



A trip down memory lane

WR1



250-bed on paper, 100-bed in reality

P5



Russia attacks Ukraine with 72 drones

P6



A 10-step proposal for election road map 2025

P8

MRT-1 unlikely to be ready before 2030

Inaugurated in 2023, country's first underground rail project sees little progress

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Five years have passed since the country's first underground metro rail project was approved, but construction of the key structure has not yet begun.

The Tk 52,561-crore project, Mass Rapid Transit Line-1 (MRT Line-1), was formally inaugurated in February 2023. The Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), which is implementing it, has so far been able to hire contractors for one of the 12 packages.

Realising that the December 2026 deadline is too ambitious, officials say they may need an extension of three or four years. A significant rise in the cost is inevitable.

Officials at a meeting last month, chaired by DMTCL Managing Director Mohammad Abdur Rouf, said the delays were mainly caused by the Covid-19 restrictions and the lengthy approval procedure of the project's primary financier Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica).

The meeting decided to accelerate the tendering process.

The MRT Line-1 will connect Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with Kamalapur Railway Station. It will also bring Purbachal township

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



A man on a bicycle pedals through the dense morning fog in Barunagaon village in Thakurgaon yesterday. The icy winds from the Himalayas, coupled with clear skies, have intensified the cold in the northern districts. PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Cold snap to continue in North for 2 more days

Says Met office

STAR REPORT

A mild cold wave currently affecting northern and western regions will persist for the next two to three days.

However, day and night temperatures are expected to improve during this period, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"People will continue to experience the chilly conditions for the next few days. The northern and western regions will face a mild coldwave during this time," meteorologist Md Abul Kalam Mallik told The Daily Star.

Panchagarh, the country's northernmost district, recorded the season's lowest temperature of 7.3°C yesterday as a mild to moderate coldwave swept

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



No local polls before general election

Demand BNP, like-minded parties

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP and its like-minded parties have firmly opposed plans to hold local government elections before the national polls.

The parties want to hold programmes to mobilise public support for an early national election if the government attempts to delay it by raising issues like local government elections.

At liaison committee meetings between the BNP and 10 other parties on Wednesday and Thursday, the leaders called the idea of holding local government elections before national polls "an attempt to detract from the major issues".

In recent years, the BNP and these parties simultaneously demonstrated against the Awami League government. As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen ties, the BNP

BNP, like-minded parties criticise govt for 'shifting focus from national election'

They plan programmes to mobilise public support for early general election if govt attempts to delay it

is scheduled to hold discussions with leaders of the 12-party alliance today.

Leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote -- an alliance of BNP's like-minded parties -- among others, attended the liaison committee meetings at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

"We want the national elections to be held after essential electoral reforms as soon as possible," said Fariduzzaman Farhad, chairman of the National People's Party and coordinator of Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote who attended a meeting.

"If the government fails to do this, we will intensify efforts to build public opinion on the issue," he told this newspaper.

"The people want their voting rights restored and an elected government in place,"

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Cancer patients cut off from vital lifeline

All 6 radiotherapy machines at NICRH out of service for 19 days

AHMED DEEPTO

All six radiotherapy machines of the NICRH have been out of order for 19 days, depriving over 200 cancer patients of their scheduled therapy every day.

The National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH) in the capital is the country's only full-fledged cancer treatment facility.

Of the hospital's six radiotherapy machines, two Linear Accelerators (LINACs) became nonfunctional two years ago and two Cobalts a year ago.

Since then, the two remaining LINACs were used beyond their capacities for approximately 200-230 patients every day, until they recently became nonfunctional.

One of the machines malfunctioned during a therapy session on December 21. The other stopped working the following day, halting all radiotherapy services at the state-run facility.

Of the hospital's six radiotherapy machines, two Linear Accelerators (LINACs) became nonfunctional two years ago and two Cobalts a year ago. The two remaining LINACs went out of order recently.

While visiting the NICRH yesterday, a notice was seen in the radiotherapy department, announcing that the machines were out of order. There was no mention of when they might be operational and patients were told they would be contacted later when the machines start working again.

The hospital authorities are yet to specify when the machines will be repaired and made operational. However, they have announced plans to set up two new radiotherapy machines in February and March.

Confirming that all six machines are currently non-functional, NICRH Director Dr Jahangir Kabir said the hospital has been unable to provide radiotherapy services, forcing around 200 cancer patients to return home without the therapy every day.

He added that efforts are underway to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

"By the first week of February, we hope that one new machine will start its operation, and within the first week of March, we will start operating another new machine."

"If four more machines can be made operational, we will be able to provide therapy to an additional 600 cancer patients daily."

The collapse of radiotherapy services at the NICRH is a stark reminder of the systemic challenges in Bangladesh's healthcare system.

Patients who had waited months to get radiotherapy appointments at the NICRH have expressed frustration over the disruption in services. Many travelled long distances to Dhaka, only to find the machines out of order.

Rabeya Begum, 53, a breast cancer patient from Moulvibazar, said she underwent four radiotherapy sessions at the NICRH.

She arrived at the hospital yesterday morning for her

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Police launch hunt for ex-OC who escaped custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have issued a nationwide red alert to arrest Shah Alam, the former officer-in-charge of Uttara East Police Station, who escaped from custody.

It was issued yesterday across all police stations and border points in the country. The immigration authorities were notified to prevent Shah Alam, 42,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The water of this ditch near the Botanical Garden in Mirpur's Goran Chat Bari area has turned blue due to toxic chemical waste from different factories. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN





DHAKA THROUGH THE LENS

Beauty in unexpected places

RBR

The first week of January passed quickly, as we sorted through pictures of Dhaka submitted for our My Dhaka Lens competition.

For those who are unaware, we have been running a photography contest during the last weeks of December. We wanted our contestants to focus on Dhaka's appeal — meaning what they think is the true essence of Dhaka; not categorising, just Dhaka as a theme projected by a singular photo, a photo documentary, drone shot, heritage, street photography, etc.

The response was overwhelming! So much so, that shortlisting the entries has become a challenge. We were



PHOTO: STAR



supposed to select 100 good entries, and trust me, just going through three days' worth of content, we selected 308 shots! It was that brilliant a contest.

I will not get into the formalities of the contest; instead, I will just talk about how this sorting in progress gave me a new perspective on Dhaka.

Truly, it is a magical place, where even a dumpster invokes hope. The landscape is littered with garbage and trash in an unproportioned way, and amid this filth, sleeps two young souls not more than five or six years old. A big bag full of their treasure, plastic trash held tightly in their fist, the tired kids drop off to sleep, working relentlessly to earn a few takas for a rice meal.

I found pictures of adolescents like this pop up quite frequently, either

frolicking in the rain, posing a thumbs up for the camera, or working in garages or metal factories. Even though the deep underlying explanation of these street children working will be filled with human rights, activism, and other illegal actions, I just saw their resilience.

I am not feeding them, clothing them, or sheltering them, neither am I helping educate them; these angels are living life the hard way, fending for themselves in whatever manner they can.

If Dhaka is under the spell of Maleficent, the dark witch, then

they are Dhaka's spirits and fireflies, lighting the way in the dark. It is said that the Latin root of the word fairy is fay, which means fate. As irony would have it, the street children of Dhaka are our magical children of the lesser gods, with supernatural qualities to endure hardship and live through it.

