; however, we categorically oppose electioneering.

Electoral politics relentlessly seeks to maintain the status quo and obstruct essential reforms. In stark contrast, the movement to dismantle the fascist

This aspiration is not merely a romantic notion; it is a concrete vision grounded in global democratic principles. Our proposed vision for the state demands the establishment of a democratic constitution that unequivocally removes state institutions from executive control. We will implement decisive measures to limit the powers of the prime minister, preventing the rise of a singular authority.

We will unapologetically recognise the rights of all ethnic communities and prioritise the needs of minority groups. Ensuring a safe public space and achieving economic equality for women are non-negotiable imperatives. We reject the binary politics of religion versus culture and instead assert the necessity of building

to protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our nation. When it comes to foreign policy, we rigorously prioritise mutual interests and uphold our dignity.

Bangladesh will no longer be dismissed as a "bottomless basket." We've emerged as one of the world's rising economies, and it is clear that, had it not been for the extensive looting, rampant corruption, and money laundering of the past 15 years, our economy would rank among the foremost in Asia. We are resolute in our commitment to eradicating corruption and money laundering, creating abundant employment opportunities, offering special incentives to small and medium-sized enterprises, and transforming the tourism industry.

The last American moral president



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FAISAL M. RAHMAN

Jimmy Carter, the oldest surviving American president at 100, passed away on December 29 leaving the world with the legacy of morality, decency, and social responsibility. Such enduring values have eluded all his successors—Republicans and Democrats alike, as the political discourse has degenerated into name-calling, partisanship and winning at any cost. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to refer to Jimmy Carter as the last American moral president and a statesman. The last adjective summarises his work during his entire life, particularly the 44 years of post-presidency contributions throughout the world.

I first came across Jimmy Carter when he was running for president. A simple man who carried his own garment bag, stayed in small hotels, and would surprise commuters in train and bus stations with a simple statement—"Hi, I am Jimmy Carter, and I am running for president." Most people were not familiar with the one-term governor of Georgia and would walk away. I did stay around and was impressed with the simplicity of his demeanour and clarity of what he wanted to achieve. He, of course, went on to be the 39th president of the US but the "Iranian Hostage Crisis" and inept handling of the economy made him a one-term president.

Americans, however, must not overlook some of the pivotal legislations and regulations that took place during the Carter presidency. Today minorities including women have access to home loans and other forms of credit due to the



Jimmy Carter (1924-2024)

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

vigorous enforcement of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act by Carter administration. President Carter also brought about airline deregulation which allows millions of Americans to avail cheap airline tickets today. He was also responsible for the passing of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act which prohibits US citizens and businesses from bribing foreign government officials to benefit their business interests. During his presidency, US Justice Department sent high-level executives to jail for such acts. What a contrast to today's politics, business, and their leaders.

President Carter's life after his defeat to Ronald Reagan serve as a shining example of what can be

achieved even without the power of presidency. He embraced the mission of Habitat for Humanity and worked tirelessly to provide affordable and safe housing for the needy throughout the world. In addition to raising millions of dollars for the not-for-profit organisation, he and his wife physically joined volunteers in building houses in both ghettos

of Palestinians with apartheid in his book Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter established the Carter Center at Emory University with the vision of peace and human rights and for the past four decades initiated various programmes to empower and improve the lives of the world's poorest and most forgotten people. Through a variety of programmes and partnering with various organisations throughout the world, Carter Center's achievements include—helping to monitor elections in newly independent countries and advocate for human rights; reducing incidence of communicable disease including eradication of Guinea worms; helping to establish rural healthcare clinics for distribution of affordable medicine and provide healthcare education including raising awareness to fight stigma against people with mental disease.

After Nelson Mandela, there has not been anyone deserving enough to be called a statesman other than Jimmy Carter. He stood for what was right, was always honest with the American people and was a relentless believer in conflict resolution through conversation and negotiation. In his lifetime, he met with leaders as diverse as Soviet leader Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, China's Deng Xiaoping, Cuba's Fidel Castro, and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. During his term as president, Jimmy Carter also refrained from military interventions in other countries. For his many efforts towards the pursuit of peace, President Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

In his personal life, Jimmy Carter was deeply religious but did not try to impose his beliefs on anyone. His life itself was an example of a true religious man—devoted to his wife and family, scrupulously honest in all his personal, political, and business dealings and respectful of others who did not agree with him. Rest in peace, President Carter, yours is truly a life fulfilled.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 "To — own self be true"

