



## Swechchhasebak League leader shot dead at Cox's Bazar beach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Golam Rabbani Tipu, vice president of Swechchhasebak League's Khulna city unit, was shot dead at Cox's Bazar sea beach last night.

The killing took place at the Seagull point of the beach around 8:00pm, said Ilyas Khan, officer in charge of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

Tipu, son of Golam Akbar of Khulna city's Daulatpur area, was a former councillor of Ward 4 of Khulna City Corporation.

Abdus Salam Babu, an auto rickshaw driver who took Tipu to a hospital, said he heard a loud bang near the wooden bridge on Seagull Point.

"I saw a person collapse after the bang, but I did not see anyone else there," he added.

Tipu was declared dead when brought to the hospital, police said.

Police confirmed the victim's identity by the national identity card found in his pocket.

The killing of Tipu could be a planned murder due to previous enmity, said Jasim Uddin Chowdhury, additional superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar district. Several police teams and intelligence agencies started working on the matter, he added.

## Talks with political parties

FROM PAGE 1

The students and the Nagorik Committee on December 30 said they would formally proclaim the uprising the next day. Student leaders also said the "Mujibbad" constitution would be invalidated.

Initially, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said the government had no involvement in the event. However, that very night it said the government would take the initiative to prepare the proclamation based on national consensus.

Later that night, the student group and the Nagorik Committee announced their support for the government initiative and decided to hold a "March for Unity" programme instead of the event to announce the proclamation.

Asked about the students' thoughts on the constitution, Mahfuj said many, including some political parties, are critical of the 1972 constitution.

"If we can reach a point of consensus, then the question arises: What will we do about the constitution? There are proposals from students, but there might also be opposition from other political parties."

"Since this is a contentious matter, we need to keep this in discussions [with the parties]. We will document it and formalise our decisions."

Discussions on the proclamation would also be held with cultural and social organisations and other stakeholders, he said.

Mahfuj also said the government decided to prepare the proclamation after realising that a proclamation by the students alone would hamper existing wider consciousness and unity.

He said that there is a consensus among political parties and others on opposing Sheikh Hasina's fascism. The continuity of this issue may also be described in the proclamation.

The second part of the proclamation will outline how the state will be governed. On these matters, there might be some disagreements.

The adviser said that the BNP has stated that they want their 16-year-long democratic struggle, to be recognised in the proclamation, along with the struggles of all other political parties, cultural organisations, and individuals who have fought for their rights and suffered oppression. "We want to make it inclusive and no one will be left out."

Asked about the next national election, Mahfuj said the matter depends on the political parties: how much reform they want. This will be discussed during consultation on the reports of the reform commissions.

He said a decision on local government polls will also be taken following consultation with the political parties. Many services are being disrupted since the interim government removed local government representatives.

Regarding attacks on shrines and cultural activities after August 5, Mahfuj said they feel sorry that they cannot take clear steps against many attacks.

"But from now on, we will take stern action if there is an attack on shrines, qawwali concerts or cultural activities", he said, urging all the victims and aggrieved to file cases.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said at the press conference that Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to resolve the waterlogging problem in Chattogram. Quick measures will be visible in the coming days to improve the traffic situation, he said.

He also said that all students of primary and secondary levels will get textbooks within February.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at a meeting with Turkey's Trade Minister Prof Ömer Bolat at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## VAT shock in the middle of the fiscal year

FROM PAGE 1

unprecedented, said SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

Although Finance Adviser Shafiqul Ahmed on January 2 said the VAT and SD hike would not fuel inflation as the items account for an insignificant part of the basket for consumer price index, the NBR notification indicates a host of goods and services that are used widely in day-to-day life such as mobile phone and broadband internet use, LP gas, spectacles and clothes.

"People are already grappling with high inflation, and this move will only add to their burden," Hossain said.

The VAT and SD increase aligns with the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund as part of a \$4.7 billion loan it approved for Bangladesh in January last year.

The IMF advised the government to rationalise tax exemptions, improve compliance with laws and bring about reforms in tax measures to bolster domestic revenue collection in Bangladesh, which has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world.

The hike in indirect taxes comes as overall revenue collection fell by 2.62 percent in the first five months of the fiscal year, increasing pressure on the government to borrow from domestic and foreign sources.

"If the government aims to increase revenue, it should prioritise curbing tax evasion. That would eliminate the need for such measures and prevent further public suffering," Hossain said.

The VAT on certain industrial items such as electric transformer,

electric pole and steel products such as cold rolled coil, limestone and dolomite, was also hiked to 15 percent from 5 percent.

People are also expected to pay more for medicine as the tax collector raised VAT at the trading stage to 7.5 percent from 5 percent.

The cost of printing, cinema ticket, repair and servicing and cleaning services will also rise because of a VAT hike to 15 percent from 10 percent.

The cost of mobile phone and internet services will rise as well. The NBR increased SD on mobile phone use to 23 percent from 20 percent. Now, mobile phone users will face over 42.45 percent in SD, VAT and surcharge, up from 39 percent.

Broadband internet users will face a 10 percent SD, which is likely to push up internet bills.

"This will have a detrimental impact. We are uncertain how we will survive with such extreme measures," said Emdadul Hoque, president of the Internet Service Provider Association of Bangladesh.

The quality of ISP services will deteriorate, he said.

"We urge the government to reconsider such actions as they will not only harm businesses but also undermine services and increase the costs for customers," he added.

The NBR increased excise duty on domestic flights from Tk 500 to Tk 700 per ticket. It raised the excise duty for travel to SAARC countries from Tk 500 to Tk 1,000.

For trips outside SAARC countries but within Asia, the excise duty has been hiked from Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500.

The excise duty on tickets to Europe and America has been increased from Tk 3,000 to Tk 4,000.

The NBR hiked the SD on the import of certain dry and fresh fruits such as nuts and betel nuts to 45 percent from the previous 30 percent, and grapes, apples, melons, fresh fruits and juices to 30 percent from 20 percent.

Additionally, unmanufactured

tobacco importers will have to pay 100 percent SD during import, up from the previous 60 percent. Imported paints, soap and detergent will also become costlier.

Consumers will also feel the pinch of increased SDs on juice, fruit drinks, and flavoured and electrolyte drinks as SD on the drinks went up by up to 30 percent.

Smoking will become costlier since the NBR hiked SD on all types of cigarettes and tobacco. Liquor served in bars will be more expensive due to an increase in SD to 30 percent from 20 percent.

At the same time, the revenue collector reduced the annual turnover limit for VAT registration for firms to Tk 50 lakh from the previous Tk 3 crore. It also cut the enlistment threshold for turnover tax limit for businesses from Tk 30 lakh to Tk 50 lakh.

The move means that a good number of businesses will come under the net of VAT, the main source of revenue, accounting for nearly 38 percent of total taxes collected by the NBR.

The indirect tax hike was necessary as the government's fiscal space has reached a critically low level, said MA Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development.

"Without any improvement in revenue mobilisation, the government will have to rely on excessive borrowing, which will be difficult this year given the contractionary policy in place."

More importantly, since the interest rates are now high, the cost of borrowing for the government will be extremely high, he said.

Given the historically low revenue situation, more than one-third of the revenue was being spent on interest payments.

"And this year, the burden could be even higher. Therefore, given the tight fiscal space, the government might not be able to borrow to meet the fiscal deficit."

From today, consumers will be required to pay up to 15 percent VAT on restaurant bills, biscuits, cakes, pickles, tomato sauce, clothes, tailoring, toilet paper, napkin, towel, sweets, driving licence, non-AC hotel, spectacles, sunglasses, motor workshop and lubricant oil. Previously, the VAT was as low as 5 percent.

The VAT on certain industrial items such as electric transformer,

manufacturing motorcycles, refrigerators, air conditioners and compressors amid the present economic situation is very unfriendly for industries though there has been a promise of tax benefit in the mentioned sectors until 2032," the DCCI said in a statement.

If the promise is retracted in the midway, it may send a detrimental message to both local and foreign investors of the government's "inconsistent" policymaking.

"This move will seriously impact foreign investment and put local investors in the doldrums."

Private sector credit growth hit a 41-month low of 7.66 percent in November last year, the latest available data from the Bangladesh Bank.

As a result, the production cost of export-oriented industries will increase significantly, which will weaken Bangladesh's export competitiveness in the international market and also discourage local and foreign investment.

The National Board of Revenue's move to increase the income tax for motorcycle, refrigerator, air conditioner and compressor industries from 10 percent to 20 percent will have an equally detrimental effect on the investment climate.

The chamber also called for a joint effort by the government, private sector and concerned stakeholders to overcome the existing economic challenges by ensuring a cost-effective business-friendly environment in the

country.

M Masrur Reaz, chairman of the Policy Exchange of Bangladesh, a think-tank focusing on private sector economic policy and markets advisory, endorsed the DCCI's position.

"Doubling the gas price for industrial and captive users will compound several challenges facing businesses in Bangladesh," he said.

The private sector has seen a sharp and continued increase in the cost of business over the last two years due to a large devaluation of the taka and the hike in interest and wage rates.

Secondly, firms have been hit by sluggish demand due to erosion in purchasing power from inflation and reduced output due to import compression.

"A sudden large increase in both energy and taxes will likely hit the business, particularly small businesses, very hard, creating risks of retrenchment and even closure or default."

Subsequently, he urged the government to engage in a dialogue with businesses on the impact, approach and timing of such price and tax adjustments.

## Government debt

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The debt-bulletin report showed government expenditure in interest payment increased by 21 percent in the last fiscal year to Tk 1.1 lakh crore, which is one sixth the national budget.

In fiscal 2023-24, foreign interest payments increased by 60 percent and domestic interest payments by 17 percent.

The then government could not bear the huge expenditure and they had to pay Tk 36,586 crore arrear bills to some power, energy and fertiliser supplying companies through special treasury bonds, the report added.

"If that much interest payments were not needed, the government could spend the money on welfare sectors like health or education," Hussain said.

The domestic debt is no less problematic as the revenue growth is weak, interest rates higher and budget deficits have crawled up, said the White Paper.

"The cost of domestic debt is rising," it said.

Interest payments on such debt relative to revenue increased from 17.6 percent in fiscal 2017-18 to 22.5 percent in fiscal 2022-23, thus shrinking fiscal space.

"It may shrink even more as tighter monetary policy necessitated by high

inflation is increasing interest rates on treasury bills and bonds," it said.

About the foreign loan, the principal and interest payments are projected to expand in the near term. Grace periods of several big loans have ended and many more will end in the near future.

"Maturity of new loans, including grace periods, has become shorter. An examination of active loans to assess the increase in amortisation payments shows sharp increases are imminent."

These include repayments for 213 loans, including the Rooppur nuclear power plant, the Padma Bridge rail link, the Karnaphuli Tunnel and the Dhaka Mass Transit projects.

The white paper said the politicians in charge of the government have used the government's borrowing power recklessly for their own benefits in the past.

They tended not only to take whatever foreign currency loans were on offer but also to incur even larger implicit obligations via unfunded, off-balance sheet liabilities.

"Our most living nightmares of such borrowing are in, but not limited to, energy, transport and banking. Both external and domestic borrowings add to macro vulnerabilities when they do not come with value for money," it added.

## Bangabandhu's Homecoming

FROM PAGE 1

in 1971, Pakistan army arrested him from his Dhammudi residence and sent him to a West Pakistani jail the following day.

In the jail, he had been counting days to the execution of the death sentence he was handed down in a farcical trial.

"I was a prisoner in the condemned cell awaiting hanging. Since the day I went to jail, I didn't know whether I would be alive or not. I was mentally ready to die, but I knew Bangladesh would be liberated," Mujib spoke emotionally about his ordeal in Pakistani prison at a news conference in London.

On arrival at Dhaka (Tejgaon) airport in the afternoon of January 10, Bangabandhu was greeted by tens of thousands of jubilant people who had been eagerly waiting to see their beloved leader since the victory on December 16.

In a statement posted on its official Facebook page on Wednesday, the Awami League said it would observe the Homecoming Day by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city's Dhammudi.

Besides, the party will place wreaths at his grave in Tungipara. It will also arrange discussions and distribute food and warm clothes among the destitute. It, however, did not say where it will hold the discussion.

The party urged its front and associate bodies to organise similar programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

From the airport, he was escorted to the Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udayan) where he addressed a mammoth gathering.

Two days later, he took the oath of office as the country's prime minister on January 12.

In a statement posted on its official Facebook page on Wednesday, the Awami League said it would observe the Homecoming Day by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city's Dhammudi.

In the same period last year, it has increased to 6.10 lakh metric tonnes, according to the Directorate General of Food.

Under this situation, the government is going to import rice from Myanmar, Pakistan, and India, the food adviser said on January 8.

Replying to a query about the price hikes during harvest season, Majumder told reporters at an event at the ministry earlier this week that the flash floods in several districts in the southeastern parts of the country have reduced Aman paddy production, causing the price of rice to be higher than the government expected.

"To address this shortfall, the government has arranged for rice imports and has also encouraged private traders by withdrawing import duties."

He added, "Discussions are underway to import 50,000 tonnes of rice from Pakistan. The process of importing 100,000 tonnes of rice from Myanmar on a government-to-government basis has also been finalised. Additionally, we will import another 50,000 tonnes from India."