Yes, I feel heartbroken seeing their state of living, and yes, I have done nothing to contribute to their wellbeing, but at the same time, I salute their fight for survival to keep Dhaka ticking.

Besides these disheartening shots, pointing towards thousands of shortcomings of the state, the pictures of old beggars and the toiling mass showed that when you actually want to portray Dhaka, it is never the posh, upscale Dhaka. It always means the people on the street, at ground zero, where the true colours of fast change and intense activities are revealed.

Green parks, flowers, festivals, events, street food, and shopping malls somehow entail the ritzy Dhaka; at least, this is the idea I got while sorting the entries of My Dhaka Lens. I am eager to see how the contest shapes up.

In the meantime, the street children of Dhaka, famously named by our artist Rafiqun Nabi, as Tokais, are Dhaka's superheroes, their smiling faces and happy selves gives me the courage to go through another day.

Statues, gold ornaments stolen from Kali temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Brass idols of Kali and Shiva were stolen from the Shri Shri Bhabotarini Kali Temple in Tushbhandar of Kaliganj upazila, Lalmonirhat, early yesterday.

Gold and silver ornaments, along with brass furniture worth over Tk 4 lakh, were also taken after thieves broke the locks of two gates of the temple.

The theft took place between 2:00am and 4:00am, police said.

A case has been filed with Kaliganj Police Station regarding the incident, Kaliganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Selim Malik confirmed.

Arun Chandra Das, general secretary of the temple committee, told The Daily Star that the 150-year-old temple has never been looted before.

"Criminals group stole the idols, ornaments, and furniture. Police and upazila administration officials visited the spot. We hope the authorities will quickly identify and arrest the thieves and recover the stolen items."

Ashish Chandra Chakrabarty, the temple priest, said he discovered the theft when he arrived at the temple for morning prayers on Friday morning. "The lock was broken, and the idols, ornaments, and furniture were missing," he said. The matter was immediately reported to the temple committee and police.

Lalmonirhat Superintendent of Police (SP) Torikul Islam, Kaliganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sifat Anwar Tumpa, and the Kaliganj Police Station OC visited the temple later in the day.

SP Torikul Islam told The Daily Star that it appears to be a planned theft.

"The temple was secure, but the organised thieves managed to break two locks and steal the items. Police are actively working to identify and arrest those involved and recover the stolen idols, ornaments, and furniture."

Gold and silver ornaments, along with brass furniture were taken after thieves broke the locks of two gates of the temple.

Cancer patients

FROM PAGE 1
fifth scheduled therapy, only to find the machines were non-operational.

"My family had to borrow money for my treatment. Yet, I missed my therapy today [yesterday]. I don't know how I'll manage the rest of my five therapy sessions."

Speaking to The Daily Star on the condition of anonymity, a doctor of the NICRH, said, "Patients of this hospital have been facing difficulties, either

due to faulty machines or delays in getting appointment, for the past five years. The hospital authorities have done nothing in this regard. We had even gone to the higher authorities for help, and they too have done nothing yet.

"We're tired of constantly turning patients away. It's extremely frustrating for a medical team to not be able to provide proper treatment to the patients."

বিশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

যান্ত্রিক ত্রুটির কারণে, Linac-3 & Linac-4 মেশিনে রেডিওথেরাপী চিকিৎসা সেবা প্রদান করা সম্ভব হইতেছে না। মেশিন মেরামত হয়ে গেলে আমরা কার্ডে দেওয়া নাম্বারে ফোন করে জানিয়ে দেব, ইনশাআল্লাহ।

কর্তৃপক্ষ

Cold snap

FROM PAGE 1
across 11 districts.

The temperature marked a sharp drop from 9.5 degrees Celsius recorded the previous day in Panchagarh, said Jitendranath Ray, assistant officer at the local weather observatory.

"The icy winds from the Himalayas, coupled with clear skies, have intensified the cold in the northern districts," he added. The weather is expected to remain similar over the next few days.

According to the meteorological department, temperatures between 8-10 degrees Celsius indicate a mild cold wave, 6-8 degrees Celsius

a moderate cold wave, and below 6 degrees Celsius a severe cold wave.

To address the situation, district administrations in some northern districts, including Panchagarh, have begun distributing warm clothing to affected individuals. Local authorities have also urged affluent residents to step up and assist the cold-stricken population alongside government efforts.

The lowest temperature was recorded at 14.5°C in Dhaka.

According to the Met office, light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during midnight to morning in 24 hours, starting 9:00am yesterday.

Trump spared jail

FROM PAGE 12
while he is serving a four-year term as president.

Trump fought tooth and nail to avoid the spectacle of being compelled to appear before a state-level judge so close to when he is due to be sworn into office. The US Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a last-minute bid by Trump to halt it.

The six-week trial last

year played out against the extraordinary backdrop of Trump's successful campaign to retake the White House. The sentencing marks the culmination of the first-ever criminal case brought against a US president, past or present.

Trump will be the first president to take office with a criminal conviction.

No local polls before general election

FROM PAGE 1
another meeting participant said, requesting anonymity.

During Thursday's meeting, LDP Secretary General Redwan Ahmed criticised the government for what he said was an attempt to shift focus from the national election.

"There was no prior discussion about local government elections. Now, they are suddenly bringing up this issue again, causing confusion with their inconsistent statements," he said.

On Wednesday, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said that the interim government is simultaneously preparing for national and local body elections.

Asked about the next national election at a press briefing on Thursday, Adviser Mahfuj Alam said the matter depended on the political parties; how much reform they want. This will be discussed during consultation on the reports of the reform commissions.

He added a decision on local government polls would also be taken following consultation with the political parties.

The parties agreed that national elections should be conducted this year. They expressed concerns that unnecessary delays or distractions, such as local government polls, could derail the process.

Jatiya Ganotantrik Party

President Khandaker Lutful Rahman, who attended the meeting, told this newspaper that they would conduct a campaign to gain public support for a national election.

Leaders in the meeting accused the government of failing to address critical issues like deteriorating law and order and the rising cost of essential commodities. They vowed to make these concerns a central focus of their campaigns.

Sources said they also criticised student leaders for undermining the role of political parties in the anti-fascist movement and questioned the funding source for student leaders' activities like private vehicles

used during public events.

Speaking to this correspondent, BNP Standing Committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said the interim government was supposed to hold a national election, but it was making noise about local polls.

As far as he knows, Tuku said, local government elections have never been held under an interim government except during the Ayub Khan regime before independence.

Questioning the intention behind bringing up the local election issue at this time, Tuku accused the government of focusing on reforms instead of election, law and order, and rising prices of daily necessities, which he said is worsening public suffering.

Police launch hunt for ex-OC

FROM PAGE 1
from leaving the country through airports and land ports, Abu Sayeed Mia, inspector (investigation) of Uttara East Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Over escaping the OC, Md Mohibullah, OC of Uttara East Police Station, was withdrawn yesterday, he added.

Earlier, ASI Sajjad Hossain of the police station was suspended. A case has been

filed against Shah Alam over his escape from police custody.

Police are searching for him. An investigation has also been initiated to find how he managed to escape, the officer added.

Shah Alam, who was sued over a murder that took place during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, was held in Kushtia on Wednesday. He was brought to Uttara East Police Station and

supposed to be produced before a Dhaka court on Thursday. But before that, he escaped from the police station around noon.