6 May honorees

10 Arrested

11 Regions

13 Lent a hand

14 "Divine Comedy" writer

15 Mamie's husband

16 Online address

18 Play division

19 Fancy boat

22 View

23 Lively folk dance

24 In the future

27 Move like a crab

28 Musical number

29 Gorilla, for one

30 Fancy car

35 Cry of discovery

36 Tiny

37 Period

38 Find another purpose for

40 Fashionably dated

42 Spud

43 Make blank

44 "Edward Scissorhands" star

45 Wise ones
- DOWN

1 Hike route

2 17-syllable poem

3 Almanac section

4 Never, in Germany

5 Lasted

6 One way to be in love

7 Singer Rita

8 Threatened

9 Big bag

12 End a lawsuit

17 Reuben base

20 Grammar topic

21 Disney's mermaid

24 Classify

25 Impetuous one

26 Between travel points

27 Balls

29 Star pitcher

31 Annoying fellow

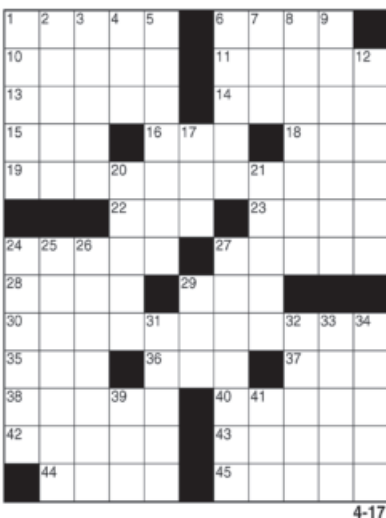
32 Luggage clip-on

33 Code name

34 Sioux tribe

39 Fall mo.

41 Stretch of years



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

T	O	M	B	S	P	U	D
M	A	R	I	O	L	A	S
A	T	A	L	A	T	O	N
G	E	T	D	O	W	N	P
M	R	E	G	E	T	R	E
A	S	S	E	N	T	O	N
T	A	N	G	O			
A	R	I	A	O	U	T	S
G	E	T	L	O	S	T	A
A	V	A	G	E	T	E	V
P	O	L	A	R	E	L	E
E	L	I	T	E	R	I	O
T	A	M	S		S	A	N

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

Stars hope for a fruitful 2025

From career milestones to personal aspirations, we dive into what some of our biggest stars are looking forward to as they step into the new year.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

As 2024 wraps up and the promise of 2025 looms ahead, the excitement of fresh beginnings is in the air. Like the rest of us, Bangladesh's top celebrities are brimming with hopes, dreams, and plans for the year to come. From career milestones to personal aspirations, we dive into what some of our biggest stars are looking forward to as they step into the new year.

Pori Moni
As another year ends, I find myself reflecting on how quickly time passes. The end of the year marks the close of a chapter, and 2024

to bring even better work in 2025, whether in films or OTT platforms. All I can say is, exciting things are coming!

Mehazabien Chowdhury
My debut film, *Priyo Maloti*, was released in the final month of this year, and the amount of love I received from close friends, fans, and industry peers was overwhelming. I'm deeply grateful for everyone's support. Not only did *Priyo Maloti* earn praise locally, but it also received international recognition. The year went really well for me. As we move into 2025, my next film *Saba* will be released soon, and I think it will be a great surprise for my fans. I'm excited to take on new

to focus even more on quality over quantity. I want to step away from the usual and do work that stands out—something that breaks the norm. All I want is to do meaningful work; and, of course, my biggest wish is for our beloved Bangladesh to thrive and for its people to stay happy.

Moushumi Hamid
At the end of 2024, *Noya Manush*, which touches on real-life issues, was released, and it received positive feedback from moviegoers. It felt good to be appreciated for such a personal project. Over the last year, I had several other projects that were well-received. Overall, 2024 was a good year for me, filled with



PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

Abdun Noor Shajal

throughout my career. I started out in television, but now I mainly work in cinema, with some ventures into OTT as well. I've even worked in Indian Bengali cinema. As an actor, you have to deliver great work to stay relevant and to win people's hearts. Without that, it's impossible to survive in this industry. I had a good 2024 with some strong projects, and I'm eager to keep the momentum going into the new year. I want to do more films and see myself grow as an actor. Above all, I want to keep working with the love and support of my audience.

Tanjim Saiara Totini
Happy New Year everyone! My wish is that 2025 brings joy and beauty into everyone's lives. May it be a wonderful year for us all! When it comes to work, I had a great 2024, filled with many successful projects. I received so much love for my work, and I stayed in the spotlight throughout the year. In 2025, I hope to take on even more meaningful roles. I want to be part of projects that make people think. With some exciting plans already lined up, I can't wait to see what this year has in store!



Asha Bhosle stuns Dubai crowd as she performs 'Tauba Tauba'

At 91, legendary singer Asha Bhosle wowed fans at a Dubai concert with Sonu Nigam on December 29. She performed for hours establishing her timeless relevance.