Earlier, OMS activities were

# DHAKA

## 250-bhori gold stolen from mall in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Sylhet

Gold ornaments worth Tk 3.5 crore were stolen between Wednesday evening and yesterday morning from a jewellery shop at a Sylhet shopping mall.

Nurani Jewellery is on the third floor of Al Hamra Shopping City in Sylhet city's Chowhatta area. Its proprietor Md. Jabed Chowdhury said when he came in the morning to open the store, he saw a new lock in the shutter.

He then broke the lock to get in and found that around 250 bhori of gold jewellery had been stolen from the store along with the storage box containing CCTV camera.

Md. Mohsin, security in-charge of the mall, said, "The entire shopping mall was locked down and there was no trace of anyone entering or exiting the mall. However, we are checking all CCTV footage

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A goods-laden pickup crosses a rickety bailey bridge over the Turag river beneath a flyover in Tongi, Gazipur. Although the bridge is designed only for lighter vehicles, it is frequently used by the heavy ones. This practice led to the collapse of a nearby bailey bridge last week, yet drivers continue to use this one amid risk. The photo was taken at Abdullaupur recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## When students become guinea pigs

ARAFAT RAHMAN

Let us begin with a generic scenario to explain the quandary of a 10th grader in Bangladesh in 2025. Due to take the SSC examinations in a year, this student will have to choose between science, humanities and commerce streams.

The same student in 2024 had a generalised education without having to choose from any stream and instead

preparation. Students are caught in the middle, forced to adapt to frequent, poorly implemented changes.

The National Curriculum 2022 aimed to modernise education with a unified system for grades 1 through 10, moving away from rigid streams and traditional exams. The government claimed this shift would help transition students from rote learning to a more practical, real-world education.



of year-end finals, was graded on the basis of continuous assessments under the 2022 curriculum. A year earlier, in 8th grade, the same student was made to follow the long-standing 2012 curriculum, which used traditional exams and mandated stream selection.

This rapid succession of reforms reveals a core problem: education has become an elaborate experiment, lacking long-term vision or adequate

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removed traditional year-end exams, replacing them with continuous assessments and a greater emphasis on practical activities.

While the curriculum initially seemed promising, its implementation was flawed. Even months after the start of the academic year in 2024, the assessment system remained unclear. The situation was clear -- teachers were unprepared, parents were

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## People suffer hours of gridlock amid protests

Dismissed BDR personnel block Shahbagh while madrasa students protest makeshift courtroom on its premises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City dwellers endured hours of traffic gridlock yesterday as dismissed BDR (now BGB) personnel and their families blocked the Shahbagh intersection, while students of Government Madrasah-e-Alia staged a protest in Bakshibazar.

The dismissed BDR members began their protest in the morning at the Central Shaheed Minar, demanding justice for the 2009 Pilkhana massacre victims, reinstatement of dismissed personnel [who are innocent], and the release of those they claim were wrongly imprisoned.

Around 1:30pm, they marched to Shahbagh, blocking the intersection for two and a half hours before returning to the Shaheed Minar.

Meanwhile, Alia Madrasa students in Bakshibazar protested the presence of a makeshift courtroom on their premises, calling for its relocation, citing disruption to their academic activities.

**SHAHBAGH PROTEST**  
Hundreds of dismissed members of the paramilitary force and their families gathered at the Shaheed Minar yesterday morning, where protests had been ongoing since Wednesday.

Anwar Hossain, a dismissed

BDR personnel, said, "We want justice for the innocent, both the victims of the massacre and those dismissed unfairly. We are demanding the unconditional release of those who were not involved in the killings, rather than arrested based on suspicion."

He also demanded job reinstatement and proper

3:30pm and announced their next course of action.

Mahin Sarker, a coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination platform, who joined the protesters, said they would hold mass contact programmes in their respective areas on Friday and Saturday.

On Sunday, they plan to

organise human chains in



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

compensation.

Monira Parveen, the wife of a detained BDR man, said, "My husband has already spent 16 years in jail in a case filed under the Explosives Act. The case is still ongoing. How long will he stay in jail? We want his release now."

The protesters returned to the Shaheed Minar around

front of district press clubs.

He said before the next hearing, they would return to Dhaka and resume their protest in the capital.

### FIRE AT ALIA MADRASA COURTROOM

In Bakshibazar, students of Government Madrasah-e-Alia gathered early in the day to

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## US EMBASSY Tracey Jacobson to join as new Chargé d'Affaires

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



Tracey Ann Jacobson, a career member of the senior foreign service in the US, will join US embassy in Dhaka as Chargé d'affaires (CDA), ad interim, on January 11.

She has served as US ambassador three times -- to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kosovo. Most recently, Jacobson served as a senior adviser in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

After US Ambassador Peter Haas left Bangladesh after three years of stay in July last year, Helen Lafave, deputy head of the US mission, was the CDA of the US embassy Dhaka. She then also left Dhaka late last year.

Currently, the CDA of the US embassy is Megan Bouldin, who assumed duties as the deputy chief of mission in August 2024. Bouldin will be replaced by Jacobson.

US President Joe Biden in May last year had nominated diplomat David Slayton Meale as the new US ambassador to Bangladesh. However, his name has been sent to the Senate and approval is needed before the appointment.

## In grip of bitter cold Mild cold wave sweeps parts of country, winds intensify difficulties

STAR REPORT

A mild cold wave is currently sweeping across the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna, Naogaon, Panchagarh, and Chuadanga and is expected to spread further, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The country recorded its lowest temperature of 9.1 degrees Celsius in Naogaon's Badalgachhi yesterday.

The mild cold wave has slowed daily life in the northern districts, as the chilly winds from the Himalayas continue to sweep over the area. Despite the harsh weather, clear skies brought some relief yesterday, as bright sunshine made outdoor conditions slightly more bearable.

In Tentulia, the northernmost point of the country, the lowest temperature was recorded at 9.5 degrees Celsius in the morning,



with a wind speed of 8.9 kilometres per hour, said Jitendra Nath, assistant officer at the Tentulia Weather Observatory Centre.

Nomita Bala, 40, who works in a corn field in Yakubpur village in Thakurgaon, described the difficulty of continuing work amidst the icy wind.

"It is tough to continue work

in the crop field as the wind is flowing from the northern side constantly," she said.

Rickshaw-van puller Amirul from Farabari shared similar experiences, saying, "My daily income dropped as I am working half of the day due to the adverse weather."

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) has urged farmers to follow its directives to protect their crops during the cold wave.

Additionally, the cold wave has

led to a significant rise in cold-related illnesses.

Rakibul Alam, resident medical officer at the 250-bed Thakurgaon Modern Hospital, confirmed an increased influx of patients suffering from respiratory and other cold-induced ailments.

District administrations in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh have begun distributing warm clothing to cold-affected individuals.

Top officials in the districts have also urged affluent residents to assist the cold-stricken population alongside government efforts.

In Dhaka, the minimum temperature in the morning was 14.5 degrees Celsius, with the maximum temperature recorded at 21 degrees Celsius.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecasts dry weather with a temporarily partly cloudy sky during the 24-hour period. Moderate to dense fog is also likely to occur in various parts of the country, particularly from midnight to morning.

## Ensuring justice, accountability key to national unity

### 2 int'l jurists tell event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Reconciliation and national unity cannot be achieved without ensuring justice and accountability. Ensuring justice in a corrupt political system, however, is very challenging but not impossible.

The statement was made by two internationally acclaimed jurists during an event at the Supreme Court Bar Association Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal and Human Rights Studies organised the event, titled "Truth, Justice, Accountability and Reparations for Crimes against Humanity: Comparative Experiences from Africa and Latin America".

BLAST Honorary Executive Director Sara Hossain said Bangladesh is going through a critical time when ensuring justice and reconciliation is very important.

Yasmin Sooka, chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, said every human being has the right to justice and reparation, but the problem starts when politicians of a country capture the institutions through corrupt practices. Even, the judiciary

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## ZIA ORPHANAGE TRUST

### No money was embezzled

### ACC lawyer tells apex court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Md Ashif Hassan yesterday told the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court that no money of the Zia Orphanage Trust has been embezzled.

Relevant funds of the trust have been moved but the money was deposited in bank accounts, he said.

He said this while presenting arguments before a five-member bench headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed during the third day's hearing on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's appeals against a 2018 High Court verdict that increased her jail sentence from five to ten years.

The apex court fixed January 14 for resuming the hearing. Earlier in the day, Khaleda's lawyers placed arguments before the same court, saying that the prosecution could not produce any document signed by Khaleda regarding formation of the Trust.

The prosecution couldn't even show where the money came from, they said, adding that the money of the trust has been kept in the bank accounts and the amount has increased much more.

The lawyers said the relevant provisions of the constitution and the law were not followed in the trial of this case, as Khaleda and others have been convicted in this politically motivated case.

**Jamaat could've apologised, but they're justifying it**  
**Says BNP leader Maj Hafiz on its role in 1971**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed yesterday said they had thought an opportunity had arisen for Jamaat-e-Islami to apologise to the people for their role in 1971, instead, the party is justifying its role in 1971.

"Today, a certain group is attempting to place the concept of a mass uprising above the struggle for freedom. We cannot compare anything with the Liberation War. It will always remain supreme. We will not allow anyone to tarnish the struggle for freedom," he said.

He made these remarks at a rally titled "The Liberation War of '71 is the greatest pride of the nation", organised by the Bangladesh Nationalist Freedom Fighters' Party at Jatiya Press Club.

"Some days ago, a statement caught our attention. It was said by Jamaat-e-Islami that in this country, only the military [army] and Jamaat-e-Islami are patriots. This statement has hurt us. The Bangladesh Army fought in the Liberation War; it was a force built through the Liberation War.

"It was formed under the leadership of Maj Ziaur Rahman with soldiers and officers from the then East Bengal Regiment and EPR, and they fought the war to gain independence for the country. The army doesn't need a certificate from anyone to prove they are patriots. Their role in 1971 and beyond proves they have always stood by the people and will continue to do so in the future. But I am shocked by Jamaat's statement," he said.

"We have always regarded them [Jamaat] as allies. When the fascist forces tortured and persecuted them, we expressed solidarity. When their party was dissolved, we gave them a chance to participate in elections under the 'Sheaf of Paddy' symbol. Khaleda Zia gave them a place in her cabinet." He added that many of his party leaders did not like this decision, but they accepted it for the sake of party discipline.

"Was this statement from them appropriate in return? We do not expect such statements from them. The strong unity that has been formed among political parties today could be fractured by this. They need to be more careful about this in the future," he said.

## Ensuring justice, accountability key to national unity

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## When students become guinea

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confused, and students were left without clear guidance.

This was proven in a survey by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) among 2.53 lakh teachers in January 2024, which found that 37.6 percent of teachers "roughly" understood the assessment system, while the rest struggled with its practical application.

This lack of preparedness led to widespread dissatisfaction. Protests erupted nationwide, with parents, educators, and students demanding changes.

Then in August 2024, after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the interim government discarded that curriculum and reinstated the 2012 curriculum.

While this decision restored some familiarity, it created additional challenges. Current grade

10 students, who had studied under the 2022 framework in grade 9, were left to compress two years of stream-based study into one year, further straining the academic environment.

Despite these adjustments, the cycle of instability persists. As 2025 begins, plans are already underway for another reform in 2026.

According to Bangla daily Prothom Alo, the proposed system will once again eliminate streams for grades 9-10, replacing them with a mix of mandatory and optional subjects. While this approach promises flexibility, it raises questions about the readiness of schools and teachers to handle yet another overhaul.

In a system already destabilised by frequent changes, can such reforms be implemented without further compromising education quality?

More importantly, are these reforms truly in the best interests of students, or are they turning education into a series of poorly executed experiments?

The consequences of this instability are far-reaching. Students face not only disrupted academics but also a loss of confidence in a system that seems directionless. Teachers, too, are left struggling to adapt, often without adequate training or resources. The frequent changes also place parents in a state of confusion, unsure of how to support their children in an ever-shifting landscape.

The students deserve a stable, supportive education system that helps them blossom and realise their potential in life.

Policymakers would do well to address the fundamental flaws in their approach to education reform. Instead of treating students as test subjects for policy experiments, reforms should be evidence-based and implemented with care.



Belal, a farmer, lets his flock of ducks graze this open field. After the Aman rice harvest, most fields in the area remain vacant and are used by farmers to raise ducklings seasonally. The photo was taken from the Pagla area of Shantiganj upazila in Sunamganj yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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## PRAYER TIMING

JANUARY 10

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-30 12-30 4-00 5-36 7-00

JAMMAT 6-05 1-15 4-15 5-40 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Sirajganj

Tel: 02588831039, Fax No. 02588830242

Email: eeshid@rhd.gov.bd/eerhdsirajganj@gmail.com

### Invitation for e-Tendering

Invitation Reference No.	Memo No. 35.01.8800.471.07.001.25-47	Date: 09/01/2025	
Tender ID	Work description	Publication date & time	Opening date & time
1041197 e- GP/24/EE/SR D/2024-2025	Pavement repairing and Single Bituminous Surface Treatment (SBST) work at Ch. 6+000 to 8+500 of Saydabad-Enayeturp (Khaju Yunus Ali Medical College Hospital) (Z-5409) Road under Sirajganj Road Division during the year 2024-2025.	09 Jan- 2025 14:10 Hrs	26-Jan- 2025 15:00 Hrs

This is an online tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline and hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on 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 bank's branches for 26.01.2025 Up to 14:30 Hrs. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) (+8809609112233, +880176265528-31).