Officials warned of strict disciplinary action if anybody is found negligent in performing their duties.

Meanwhile, students and locals of Uttara yesterday brought out a protest procession, demanding the arrest of OC Shah Alam.

Rawnaq Jahan, deputy

commissioner of Uttara Division, visited the spot and assured the protesters of arresting him.

She told them that a probe committee has been formed to take action against those involved in the incident, and a report will be submitted within three working days.

The protesters also issued an ultimatum that they would launch a tougher programme if the OC is not arrested within 24 hours.

MRT-1 unlikely to be ready before 2030

FROM PAGE 1
and parts of Narayanganj under the metro network.

Of the 31.24km line, a 19.87km section from airport to Kamalapur will be underground. The part from Notun Bazar to Purbachal, an 11.36km stretch, will be elevated. There will be a total of 19 stations.

Once done, trains will be able to carry eight lakh passengers a day.

As the largest transport-sector initiative in Bangladesh's history, the project aims to significantly reduce Dhaka's notorious traffic congestion and pollution.

The MRT Line-1 is part of a broader plan, conceived by the previous government, to establish a 140-km metro rail network across Dhaka and adjacent areas by 2030.

RUNNING BEHIND SCHEDULE

After the MRT Line-1 project was approved in October 2019, it took three years to hire the first contractor mainly due to delays in drawing the

detailed designs during the coronavirus pandemic.

In October 2022, the authority signed a contract with a Japan-Bangladesh joint-venture firm to develop the land for a depot in Pitalganj of Ruppaganj, Narayanganj.

Sheikh Hasina, then prime minister, inaugurated the physical work in February 2023. Japan's Tokyu Construction Co Ltd and Bangladesh's Max Infrastructure Ltd started depot development work under package-1 the following month. The work saw 87 percent progress as of December last year.

But the DMTC could not hire any contractor for the main work which includes tunnel boring, construction of viaducts and stations, installation of tracks and power lines, and procurement of trains.

The authority so far called for tenders for nine of the packages. Pre-contract negotiations with the contractors are going

on for package-5, under which the underground line from Nadda Station to Natun Bazar Station, an interchange, and two stations will be built, shows the project document.

The eight other packages are now at different stages of the tendering process. Draft documents for two other packages now pending with Jica for approval.

Meanwhile, the metro authority has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladesh Army in June 2023 to relocate utility lines. The Army has started relocating service lines near five stations.

Besides, the authority so far acquired 93 out of 115 acres of land, documents show.

The project implementation committee held its 8th meeting on December 23 last year with Rouf, managing director of DMTC, in the chair.

According to the meeting minutes, the project authority could

spend only Tk 523.97 crore (14.57 percent) of Tk 3,594.37 crore allocated under the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The project saw only 6 percent overall progress and 5.55 percent financial progress.

At the meeting, Project Director Abul Kashem Bhuiyansaid it is mandatory to take concurrence from Jica for all phases of the bidding process and Jica gives approval considering priority of the packages, reads the meeting minutes.

Besides, Covid-19 hit the country just six months after the approval of the project which delayed the drawing of detailed design, land acquisition and other works, he said.

Apart from accelerating the tendering process, the meeting decided to hold an inter-ministerial meeting to expedite land acquisition process, reads the minutes.

NOT BEFORE 2030? Officials say meeting the December 2026 deadline is

Gaza death toll 40% higher than recorded

FROM PAGE 12
The study's best death toll estimate was 64,260, which would mean the health ministry had under-reported the number of deaths to that point by 41 percent.

That toll represented 2.9 percent of Gaza's pre-war population, "or approximately one in 35 inhabitants," the study said.

The UK-led group of researchers estimated that 59 percent of the deaths were women, children and the elderly.

The toll was only for deaths from traumatic injuries, so did not include deaths from a lack of health care or food, or the thousands of missing believed to be buried under rubble, reports AFP.

On Thursday, Gaza's health ministry said that 46,006 people had died over the full 15 months of offensive.

Israel has repeatedly questioned the credibility of the Gaza health ministry's figures, but the United Nations have said they are reliable.

The researchers used a

statistical method called "capture-recapture" that has previously been used to estimate the death toll in conflicts around the world.

The analysis used data from three different lists, the first provided by the Gaza health ministry of the bodies identified in hospitals or morgues.

The second list was from an online survey launched by the health ministry in which Palestinians reported the deaths of relatives.

The third was sourced from obituaries posted on social media platforms such as X, Instagram, Facebook and Whatsapp, when the identity of the deceased could be verified.

"We only kept in the analysis those who were confirmed dead by their relatives or confirmed dead by the morgues and the hospital," lead study author Zeina Jamaluddine, an epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, told AFP.

The researchers scoured the lists, searching for duplicates.

no way possible.

It took more than six years to launch partial operation of MRT Line-6 from the day physical works began.

Citing a bidding document, a DMTC official said contractors, after signing of contracts, will get five years to complete underground lines and three and a half years for elevated lines.

Considering this, if one underground package is signed this month, the contractor will get up to January 2030 to complete the works.

An official, wishing anonymity, said the contract for package-5 may be signed in March and contracts for other packages may be signed at three-four month intervals.

"In this given situation, it may not be possible to complete the project before 2030," he said.

WHAT THE AUTHORITY SAYS

The Project Director's Office, on January 6, sent a press release claiming that

the works for metro rail is gaining momentum.

It mentioned the land development works for the depot saw 87 percent progress and tender for four underground packages have already been floated.

Contacted, Project Director Abul Kashem said he and his colleagues were working hard to expedite the procurement process and hoped to sign contracts for package-2 and 5 within June this year.

The structure at the depot will be built under package-2, he said.

Asked when they would be able to complete hiring all contractors, he said it depended on many issues including the concurrence of Jica and thus it was difficult to give an exact timeline.

Replying to a question, he said when the project was approved the exchange rate of the US dollar was around Tk 85 but currently it is more than Tk 120.

The project cost is likely to rise, he told The Daily Star on January 7.

'Minus-two' won't be successful

Says Khasru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said the hope for implementing a fabricated notion of minus two formula or depoliticisation will not be fulfilled as BNP is now the most popular political party in the country.

"That expectation [minus-two] will not be fulfilled..." he said, replying to a question from reporters after paying tribute at the grave of Ziaur Rahman.

Khasru also said, "Democracy must be established in Bangladesh. The first task for that (to restore democracy) is (to arrange) election... election is the first reform (initiative). The movement for reforms and the restoration of democracy must begin with this (election)," he said.

Meanwhile, BNP senior
SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



A farmer spreads paddy grains under the sun, following a traditional post-harvest method to ensure they are properly dried for storage and preservation. This photo was taken in Surjanagar, Rajbari recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Need collective efforts for societal challenges

Says Rizwana

UNB, Dhaka

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan has stressed the critical role of women alongside men in promoting environmental conservation and climate resilience.

"We must commit to collective efforts to address societal challenges and uplift communities. By securing equity and sharing responsibility, we can create a better world where everyone can progress," she said.

She made the remarks at an event organised to mark the 40th anniversary of Inner Wheel District 328 yesterday at a city hotel.

The adviser urged all to work tirelessly for positive change and extend support to disadvantaged individuals.

She highlighted the importance of stepping out of comfort zones to advocate for justice and dignity as central to all human endeavours, whether by the state or private individuals.