Asha Bhosle, draped in a white saree, captivated with her rendition of Karan Aujla's *Tauba Tauba* from the film *Bad Newz*, even recreating Vicky Kaushal's signature dance step.

Videos of her iconic moment went viral on Monday, garnering widespread admiration. The live audience cheered loudly as the nonagenarian proved that her charm and spirit remained unmatched.

Irrfan Khan: Only Indian in The Independent's '60 Best Actors of 21st-Century'



Irrfan Khan has been named the only Indian actor in The Independent's prestigious list, titled *60 Best Actors of 21st-Century Cinema*, securing the 41st spot. His exceptional performances in films, such as *The Warrior*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Jurassic World*, were key to his inclusion.

The list also features renowned actors like Tom Cruise, Emma Stone, and Song Kang Ho. The Independent highlighted Khan's "stoic fortitude" in portraying a warrior in his native Rajasthan. His remarkable career includes roles in *Haasil*, *Maqbool*, *The Namesake*, *Piku*, *Hindi Medium*, and more.

COUNTRYWIDE



Treatment seekers often have to wait to get treatment as there is only one staff member at Chaumohani Union Health and Family Welfare Centre in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Habiganj union health centres grappling with staff shortages

MINTU DESHWARA

Chaumohani Union Health and Family Welfare Centre in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila provides health services to nearly 40,000 people living in different villages under the union.

As surprising as it sounds, only one family welfare inspector provides services to several thousand healthcare seekers at this particular sub-centre.

Roksana Akhter, family welfare inspector at the health centre, said, "Lots of patients visit this health centre every day. I alone cannot provide services to so many people."

"If there's an emergency case, I do not even get the chance to talk to any other patient," Roksana said, adding that she needs at least one staff member to assist her when any child delivery is performed.

According to data received from the district family planning office, there are a total of 52 union health and family welfare centres in Habiganj.

Alongside minor diseases, these health centres mostly provide services to pregnant women and perform child deliveries.

When most of the private hospitals encourage expectant mothers to have caesarean sections, the union health centres perform 100 percent normal child deliveries.

In 2022, a total of 8,737 normal deliveries were performed at all the union health centres in Habiganj, while 8,816 were performed in 2023.

Till June this year, the number is only 2,161.

Staffers at health centres said the number of delivery cases would have been doubled if they had adequate staff members.

According to regulations, every union health centre should have at least 10 staff members in six posts, but in reality, most of them have only one or two employees.

Only 10 staff members are in service against a total of 52 posts of deputy assistant community medical officers in the whole of Habiganj district.

Moreover, as many as 60 family welfare inspectors are working against 101 designated posts because many of them, who are posted in the union health centres, are performing their duties at the upazila or district level while some are on leave.

As a result, people living in remote areas are being deprived of medical services.

Monihar Begum, who came to Lukra Health and Family Welfare Centre for treatment, said she was advised to take calcium tablets regularly, but most of the time there is no medicine available at the sub-centre.

Contacted, Sirajul Islam, deputy director (acting) at Habiganj District Family Planning Office, said though a circular was issued to fill the vacant posts, the current political situation is causing further delays to the appointment process.

Major changes coming to Bangla, English textbooks

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autobiography by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have been dropped from the class six English textbook, while a poem -- "The Magic E" -- was also removed.

A new write-up titled "Our Pride", a passage on Victory Day, and a poem called "The Chaos" will be included in the textbook.

Two texts -- "Bangabandhu's love for sports" and "Bangabandhu's responses to natural calamities" -- will be removed from class seven's English textbook.

Another write-up "Bangamata: our source of inspiration", on the life of Bangabandhu's wife and Sheikh Hasina's mother Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, will be dropped from same book, while two write-ups titled "A New Generation" and "Our Winners in the Global arena", on student-led mass uprising, will be included.

A content titled "Bangabandhu and Bangladesh", on Sheikh Mujib's role in the Language Movement, his historic March 7 address at Suhrawardy Udyan, his declaration of independence in the first hours of March 26 of 1971, is also going to be dropped from the class eight English textbook.

Texts like "Women's Roles in The Uprising" and "Human and Development" will be added to the textbook.

A write-up titled "Father of the Nation", which deals with Bangabandhu's family during the 1971 Liberation War, his return home from captivity in Pakistan, his time at the UN and others, is likely to be dropped from the class nine English textbook.

On the other hand, a content on the graffiti art during the student mass uprising and two others titled "Sense of Self" and "Loneliness" -- are set to be included in the same

textbook.

CHANGES IN BANGLA TEXTBOOKS

A poem "Roudra Rekhe Joy" by Shamsur Rahman, a rhyme "February'r Gaan" written by Lutfur Rahman Riton, and short story "Opekkha" by Selina Hossain will be dropped from class five's Bangla textbook.