Md. Imran Farhan Sumel  
Identity No. 602280  
Executive Engineer, RHD  
Road Division, Sirajganj

GD- 100

## Ensuring justice, accountability key

FROM PAGE 3

cannot operate without fear in such circumstances.

Sooka, who served on the truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa and Sierra Leone, said lack of evidence remains a big challenge in ensuring justice. Thus, there is a serious need for training prosecutors to collect and maintain evidence using digital technologies.

She said sometimes corrupt individuals cannot

be tried domestically. In such cases, international courts can be used.

Dr Carlos Castresana Fernández, UN Commissioner for Human Rights in South Sudan, said trials cannot correct past mistakes, but can ensure crimes are punished and that institutions function properly.

Fernandez previously served as commissioner of the International Commission Against

Impunity in Guatemala.

Democracy is not all about elections, but also about abiding law. There are disagreements over the definition of terrorism, which is also used for political abuses. However,

the definition of torture is well accepted and the

criminals of torture can be tried in the international courts, he added.

BLAST Vice Chairman Dr Shamsul Bari said the international jurists' experiences can help them understand the ways of justice and reconciliation in Bangladesh.

## People suffer hours

FROM PAGE 3

demand the relocation of the makeshift courtroom used for trials related to the BDR carnage. Their protest followed a fire at the courtroom on the madrasa grounds at around 4:22am.

Fire service officials extinguished the blaze, but the courtroom was completely destroyed. Court proceedings, including a scheduled hearing in an explosives case related to the carnage, were cancelled.

The courtroom has been burnt. At this stage, conducting trials here is not possible without major

renovations," said special public prosecutor Md. Borhan Uddin.

Chawkbazar Police are investigating the cause of the fire. Members of the army and police were deployed to manage the protests. Vehicular movement in the affected areas gradually resumed after the demonstrators dispersed.

Fire service officials extinguished the blaze, but the courtroom was completely destroyed. Court proceedings, including a scheduled hearing in an explosives case related to the carnage, were cancelled.

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### Janata Bank PLC.

Head Office  
IT Procurement, Security, Compliance and Maintenance Department  
110, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000

Tel: +88-02-956444, Telex: 675840 JBD JBJ

Website: [www.jb.com.bd](http://www.jb.com.bd)

### Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([https://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the procurement of following goods:

Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Publish Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1061129	JBPLC/ITPSCM/Proc-14/e-GP/OTM/UPS-80/2024	Tender for Procurement of Off-Line UPS (650 VA) (Supply, Installation & Commissioning) for Janata Bank PLC following Open Tendering Method	09/01/2025 04:00 PM	27/01/2025 12:00 PM

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

To submit e-Tender, registration required in the National e-GP System portal ([https://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: [helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Mohammad Shakrawat Hossain)  
Deputy General Manager



## WEST ZONE POWER DISTRIBUTION CO. LTD.

(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Dev. Board)

Office of the Chief Engineer

Biduy Bhaban, 35 Boyra Main Road, Khulna

Ph: 02477-730484, Fax: 02477-730484

Memo No: 27.22.4785.010.74.001.25/60

Date: 08.01.2025

### e-Tender Notice (NCT)

e-Tender for the office of the Superintending Engineer (P&S) invites in the National e-GP system Portal([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the procurement of following goods:

SI	Tender ID	Name of Tender	Last Selling and Closing Date & Time
1	1054044	Supply and Delivery of 1000 Nos. 09 m (200daN) and 1500 Nos. 12m (350daN) SPC pole at different Store in WZPDC area	10-Feb-2025 12:00:BST 10-Feb-2025 13:00:BST

This is an Online Tender, Where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration required in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)).

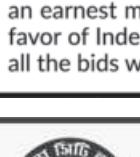
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank.

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

(Engr. MD. Mamunur Rahman)

Superintending Engineer (P&S),

WZPDC, Khulna.



## Dhaka South City Corporation

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Zone- 03 (Azimpur), Dhaka.

E-mail: [dscczone3@gmail.com](mailto:dscczone3@gmail.com)

Phone: 02-41061381

Ref No: 46.207.014.09.23.2025.100

Date: 08/01/2025

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through e-GP portal by Executive Engineer, Zone-3 (Azimpur), Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of following packages which will be available at e-GP website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) from 08/01/2025 17:00.

S.L No	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of Work	Last Selling date and Time	Tender Closing date & Time
1.	Tender ID: 1053247 Package No: W10/Z3/2024-25/Cut-Kha	Repairing works of roads excavated by different Organizations and Institutions at different ward under zone-03 of DSCC (Group-Kha).	23-Jan-2025 14:00	23-Jan-2025 15:00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

*Mithun Chandra Shil*  
Executive Engineer  
Zone- 03  
Dhaka South City Corporation

Memo No. 46.02.9000.000.99.049.24.88

e-Tender is invited in the e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following Packages

## BNP issues strict directives to prevent infiltration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday issued strict directives to prevent infiltrations from other political parties and non-political individuals into the party during the formation of various committees.

This directive was conveyed in a press release signed by BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

Members of any other political parties or non-political individuals should not be included in the committees of BNP and its associate bodies – from ward to the national levels, Rizvi said in the press release.

He also expressed concerns that members of various political organisations affiliated with the ousted Awami League are attempting to infiltrate the BNP and its affiliate and associate organisations.

"For instance, a group called 'Zia Cyber Force' has recently announced a committee at Pabna University of Science and Technology under the banner of BNP's student wing, Chhatra Dal, including several leaders of Chhatra League. This is entirely fraudulent. Similarly, collaborators of the autocratic regime are engaging in such deceptive activities," the release read.

All leaders and activists of the BNP and its affiliate and associate organisations were urged to strictly adhere to this directive.



Fishermen along the Cox's Bazar seashore use large nets to catch fish, but these nets often trap other marine creatures such as jellyfish, pufferfish, and turtles. While turtles are usually able to survive, many other aquatic animals are left stranded instead of being returned to the sea, posing a threat to marine biodiversity. The photo was taken at Shamnapur Ghat recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



## Sylhet City Corporation

Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet

[www.scc.gov.bd](http://www.scc.gov.bd)

### Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Services of Preparation of Master Plan (Structural Plan, Urban Area Plan, Detail Area Plan) for Extended Area of Sylhet City Corporation

The details of EOI are shown in the table below-

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of The Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives/ Local Government Division.
2.	Agency	Sylhet City Corporation
3.	Name of the procurement entity	Superintending Engineer, Sylhet City Corporation
4.	Procurement entity district	Sylhet
5.	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Consulting firm for Preparation of Master Plan (Structural Plan, Urban Area Plan, Detail Area Plan) for Extended Area of Sylhet City Corporation.
6.	EOI Ref No. and date	46.07.0000.018.14.111.23.50, Date: 09/01/2025.
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
7.	Procurement method	Fixed Budget Selection (FBS)
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
8.	Sources of funds	GOB
9.	Development partners	N/A
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
10.	Project/programme code	224404600
11.	Project/programme name	Preparation of Master Plan (Structural Plan, Urban Area Plan, Detail Area Plan) for Extended Area of Sylhet City Corporation.
12.	EOI submission date, time & place	23/01/2025, Time- 1.00pm at Chief Engineer Office Room, Sylhet City Corporation.
13.	EOI opening date & time	23/01/2025, Time- 2.00pm
14.	EOI receiving office	Office of the Chief Engineer, Room No-401, Level- 03, Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet City Corporation.
<b>INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT</b>		
15.	Brief description of the assignment	Sylhet City Corporation is undertaking a project entitled 'Preparation of master plan (Structural Plan, Urban Area Plan, and Detail Area Plan) for its extended area'.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of comprehensive master plan- short-term (2025-30), mid-term (2030-2035) &amp; long-term (2035-2050) periods.</li> <li>Mouza map and all project-relevant secondary data collection and acquisition</li> <li>Conduct existing land use survey, topographic survey, physical feature survey, transport survey, and other relevant survey work.</li> <li>Generate GIS database &amp; preparation of ward &amp; land use zone maps.</li> <li>Strategies for the best use of land and its control.</li> <li>Development of standard design for different types of roads, footpaths, and intersections</li> <li>Development of the Primary and secondary drainage network with standard design and modeling (if required)</li> <li>Consider environmental, Social, and waste management issues</li> <li>Preparation of implementation plan of development works considering short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities.</li> <li>Preparation of Structural Plan, Urban Area Plan, and Detail Area Plan for the study area till 2050.</li> <li>Financial assessment of the master plan includes cost estimates for implementation in different phases according to priority works, funding sources, and economic and financial evaluations.</li> <li>Inception &amp; interim report, draft Master Plan &amp; final Master plan, GIS map &amp; workshop &amp; Consultation with key personnel of SCC.</li> </ul>
16.	Capacity, resources, experience required	<b>Related Professionals:</b> Team Leader Urban Planner, Water & Drainage Expert /Drainage Modeler, Transport Planner, Solid Waste Management Expert, GIS Specialist Environmental Specialist, Structural Analyst, Architect, Survey Specialist, Sociologist & Financial Expert, institutional Specialist, Junior Urban Planner, Junior Engineer. <b>Resources:</b> Office Space, Financial and Managerial Strength, Hardware and Software (Computer, Survey Equipment-UAV drone, RTK, Hand GPS, Total Station, Leveling machine, Large Plotter, SPSS, GIS, HEC-RAS compatible, and Photogrammetric workstation, latest version Arc GIS licensed software. <b>Experience of Firm:</b> The firm should have 10 years of experience in conducting topographical, physical features, and other relevant surveys in master plan preparation for urban and regional areas.
17.	Other details	The firm will be selected following the Public Procurement Act 2006 and Public Procurement Rules 2008. Interested Consultancy firms are hereby invited to submit EoI containing print brochures (showing organizational identity and background) and legal documents for bank solvency with statements for the last 01 year (according to PPA 2006 and PPR 2008), Firms Turnover for three (03) year, up-to-date Trade License, Income Tax Certificate & VAT Clearance Certificate, valid TIN certificate, memorandum of understanding of article (if applicable), NID card of authorized person, staffing and inventory of resources and logistics confirming the firm capabilities to provide the required services. Interested consultancy firms will submit 01(one) original and 01(one) true copy of the EoI in sealed envelopes marked with the "title" with an electronic copy.
18.	Name of official inviting EOI	Engr. Md. Ali Akbar
19.	Designation of official inviting EOI	Superintending Engineer, Sylhet City Corporation
20.	Address of official inviting EOI	Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet City Corporation.
21.	Contact detail of official inviting Expression of Interest (EOI)	+8802 996 640 486
22.	The Expression of Interest (EOI) in two sets (one original & one duplicate) shall be submitted in sealed envelope.	
23.	Interested consulting firms may obtain further information in all working days from the address mentioned above.	
24.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all EOIs without assigning any reasons.	

Engr. Md. Ali Akbar  
Superintending Engineer  
Sylhet City Corporation

## LAST 2 DAYS !

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22nd International Tradeshow  
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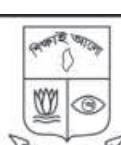
08 09 10 11 JAN 2025

International Convention City, Bashundhara, Dhaka.



Contact : 0189 458 3601  
[info@asktradex.com](mailto:info@asktradex.com) / [www.atbdhaka.com](http://www.atbdhaka.com)

Expo Timings 11.00am to 7.00pm (Entry Free)



### Institute of Modern Languages University of Dhaka Teacher Recruitment Notice

Applications in prescribed form, obtainable on Working days from the office of the Registrar, University of Dhaka are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for the following posts:

1. **Lecturer in French Language and Culture (FLC)** (Permanent Lecturer against vacant post of Lecturer)-01 (One)

**National Pay Scale 2015:** Tk. 22,000-53,060/- (with other allowances according to University rules).

**Minimum Qualifications:** Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honours and Master degrees in French Language and Culture (FLC) with a first division/a minimum GPA of 4.25 out of 5.00 in both SSC and HSC Examinations. Candidates having a Ph.D. in the relevant field and research publication(s) in a quality journal may get preference. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Bachelor and Master degrees.

2. **Lecturer in Japanese Language and Culture (JLC)** (Temporary Lecturer against vacant post of Professor)-1 (one)

**National Pay Scale 2015:** Tk. 22,000-53,060/- (with other allowances according to University rules).

**Minimum Qualifications:** Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honours and Master degrees in Japanese Language and Culture (JLC) from any recognized University with a first division/a minimum GPA of 4.25 out of 5.00 in both SSC and HSC Examinations. Candidates having a Ph.D. in the relevant field and research publication(s) in a quality journal may get preference. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Bachelor and Master degrees.

3. **Lecturers in English Language and Chinese Language and Culture (CLC)** (Temporary Lecturers against the study leave vacancy of Assistant Professors) -02 (two)

**National Pay Scale 2015:** Tk. 22,000-53,060/- (with other allowances according to University rules).

**Minimum Qualifications:** Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honours in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)/ Chinese Language and Culture (CLC) and in Master degrees in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)/Chinese Language and Culture (CLC) from any recognized University with a first division/a minimum GPA of 4.25 out of 5.00 in both SSC and HSC Examinations. Candidates having a Ph.D. in the relevant field and research publication(s) in a quality journal may get preference. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Bachelor and Master degrees.