She also encouraged organisations like the Inner Wheel to continue inspiring others through service and friendship, setting impactful examples for society to follow.

Political parties slam VAT, tax hikes

Say it's an 'authoritarian policy', will disproportionately impact the poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties have criticised the government for increasing value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on nearly 100 goods and services, saying such measures would disproportionately burden marginalised and low-to-middle-income groups.

They argued that the hike in indirect taxes would exacerbate the struggles of ordinary people, calling it a move akin to the "authoritarian policy" of draining citizens' resources.

The National Board of Revenue on Thursday issued a notification raising VAT and SD rates on products such as mobile phone usage, internet, tissue, fruit, readymade garments, LP gas, spectacles, and hotel services. The new rates came into effect yesterday.

Consumers now face VAT rates of up to 15 percent on items like restaurant food, biscuits, cakes, pickles, tomato sauce, tailoring services, toilet tissue, towels, sweets, driving licences, non-AC hotels, motor workshops, and lubricant oil.

Previously, VAT rates for these items ranged as low as 5 percent. Additionally, VAT on electric transformers, poles, and steel products such as cold-rolled coils, limestone, and dolomite was raised to 15 percent from 5 percent.

Medicine prices are also expected to increase due to a VAT

hike at the trading stage, rising from 5 percent to 7.5 percent. Other areas affected include printing, cinema tickets, repairs, cleaning services, and airfares, with VAT and excise duties seeing significant increases.

BNP standing committee members Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku criticised the government for what they described as regressive policies.

These measures will worsen public hardship, especially for marginalised groups, fixed-income earners, and low-to-middle-income families.

Communist Party of Bangladesh

Tuku said, "Raising indirect taxes will place an unbearable burden on the people. This is completely unacceptable. During Sheikh Hasina's tenure, the prices of essentials skyrocketed. Now, under the interim government, what measures have been taken to alleviate public suffering?"

He added that the interim government had failed to stabilise the economy, leaving it unchecked like the previous administration.

Khasru said, "It will severely affect the lives of ordinary people,

increasing their suffering."

The Communist Party of Bangladesh also condemned the decision.

In a statement, the CPB said, "These measures will worsen public hardship, especially for marginalised groups, fixed-income earners, and low-to-middle-income families."

The CPB linked the tax hikes to International Monetary Fund (IMF) pressure, accusing the government of adopting policies characteristic of an authoritarian regime. The party called for reversing the decision, recovering embezzled funds, collecting bad loans, and imposing special taxes on the wealthy.

The Socialist Party of Bangladesh also criticised the government, saying it had followed in the footsteps of the previous "fascist regime".

"This absurd decision will push low-income groups further into jeopardy. It exposes the anti-people nature of this interim government," the party said.

The statement also said IMF recommendations influenced the decision, warning of adverse effects on rural and low-income earners, as well as a deeper economic crisis.

Political parties across the spectrum demanded the immediate withdrawal of the tax hikes, urging the government to prioritise public welfare over regressive fiscal measures.

Unite for inclusive Bangladesh

Says Sarjis

UNB, Bhola

The youth should unite in shaping an inclusive and equitable

Bangladesh, said Sarjis Alam, central coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Speaking at a public rally near the Ilisha Fountain in Bhola yesterday, Sarjis said it is important to document the aspirations of all citizens in a unified declaration.

"These dreams must reflect the voices of people from every district, sub-district, and social stratum," he said.

Sarjis highlighted the movement's success in ousting the "autocratic killer regime" of Sheikh Hasina, uniting people across parties, religions, and classes. "It's now our responsibility to fulfil the masses' aspirations for a brighter Bangladesh," he added.

He criticised corruption and extortion and demanded justice for protesters injured by law enforcement. "The officers who opened fire on our brothers, including Jasim, must face more than mere transfers," he said.

Sarjis questioned Bhola's lack of gas access and medical facilities, despite producing gas.



JULY UPRISING

Six bodies of martyrs found in DMCH morgue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six bodies of martyrs from the July uprising have been found in the forensic department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The special cell for the July uprising at DMCH revealed this during a press conference yesterday, reports UNB.

The identities of the bodies are as follows — an unidentified male aged around 20, an unidentified male aged around 25, an unidentified male of around 22, an unidentified male of around 30, an unidentified female of around 32, and Enamul, 25.

The forensic team has completed autopsies and collected DNA samples. Reports indicate that five individuals died from injuries, while Enamul succumbed to a fall from a height, according to the cell's secretary Hasan Inam.

"We discovered that six unidentified bodies from the uprising were at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. This morning [yesterday], our team visited Shahbagh Police Station to gather detailed information. Officer-in-charge Khalid Mansur confirmed that six bodies were in the morgue, and these bodies belong to the protesters of the uprising," he said.

"However, the police have not clarified when the bodies were brought here," he added.

The special cell urged anyone missing a person of the mentioned ages to contact them at this number — 01621324187.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Tipu was a victim of local power struggle'

Claims family of slain Swechhasebak League leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Family members of Golam Rabbani Tipu, a Swechhasebak League leader who was shot dead at Cox's Bazar sea beach on Thursday night, believe his murder was part of a power struggle in the local political scene.

Tipu was vice president of the organisation's Khulna city unit, and former Ward 4 councillor of the Khulna City Corporation.

"Tipu's popularity made him a target of multiple groups who were envious of his success as a councillor," said Tipu's elder brother, Golam Rasul Badsha, a school teacher.

"After August 5, Tipu left Khulna and moved to Dhaka. There, numerous people contacted him with different offers, perhaps to lure him into a trap," he also said.

"One of the suspects might be Ward 16 councillor Sheikh Hasan Iftakhar alias Chalu, who could have tricked Tipu into traveling to Cox's Bazar by luring him with something like a business deal," he added.

A case was filed by Tipu's brother-in-law Yunus Ali yesterday against unidentified accused, said Jasim Uddin Chowdhury, additional superintendent of police (Media Spokesperson) in Cox's Bazar.

The ASP said the body was handed over to relatives after autopsy. "No one has been arrested yet. Involvements of suspects Sheikh Hasan Iftakhar, and Tipu's friend Mejbah Uddin Bhuttu, who were detained by Rab earlier on Friday, could not be found in connection with the murder," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Bus driver and helper held with 4,000 yaba pills in Jatrabari

UNB, Dhaka

Detective Branch of Police (DB) arrested a bus driver and his helper with 4,000 yaba tablets during an anti-narcotics drive in the capital's Jatrabari area yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as bus driver Md Zakir Hossain, 45, and helper Md Shahin Chowkidar, 30.

Following a tip-off, a team of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police stopped a bus named "Saint Martin Road Master" at Janapath intersection in the capital Sayedabad around 9:05am on Friday, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) of DMP Talebur Rahman.

During a search, detectives found the yaba tablets inside a bag the driver was carrying. The bus was also seized, the DC added.

The two had been smuggling yaba from Cox's Bazar to Dhaka under the guise of passenger transport, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) of DMP Talebur Rahman.

A case has been filed under the Narcotics Control Act with Jatrabari Police Station, and further legal actions are underway, said police.

Cold disrupts life, livelihood

Panchagarh records coldest day of the season at 7.3 degrees Celsius

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Jatish Chandra Barman, a tractor driver in Barunagaon village of Thakurgaon, struggles against biting winds as he tills frozen croplands. "The cold winds make it extremely difficult to drive the tractor," says the 35-year-old, his breath visible in the air.