Texts titled "Matir Niche Shohor", on The Wari Bateshwar ruins in Narsingdi; "Dekhe Elam Niagara" on the Niagara Falls; and contents on Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and on Titumir, a revolutionary in British India; are set to be dropped from the same textbook.

Meanwhile, a write-up titled "Amra Tomader Bhublo Na" on the July uprising; a poem "Sobar Ami Chhatro"; and write-ups like "Jalpuri Kathurer Golpo", "Nolok", "Kumro O Pakhir Kotha", and "Doityo O Jele" are to be added to the textbook.

Two prose titles "Our Fine Arts" by Kamrul Hasan, and "Satire and the Language of Protest", a compilation of writings on the July uprising, will be included in the Charupath textbook for class six.

Besides, poem "Chithi Bili" by Rokonuzzaman Khan is likely to be added in the book, replacing poem "Mujib" by the same writer.

In the Bangla grammar book, an article called "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", which termed him the "best Bangalee of 1,000 years" and the undisputed leader of the country's Liberation War, will be removed.

In the class seven Soptoborna textbook, a prose titled "Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain" by Selina Hossain is set to be dropped, while a new poem titled "Sithi" on the July uprising, written by Hasan Robayet, will be added. Two

other poems titled "Shono ekti Mujiburur theke" by Gouri Prasanna Majumder and "Sobar Ami Chhatro" by Sunirmal Bose will be removed.

In class seven's Anandapath textbook, a travelogue titled "Switzerland er Dinguli" written by Selina Hossain is also going to be dropped.

In the Bengali textbook for class eight, two prose -- "Library" by Motahar Hossain Chowdhury and "The Story of Mass Uprising" -- will be added. A prose titled "Our Fine Arts" by Kamrul Hasan will be dropped.

In another Bangla book for same grade, a novel titled "Amra and Crab Nebula" by Zafar Iqbal will be removed.

In the Bangla Literature textbook of classes nine and 10, two prose -- "Ekusher Golpo" by Zahir Raihan and "Amader Notun Gourab Gatha", a compilation of texts on the July uprising -- will be included.

Meanwhile, "Dena Paowna" by Rabindranath Tagore, "Library" by Motahar Hossain Chowdhury, "Pahela Baishakh" by Kabir Chowdhury, "Badh" by Zahir Raihan, "Rokte Bheja Ekush" by Selina Hossain, "Niyoti" by Humayun Ahmed and "Tothyo Projukti" by Zafar Iqbal are going to be removed from the book.

Four poems -- "Aj Srishti Shukher Ullashe" by Kazi Nazrul Islam, "Amar Porichoy" by Syed Shamsul Haq, "Swadhinota Ei Shobdoti Kibhabe Amader Holo" by Nirmalendu Goon, and "Shahoshi Jononi Amar" by Kamal Chowdhury -- will also be taken out of the same book.

A novel titled "1971" by Humayun Ahmed is likely to be added, while "Kaak Tarua" by Selina Hossain will be removed from Bangla textbook of classes

nine and 10.

About dropping contents by various writers, NCTB chair Reazul said, "It might seem that contents by many writers were removed, but alternative contents on the same themes have been added.

"For example, while some writings on the Liberation War by Selina Hossain and Zafar Iqbal were removed, other contents on the same topic were included."

Officials of the NCTB and other experts involved in the changes in the textbooks said the authorities concerned took up a policy, in which they decided not to keep any exaggerated information without historical evidence in the textbooks.

"Another policy is that no incident or person will get any undue preference and no incident or person will get less importance," said one of the experts, seeking anonymity.

He also said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not mentioned as "the father of the nation," in the primary and secondary textbooks.

Reazul said, "The terminology 'father of the nation' was imposed and is not relevant anymore. We should move to the terminology 'founding fathers'. If we say someone is the father of the nation, it becomes a singular narrative of one leader."

Speaking to The Daily Star, writer Rakhal Raha, who was also involved in the process of changing the textbook contents, said they did not wipe out Bangabandhu from the textbooks.

For example, a text on Sheikh Mujib's March 7 speech is still included in a class eight textbook. The English version of the speech is also there in a higher secondary level textbook. Another write-up on Sheikh Mujib is also there in a class three textbook.

"We firmly believe that, so far, his [Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] presence in textbooks remains significantly higher compared to other historical leaders or their roles," he said.

NCTB officials added that there are contents on Begum Rokeya and Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and the poem "Shobar Ami Chhatro" in textbooks of different subjects.

Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12

no policy decision about giving them shelter in Bangladesh, he added.

"We need everyone's cooperation to resist these brokers. Otherwise, they will become a menace. Trespassing will not be allowed under any circumstances," he said, adding that Chief Adviser Dr Yunus had raised the Rohingya repatriation issue at the last UN conference.