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials and mark sheets along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 750/- (seven hundred fifty) (non-refundable) payable to the Registrar, University of Dhaka should be submitted to the Director, Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka on or before 30 January, 2025. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel.

Director (Acting)

## SI hacked to death in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A sub-inspector was hacked to death by miscreants in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila yesterday evening.

Md Shafiqul Islam, 43, of Bagichapara area of Durgapur municipality, was an SI at the radio department of Jamalpur Police Lines, said police.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge of Durgapur Police Station Bachchu Mia said a group of miscreants attacked Shafiqul with sharp weapons at Ukipara while he was going to a local market around 6:30pm.

Hearing his screams, locals rushed to the spot and took him to Durgapur Upazila Health Complex.

As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The doctors declared him dead at the hospital.

Police recovered the body and sent it to morgue for autopsy.

Quoting family members, the OC also said Shafiqul, a father of three children, reached home from Jamalpur on a vacation yesterday.

The family members said Shafiqul had no dispute with anyone and they could not say why the incident took place, said the OC.

"We have got a video of the incident and drives are on to arrest the killers," said the OC.

No case was filed and no one was arrested as of filing this report around 11:50pm.



## Arnob brings out a special surprise

Shayan Chowdhury Arnob — best known as a musician penning lyrics, composing music, and performing songs — is embarking on a new creative journey by stepping into the realm of literature. For the first time, he will appear as an author at this year's Ekushey Boi Mela.

The book he authored is titled after one of his popular songs, *Hok Kolorob*, and has been published by Legend Publication. The cover has been illustrated by Arnob's father, artist Swapna Chowdhury.

The book includes songs composed by Arnob with the stories behind their creation. For international audiences, each song is accompanied with its English translation alongside the original Bangla lyrics.

# SIAM credits 'Jongli' as a transformative journey

Siam Ahmed, known for his breakout roles in *Damal* and *Poromon 2*, is all set to return to the silver screen with his highly anticipated film, *Jongli*. Directed by M Raahim, the film is scheduled for release this Eid-ul-Fitr.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Siam, who has won two Bangladesh National Film Awards for Best Actor, opened up about his journey and dedication to *Jongli* in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star yesterday, on the occasion of the film's official motion poster release.

"I'm thrilled to mark my silver screen return with *Jongli* as it has proved to be a transformative journey in my career. The film's strong story is likely to win over the audience," he said, expressing full confidence in its success.

The actor then mentioned that he had to maintain the same shaggy look for seven



months by avoiding fake hair or beards to ensure realism in his role. "I didn't see it as a sacrifice. It was my dedication to the craft," Siam noted.

Hinting at major surprises, Siam assured, "Everyone will see a new side of me in *Jongli*. Moreover, the film has unexpected twists that viewers will enjoy."

As excitement builds for his return to the big screen, Siam praised the cast and director for their hard work, stating, "Our ensemble cast delivered outstanding performances. Now, we simply await Eid."

With *Jongli*, Siam is all set to once again captivate audiences and bring something fresh to the table, the actor affirmed.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?

### 'Dhyan'

Shohojia's inaugural solo concert, *Dhyan*, is set to offer an intimate journey through the band's evolving soundscape today. Audiences will be able to immerse themselves in a dynamic mix of the band's past hits and the debut of its new track, *Abhinoy*. With Eventholic on board as the organiser, it will be a night of powerful music and emotion. Tickets are available at Acoustica and Get Set Rock.

**DATE:**  
Friday, January 10, 2025

**TIME:**  
6pm onwards

**VENUE:**  
Bangladesh Shishu Academy

# FDC FILM DIRECTORS' ELECTION today amidst no festivities



The Bangladesh Film Directors' Association election for the 2025-26 term is set to take place today at FDC, but the usual pre-election festivities has been absent.

Initially scheduled for December 28, it was postponed a day before voting and later rescheduled for January 10 after discussions with the election commission and both panels.

The election contest is between two panels: the Mushfiqur Rahman Gulzar-Shafi Uddin Shafi panel and the Shahin Shumon-Kabir Tutul panel. Abdul Latif Bachchu is set to serve as the chief election commissioner, with AJ Rana and BH Nishan as assistants.

Assistant Commissioner AJ Rana confirmed to The Daily Star that the decision was made in consultation with all stakeholders.

## 'Saba' continues festival run, headed to Sweden



The Mehzabien Chowdhury starrer much-anticipated film *Saba* is set to have its European premiere at the 48th Göteborg International Film Festival in Sweden.

Following its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), the Maksud Hossain directorial debut made its Asian debut at Busan International Film Festival and was also selected for Saudi Arabia's Red Sea International Film Festival.

The Göteborg International Film Festival, which is set to commence on January 24, will feature *Saba* in its Voices section, a category dedicated to honouring the works of emerging filmmakers.

The film depicts the aftermath of a tragic accident two decades ago, leaving a 12-year-old girl with psychological trauma and her mother wheelchair-bound.



# NEWS

## Rohingya crisis, trade gap

FROM PAGE 12

in Beijing on January 21.

Additionally, official sources have indicated that Touhid will also engage with senior officials of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and is likely to visit Shanghai as part of the trip.

During the bilateral meetings, key issues such as agriculture, education, trade, and the progress of the Rohingya issue will be discussed prominently.

Highlighting the economic aspect of the visit, Alam noted that trade between Bangladesh and China currently stands at USD 25 billion, though the balance heavily favours China.

The adviser's trip aims to address trade imbalances and explore avenues for increased Chinese investment in

Bangladesh," he said, adding that the full agenda for the visit is still being finalised.

Alam said the relationship between Bangladesh and China has evolved into a "Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership," reflecting its multifaceted nature.

"This upcoming visit, as the first

bilateral trip by the adviser following the formation of Bangladesh's interim government in August, presents a valuable opportunity to further strengthen and deepen the bilateral ties between the two nations," said the spokesman.

Bangladesh and China are set to

celebrate the golden jubilee of their diplomatic relations in 2025, and both

countries have undertaken various programs to mark the milestone.

The visit will also provide an opportunity to outline the future roadmap for Bangladesh-China bilateral relations, focusing on enhancing economic cooperation, expanding trade and investment, and reviewing progress in ongoing collaborations," he added.

The foreign adviser is also expected to deliver speeches at the "China Institute of International Studies" and the "Shanghai Institute of International Studies" during the visit.

Besides, he will meet business

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bilateral trip by the adviser following the formation of Bangladesh's interim government in August, presents a valuable opportunity to further strengthen and deepen the bilateral ties between the two nations," said the spokesman.

Bangladesh and China are set to

celebrate the golden jubilee of their diplomatic relations in 2025, and both

countries have undertaken various programs to mark the milestone.

The visit will also provide an opportunity to outline the future roadmap for Bangladesh-China bilateral relations, focusing on enhancing economic cooperation, expanding trade and investment, and reviewing progress in ongoing collaborations," he added.

The foreign adviser is also expected to deliver speeches at the "China Institute of International Studies" and the "Shanghai Institute of International Studies" during the visit.

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## When should student union polls be held?

That should be determined by the needs of university students

We see no valid reason for the divisions among student bodies regarding the timing of student union polls at public universities. Reportedly, the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) platform and Chhatra Shibir favour holding elections without delay, as they are confident of winning. However, Chhatra Dal prefers postponing the elections until after the national polls, as its leaders are reportedly not yet "fully active" on campuses. Meanwhile, most left-leaning student parties also support delaying the elections, citing the need to reform the structure of student unions.

Although most student bodies united during the July uprising that brought down Sheikh Hasina's autocratic regime, divisions began to emerge after Dhaka University authorities formed a special committee on November 14 to conduct the Ducus elections. These divisions are concerning as they appear to prioritise political interests over the needs of students.

Student union polls, not just at DU, must be held based on the needs of university students—not external factors like national elections. Chhatra Dal's push for postponement until after national polls seems to hark back to the old system where ruling parties granted undue advantages to their student wings. This system cultivated political dominance on campuses, disregarding the welfare of the broader student community.

It is crucial to remember that such politics of dominance caused immense suffering for students, degraded the quality of education, and undermined universities and colleges over the 15 years of Awami rule. During this period, Chhatra League's reign of terror reached unprecedented levels, with the tragic death of Abrar Fahad at BUET becoming a rallying point for the July uprising against the fascist regime and its oppressive student wing. Although not on the same scale, previous governments also misused student wings to achieve political ends. In post-uprising Bangladesh, the people reject any return to these practices—a message that political and student parities must take to heart.

At the same time, it is important to ensure that all student bodies are given a level playing field for fair elections at different universities. Therefore, the elections should not be rushed either.

Public universities have mechanisms to form their own election commissions, and they should follow timelines that best serve their students. In addition, necessary reforms should be considered to ensure these elections properly reflect student interests. Prospective candidates and student bodies must recognise that the only purpose of these elections is to serve the general student population. Both students and the public expect a new kind of student politics—one that fosters learning and leadership, not domination, criminality, or terrorisation.

## End the brick kiln menace

984 kilns operating in breach of regulations in Rangpur

The number is staggering, and it's frustrating that such numbers exist despite there being a pro-environment government in place. According to a report citing the departments of environment and agricultural extension in Rangpur, the division has 984 brick kilns—set up on farmlands across its eight districts—operating in violation of government regulations. These kilns use fertile topsoil to make bricks in a process that causes significant damage to the local environment, livelihoods, and health. While the proliferation of such kilns, owned or operated mostly by people with political connections, was understandable under the Awami League regime, their continued operation now questions the ability and sincerity of the interim administration.

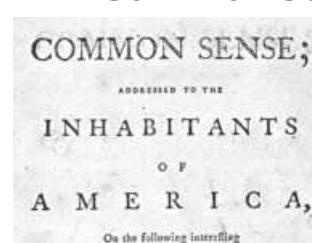
The situation is by no means unique to Rangpur. Similar operations also continue in many other areas, ravaging topsoil and burning bricks with impunity. Not long ago, we highlighted the case of Brahmanbaria where, according to a *Prothom Alo* report, 56 kilns operate illegally. Many of them, including one set up by a former Awami League lawmaker, have no valid documents such as environmental clearance or the permit for brick burning. Many were set up on agricultural lands and even wetland areas. In Lalmonirhat, according to another recent report, 36 brick kilns are operating without a clearance certificate. Although there is no central database on the number of illegal or non-compliant brick kilns in the country, the above reports portray a grim picture.

The question is, what is the interim government doing? To be fair, the environment ministry did take some encouraging steps, including the development of a National Air Quality Management Action Plan in early November to tackle sources of air pollution and enhance enforcement mechanisms. More recently, it has overseen a number of drives through mobile courts targeting illegal kilns, shutting down quite a few by demolishing their chimneys while ordering the closure of multiple others. These measures, however, are proving to be inadequate to address the menace of brick kilns.

We, therefore, urge the government to step up its efforts. Given the massive impact of brick kilns, having legal papers or not, it is no longer enough to just go after a few illegal ones without enforcing compliance across the sector or addressing the heavy reliance on topsoil or traditional bricks. What's at stake here is not just the health of our environment or local communities. The livelihoods of farmers, and by extension the nation's food security, are also at risk. So, the government must explore options to replace traditional brick making in a way that eventually reduces topsoil and fuel consumption.