But for farmers like Rafiqul Islam, there's no choice but to brave the bitter cold. "We must nurture our potato plants now to prevent pests and fungal attacks," he says.

This week, Panchagarh recorded the coldest day of the season at 7.3 degrees Celsius yesterday, the lowest temperature in the country so far. Dinajpur was not far behind, with the mercury dipping to 9.7 degrees Celsius.

According to the Meteorological Department, the region is under a mild to moderate cold wave, amplified by cold winds rolling down from the Himalayas. Temperatures between 8 and 10 degrees Celsius mark a mild cold wave, while anything below 6 is considered severe.

For farmer Yunus Ali in Dinajpur Sadar upazila, the cold brings a different worry. "My paddy seedbeds are at risk. If this weather persists, they will be ruined," he says.

Others, like rickshaw-puller Md Sattar from Nishchintapur in Thakurgaon, are seeing their incomes plummet. "I can only work a few hours a day in this cold. My earnings have dropped to



half of what they were," the 55-year-old says.

Schools, too, are feeling the chill. At Abdur Rashid Degree College, Principal Anwar Sahadat said there is a significant drop in attendance. "The cold has kept many students at home," he said.

The cold is also taking a toll on health. Hospitals say there is a surge in patients with respiratory and cold-related illnesses.

"The number of cases has significantly increased," says Rakibul Alam, resident medical officer at Thakurgaon Modern Hospital.

While district administrations in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, and Dinajpur are distributing warm clothes, the demand far outweighs the supply.

Officials have urged wealthier residents to lend a hand to mitigate the suffering.

Arrest those responsible for Ijtema ground deaths

Demand Zubair followers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The supporters of the Tablighi Jamaat faction aligned with Maulana Zubair Ahmad yesterday demanded a ban on the activities of the faction aligned with Maulana Saad Kandhalvi.

They made the demand during a protest rally after Juma prayers at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque, under the banner of "Ulema Mashayekh Bangladesh and Tawhidi Janata."

They called for the cancellation of bail and swift arrest of those involved in the death of four devotees at the Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi on December 18 last year.

Shaikhul Hadith Allama Mohiuddin Rabbani said the ulema (Islamic scholars) shed blood and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

STAY UPDATED WITH The Daily Star @ thedailystar.net

Flat For Sale 6 UN Road Baridhara Diplomatic Area Size-4381sqft., 4 Bed, 2 Car Park Keep & Quiet Locations 01844600353 01891782762

Fourth death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman Khan, who was the joint editor of Prothom Alo.



The noted journalist died of cardiac arrest in 2021 at a private hospital in the capital. He was 53. He was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur.

He was one of the few journalists who became known for their expertise on writing about judicial matters.

Before joining Prothom Alo, he worked as a journalist in different media, including Samakal, Jugantar, Manabjamin, Muktakantha, Banglabazar, New Nation, Saptahik Manchitra, and two other dailies published from Barishal - Daily Dakshinanchal and Biplobi Bangladesh.

Marking the death anniversary, Mizanur Rahman Khan Smriti Sangsad and his family have chalked up various programmes.

Arrest those

FROM PAGE 3 gave their lives in 2014 at Shapla Chattar, and again in 2018 and 2024, against fascism. "Therefore, do not attempt to divide the Tablighi Jamaat..."

Mufti Sakhawat Hossain Raji said the fascist government had created divisions within the Tablighi Jamaat, and partitioned both Kakrail Mosque and the Tongi Jtama ground.

He alleged that even though fascism has been ousted, its allies still occupy positions in various institutions including the Secretariat, who helped the accused getting the bail.

They announced that one Jtama will be held in Tongi, organised by the ulema.

Similar protests were held at several other locations.

Six bodies

FROM PAGE 3 Contacted, Shahbagh OC Khalid Mansur said the bodies haven't been handed over to Anjuman Mufidul Islam yet, as people continue to come and check the bodies daily. A committee, to be formed under the DMP Commissioner's guidance, will decide further actions regarding the bodies.

PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 11 Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZMA 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00 JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

'Minus-two' won't be Tipu was a victim

FROM PAGE 3 leader Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday said they were hurt by the comments of the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, who claimed that the army and his party are the only tested patriotic forces in Bangladesh.

Talking to reporters at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office after a meeting with a delegation

of Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote, he, however, expressed hope that Jamaat would join the movement for the restoration of democracy alongside other democratic parties in the future.

Asked whether BNP would hold any meeting with Jamaat, he said their party was not formally engaged in a simultaneous movement with Jamaat.

FROM PAGE 3 The register of the hotel showed that Iftekhar and a woman also boarded the same flat along with Tipu.

CCTV footages of the hotel's reception showed that Tipu left the hotel along with the woman at 6:31pm on Thursday. The woman has been absconding since the incident and police are looking for her, said ASP

FROM PAGE 3 Jasim. Around 8:20pm, Tipu was shot dead by miscreants on the footpath in front of Hotel Sea-Gull adjacent to Cox's Bazar beach.

"The bullet entered Tipu's head from right side and exited from left side. There was no other injury mark..." said Dr Mohammad Sadek, medical officer of Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, who conducted the autopsy.

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

BANGLADESH POWER DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Office of the Project Director Hundred Percent Reliable and Sustainable Electrification of Hatiya Island, Nijhum Island & Kutubdia Island, Biddu Bhaban 1, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000, E-mail: faruk_3264@yahoo.com

Memo. No.: 27.11.0000.853.06.001.25-02

Date: 08.01.2025

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works mentioned below-

Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., Tender ID, Package No., Name of Work, Scheduled Tender/Proposal Publication Date and Time, Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time. Row 01: 1060984, WD-37, Transportation of Electrical Goods and Steel Poles from Hatiya Island to Nijhum Island...

This is an Online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no Offline/ Hard Copy will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

বিদ্যুৎ/জন-৬৬৩ (২)/ ০৯/০১/২৫

(Md. Faruque Ahmed) 08.01.2025

Project Director Hundred Percent Reliable and Sustainable Electrification of Hatiya Island, Nijhum Island & Kutubdia Island Project, BPDB, Dhaka.

GD-110

বাংলাদেশ সরকারী কর্ম কমিশন

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ সরকারী কর্ম কমিশন সচিবালয়

আপারগাঁও, শেরেবাংলা নগর

ঢাকা-১২০৭।

www.bpsc.gov.bd

উন্মুক্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ সরকারী কর্ম কমিশনের নিম্ন লেখা নির্ধারণের শর্তাংশে specification অনুসারে লেখা প্রযুক্তিকরণের বিস্তৃত প্রকৃত লেখা প্রযুক্তিকরণী ব্যক্তি/ প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে লেখার ডিআইন অর্জন করা যাবে।

Table with 2 columns: ক্রমিক নং, কাজের নাম, specification অনুসারে লেখা প্রযুক্তিকরণ। Row 1: বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর ও তারিখ, ৮০.০০.০০০০.৪০০.১১.০১৪.২৪-০৭, তারিখ ০৯/০১/২০২৫।

GD-105



Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh Office of the Executive Director Central Procurement, Engineering and Store Unit Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229 www.caab.gov.bd

No: 30.31.0000.184.30.001.24. 23

Dated: ০৯ /01/2025

e-GP Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP system portal.