"Bangladesh border is completely under the control of BGB and Coast Guard. The locals at the border have no reason to fear," he said acknowledging that violence is still continuing on the other side of the border.

Jahangir also said the illegal drug trade is a long-standing problem in the area. "This area [Teknaf] is infamous for drugs. Mr Bodi was also infamous [for the same reason]. We need everyone's cooperation to fight this problem. Law enforcers cannot solve it alone."

Earlier, the home adviser flew to Teknaf from Dhaka by helicopter. After holding a meeting with BGB officials, he visited some border points in Teknaf and observed the overall situation.



The 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League created a buzz, pulling fans of various age groups (Top Right) to witness the opening day's action at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The cricket on the field also matched the hype, with defending champions Fortune Barishal starting the tournament with a four-wicket win over Durbar Rajshahi in a high-scoring thriller – thanks to cameo knocks from Mahmudullah Riyad and Faheem Ashraf (Left). In some separate incidents, fans gathered complaining of not being able to secure tickets online and from Modhumoti Bank PLC -- the designated places for ticket collection -- while some fans highlighted the absence of ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan [bottom] through placards.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BPL CORNER

“Mahmud [Mahmudullah] bhai is magic. When I went to the pitch, in the first seven to eight balls, I could score only one run. Then I asked him what’s happening. He told me just to stay there. When such experienced player is with you at the crease, whether you are experienced or not, you will get this sort of motivation. After that, I absorbed the pressure and things became easier.”

Fortune Barishal all-rounder
Faheem Ashraf

“Actually we haven’t received our salaries but I feel the BPL just started so we don’t want to raise questions or create complications.”

Durbar Rajshahi captain
Anamul Haque

“We have gotten great response with tickets. What I want to say to all is that in any system there are some flaws at the beginning. So, please have patience. After seven days, this will be clearer and understood by all and everyone will reap the benefits.”

BCB president
Faruque Ahmed

BPL begins with a bang

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The 11th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 got off to a flying start at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Fans were treated to high-scoring matches, while off-field drama surrounding ticketing issues added intrigue to the tournament’s opening day. Eventually, brilliant performances on display from both local and foreign players.

Ticketing chaos and fan protests
For the second straight day, fans’ hue and cry over ticket shortages continued. Hours before the opening match between defending champions Fortune Barishal and Durbar Rajshahi, large crowds gathered at the stadium gates, with some breaking through in frustration. The Bangladesh Army intervened to disperse the angry fans. Later, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Faruque Ahmed addressed the issue while speaking to official broadcasters, promising improvements to the ticketing system within a week and urging fans for patience.

Packed galleries light up the stadium
Eventually, despite the chaos outside, the galleries inside were packed, creating a vibrant atmosphere uncommon for weekday matches. Long queues stretched at the gates, as eager fans flooded in to catch the action live.

Short but meaningful opening ceremony
The BCB held a brief yet symbolic opening

ceremony, where the BCB boss and special guests released balloons and pigeons to mark the start of the tournament. Injured victims from the July uprising were also honoured, adding a poignant touch to the event.

Bijoy’s kit trouble at toss
Durbar Rajshahi skipper Anamul Haque Bijoy turned up for the toss in his training



kit after angry fans blocked the team bus carrying their match jerseys. A Rajshahi team official later informed that the kits were delivered through an alternate route, saving Rajshahi from further awkwardness. Adding a touch of novelty, both captains -- Bijoy and Tamim Iqbal -- exchanged saplings during the toss, as part of government’s initiative in raising environmental awareness.

Rishad left out of Barishal XI
Bangladesh’s rising leg-spinner Rishad Hossain, who recently earned a place in Hobart Hurricanes’ squad for the Big Bash League but opted to play in the BPL, was notably absent from Barishal’s playing eleven. Despite becoming a mainstay in the national side, Rishad found himself benched during his team’s campaign opener. Given Barishal’s star-studded line-up and the BPL’s history of under-utilising leg spinners, he may struggle for game time throughout the tournament.

Improved facilities, but old habits die hard
For the first time, the BCB arranged free water for the spectators at the stadium, introducing “Mugdho Water Corner”, while a “Zero Waste Area” was in place for proper waste disposal. While fans appreciated the amenities, many littered the premises, leaving the area messy.

High-scoring opener thrills fans
On the ground, the Rajshahi and Barishal played out a nail-biter. After reigning champions Barishal were reduced to 61-5 in reply to Rajshahi’s 197 for three, -- courtesy of a brilliant batting performance by Yasir Ali, who struck 47-ball 94 -- it seemed like a matter of time for an upset to materialise. However, Mahmudullah played a gem of an innings, remaining not out on 56 off 26 balls, while putting up an unbroken stand of 88 runs with Faheem Ashraf (54 not out off 21 balls) to propel their side to clinch an emphatic victory with four wickets in hand and 11 balls to spare.