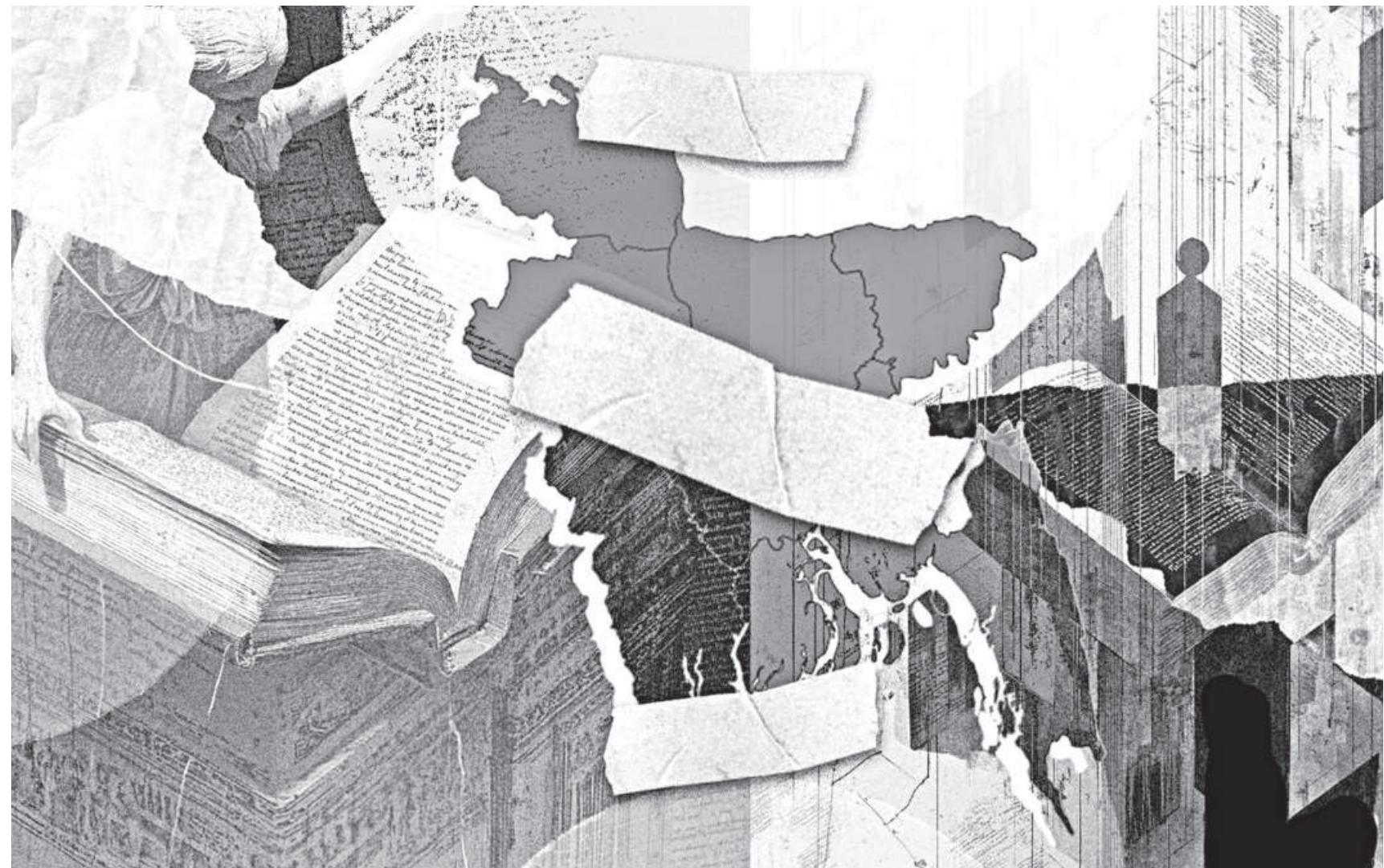
## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### 'Common Sense' published



On this day in 1776, Thomas Paine published *Common Sense*, a 50-page pamphlet that sold more than 500,000 copies within a few months and called for a war of independence that would later become the American Revolution.

# EDITORIAL



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

## Bangladesh's eunomia problem



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

Dr Adnan Zillur Morshed  
is an academic and a  
public thinker.

ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

Let us ask an elusive question against the current political situation in Bangladesh: what creates a good nation? An ambitious constitution? Honest and accountable leaders? Effective policies? People themselves? We begin by discussing the idea of the constitution. You may not have noticed that you don't have to sign the constitution to pledge your allegiance to it or abide by it. The state assumes that you as a citizen are going to accept the constitution as a social contract and respect and follow it. In this assumption, the state imagines a nation with common beliefs and aspirations, and a shared interest in history, language, and culture. The constitution places a lot of trust in people to see, understand, and approve how it seeks to create a good nation with a common purpose. By championing a national mission, the constitution supposes that it can provide some consistency to people's public lives.

Yet, the idea of the constitution is tricky. It is a deeply idealistic instrument of the state in the sense that it is broadly based on people's collective trust and willingness to accept it as the nation's guiding principles. When that trust is not there, the constitution is fragile, becoming merely a book that catches dust on the shelf of a dimly lit office. Furthermore, as legal scholars have argued, the constitution presents a larger moral quandary. Even if it is ratified by the national assembly, it may not be just. It may only reflect the aims and machinations of an exclusive power-wielding group. When the US constitution was ratified in 1788, enslaved people in the country were considered three-fifths of a person and women didn't have the right to vote. The point is that a ratified constitution may not guarantee a fair society. To add to the complexity, there are nations—such as the UK, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Israel—that do not have a single or full written constitution, rather various laws, conventions, principles, and judicial decisions.

Despite the inherent limitations in the ways the constitution is conceived, the image, purpose, and identity of a nation that it seeks to articulate are essential for the nation to function as a unit. But the problem is this: for people to collectively believe in the constitution as a social contract, there must be broad agreement on some "fundamentals" that take shape organically from within society over a period. In an ideal world, the constitution has already embodied these fundamentals to flesh out the details. Only when the public accepts the fundamentals wholeheartedly does the constitution begin to make sense.

But what may the fundamentals be? They may include: i) that all people—irrespective of their race, gender, ethnicity, and religion—are equal before the law; ii) peaceful coexistence even while in disagreement; iii) free and fair election as the basis of democratic governance; iv) a tyranny-proof system of checks and balances in power; v) respect for the natural environment; vi) independent institutions; and vii) some historical happenings that galvanised the nation in the first place.

In the absence of public trust in the fundamentals, the constitution does not and cannot make good sense. On January 6, 2021, the US constitution became dangerously brittle until then Vice-President Mike Pence certified

**Athenian legislator Solon came up with the idea of eunomia, an ideal political order that served the interests of all feuding parties. In addition to creating the social framework for a sound distributive justice, eunomia outlined, most importantly, how things should be in an ideal society. In other words, Solon created some fundamentals that brought people together, enabling them not only to transcend their narrow selfish interests, but also to believe in the virtues of citizenship and democracy.**

the 2020 US presidential election results. The constitution is not—has never been—enough to create a good nation. Let me make two crucial points here. First, what is most important in creating a good nation is a reasonable and civil historical process, powered by inclusive institutions, that produces reasonable people with the prudence to value some fundamentals as the cement of their national formation. Second, fundamentals are not God-given, and what is needed is a dynamic and quality public debate about their significance in building a good nation. In other words, a reasonable nation must know how to debate what is in their best collective interest.

A good nation is, of course, a utopian aspiration or even a myth—perhaps a necessary myth with which to articulate an acceptable national purpose. One way or the other, a nation's polity, stability, and sense of justice often depend on how maturely it deploys its ideas of fundamentals in the

the project of nation-building.

The Greeks first understood this political riddle. At the precipice of a civil war, circa 600 BCE, raging between a landed aristocracy and the peasants who owed it vast debts, Athenian legislator Solon came up with the idea of *eunomia*, an ideal political order that served the interests

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idea of Bangladesh. The achievement of 1971 is a foundational concept for this country. The whole point of the planned killing of the country's intellectuals by anti-liberation forces on December 14, 1971 was to defeat that concept. Ironically, the last regime's over-Mujibification of the country's political landscape spawned the wrong kind of debates on 1971.

While fundamentals can be debated across historical eras, they should be neither dismissed nor desacralised in the name of renewal or with the intention of political erasure.

The problem in Bangladesh has been that political parties created their own "party fundamentals" that collapsed or

were erased with their departure from the government. They weaponised history in their favour. While one party colonised 1971 as its exclusive turf, others showed a peculiar discomfort towards it (even when indulging in its sartorial celebration) or secretly denied its legitimacy.

Thus, Bangladesh's political history has been a history of biased histories that created permanent political fault lines, weakening the promise of developing the nation's human capital. One cannot expect a mature nation when a misguided culture thrives, one in which people become accustomed to seeing the world from the lens of their narrow self-interests, ignoring the transcendental values of fundamentals in nation-building.

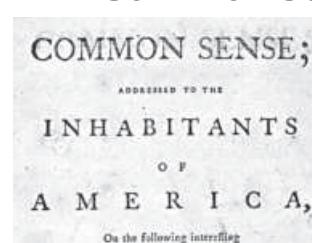
An insurmountable roadblock in Bangladesh has long diminished the possibility of establishing fundamentals as national unifiers. Since independence, the country has carried on with a peculiar birth defect, that is, the secret guilt-ridden binary of 1971 and religion. Despite the euphoria of liberation, in post-independence Bangladesh, many people, beyond the Islamist parties, secretly considered the secession from Pakistan a betrayal of Islam.

Even though false—the Liberation War was fought against economic and political marginalisation—this binary continued to influence politics in Bangladesh with different artifices and under different circumstances. In many ways, August 15, 1975, the debate of Bangalee vs Bangladeshi, and partisan debates on secularism, among other examples, are different manifestations of this false binary, which seems to have become entrenched in the national psyche. It has become a culture even though its expression in recent times has become shrouded in mystical and indeterminate pronouncements.

Binaries that entrap us in a black-and-white belief system harm our social and cognitive evolution. What I propose is that some foundational concepts are necessary to anchor a good nation and its ability to live a richly hybrid life. More importantly, to be able to believe in unifying fundamentals, a nation needs maturity, courage, and a willingness to debate its purpose with civility. For that, we need to robustly invest in public education, civic programmes, and social campaigns.

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# Challenges to media freedom in post-Hasina Bangladesh



Rahat Minhaz  
is assistant professor of mass communication and journalism at Jagannath University. He can be reached at minhaz.uddin.du@yahoo.com.

RAHAT MINHAZ

After the student-led mass uprising in July-August 2024, a lot of expectations emerged within society, which was normal. The media sector is no exception. During Sheikh Hasina's 15-plus years of hybrid regime, standard journalism practices declined drastically due to certain actions of a group of pro-Awami League journalists. It would be more appropriate to call them activists of the regime. The press wing of the ousted prime minister and a particular intelligence branch exerted a kind of pressure on our media outlets. That's why, after the Awami League's fall in August, people expected major changes in this sector. However, these expectations, under the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, have already experienced setbacks for many reasons. It is unfortunate that professional journalists who played a pivotal role in ousting Hasina are now facing unfortunate situations.

After the massive fire at the secretariat on December 26, another controversial decision related to journalism was made. Due to security concerns, the interim government suspended accreditation cards for journalists, including visitor and other passes. Barring others from

the secretariat may be necessary, but restricting journalists from performing their daily duties is not acceptable. Although the press wing of the chief adviser clarified the issue and a temporary pass issuance process was put in place, this decision ultimately did not bode well for media freedom. The Editors' Council and other journalists' rights-based organisations issued statements saying that such decisions are a threat and an obstacle to independent journalism. By observing the situation closely, I can assume that this particular decision did not help journalism at all. However, I strongly agree with the authorities that many unprofessional journalists are holding accreditation cards for purposes other than journalism. These should be cancelled as early as possible.

Another burning and unfortunate issue is the firing of five senior journalists from Somoy TV. No doubt, this media outlet was one of the notorious propaganda machines of Sheikh Hasina. It systematically spread the regime's disinformation. On the other hand, this channel also targeted individuals who were critical of the ousted fascist regime.

That said, firing journalists through "mob justice" is not acceptable. The information ministry and the press wing of the chief adviser failed to address this issue. This was undoubtedly done through the misconduct of student leaders. The press wing and the government should have taken proper action

different media outlets under Sheikh Hasina became almost party propaganda cells. However, after her fall, intervening in TV channels and newspapers is not acceptable either. Alongside the spin doctors of these outlets, many professional journalists have also lost their jobs in recent months. These decisions were

Bangla authorities fired him. The government did nothing in these journalists' aid. At the very least, it could have issued a strong statement against this malpractice.

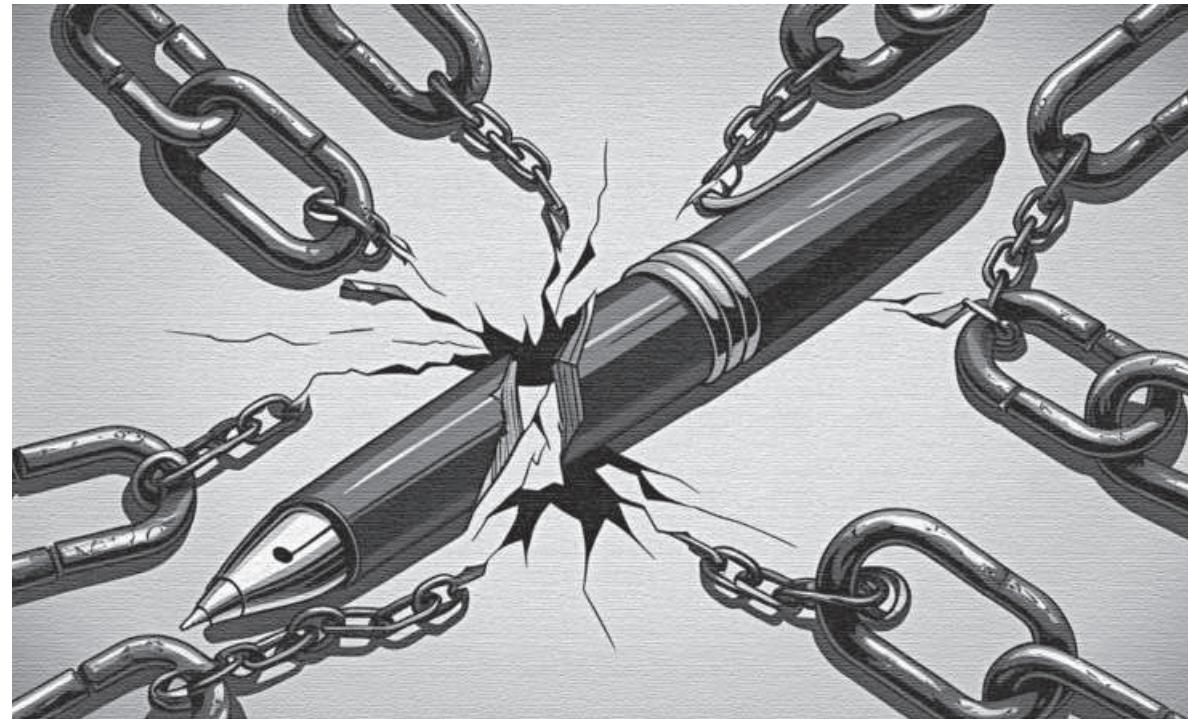
Though Sheikh Hasina has fled, and her press and intelligence wings have been dissolved, has the sense of fairness in free journalism

think pressure groups—including some anti-discrimination student activists, government members, powerful political parties, and others—are already acting against media freedom.