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

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

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed of the Goods listed below:

Table with 5 columns: No., Name of Works, Package No., e-GP Tender ID, Last Selling Date and Time, Closing Date and Time. Row 01: Supply of different type of Electrical & A/C items for EM Workshop at Central Procurement, Engineering & Store Unit.

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

সং-৩০.৩১.০০০০.০৫১.০৫.০০১.২৫/১৪ তারিখ: ০৯/০১/২০২৫ খ্রি.

(Md. Rezaul Islam) 09.01.2025

Executive Director Central Procurement, Engineering and Store Unit Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229 Email: edcemsu@caab.gov.bd

GD-109

Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (A Company of Petrobangla) Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Selection of Consulting Firm (International). Includes details of project, key information, funding, and applicant requirements.

GD-108

Deputy General Manager (Procurement) 09/01/25

LA wildfires rage on, kill 10

Burn 10,000 structures; curfew declared amid reports of looting

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Wildfires menacing Los Angeles have killed at least 10 people and devoured nearly 10,000 structures, with five fires burning into a third night on Thursday, as dry desert winds fanning the flames again gathered strength.

The Palisades Fire between Santa Monica and Malibu on the city's western flank and the Eaton Fire in the east near Pasadena already rank as the most destructive in Los Angeles history, consuming more than 34,000 acres (13,750 hectares) - or some 53 square miles - turning entire neighborhoods to ash.

The death toll from the blazes rose to 10, Los Angeles County's Medical Examiner said in an update late on Thursday, without providing identities or other details.

Los Angeles County Sheriff

Two largest blazes consume 34,000 acres

180,000 evacuated, 200,000 under warnings

Robert Luna told an earlier press conference he expected the number to grow.

"It looks like an atomic bomb dropped in these areas. I don't expect good news, and we're not looking forward to those numbers," Luna said.

About 180,000 people have had to evacuate and another 200,000 people are under evacuation warnings, the LA County Sheriff's Department said.

At least 20 arrests have been made for looting, and the city of Santa Monica declared a curfew because of the lawlessness, officials said. Officials said they were working to establish curfews for areas affected by mandatory evacuation orders.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has mobilized 400 National Guard troops to assist with the escalating wildfire crisis in Los Angeles County.



Protesters attend a rally against the impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near his residence in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia attacks Ukraine with 72 drones

Kyiv downs 33 drones; Kremlin says Putin ready for talks with Trump

AGENCIES

Ukraine's air force said yesterday Russia attacked it with 72 drones overnight though it downed 33 of them while 34 others disappeared from radar without reaching their targets.

Five drones struck various buildings in the northern region of Chernihiv, wounding one person, the air force said. One downed drone fell on a building in the capital Kyiv but did not cause casualties.

Video footage filmed by Reuters carried the sound of an explosion and showed a fire burning in the distance in Kyiv during the overnight attack, reports Reuters.

More footage after daybreak showed the charred corner of

a high-rise apartment block in Kyiv with windows blown out and a line of cars parked below suffering damage.

Three people were killed yesterday morning and six wounded by Ukrainian strikes

Ukraine strikes on occupied Donetsk kill three

on the Russian-occupied part of Donetsk region, officials said.

The Russian-installed regional chief, Denis Pushilin, said that during the morning rush-hour Ukraine struck a square in the region's main city of Donetsk with precision-

guided long-range missiles fired by HIMARS rocket launchers, reports AFP.

The strikes on Shakhtarska Ploshcha killed two people and wounded two more, Russia's Investigative Committee told RIA Novosti news agency, accusing Ukraine of deliberately firing on civilian infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said yesterday that President Vladimir Putin was open to talks with Donald Trump, after the incoming US president said a meeting between the pair was being set up.

Trump, who will be inaugurated on January 20, has said he can bring a swift end to the conflict, without presenting a concrete plan.

Israel strikes Houthi targets in Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli military said yesterday that its air force had struck Houthi targets in Yemen, including a power station and ports on the western coast.

"A short while ago... fighter jets struck military targets belonging to the Houthi terrorist regime on the western coast and inland Yemen," the military said in a statement, adding the strikes were in retaliation for Houthi rocket launches into Israel.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the strikes on several targets in Yemen were a "sharp message" to the leaders of the Houthi rebel group, whom he said Israel "will hunt down".

US announces \$25m reward for arrest of Maduro

AGENCIES

The US has announced an increased \$25m (£20.4m) reward for information leading to the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on the day he was sworn in for a third six-year term in office.

The inauguration ceremony was overshadowed by recrimination from the international community and Venezuelan opposition leaders, reports BBC.

Rewards have also been offered for information leading to the arrest and or conviction of Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello.

A new reward of up to \$15 million for Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino has also been offered.

The United States slapped fresh sanctions against eight senior Venezuelan officials, reports AFP.

The US Treasury Department announced it had designated "eight Venezuelan officials who lead key economic and security agencies enabling (President) Nicolás Maduro's repression and subversion of democracy in Venezuela."

Those designated include high-level officials from the military and police, and the presidents of the country's state-owned oil company and airline.

Airlines face 'high risk' flying over Russia

Says EU aviation agency

AFP, Paris

The downing of an Azerbaijan Airlines airplane shows that flying over Russia poses a "high risk" to civilian flights amid the war in Ukraine, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency said yesterday.

The EASA said in a safety bulletin that the conflict "poses the risk of civil aircraft being unintentionally targeted in the airspace of the Russian Federation, due to possible civil-military coordination deficiencies, and the potential for misidentification".

The agency renewed its recommendation for airlines to avoid flying over western Russian airspace.

Russia has banned EU airlines from flying over its airspace but those from China, Turkey, Gulf states and other countries are still authorised.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said the Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet, which crashed in Kazakhstan on December 25, killing 38 people, was shot at "from the ground" over the Russian city of Grozny where it had been due to land.

No let-up

FROM PAGE 12

to import 14.81 lakh tonnes of rice as part of efforts to contain domestic prices by increasing stocks.

On January 7, the cabinet committee on purchase also approved 50,000 tonnes of rice import.

Kamal Sarkar, owner of Mirpur Makbul Rice Agency at Mirpur II, said coarse rice has low demand in Dhaka's market, which is why its price has increased slightly.

"The demand for fine rice is huge in the local market, and there is a shortage of this variety in the market. For this, its price has been increasing for the last several weeks. This week, each 50kg sack of fine rice saw a rise of Tk 50."

During visits to several kitchen markets in the capital yesterday, including Karwan Bazar, Mirpur, Kazipara, and Mohammadpur, this newspaper found that the retail price of fine rice rose by Tk 6-8, medium-grain rice by Tk 5-6, and coarse rice by Tk 2-3 per kg compared to three weeks ago.

At retail level, Miniket rice was selling at Tk 75-86 a kg, up from Tk 68-78; Nazirshail at Tk 78-92, up from Tk 72-82; BR-28 at Tk 64-66, up from Tk 58-62; and Pajjam at Tk 62-65 a kg, up from Tk 55-58.

Besides, the price of coarse rice (Guti Shorna) has risen by around Tk 2-3 per kg to Tk 52-55 in three weeks.

Alamgir Hossain, manager at Krishi Bhandar in Mohammadpur Krishi Market, said rice prices have been rising every week, and this week was no exception.