Youthful Air Force clinch maiden hockey title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Air Force emerged champions in Paragon Group Victory Day Hockey Tournament with a 5-4 win over holders Bangladesh Navy in a pulsating final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Forward Rakibul Hasan slammed a hatrick to deliver the maiden trophy for Bangladesh Air Force at any level of hockey but it was the under-21 team forward Obaidul Hossain Joy, who stole the show with a goal and three assists in the enthralling final.

The final was also a battle between the experienced national players of Bangladesh Navy and young and promising players of Bangladesh Air Force.

Navy were the favourites coming into the final, having won two consecutive Victory Day hockey titles and boasting a bunch of national players but they were stunned conceding two goals within seven minutes. They, however, recovered to make it 3-3 at one stage but the feeble Navy defence conceded two more goals in a span of eight minutes in the fourth and final quarter as Rakibul completed his hatrick.

Navy, who pulled one back in the penultimate minute, lashed their anger at the umpires, complaining that Shabbaz Ali did not award them



a legitimate a penalty corner in the final quarter. However, the performance of the players in the final was enough evidence of what difference players’ fitness and proper training makes.

“I think the fitness of our players were better than the opponents, who just could not match our players’ speed,” Air Force coach Hedayetul Islam Razib said after the match.

“We started the tournament with a defeat but we grew in confidence after beating Bangladesh Army. Today the players really wanted to deliver the trophy to Air Force and they played out of their skin,” said the former national player.

Bangladesh Navy forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy was not happy with some decision of umpires, saying, “Green card has been withdrawn from Bangladesh hockey as the umpires showed only yellow and red cards.”

“Apart from umpiring decisions, we could not play our natural game because we failed to keep the momentum despite coming back in the match,” Jimmy said. “It was not a matter of fitness. It was really tough to fight with the shortage of one or two against 11 players.”

“People abroad will be shouting that we had an easy draw. Well, I’m not going to apologise for that. We’re just thrilled that we can be at Lord’s next year.”

South Africa coach **Shukri Conrad** brushed off criticism about the uneven scheduling of the World Test Championship after his team qualified for the final with a dramatic two-wicket win over Pakistan on Sunday to earn their sixth successive Test win.

Slot rounds off almost perfect year

REUTERS, London

Replacing Kop idol Juergen Klopp at Anfield looked to many like a mission impossible for Dutchman Arne Slot when he was named as the German’s successor in May.

Now the appointment looks like a masterstroke halfway through his maiden Premier League campaign.

Liverpool’s 5-0 thrashing of West Ham United on Sunday put Slot’s side eight points clear of surprise second-placed side Nottingham Forest and 14 ahead of champions Manchester City.

They have lost only once in all competitions this season and Slot can look back on an almost perfect 2024.

The only side to get the better of Liverpool this season are Nottingham Forest and the way Slot’s side have ended the year, a 20th title for the club now looks in their grasp.

“Compliments to Nottingham Forest. They were the one,” Slot said after his side’s rout of West Ham at the London Stadium.

While Slot inherited a high-quality squad and has not had to instigate a major rebuild, the tweaks he made have put Liverpool in total control of the table. They are a little more pragmatic than they were under Klopp’s high-octane pressing game, but Slot has still retained Liverpool’s attacking verve -- they have scored 45 goals in 18 games including 14 in the last three.

The 46-year-old has benefited hugely from Mohamed Salah having what promises to be his best-ever season at Liverpool despite the ongoing saga of the Egyptian’s contract talks.

The 32-year-old Salah has been involved in 52 goals in all competitions in 2024 (29 goals, 23 assists), which is more than any other player in Europe’s big five leagues.

“Mo and the word extraordinary is something I’ve heard a lot in the last six months,” Slot told reporters.

Australia win MCG thriller

Australia ripped out seven Indian wickets in the final session of a dramatic fourth Test in Melbourne on Monday to win a thriller by 184 runs and go 2-1 up in the five-match series. India crumbled to 155 all out with just 12.5 overs left in the match and will need to win the final Test starting in Sydney on Friday to level the series and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Third umpire Sharfuddoula Saikat of Bangladesh caused a stir when he overturned the on-field umpire’s not-out decision against India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal. He relied on visual evidence, showing a slight deviation after the ball had passed the bat, rather than Snicko -- a system used to determine whether the ball has taken an edge -- to signal out after Australia called for a review.

Yashasvi Jaiswal’s impressive 1478 runs in 2024 places him third on the list of most runs in a calendar year in Tests for India. This places him behind only Sachin Tendulkar (1562 in 2010) and Sunil Gavaskar (1555 in 1979).