I want to conclude with the example of journalist Khaled Muhiuddin, a renowned journalist who faced severe backlash on social media mainly for criticising student leaders. He also became a target after inviting a leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of the Awami League, as a guest on his show. Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the anti-discrimination student movement, and Sarjis Alam, secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation, said Khaled Muhiuddin was "betraying the blood of the martyrs" by promoting Chhatra League. Though the proposed show was not conducted supposedly due to legal reasons, this issue has certainly cast a shadow over media freedom.

According to a report published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in May last year, Bangladesh ranks 165th out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index. Moreover, RSF identified Bangladesh as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists in their 2024 round-up report.

We don't want Bangladesh to be labelled as a dangerous country for journalism. We don't want further degradation of press freedom, and we don't want to lose the sense of fairness in professional journalism again. Hopefully, the interim government will take prompt and necessary steps in this regard. A new Bangladesh certainly deserves it.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

against it, but they did nothing. It has already become an international issue, which does not align with the reputation of Prof Yunus at all.

Yes, we are well aware that

made under pressure and without following due process. A journalist of ATN Bangla is one of them; as far as I know, he had supported the students' movement. Yet, the ATN

disappeared? Not at all. Senior journalist and editor of the daily *Manab Zamin*, Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, pointed out this issue during a public discussion. I

## A crossover episode with my depression



Mahiya Tabassum  
is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

Picture this: it's an ungodly hour of the morning, and I'm stumbling out of my building after pulling an all-nighter for an exam. The gloomy morning sky and cold snaps are having this fascinating interaction with the circadian rhythm of my body, and the coffee in my empty stomach is doing the cha-cha. Just as I'm having one of those "What even is this life, man?" moments...

"Hey, that's life," drawls a familiar voice—one belonging to everyone's favourite depressed, self-loathing, alcoholic horse. Classic BoJack Horseman, appearing like an existential crisis personified, ready to drag you into the depths of contemplation on just another weekday morning.

Ten years after its debut, *BoJack Horseman* remains less of a TV show and more of a gut punch wrapped in animal puns. In an era where talking animals could've been just another gimmick, this series chose violence—emotional violence, that is. It's the kind of show that makes you laugh, then makes you question why you're laughing, and then makes you question everything else about your life choices.

But more than that, it has become a lighthouse for those of us navigating the stormy seas of depression. Addressing the mental health struggles, the series chose authenticity—raw, uncomfortable, yet deeply validating.

The show's brilliant stroke was mixing humans and animals in a world where a horse can be a washed-up sitcom star and, somehow, that's the least bizarre thing about it. But here's the kicker: behind the cartoon facades and animal jokes lies a mirror so clear, it's uncomfortable. Every character is carrying enough emotional baggage to fill a cargo hold, yet they're still somehow functioning—just like us!

Through the characters, the show portrayed the symptoms we often try to hide—the random crying spells, the inability to get out of bed, the constant fatigue that no amount of sleep seems to fix—and none of these

are character flaws. They're shared experiences, even if they're wrapped in fur and feathers.

Take Princess Carolyn, the feline agent whose life is a masterclass in "fake it till you make it," while simultaneously having an internal meltdown. Her perpetual hustle culture mentality isn't just a character trait, it's a perfect illustration of high-functioning depression, where we keep spinning plates while feeling completely hollow inside. When she tells herself, "You gotta get your shit together," it's the same mantra many of us repeat, thinking we're somehow failing at life while everyone else has it figured out.

What sets *BoJack Horseman* apart is how it normalises the full spectrum of depression's manifestations. The show tells us it's okay if your depression doesn't look like the commercials, where people just stare sadly out of windows in grayscale. Sometimes it's angry outbursts, sometimes it's numbness, and sometimes it's throwing yourself

while somehow maintaining its sense of humour. Depression, addiction, trauma, toxic relationships—it's all there, wrapped in animal puns and visual gags. It's like getting therapy, but your therapist is a cartoon horse who's probably more messed up than you are.

Made in the early 2010s, when streaming platforms were willing to take risks on quirky ideas, *BoJack Horseman* became more than just another adult animation. It pioneered a new kind of storytelling that proved animation could tackle serious issues without losing its comedic edge. In today's landscape, a show about a depressed talking horse dealing with existential dread might sound like a hard sell, but *BoJack* made it work. It showed us that depression isn't always dramatic breakdowns; sometimes it's just getting through another day, trying your best even when your best feels inadequate. The show's greatest gift might be its message that healing isn't linear. Some days you're Princess Carolyn, getting yourself together. Other days you're BoJack, floating in your pool, questioning everything. Both are valid, both are normal, and most importantly, both are temporary states, not permanent identities.

A decade later, the show's message still rings true: mental health struggles are part of the journey, and they're definitely not character flaws or personal failures. Life can be messy, people (and animals) are complicated, and sometimes the best we can do is keep swimming. Or galloping. Or whatever species-appropriate movement applies to you.

**Mental health struggles are part of the journey, and they're definitely not character flaws or personal failures. Life can be messy, people are complicated, and sometimes the best we can do is keep swimming, or galloping, or whatever movement applies to you.**

Well, that would be me too!

Then there's Diane Nguyen, the writer who can't seem to fit into the "rainbow muffin" version of happiness that society, especially her romantic partner Mr Peanut Butter, prescribes. Her journey with depression hits particularly close to home. When she sits in her flat, unable to write her "fun" book because the weight of existence feels too heavy, and ends up with a heavy memoir instead, it also serves as a validation. It's the show saying, "Hey, sometimes depression makes basic tasks feel impossible, and that's not your fault." Her struggle with medication, her resistance to accepting help, and her fear that treating her depression might change who she is—these aren't just plot points. They're real fears that many of us grapple with while suffering from depression.

But let's talk about our protagonist, the horse himself. BoJack Horseman isn't just another lead character of

into work or relationships to avoid dealing with the void inside.

The series doesn't just acknowledge these experiences—it validates them. When BoJack spends days in his pool, when Diane can't write her book, when Princess Carolyn pushes herself to exhaustion—these are permission slips for viewers to recognise their own struggles and understand that they're not "broken" or "abnormal." These are human experiences (even when portrayed by animals).

The series' unflinching commitment to reality—despite being, you know, a cartoon about talking animals—also makes it raw and relatable. When that ottoman in BoJack's living room catches fire, it stays burnt in every subsequent episode—a brilliant metaphor for how our actions leave permanent marks on our lives and those around us. The show doesn't just touch on heavy topics; it belly-flops right into them

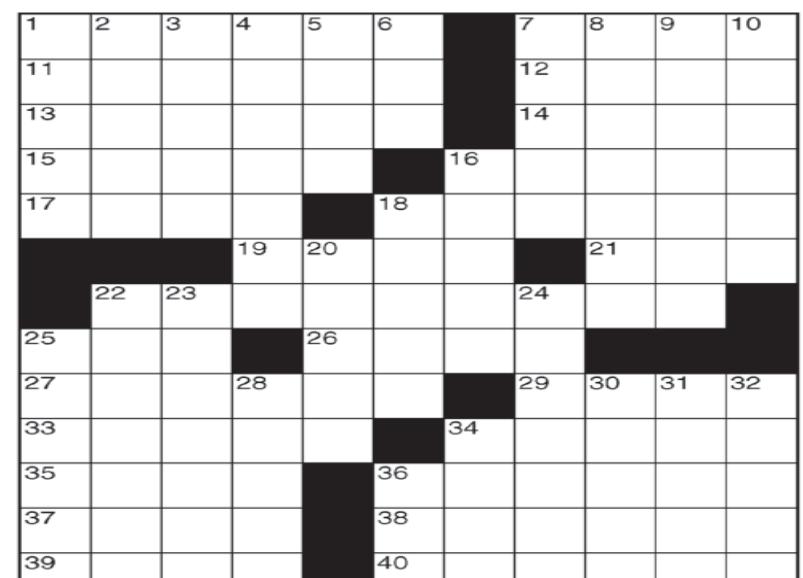
The genius of *BoJack Horseman* lies in its ability to make us laugh at our darkest moments while acknowledging their weight. As BoJack himself put it, "Life is just one hard kick in the urethra." But sometimes, watching a show about messy characters trying their best is exactly the comfort we need. In a world that often demands we put on a happy face and pretend everything's fine, *BoJack Horseman* stands as a mirror to the beauty of acknowledging our struggles, our failures, and our continuous attempts to do better, even when we keep messing up. And isn't that, after all, the way life is?

Back to that morning after my all-nighter, maybe hallucinating a conversation with BoJack Horseman isn't the worst way to start the day. At least he gets it. That's just, like, life, man—and I'm not alone in it.

## CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	29 Physics amount	7 Start
1 Convincing	33 Lucy's brother	8 Kilaea, e.g.
7 Track shape	34 Fire starter	9 Ace, e.g.
11 Dense	35 Rara	10 Passed on the track
12 Flaring star	36 "The Naked and the Dead" author	16 Caesar subject
13 Good name	37 Minimal change	18 Japanese noodles
14 Marina spot	38 Mysterious	20 Cartesian line
15 Provinces	39 Hence	22 Away from the mouth
16 News summary	40 Poked fun at	23 Drizzly
17 Endure	18 Take turns	24 Reggae's birthplace
19 Final, for one	19 Final, for one	25 Comfort
21 Silent assent	21 Silent assent	28 Relish
22 Alcor's	22 Alcor's	30 Travel aid
23 constellation	23 constellation	31 Public outburst
25 Sauna site	25 Sauna site	32 Tatter
26 TV warrior	26 TV warrior	34 Foal's mother
27 Genesis	27 Genesis	36 Yoga need
DOWN		
1 Pink shade	1 Pink shade	7 Start
2 Met performance	2 Met performance	8 Kilaea, e.g.
3 Stares stupidly	3 Stares stupidly	9 Ace, e.g.
4 Considers	4 Considers	10 Passed on the track
comparable	comparable	16 Caesar subject
5 Squirrel's cache	5 Squirrel's cache	18 Japanese noodles
6 Kicker's aid	6 Kicker's aid	20 Cartesian line



4-22

### SATURDAY'S ANSWERS

S	H	A	R	D		F	L	O	S	S
L	O	T	T	O		R	A	N	C	H
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Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).



## YEAR-END JUDGMENT REVIEW

# Notable decisions of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh

**Throughout the year, the High Court Division and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh handed down several significant judgments of immense constitutional importance.**

RAFID AZAD SAUMIK AND KHALID KHAN

Last year witnessed an array of major judicial decisions shaping the jurisprudence and legal discourse in Bangladesh. Indeed, throughout the year, the High Court Division (HCD) and the Appellate Division (AD) of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh (SCB) handed down several significant judgments, of immense constitutional importance, among others.

**The 15th Amendment to the Constitution has been partially invalidated.**

The HCD has delivered a landmark judgment invalidating the 15th Amendment to the Constitution partially. A total of 54 changes were brought by the 15th Amendment in 2011. The major changes include scrapping the provision for a non-partisan Caretaker Government (CTG) to hold elections, incorporating an exhaustive list of basic structure to the Constitution (Article 7B), etc. The HCD bench comprising Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury gave the verdict, scrapping parts of the 15th amendment reinstating the provision of CTG, omitting Articles 7A, 7B, etc. The final decision regarding the CTG will be taken by the Appellate Division as three review petitions are pending in it challenging a 2011 verdict that had scrapped the system.

**Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) has been reinstated**

The AD of the SCB has recently scrapped the 16th Amendment of the Constitution. The SJC is a body composed of the Chief Justice and two other senior most judges of the AD to probe allegations on the grounds of incapacity or misconduct against any judge of the Apex court. The 16th Amendment scrapped the SJC and gave the power to the parliament in 2014. The 16th Amendment was invalidated by both

the HCD and the AD in 2016 and 2017, primarily focusing on the doctrine of 'separation of power' and concerns regarding judicial independence. However, when the government filed the review petition, the matter reached a legal stalemate and continued in that state until recently, when the AD again declared the 16th Amendment unconstitutional.

**Discouraging disclosure of the sex of unborn babies**

The HCD of the SCB has ruled that the guideline by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) discouraging revealing the sex of unborn babies be followed. Prenatal sex detection oftentimes has a direct connection with the ill-treatment of babies and pregnant mothers. That is why the DGHS, in their guideline, discouraged hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres from revealing the sex of unborn babies for non-medical reasons. The HCD disposed of the writ petition seeking a ban on such disclosure by directing that the guidelines of the DGHS be followed.