"On the one hand, we face the customers' wrath, and we have to deal with mobile court drives on the other hand. They fine us despite our repeated explanations that we are not responsible for the price hike," he said, urging the authorities concerned to conduct drives at rice mills to inspect purchasing prices.

Nirod Boron Saha, president of Paddy and Rice Stockists and Wholesalers' Association in Naogaon, a wholesale hub in the north for medium and fine quality rice, blamed the price hike on the shortage of good-quality paddy.

"We cannot buy good-quality paddy due to supply crunch. Whenever we find some, the farmers are unwilling to sell at lower prices," he said, adding that there is no chance of dropping the fine rice price until the end of winter.

He, however, thinks that rice prices would not rise significantly in the coming weeks due to the government's OMS programme.

Tamim retires

FROM PAGE 12

"I had been pondering over this issue for a while. Since a big stage such as the Champions Trophy is coming up, I don't want there to be discussions again surrounding me and disturbing the focus of the team," Tamim wrote in a Facebook post.

The veteran opener last donned the Bangladesh jersey in April 2023, crucially opting out of the ODI World Cup in India that year. He had previously mentioned that he had some conditions for returning to the national team, but, having withdrawn from Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) central contract last year, he felt that discussions regarding a return were unnecessary.

"I didn't want that before [a return to the national team]. That's why I removed myself from BCB's central contract. But many said it in the media that I was the one keeping things hanging... retiring or playing on is something that is the right of any professional sportsman. I gave myself time and now I feel the time is right. Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was very cordial when he asked me to return, and I discussed it with the selection panel too. I am grateful that they felt I was still capable, but I listened to myself," he said.

Conspiracy

FROM PAGE 12

justification. But he said constitution or laws are made for people.

By bringing these issues to the forefront, a controversy is being created, he said.

"I want to ask them: under which law did Dr Yunus come [into power]? Which constitution? Which regulation? The Advisory Council was formed, Sheikh Hasina left, and under what law was the oath administered?"

The Jamaat leader further said, "What are the constitution and the law? The constitution reflects the aspirations of the people. The written form of what millions of people want is the constitution."

"When we established the caretaker government through the mass uprising of the 1990s, the caretaker government was not in the constitution at the time. It was included in response to public demand. Elections were held, and then came the law. If we talk about the constitution and the law, even this interim government is illegal, and so are the advisers," Parwar said.

The 2023 World Cup was a big chapter for Tamim, and he said that "what happened prior to the 2023 World Cup was a big shock for me as I did not go out of the side due to cricketing reasons."

"Wherever I went, cricket fans wanted to see me return to the national team, and I considered their love. My home has one such fan. My son never said it to me directly, but he told his mum that he wanted to see his father wear the national jersey again. I am sorry for disappointing the fans. I told my son, 'The day you grow up, you will understand your father,'" Tamim wrote further.

Tamim retired from T20Is in 2022, and his international retirement sees him end with 5,134 Test runs from 70 Tests and 8,357 runs from 243 ODIs.

2024 hottest

FROM PAGE 12

"All the groups agree, regardless of how they put the data together, there's no question," said Gavin Schmidt, a senior climate scientist at NASA. "The long-term trends are very clear."

Schmidt said the levels of global heating are pushing humanity beyond its historical experience of the Earth's climate. "To put that in perspective, temperatures during the warm periods on Earth three million years ago - when sea levels were dozens of feet higher than today - were only around 3C warmer than pre-industrial levels," he said. "We are halfway to Pliocene-level warmth in just 150 years."

Five Reovirus

FROM PAGE 12

Columbia University of the United States, she said.

She also said that reovirus spreads through coughing and sneezing. Symptoms include respiratory problems, fever, headache, vomiting, and diarrhoea. In severe cases, it can cause pneumonia or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

Children and the elderly are more vulnerable in this case. There is no cause for concern regarding this virus, she said.

Prof Tahmina also mentioned that many encephalitis patients are found in the country, but the cause often remains unidentified. This research could help improve treatment for such patients.

Reovirus was first identified globally in 1950, and outbreaks are more common in winter.

Sinner favourite as Djokovic eyes elusive record

FROM PAGE 12

International Tennis Integrity Agency cleared him to play and accepted that he had been inadvertently contaminated with an anabolic agent through massages by a member of his support team.

The World Anti-Doping Agency has since lodged an appeal over the judgement with the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Sinner shared 2024's major titles with Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, who at 21 will look to become the youngest man to complete the career Grand Slam by winning in Melbourne.

Victory for either Sinner or

Alcaraz, the reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion, would back up predictions of an enduring duopoly in men's tennis.

But Novak Djokovic, the last man standing from the golden era of the "Big Three", will hope to rekindle the Melbourne magic and finally clinch the record 25th Grand Slam title he has long coveted.

The 10-times Australian Open champion was beaten by Sinner in last year's semifinals and lost the Wimbledon final to Alcaraz to finish the year without a Grand Slam trophy for the first time since 2017.

Even at 37, however, Djokovic

remains among the very best on tour and turned the tables on Alcaraz to win the Olympic singles gold at Paris.

Motivation has rarely been an issue for Djokovic but Rafa Nadal's retirement last year was another reminder of his tennis mortality following Roger Federer's exit in 2022.

"I still enjoy competing but part of me left with them, a big part of me," Djokovic said last year of his "Big Three" rivals.

He landed in Melbourne after a flat defeat by American Reilly Opelka in the Brisbane International quarterfinals.

Government of The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Office of The Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Bagerhat
☎: 02477751642
☎: 02477751644
E-mail : eebegrhd@gmail.com

Reference No: 35.01.0108.400.16.049.24-1961 Date: 09-01-2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of:

Sl No	Package Description	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing, Opening Date & Time	Security Submission Date & Time
01.	e-GP/12/PMP-Road/EE/BRD/2024-2025 (ID- 1058965) Periodic Maintenance Programme (PMP-Roads) Providing Double Bituminous Surface Treatment (DBST) work from Ch-80+062 to Ch-93+312 -13.250Km of Bhangabatiapara-Mollahat-Fakirhat-Noapara Road (N-805) and Double Bituminous Surface Treatment-DBST including other necessary repair works from Ch.20+988m (Majhi Bari) to Ch.32+000m (Katherpool), Ch.47+000m (Tafalbari) to Ch.52+039m (Bogi) and Widening, Strengthening & Surfacing with DBS-Wearing Course works from Ch.32+000m (Katherpool) to Ch.38+470m (Rayenda Bridge Approach) of Signboard-Morelgonj-Rayenda-Shorankhola-Bogi Road (R-773) under Road Division Bagerhat during the year 2024-2025.	09-02-2025 05:00 PM	10-02-2025 12:30 PM	10-02-2025 11:30 PM

This is an Online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration required in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd).
The fees for downloading the e-Tender Document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank branches up to 09 February, 2025 at 05:00 PM.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Ashrafur Islam Pk.)
ID No- 602162
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Bagerhat.

GD-106

FROM BAILEY ROAD TO 'MISS NORTH AMERICA': Zarin's inspiring journey



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Pageantry was the perfect platform for a person naturally gifted with height and a symmetrical face, to do exactly what Zarin desires. She soon became the first runner-up at the Miss Canada World competition.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

When NSU graduate Zarin Mahmood landed in Canada in 2017, she had left behind a life of relative certainty to enter the grind of a life far away. Discarding her desire to pursue business, which was her major in university, she jumped on the opportunity to complete a Master's in Technology Innovation Management at Ottawa's Carlton University.