India’s Rohit Sharma has been dismissed by Australia’s Pat Cummins six times in Tests, setting a new record for a captain dismissing an opposition captain. In the ongoing Border-Gavaskar series, Cummins dismissed Rohit four times in four innings, conceding just 11 runs off 44 balls.

If Australia win the Sydney Test against India, they will be in the WTC final regardless of results in their upcoming two-match series in Sri Lanka.

A draw in Sydney will keep Australia ahead of India, but it would leave the door open for Sri Lanka to sneak through. If Australia were to lose in Sydney, they would need one win in Sri Lanka to qualify.

India, meanwhile, must need to win the Sydney Test to stay in contention for the WTC final.



PHOTO: AFP



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





HAT-TRICK OF Superbrands AWARD

AL can join polls unless govt or court bans it: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday said unless the government or the court imposes a ban, there is no legal barrier for the Awami League to participate in the upcoming elections.



The CEC made the remarks during a meeting on "Voter List Update and the 13th National Parliament Election" at the Chattogram Circuit House.

"Everyone saw how the last three elections were held. This time, the Election Commission is functioning entirely independently, free from internal or external pressure. We are committed to ensuring a credible election that is acceptable to all," he added.

In response to another question, the CEC said, "We aim to eliminate

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

All-rounder Mahedi Hasan shone with the ball in hand to help Rangpur Riders to a convincing 40-run win over Dhaka Capitals in the second game of the Bangladesh Premier League's opening day at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Mahedi was the wrecker in chief, picking up four for 27 runs to restrict Dhaka to 151 for nine after Rangpur set a daunting 192-run target.

Progress in sport setbacks, and a call for reform

KHALID HOSSAIN

It was, once again, a mixed bag for Bangladesh sports in 2024. While there were moments of bold strides, the year was also marked by lingering struggles and a desperate search for fresh beginnings.

In women's football, the national team gave their best in retaining the SAFF Women's Championship title, yet the limitations imposed by a lack of resources, international fixtures, and minimal pre-tournament preparation remain glaring. This victory, like their success in 2022, highlighted an important truth: it's time -- if not past time -- for the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to focus on raising its sights beyond the South Asian level.

In cricket, the men's team offered glimpses of brilliance, clinching a historic 2-0 Test series victory in Pakistan and a T20I whitewash over the West Indies to cap off the year. However, the Tigers' closing performance at the T20 World Cup was marred by disappointment.

The year was marked less by the results on the field and

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Dentist 'taken' from home by her stalker

Father was also abducted, but later released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A female dentist and her father were allegedly abducted by her stalker and his associates from her home in Rajshahi city yesterday morning.

The criminals later released the father, but the dentist remained traceless till the filing of the report around 9:00pm.

Family members said the kidnappers also injured the victim's mother when she was trying to protect her daughter.

They also alleged that one Tanjeem Khan Nirab, 42, had long been stalking the 24-year old dentist, who had recently completed her Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) degree from a private medical college hospital in Rajshahi.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the victim's uncle said, "Nirab identified himself as a magistrate to get into a relationship with my niece. In 2018, we realised he was lying.

"Nirab had also sent a marriage proposal, but we rejected it. He had since been stalking her and even threatened to kill her and her parents if they didn't agree to the proposal."

He added, "Today [yesterday], my brother-in-law [the victim's father] went out for Fajr prayers. On his way back home, six people, including Nirab, forced him into a microbus. They then entered the home and

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Major changes coming to Bangla, English textbooks

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Bangla and English textbooks for primary and secondary educational institutions are set to see some major changes, including the dropping of some contents related to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Contents on the student-led mass uprising are likely to be included in the Bangla and English textbooks for classes five to nine, said sources at the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). Six texts and proses on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be dropped from English textbooks of classes six to nine, while four write-ups on the July uprising are to be added in those.

Three proses and poems on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman might be dropped from Bangla textbooks of classes 6 and 7, and four write-ups on July uprising are likely to be added in their stead.

A content each on Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Titumir will be removed from the class six Bangla textbook.

It has also been decided that five contents written by Selina Hossain, two by Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, one each by Syed Shamsul Haque, Rokonzaman Khan,

Nirmalendu Goon and former bureaucrat Kamal Chowdhury, along with others, will be removed.

Asked, NCTB Chairman Prof AKM Reazul Hassan, said, "Exaggerated contents about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are being removed from the textbooks. One leader, one country -- that's not what it is. There were other leaders, such as Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Maulana Bhashani, and Ziaur Rahman, and there is no scope to underestimate their contributions."

He added that some contents on Bangabandhu, such as on the 1969 mass uprising, the 1970 election, and the March 7 speech in 1971, still remain in many of the textbooks.

