



Sitting beside a fire, these four women engage in a conversation in a cold winter morning. Like them, many are finding it hard to keep themselves warm as a mild cold wave is sweeping across the country. Dense fog and chilly winds continue to disrupt lives. Many still had to wrap themselves up in warm clothes and head out for their daily chores. The ongoing cold spell has particularly affected farmers and daily wage earners. The lowest temperature 8.3 degrees Celsius was recorded in Tentulia yesterday. The photos were taken in Khulna, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Barishal.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN, S DILIP ROY, TITU DAS

Shivering in the cold

Farmers, children and elderlies bear the brunt

STAR REPORT

For farmer Dinesh Barman of Thakurgaon, every morning is a battle against the cold.

The thin fabric of his sweater barely does enough to keep away the chill, leaving Dinesh shivering as he steps into the dew-covered fields to cultivate potatoes. His hands tremble with the sting of winter, but he keeps on working.

Similarly, before the first light of dawn, 65-year-old cattle farmer Ananda Chandra Barman of Lalmonirhat wraps himself in whatever scraps of warmth he can muster. The cold has seeped into every corner of his Teesta basin home, but he has to prioritise his livestock's survival over his own comfort.

Meanwhile, in south-western Bangladesh, the story is the same for Kabir Mollah, a farmer from Bagerhat.

The farmer from Kolamibunia village knows he cannot wait for the sun to pierce through the fog – Boro paddy fields will not prepare themselves.

“Today [yesterday] was particularly difficult. I trembled all day while working in the field to cultivate potatoes,” said Dinesh.

Meanwhile, Ananda said, “My cattle have become malnourished due to the fodder crisis, and the biting cold makes it impossible to take them outside for grazing.”

The ongoing cold wave sweeping across the northern region and other parts of the country has intensified

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Government extends terms of six reform commissions

UNB, Dhaka

The government has extended the tenure of six reform commissions tasked with addressing major challenges and driving improvements across various sectors.

The Cabinet Division issued a notification to this effect on Thursday.

According to the notification, the tenures of the Public Administration Reform Commission, Police Reform Commission, Electoral Reform Commission, Anti-Corruption Reform Commission, Constitutional Reform Commission, and Judiciary Reform Commission have been extended.

The tenures of five of the commissions, excluding the Judiciary Reform Commission, have been extended until January 15. However, the Judiciary Reform Commission's tenure has been extended until January 31, added the notification.

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PRAYER TIMING

JANUARY 4

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
JAMAAAT	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SIFAYET ULLAH

The recent death of 36-year-old welder Ali Akbar, who was killed by an elephant which intruded onto his property, has left his loved ones in deep mourning and hardship. Akbar, a resident of Shah Mirpur in Chattogram's Karnaphuli upazila, was the primary provider for his family.

His wife, Minu Akter said Akbar was killed by an elephant last October when he went outside at night to use the toilet.

The human-elephant conflict in Chattogram's Karnaphuli, Anwara, and Banskhali upazilas is increasing, largely due to the rapid loss of elephant habitats. At least 14 people have died and 15 have been injured in the last six years in these areas, as per data from the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division.

Meanwhile, poachers killed at least 14 elephants in these areas in the last decade, WMNCD data adds.

HABITAT LOSS

Discussions with local residents and wildlife officials revealed that a herd of over 30 elephants from Chunati Sanctuary began migrating to Anwara and Karnaphuli via the Sangu River, establishing a seasonal presence in the Deyang Hill forest since 2010. Additionally, a smaller herd of four elephants has settled permanently in the Deyang Hill forest since 2018.

Between 1998 and 2023, the Korean and China Economic Processing Zones and a cluster village under the Ashrayan project was established over at least 3,300 acres of hilly land in these upazilas. This resulted in the destruction of critical elephant habitats.

The Asian elephant was classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature two decades

THE COST OF HABITAT LOSS

Casualties rise amid human-elephant conflict



AT A GLANCE

- Human-elephant conflict in the region caused 14 deaths and 15 injuries in six years
- Rapid habitat loss due to industrial and housing projects escalated conflicts
- Migratory elephant herds from Chunati Sanctuary now seasonally or permanently occupy Deyang Hill forest
- Farmers and KEPZ workers face severe disruptions and safety risks from elephant incursions
- Conservationists call for dedicated elephant zones as a sustainable solution

ago, with an estimated population of around 400 in the country.

Wildlife officials report that significant areas of hill forest, once home to these elephants, have been lost to industrialisation, housing, and development projects over the past decade, although there is no official data on their habitats.

Satellite images from 2008 reveal a lush green landscape in the Bandar, Hajigaon, and Belchura areas of the upazilas. In contrast, recent satellite imagery shows that numerous structures have emerged in these regions.

Abu Naser Md Yasin Newaz, divisional forest officer of WMNCD in Chattogram, said, “Due to habitat destruction, elephants are being forced to encroach on human settlements, which is significantly increasing the human-elephants conflicts.”

WHERE CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOOD COLLIDE

Ahman Hossain, a 55-year-old farmer from Battali union in Anwara upazila, once cultivated crops on his 2.5 acres of land. However, due to the destruction caused by elephants, he was compelled to abandon farming in 2023.

The situation is dire for hundreds of farmers in these upazilas, along with over 20,000 local and foreign workers at the KEPZ, all living in fear of elephant invasions.

Anamul Hoque, a KEPZ worker, said, “Our lives have become difficult due to the elephants’ incursions.”