**Revising the quota scheme**

The AD of the Apex Court of the country has revised the existing quota scheme, which some have embraced positively, while others raised concern over the level of interference in policy decisions done in the case. Prior to the decision of the AD, the HCD had decided that the notification by the government in 2018 withdrawing the quota system in government jobs was illegal. However, the AD reversed the decision of the HCD. The new quota scheme is applicable for government jobs in all grades. As per the new scheme, a seven percent quota is reserved for all jobs: five percent for children of freedom fighters, martyred freedom fighters and Beerangonas, one percent for the indigenous community, and one percent for people with disabilities and 'Tritiyo Lingo'.

**The imposition of conservancy fees under section 3 of Conservancy and Pilotage Service Fees Rules 1990 is legal**

The plaintiffs of the original case alleged, amongst others, that the imposition of conservancy fees under the 1990 Rules is illegal. The AD of the SCB found that, firstly, such imposition of fees under the 1990 Rules is justified and not at all a breach of the principle of double jeopardy. It moreover concluded that the imposition of conservancy fees is not a punitive measure but rather an investment in sustainable water management. Such measures are needed for both our economic interests as well as out of environmental concerns. In a country with concerning environmental conditions, such decisions by the Apex Court of the country are appreciable.

**The legitimacy of the interim government under the current Constitution**

The AD of the SCB on 8 August 2024 decided that the President of Bangladesh may, to fill in the constitutional vacancy, for urgent necessity, appoint chief advisor and other advisors to conduct executive functions on an interim basis. The AD exercised its power under Article 106 of the Constitution which allows it to give opinions to the President when the President seeks the same on a question of law of great public importance. The AD noted that as the previous Prime Minister resigned and the President dissolved the previous parliament, such an interim government could be established as of necessity. This decision by the AD was important to maintain the constitutional continuity of the country.

*The writers are Law Desk Assistant and Law Desk Intern of the Law & Our Rights, The Daily Star, respectively.*

## LAW LETTER

## Ensuring fair trials in Bangladesh

Any justice system must have fair trials as a cornerstone, ensuring that each individual receives the same impartial treatment while in conflict with the law. Articles 27 and 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh upholds the concept of fair trial. Nevertheless, there are several obstacles that hamper the execution of justice when these concepts are put into practice.

A major concern is the overburdened judiciary. By 2023, there will be over 3.7 million cases still waiting, making it very difficult for the justice system to provide timely justice. Prolonged pre-trial detentions, as well as greater financial and emotional strains on litigants, may result from procedural delays. Due largely to this backlog, people's right to a fair trial gets routinely violated.

Moreover, securing competent legal representation continues to be a serious struggle, especially for the socioeconomically disadvantaged citizens. While the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 provides for free legal aid, the system

remains underfunded and hence inaccessible to a vast swathe of people. Consequentially, the marginalised groups are often without access to adequate representation fuelling miscarriages of justice. The legal system suffers from corruption as well, further undermining the fairness of trials. Corrupt practices undermine public confidence in the judiciary and often distort the outcome of trials in favor of the wealthy, powerful and/or political elites.

Another obstacle to fair trial is the manner in which investigations are carried out. In Bangladesh, law enforcement agencies are often accused of fabricating evidence, obtaining forced confessions through torture, and conducting investigations that are neither thorough nor neutral. Along with that, there are insufficient forensic facilities and trained personnel, which makes it more difficult to deliver justice based on reliable evidence.

These challenges can be solved in different ways. To begin with, managing the backlog could be achieved by increasing the number of judges, improving case management systems and establishing specialised courts for specific types of cases. In addition, enhancing outreach of its free legal aid mechanisms and augmenting the resources for the Legal Aid Services Act may help underprivileged citizens access justice better. Furthermore, investing in advanced forensic facilities and enabling police to properly gather evidence and conduct fair investigations can lead to trials of a better standard. Finally, independent oversight authorities must be put in place to investigate corruption allegations within the judiciary and by the law enforcement agencies.

Upholding the rule of law and maintaining public trust in Bangladesh's justice system depend mostly on ensuring fair trials. Even though the obstacles are substantial, they are not insurmountable. By working together, the government, judiciary, and civil society can establish a more efficient and equitable judicial system, which will bring the nation closer to the principles enshrined in its Constitution.

**Alph Imran Chowdhury**

*Law student at London College of Legal Studies (South)*

## YEAR-END LAW REVIEW

# Reviewing the laws enacted in 2024

**Parban Chakma and Sadika Nousheen**

The year 2024 presented new hopes for Bangladesh. New laws and ordinances were enacted, some old laws were revised as the spirit of reforming the state touched the legal landscape. Ten Acts were enacted by the previous regime while 17 new Ordinances were passed after the parliament was dissolved. From finance to international crimes, this piece discusses some notable laws and ordinances from this year.

**The Local Government (Union Parishad) (Amendment) Act 2024**

The Act, originally enacted in 2009, was amended in 2024 to incorporate a provision for appointing an administrator on the expiry of the five-year tenure of the union-level local government body. Hence, the Union Parishad chairman and members shall not remain in their respective positions once the specified duration is over and will be replaced by an administrator appointed by the government to carry on the local activities until the next Parishad is formed. The administrator will be allocated a 120-day tenure for the task and cannot be appointed as the same more than once.

**Payment and Settlement System Act 2024**

The Payment and Settlement

System Act was passed to make provisions related to reducing the risk of financial transactions and protecting the interests of customers through integration, supervision and control of the payment, drainage and settlement system. No banking company can participate in any payment system, operate payment system or provide electronic currency payment services without the approval of Bangladesh Bank. Similarly, no individual, organisation, or company can run a payment system or perform payment services



and non-bailable.

**National Primary Education Academy Act 2024**

In order to execute the National Curriculum and improve the professional abilities of primary school teachers and primary education officials, the Act has been passed to create a National Primary Education Academy that would undertake research and offer cutting-edge training. The Act aims to strengthen the primary education structure.

**Offshore Banking Act 2024**

The Offshore Banking Act 2024 was enacted to govern and regulate offshore banking activities in conformity with the dynamics of

the contemporary international financial system. It outlines the regulatory framework for establishing and operating offshore banking units by Scheduled Banks in Bangladesh. This law prohibits engagement with any offshore banking business except a scheduled bank operating in Bangladesh.

Offshore banking units in Bangladesh can accept deposits from foreign-owned enterprises in specific zones and provide financial services like loans, letters of credit, and bill discounting. They also handle deposits and loans from non-resident Bangladeshis, foreign individuals, and institutions, and operate foreign currency accounts for residents to facilitate remittances

and transfers. Certain restricted activities include unauthorized transactions and demand deposits, and credit facilities must follow prescribed procedures. Offshore banking units are required to keep records for easy auditing, with scheduled bank auditors conducting audits. Bangladesh Bank has the authority to inspect records and assets, impose fines for non-compliance, and issue directives and policies. Penalties for non-compliance include fines for failure to submit financial statements, providing false information, and other violations of the Act.

**International Crimes (Tribunals) (Amendment) Ordinance 2024**

Originally enacted in 1973, this Act was revised this year followed by the fall of Sheikh Hasina Regime. This was done to bring the Act more in line with the international instruments and address the loopholes of the previous version. The law now has the jurisdiction to international crimes committed extraterritorially.

There have been some fundamental changes in the definitions of the crimes. Definition of Crime against Humanity is expanded to include explicitly forcible transfer of population, sexual exploitation, enforced disappearance, human trafficking, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization among other acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack, or persecutions based on political, racial, ethnic, or religious grounds. Incitement to commit any international crimes has been incorporated within the Jurisdiction of the Tribunal. Apart from this the new changes include provisions for recording and broadcasting tribunal hearings, allowing representatives from UN bodies and human rights organizations to observe public hearings. Accused persons are granted rights which the earlier version of the Act lacked.

There are also new measures for submitting digital evidence, providing compensation to crime victims, and ensuring witness protection. These updates aim to enhance transparency, fairness, and protection within the judicial process in line with the international standards.

As Bangladesh stands at a crossroads and awaits meaningful reforms within its policy-legal framework, 2025 looks both full of hopes and anticipations.

*The writers are Law Desk Intern, The Daily Star & LLM candidate at the University of Dhaka respectively.*

## BCB at sea on Shakib matter

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is waiting to find out the details regarding Shakib Al Hasan's recent test for suspect bowling action in Chennai.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) sources had told this newspaper on Thursday that Bangladesh's ace all rounder failed the second test for suspect bowling action on December 21 in Chennai after failing the first one at Loughborough University in the UK.

It could be surmised that the board has gathered some of the details but the BCB could not clarify what Shakib was awaiting.

"We know some of the information but it's important to pool together all the information before relaying it [to the media]. We don't want to publish fragmented information. We hope to send out a press release quickly so that no one has doubts about his exact situation. Our media department is working on it," BCB director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim told reporters yesterday in Mirpur.

The big question is whether Shakib will be picked for the Champions Trophy next month solely as a batter.

"It's up to the selectors' consideration and they will see to it. If they have any questions they will be able to ask the board but mainly it's a matter for the selectors," Fahim said.

It was learned that BCB had given both Shakib and Tamim Iqbal's names for visa processing in relation to the Champions Trophy, to be held in a hybrid model in Pakistan and UAE, starting from February 19.

BCB sources believe that Shakib may be able to give another test, although it has to be in coordination with the ECB. Reports in the media suggest the all-rounder has given another test but nothing was confirmed by BCB.

Fahim maintained that Shakib is under consideration for the Champions Trophy but added that the result of the test can have a bearing on Shakib's selection.

"It's already been said that Shakib is there and he is under consideration. If there is any problem in the test, that could be another matter but if he is cleared, it's already been said that he is under consideration," he said.

BCB insiders say the media department has kept two separate media releases ready in anticipation of the outcome of Shakib's latest bowling test in Chennai.

But BCB had no stance regarding Shakib in the last two series. Even chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu said on Wednesday that they received no instructions regarding Shakib.

With three days left till the deadline for Champions Trophy squad submission on January 12, Shakib's selection for the tournament, which was already uncertain before tests for suspect action, looks even more difficult.



## Sohan overcomes Adelaide regret in Sylhet

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Rangpur Riders skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan pulled off a miraculous victory against Fortune Barishal in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Needing 26 to win in the final over, Sohan, unbeaten on 32 off seven deliveries, smashed Kyle Mayers for three sixes and as many fours to help Rangpur chase down a 198-run target and stay perfect in the tournament with six wins on the trot.



over. I was able to take 15 or 16 [14] runs. If I had hit a six in the last ball, we could have won [tied] the game," Sohan told reporters in Sylhet after his side clinched their sixth successive win in the meet.

On Thursday, Sohan was faced with an even tougher challenge in the last over against Kyle Mayers but this time the wicketkeeper-batter won the game for his side by smashing three fours and as many sixes to take 30 off the over – most ever in the 20th over in BPL history

– and clinched a thrilling victory. Sohan said that he started to believe that they could win the match after he hit the first ball of the 20th for a six.

"In the previous over, when Khushdil [Shah] smashed two sixes, he was telling me that a victory is quite possible. When Rabbi [Kamrul Islam] came to bat in the last over, he was telling me to play all of the six balls as he believed that if I get in a good position, I can get the runs. When the first ball went for six, I started believing that it could be done," Sohan said, terming this innings as one of the best of his career.

After the match, there was a heated exchange between Barishal captain Tamim Iqbal and Rangpur's Alex Hales. Sohan, who was seen trying to calm Tamim down, claimed he did not know what caused this altercation.

## Burl 'really enjoying' having Taskin as teammate

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed emerged as a standout performer in international cricket in 2024, finishing as the joint third highest wicket-taker across all formats with 63 wickets in 30 matches alongside West Indies' pacer Alzarri Joseph, trailing behind only India's Jasprit Bumrah (86) and Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga (64).

Taskin's stellar form with the ball has carried over into the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as well as he has already taken 12 wickets in four matches – highest among bowlers so far – for Durbar Rajshahi, which included a record-breaking 7-19 against Dhaka Capitals during his side's second game in Dhaka on January 2.

Rajshahi's Zimbabwean all-rounder Ryan Burl was full of praises for Taskin and was glad to have him as his teammate for the first time.

"I'm really enjoying having Taskin on my team now. I mean he has bowled incredibly well in the last four games," Burl told The Daily Star

yesterday about Taskin, whom he previously faced as an opponent in international and franchise cricket, getting dismissed to the pacer once in four encounters while playing for the national side.



"It's not just about the last four games. He has had a really good 2024. I think he has been rewarded for it by making it in the Cricinfo [ODI] Team of the Year. Congrats to him. Like I said, it's nice to have him in my team," he added.

However, despite Taskin's brilliant performance, Rajshahi is struggling on the field as a unit, having lost three out of their four matches so far.

Burl, who has previously represented Sylhet Strikers and

Chittagong Challengers in the BPL, also has had a mixed campaign so far, making 84 runs in four innings which included a match winning unbeaten 55 off 33 balls against Dhaka. He also has one wicket to his name.

Burl, however, feels that it would be harsh to be too critical of the team so early in the tournament as they still have a good number of matches to go.

"We have played only four matches. So, it's difficult to be too critical of the bowlers. There are still eight games to go. A lot can happen in eight games," he said.