About the removal of contents on Maulana Bhashani, he said, "It might have been removed from one textbook, but was included in another."

Regarding the removal of content on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain from a class seven textbook, he explained, "Another piece on her has been added but in a different textbook."

CHANGES IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

Two texts -- "Son of the soil" and "Mujib in School days" -- on Sheikh Mujib, adapted from "Unfinished Memoirs", an

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CONFLICT IN RAKHINE Dhaka in touch with both the Myanmar govt, Arakan Army Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Dhaka is maintaining contact with both the Myanmar government and the Arakan Army -- the rebel group that is now controlling the border with Bangladesh -- to protect national interests, said Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury.

"The 271-km land and river border with Myanmar is now controlled by the Arakan Army completely. However, the country is officially run by the Myanmar government. Now, [given the situation] we have to maintain contact with both parties," he said in response to a journalist's question at the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority's jetty at Damdamia on the banks of the Naf River in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, yesterday afternoon.

"In order to protect our interests, the communication between the Myanmar government and the Arakan Army is being maintained from the beginning," the adviser said. The adviser said that around 60,000 Rohingyas have entered Bangladesh with the help of some unscrupulous Bangladeshi brokers.

He said the government has not yet decided on the registration of the newly arrived Rohingyas. There was

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43RD BCS RESULTS 168 candidates excluded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has cancelled the gazette published on October 15 for the 43rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) recruitment and issued a new one, which excludes 168 candidates from various cadres.

According to the new gazette from the Ministry of Public Administration issued yesterday, 1,896 candidates recommended by the Public Service Commission (PSC) have been appointed to entry-level positions in various cadres.

Appointed candidates have been directed to report to their assigned offices under respective ministries by January 15, it read.

"If they do not join on the scheduled date, it will be considered they will not join the job and their appointment letter will be considered cancelled," the notification also read.

On October 15, out of the 2,163 candidates recommended by the PSC, the ministry appointed 2,064 candidates for cadre posts and put on hold the results of 99 candidates.

Now, 168 candidates have been further excluded.

Among those excluded, 26 were previously selected for the administration cadre, eight from the police cadre, and three from the foreign cadre.

With the latest exclusions, a total of 267 candidates have now been left out of the 43rd BCS recruitment.

On December 26, 2023, the PSC published the final results of the 43rd BCS, recommending the recruitment of 2,805 cadre and non-cadre candidates.

However, after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, the interim administration began re-evaluating the background of 255 candidates.

The circular for the 43rd BCS exams was floated on November 30, 2020.

On October 29, 2021, over 435,000 candidates took the preliminary BCS exam across various centres across the country. The results were published on January 20, 2022, with 15,229 candidates passing the preliminary.

The written exams were held in July that year, and 9,841 candidates passed the written test.

Stop attacks on Gaza hospitals

WHO chief calls on Israel; 27 Palestinians killed in IDF strikes

REUTERS, Zurich

The head of the World Health Organization yesterday called for an end to attacks on hospitals in Gaza after Israel struck one and raided another in the past few days.

"Hospitals in Gaza have once again become battlegrounds and the health system is under severe threat," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a post on X.

"We repeat: stop attacks on hospitals. People in Gaza need access to health care. Humanitarians need access to provide health aid. Ceasefire!" he added.

The Israeli military said Hamas members were the targets of a strike on Gaza City's Al Wala hospital on Sunday, which the Palestinian civil defence said killed seven people.

Israeli forces also detained more than 240 Palestinians including dozens of medical staff from Kamal Adwan hospital on Friday, among them its director Hussam Abu Safiya, according to health authorities in the enclave and Israel's military.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that 27 people were killed in separate strikes from Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in the Palestinian territory in the past 24 hours, taking the overall death toll of the offensive to 45,541.

Tedros, who last week was caught up in an Israeli strike against Yemen's main airport that he said might have cost him his life, called for Abu Safiya's immediate release and said the Al-Ahli hospital had also faced attacks.



Retail traders buying winter vegetables from the Karwan Bazar wholesale market early in the morning yesterday. Vegetables from all over the country arrive at the Karwan Bazar market, from where they go out to the rest of the capital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hasina sued at ICT for enforced disappearance of Mikel Changma

DU CORRESPONDENT

UPDF spokesperson Mikel Changma yesterday filed a written complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal accusing former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and eight others of involvement in enforced disappearance.

The ICT Chief Prosecutor's Office received the written complaint and evidence in support of his allegation, said Abdullah Al Noman, a



Mikel Changma

prosecutor at the tribunal. The leader of UPDF, an organisation based in the Chattogram hill tracts, went missing in April 2019 from Dhaka and returned home two days after the fall of Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5 this year.

He says that he had been abducted and kept at a secret prison.

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