In response to the escalating conflict, the KEPZ authority submitted a letter to the district commissioner of Chattogram in 2022, requesting the removal of a herd of elephants from the KEPZ area.

Meanwhile, local residents have been protesting for years to evacuate the elephants. “Elephants have frequently attacked our workers, jeopardising the security of the economic zone. That's why we requested their removal,” said Mushfiqur Rahman, deputy director general of the KEPZ.

Anisuzzaman Sheikh, a range officer of the Joldi Range, said, “The free movement of wild elephants is being hindered by the various developments around KEPZ.”

He said the government allowed the establishment of two economic processing zones on elephant habitats in Anwara-Karnaphuli without conducting a feasibility study, putting these animals at further risk.

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Parties talk about democracy but fail to practise it

Says Mirza Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the biggest problem in Bangladesh is that political parties talk about democracy but fail to practise it, thus hindering the development of democratic institutions.

Speaking at the golden jubilee celebration of the Economics Department at Dinaipur Government College, he also said though the democratic struggle ended on August 5, the nation has failed to find a path towards building the country together in unison.

Political parties in Bangladesh have long been engaged in conflict and rivalry with one another. However, if we can move forward by practising democracy with tolerance, we can establish true democracy and secure our rights.

The BNP leader also said political parties in Bangladesh have long been engaged in conflict and rivalry with one another. “However, if we can move forward by practising democracy with tolerance, we can establish true democracy and secure our rights,” he said.

He said people of the country, including the new generation, have been unable to exercise their right to vote over the past 15 years. “What kind of democracy is this, where people lose the opportunity to exercise their rights?”

“We suffer from narrow-minded politics. We have lost our morality... Even a few days ago, we could not say that we are a proud nation. Now, once again, hope is rekindled among us. In the true sense, we're trying to build a happy,

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Allow public access, announce Ducsu, DUTA polls dates

Demand teachers’ network

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Teachers' Network has urged the Dhaka University (DU) administration to reopen the campus for public access and announce dates for elections to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) and the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA).

In a meeting with DU Vice-Chancellor Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan on Thursday, members of the network also called for stakeholder consultations before making decisions on socio-cultural issues, including those by the syndicate, senate, or academic council.

Expressing concerns over recent incidents on campus, they suggested measures to address these issues.

In a press release issued yesterday, University Teachers' Network described the discussion with the administration as “constructive and fruitful.”

The network criticised the recent restriction on public access to the campus, describing it as a sudden decision that caused public inconvenience and fostered negative perceptions.

“Dhaka University is a historic public space vital for the state. It serves as the heart of national celebrations, intellectual activities, and political movements, including the 2024 mass uprising. Being a natural breathing space for the city, and due to its proximity to important institutions, restricting traffic on public roads within the campus violates citizens' rights,” the press release read.

The network condemned the removal of graffiti commemorating the July uprising from the metro rail

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Do not only prioritise admin cadres

Demand officials from other 25 cadres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials from 25 cadres of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) yesterday suggested that officers with field-level experience from the start of their careers should be placed in policymaking positions within relevant ministries to ensure effective public service delivery.

They urged the interim government to address promotion disparities among different cadres.

They said many top positions in these 25 cadres are not being filled by officers from the respective cadres due to administrative irregularities and mismanagement.

They also requested the Public Administration Reform Commission to investigate the causes of these issues and take corrective measures.

The officials made these remarks at a discussion

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Chaity breaking barriers through beauty services

NILIMA JAHAN

Tanisha Yasmin Chaity from Rajbari never let her identity as a hijra limit her aspirations.

In a world that often rejected her, Chaity pursued education, worked with NGOs, and even contributed to the National Human Rights Commission.

However, these roles were always temporary, ending with the conclusion of projects and leaving her in search of stability.

But Chaity wanted a sustainable future. She turned to her lifelong passion for beauty and grooming, deciding to build a business of her own.

Hence, she opened “Uttaran Beauty Parlour” in her hometown in 2019.

Born in a conservative family, Chaity always felt a pull toward femininity, and as a teenager, she was forced to leave home and find refuge in the hijra community.

But Chaity didn't resonate with the hijra community's

traditional ways of earning money. So, she returned home to complete her education.

However, societal rejection continued, pushing Chaity to leave once again to search for a way of building an independent



life. It was during this journey that she found her true calling.

Introduced to the beauty industry by friends already working in the field, Chaity saw an opportunity to merge her passion with purpose.

With training from the Women's Affairs Department and countless hours spent learning through YouTube, she turned her dream into a reality.

After selling two cattle and using her savings, she opened

My goal isn't just to succeed alone but to create opportunities for others in my community. I want people to understand that we don't need pity; we can work and prove ourselves.

her parlour in the Rajbari Pouro New Market area.

This decision wasn't without obstacles. At first, no one wanted to visit her beauty parlour.

“Some people would come in, but when they saw me, they

would leave without taking any service. Others ridiculed me,” Chaity recalled.

But she didn't let these setbacks discourage her. “I started by styling those who knew me and my skills. Those who saw my work were impressed. Today, women from the area insist on being styled by me,” she said.

Chaity has continuously updated her services to align with current trends. She also received a grant from Bandhu Social Welfare Society, an organisation that works for the welfare of gender diverse population.

Today, her beauty parlour is not only a source of income but also provides livelihood opportunities for others like her. “My clients now know me for my skills, not my identity,” Chaity added.

Her business thrives during wedding seasons and festivals.

Chaity lives independently.

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