"I think we have been quite good in patches but we haven't been good for 20 overs. We probably have bowled seven or eight good overs and then few loose overs came up. We haven't quite gelled as a unit yet, especially in the bowling department. "But as I have said, it's still four games in the tournament. You got to give the guys a chance, you got to let them come to their own and get some rhythm," said Burl.

**Young starlets Gavi and Lamine Yamal, returning after an ankle problem, fired Barcelona into the Spanish Super Cup final with a 2-0 win against Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday. Gavi put Barcelona ahead from close range after 17 minutes and teenage winger Yamal netted the second early after the break. Spanish playmaker Olmo was cleared to play again on a temporary basis before the game and will be allowed to feature for Barcelona in the Sunday's final.**

PHOTO: AFP



## MSC's sole focus now BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

After being unofficially eliminated from the group stage of the ongoing Federation Cup, Mohammedan SC, the Fed Cup finalists in the last two editions, shifted their focus fully on Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches, including today's encounter against Rahmatganj MFS at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla.

A 17th hour Mohammedan SC have been flawless in the professional football league with a perfect record in six matches, the Black and Whites fell short in the Federation Cup after losing two matches out of three, eliminating them from the competition which they won in 2023.

The elimination from the Federation Cup will help the players to fully concentrate on the league. We hope to keep consistency in the league," said coach Alfaz Ahmed.

"Actually, the players have not been used to the new system of playing the league and the Federation Cup simultaneously," explained Alfaz.

"Besides, we had to play three successive matches on December 4, 7, and 10, so players were under pressure and could not maintain consistency," he added.

Mohammedan have been on the top of the BPL table with 18 points, three more than second-placed Rahmatganj.

## What to WATCH

T SPORTS

BPL

Rajshahi vs Khulna

Live from 2:00 pm

Sylhet vs Dhaka

Live from 7:00 pm

STAR SPORTS 2

Big Bash League

Hobart Hurricanes

vs Sydney

Thunders

Live from 2:15 pm

## Bangladesh eye semis of inaugural Kho Kho WC

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite being three time runners-up of the Asian Kho Kho Championship, Bangladesh set their sights on the semifinals of the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup due to a lack of preparation and the competition's new rules.

The first ever Kho Kho World Cup (both men's and women's) is scheduled to get underway on January 13 at the Indira Gandhi Stadium, New Delhi, India with participants from six continents taking part in Kho Kho, an Asia-based sport.

Bangladesh men's team became runners-up in the first three editions in 1996, 2000, and 2023. Meanwhile, Bangladesh women's team won silver in the 2016 SA Games but had to stay content with a bronze medal in the 2019 SA Games.

Bangladesh men's team also grabbed silver medals in 2016 and 2019 SA Games. "Our initial target is to qualify for the semifinals



in both men's and women's events and then think of moving into the final because we have taken preparation on the ground instead of the designated mat on which the game will be played. Also, the players are not familiar with the new rules of the game," said Bangladesh Kho Kho Federation general secretary Fazlur Rahman Babul yesterday.

Coach Mir Kaiser Sadik Sajib said, "We want to produce good results in the first ever Kho Kho World Cup by restoring our past performance because we could not perform better in the last edition of the Asian Kho Kho Championship."

Former national player Sajib, however, mentioned he is not aware of the strengths of the opponents from outside Asia.

"We don't know much about the opponents outside Asia, so we can't predict anything at the moment," Sajib said.

Both men's and women's teams, comprising 18 members each, are scheduled to fly out for India on Saturday before starting their campaigns on January 14.



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
JASHORE WATER DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
BWDB, JASHORE

### Corrigendum-1 of Tender Id No-1050706 & 1050451

Due to Unavoidable circumstances some changes have been made in BoQ for the following tender. All others terms & condition remain same.

Invitation Reference No	Tender ID	Package No & Description	Previous Tender/Proposal Document Last Selling Date & Time	New Tender/Proposal Document Last Selling Date & Time	Previous Tender/Proposal Closing & Opening Date & Time	New Tender/Proposal Closing & Opening Date & Time
T30-A/1009; Dated: 12.12. 2024	1050706	Package No- CSAWM-WDB-SWZ-WD-14/04 The River bank protective work at (A) Afra Ghat from km 0.000 to km 0.300 = 300.00 m. (B) Gobindo Mondir from km 0.077 to km 0.200 = 123.00 m. (C) Kali Mondir from km 0.00 to km 0.077 = 77.00m. (D) Kalibari from km 0.00 to km 0.630 = 630.00m. (E) Sarderhat from km 0.00 to km 0.500 = 500.00m. Total 1630.00 m. in Chitra-Bhairab-Afra Sub-Project (Jashore Part) in C/W Climate Smart Agricultural & Water Management Project in district Jashore under Jashore WD Division, BWDB, Jashore during the FY of 2024-2025 & 2025-2026.	13-Jan-2025 17:00 hrs	19-Jan-2025 17:00 hrs	14-Jan-2025 12:50 hrs	20-Jan-2025 12:50 hrs
T30-A/1001; Dated: 12.12. 2024	1050451	Package No- CSAWM-WDB-SWZ-WD-14/05 Re-excavation of Amdanga Khal from 0.500 Km to 2.700 Km=2.200 Km and strengthening of Amdanga khal by protection works from km.000 to km 0.450 = 0.450 Km and Rehabilitation of 2Nos. Outlet at Km. 1.170 & Km. 1.330 of Amdanga khal in Chitra-Bhairab-Afra Sub-Project (Jashore Part) i/c with CSAWM Project (BWDB Part) under Jashore WD Division, BWDB, Jashore During the Year 2024-25 & 2025-26.	13-Jan-2025 17:00 hrs	19-Jan-2025 17:00 hrs	14-Jan-2025 12:20 hrs	20-Jan-2025 12:20 hrs

This is online tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in National e-GP portal and no offline and 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 Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branch up to Banking hours as stated in IFT. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help Pdesk ([helpdesk@procure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@procure.gov.bd)) (0176265528-31). (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>)

  
(Polash Kumar Banerjee)  
Executive Engineer,  
Jashore Water Development Division,  
BWDB, Jashore.

GD-104

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## Four killed as ambulance, 2 buses catch fire after collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Four people were burnt to death, and seven others injured when an ambulance and two buses caught fire following a collision on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar yesterday.

The deceased were the passengers of the ambulance while the injured were the passengers of one of the buses, said Md Rakibul Islam, duty officer at the Fire Service Control Room.

The official said the ambulance first collided with a road median in the Fulbaria Police Town area around 2:00am.

A bus then crashed into the ambulance from behind, causing the vehicle's gas cylinder to explode, which triggered the fire.

A second bus, which collided with the burning vehicle, also caught fire, he said.

Five firefighting units brought the fire under control in an hour, the official said.

The ambulance and the two buses, however, were completely destroyed.

The injured have been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.

The identities of the deceased could not be confirmed.

## BCS EXCLUSION Intel reports on 227 to be reviewed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A decision has been made to review the intelligence reports on 227 candidates who were excluded from the final gazette of the 43rd BCS.

This was decided at a meeting between Public Administration Senior Secretary Mokhles Ur Rahman and representatives from two intelligence agencies at the Secretariat yesterday.

However, individuals facing legal cases are unlikely to achieve favourable outcomes.

Talking to journalists, the senior secretary said, "Those who have no record of criminal offences can hope to join their positions."

Altogether, 267 candidates were excluded from the 43rd BCS in two gazette notifications on October 15 and December 30 last year.

Among them, 40 candidates did not attend their medical check-ups and will not be considered for the review. As a result, the review will focus on the remaining 227 candidates.

Sources indicate that the senior secretary has directed officials to approach the review process positively.

No specific reasons were disclosed for disqualification of 227 candidates.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



A firefighting helicopter is seen on the backdrop of plumes of smoke as a wildfire burns in Pacific Palisades, California. A fast-moving wildfire in a Los Angeles suburb burned buildings and sparked panicked evacuations as "life-threatening" winds whipped the region. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AFP



## No room for favouritism in next polls: CEC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday said they were working wholeheartedly to hold free and fair polls.

"We are committed to holding fair, transparent, and acceptable elections," he said.

The CEC made the comments while speaking at the inaugural session of a workshop titled "Challenges in the Voter Registration Process and Ways to Overcome It" held at the Moulvibazar Bengal Convention Hall.

The Election Commission Secretariat's Capacity Building Project and Moulvibazar District Election Office jointly organised the programme.

"We have assumed the posts not to favour any particular party, organisation or individual to win elections. We are here to hold fair elections," the CEC said.

"Our aim is to hold an election where people's votes will be the only deciding factor in winning an election."

The CEC also asked the field-level officers to work fearlessly, saying, "There

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Govt expands OMS programme across country

Sale of rice to begin Jan 12 in 422 upazilas amid rising prices of the staple

BAHARAM KHAN and SUKANTA HALDER

The interim government has expanded the Open Market Sales (OMS) programme across the country to help families cope with inflation, as retail prices of kitchen essentials continue to soar in the local market.

Sales will continue till February after the first phase of the programme begins on January 12, a food ministry official said.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Food Adviser Ali Imam Majumder said the price of rice has increased exponentially in the local market, which is why the government has taken the initiative to provide relief to the common people.

A ministry official told this newspaper that under the OMS initiative, around 1,752 centres across 422 upazilas in the country will sell rice. "Two tonnes of rice will be sold every day in each upazila."

Each person can purchase five kilograms of rice at Tk 30 per kg, the official said.

Over the past two years, real income reductions due to ongoing inflationary pressure have pushed at least 78 lakh people into poverty, shows the study by the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID).

This includes 38 lakh people who have become extremely poor.

Besides, around 1 crore more are at risk of slipping below the poverty line due to continued inflationary pressures, said Md Deen Islam, research director of the RAPID.

In the past week, the price of coarse rice has increased by 6.67 percent and medium grain rice by 1.63 percent, according to the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## 'Unhealthy competition' on to cling to power

SAYS FAKHRUL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said an "unhealthy competition" is going on to cling to power, and urged all political parties to prioritise unity and stability in these critical times.

"Since Sheikh Hasina fled on August 5 last year, we haven't been able to regain the trust among ourselves. We are failing to stay united ... what has started is unfortunate; I think it's not a healthy development. An unhealthy competition has begun to remain in power."

"You can only stay in power when you can ensure stability," he said at an event at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

He, however, did not specifically name who his remarks were directed at.

A book, titled "Rajbandir Jabanbandi", which chronicles the court depositions given by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



## Mediators make some progress in Gaza truce talks

SAY SOURCES; 3 children among 17 killed in Israeli strikes

AGENCIES

US and Arab mediators have made some progress in their efforts to reach a ceasefire accord between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, but not enough to seal a deal, Palestinian sources close to the talks said yesterday.

As talks continued in Qatar, the Israeli military carried out strikes across the enclave, killing at least 17 people, Palestinian medics said.

The death toll included eight Palestinians killed in a house in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, where Israeli forces have operated for more than three months. Nine others, including a father and his three children, died in two separate airstrikes on two houses in central Gaza Strip.

Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip has killed at least 46,006 Palestinians and wounded 109,378 since October 7, 2023, the Gaza health officials said yesterday.

Palestinian authorities, meanwhile, warned that the al-Aqsa, Nasser, and European hospitals face imminent closure over dire fuel shortages, reports Al Jazeera online.

Pope Francis yesterday stepped up his recent criticisms of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, calling the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave "very serious and shameful".

Three Gaza hospitals face imminent closure over fuel shortages

Death toll in enclave rises to 46,006

## ACC sues Nixon, wife over Tk 3,162cr shady transactions



Nixon Chowdhury



Tarin Hossain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed two cases against Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury, alias Nixon Chowdhury, a former Awami League lawmaker from Faridpur, and his wife Tarin Hossain for their alleged involvement in shady bank transactions of more than Tk 3,162 crore.

The two also face charges of amassing illegal wealth of about Tk 19.5 crore.

During his tenure as a lawmaker, Nixon, also nephew of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, abused his power and accumulated unexplained wealth of Tk 11.23 crore, according to the case statement filed with the ACC's Integrated District Office in Dhaka by its Assistant Director Ferdous Rahman yesterday.

Besides, Nixon, the younger brother of former chief whip Noor E-Alam Chowdhury, also conducted unusual

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## PRETTY LI'L PECKERS

A male scarlet-backed flowerpecker gently perched on a twig in the Hazarikhil Sanctuary in Fakirkhali. This passerine bird is found in subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests, and occasionally gardens, in a number of countries throughout South and East Asia, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and more. However, it is known to be rare in Nepal and Bhutan. It feeds primarily on seeds, fruits and flower nectar, hence the name "flowerpecker". The bird is sexually dimorphic, meaning the males and females are easily distinguishable – the male has navy blue upperparts with a bright red streak down its back from its crown to its tail coverts, while the female and juvenile are predominantly olive green.

PHOTO: MD SUMON



## FA'S CHINA VISIT Rohingya crisis, trade gap to top agenda

BSS, Dhaka

Addressing trade imbalances, attracting Chinese investments in Bangladesh and Rohingya issue will be on the agenda during Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain's upcoming bilateral visit to China from January 20 to 24, according to a foreign ministry's spokesperson.

"This year marks the golden jubilee of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and China."

The adviser's visit to China is therefore of significant importance," said spokesperson Mohammad Rafiqul Alam during a weekly media briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday.

The foreign adviser is expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1