However, she never imagined in her wildest dreams, that she would pursue pageantry. "It was difficult enough when I switched from business to STEM, and I was mentally struggling. Peer pressure was also eating away at my confidence - I had to make something of myself soon."

After graduation, Zarin found success, joining an IT firm and going on to later secure a job as an IT Project Manager in a Canadian governmental institution. "There's immense pressure for girls my age to get married when we move abroad, but I knew I wanted to do something more, I wanted to inspire."

Pageantry was the perfect platform for a



PHOTO: COURTESY

person naturally gifted with height and a symmetrical face, to do exactly that. She soon became the first runner-up at the Miss Canada World competition. "I actually stumbled across this opportunity, but tried to make the best of it anyway." That leap of faith emboldened the Zarin, who had spent nearly eight years behind a desk in Canada. "For an introvert, it is very difficult to be the centre of attention like that! But the first pageant, which took place in June 2024, gave me a new set of directions for life."

At this point of the interview, I asked her if she was at all surprised when she beat 45 women to claim the title of Miss North America. With astounding confidence, she replied, "I was somehow confident I would win. A lot of credit goes to my mother, who acted as a mentor, inspiration, and strict coach throughout the entire process."

At the final junction, Zarin was asked that if she could spend some time with any historical figure, whom show would choose to do that with. "I chose Mother Teresa. I could not think of a better human being off the top of my head

- she helped hundreds of thousands of people. Wanting to do somewhat of the same thing, she was the perfect answer."

Zarin Mahmood's pageantry titles make her the first Bangladeshi to achieve them. Seemingly at her peak, what does the young IT professional want to do next? "My primary aim has always been to help women. I want to build a platform, where women who are struggling with a new environment, can reach out. At the risk of sounding tacky, I really do want to break barriers, inspire change, and cultivate environments where women can thrive confidently."

Beyond her professional work, she has actively contributed to her community. She served as an executive member of the Greater Vancouver Bangladesh Cultural Association (GVBCA), where she helped organise cultural events, engaged youth, and fostered connections within the Bangladeshi community in Vancouver, BC. Zarin is also a skilled Nazrul Geeti singer, having performed at various events since her school days.

Now to address the elephant in the room - does the newly crowned Miss North America want to join the Bangladeshi showbiz industry? "There's no such plans at the moment," laughed Zarin, rather amused. "However, if there is a project that I can leverage towards women's empowerment, I am all for it."

Out and About in DHAKA



Kite Festival: 'Sakraim'
January 14 | 10am-10pm
Central Field, Dhaka University



Play: 'Khona'
January 14 | 7pm-9pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Him Utsab
January 16-18 | 10am-12am
Jahangirnagar University

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Cunk on Life



HBO Max
The Pitt



Disney+
Goosebumps: The Vanishing



Chorki
Dui Shaw (Beshura)



Bongo:
Black Money



1-MINUTE REVIEW

'LUCKY BASKHAR' a well-told tale of man manufacturing luck

Lucky Baskhar, a Telugu film written and directed by Venky Atluri, uses a narrative style that builds tension before a twist, then revisits certain moments to explain the events leading up to it.

This relationship drama, centred around a financial scam, marks one of Atluri's finer works to date, bolstered by a strong performance from famed Dulquer Salmaan. He seamlessly transitions from a regular man struggling to survive to a clever banker eager to make fast money.

The film opens with Baskhar (Dulquer Salmaan) addressing the audience directly, sharing his story. Its production design meticulously recreates a lower-middle-class neighborhood in Bombay

from 1989-92, with Nimish Ravi's camera weaving through the worn-out walls of the houses and the cramped, narrow alleys.

In the latter part of the film, the director ramps up the intensity, diving into the dark world of money laundering and exposing how everyone, from bank managers to small business owners, is either knowingly or unknowingly involved in a vast scam.

Baskhar's character transforms throughout, rising from poverty to wealth, while also revealing his growing arrogance. Sumathi, his wife played by Meenakshi Chaudhary, serves as his moral compass, but the question remains: will her resistance be enough to make Baskhar confront his true self?



WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

Adam Brody and Leighton Meester

Last Monday, *Gossip Girl* famed Leighton Meester and *The OC* famed Adam Brody stunned on the 2025 Golden Globe red carpet in perfectly coordinated ensembles. After staying off the radar for a while, the adored Hollywood couple's presence delighted netizens on Instagram.

Brody, 45, donned a striking teal suit paired with a black bow tie, a white rose boutonniere, and glossy black oxfords, exuding effortless charm. His signature curls and radiant complexion, prepped by popular groomer Kim Verbeck with Dermalogica products, completed the look.

Meester, 38, dazzled in a slinky citrus gown with a plunging neckline, paired with sparkling diamond jewellery and silver pointed-toe heels. Her soft updo with curtain fringe and peach-toned makeup added a touch of refined glamour to the evening.

WHAT'S PLAYING

'Eka Ghor Amar' by TAHSAN KHAN AND SHITHI SAHA

The recently released song *Eka Ghor Amar*, heartily rendered by Tahsan Khan and Shithi Saha, stands out as a reflection of the duo's vocal chemistry and emotional depth.

Not only has the track resonated with listeners, but it has further solidified Tahsan's reputation as a master of melancholic ballads while highlighting Shithi's vocal finesse.

At its core, *Eka Ghor Amar* is an introspective take on solitude, heartbreak, and lingering memories of a love that once was. Inspired by a time when his home felt complete with the presence of someone special, Tahsan channeled the emotions of losing that connection into this piece. The song picks up the weight of loneliness through its hauntingly soothing melodies.

একা ঘর আমার
Lonely Home



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

A looming fiscal crisis for Bangladesh

High debt and weak revenue demand clear policy thinking

The government debt increasing by 13.3 percent last fiscal year to a record Tk 18.3 lakh crore is concerning, particularly given its low revenue mobilisation. Here, it has to be said that the former Awami League government is primarily at fault. When it returned to power in 2009, the country's total debt was just \$33.66 billion. At the time of its ousting from power on August 5, 2024, the AL government left behind a national burden of \$156 billion in local and foreign loans. Aside from wasteful expenditure and mammoth corruption, its failure to improve revenue growth means that Bangladesh's debt-GDP ratio now stands at 36.3 percent. While this is still within the safe limit per the IMF standards, it remains concerning when considered alongside the country's weak revenue earnings and dwindling dollar reserves, economists warn.

The most pressing issue now is the liquidity shortage in both local and foreign currencies. On the one hand, revenue collection remains weak, while interest payments have risen sharply. On the other hand, Bangladesh is receiving fewer foreign loans, creating challenges for meeting interest payments and settling outstanding bills. The recently submitted white paper on the economy already highlighted these risks. It also projected that by the end of June 2025, the total debt could rise to 41.3 percent of GDP.

According to the debt bulletin report, government expenditure on interest payments increased by 21 percent in the last fiscal year, reaching Tk 1.1 lakh crore, which accounts for one-sixth of the national budget. This indicates that a significant portion of the government's expenses is already allocated to paying interest on its debt, thereby reducing its fiscal flexibility. This constraint may worsen in the future as tighter monetary policies, necessitated by high inflation, drive up interest rates on treasury bills and bonds.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's per capita foreign debt has more than doubled over the past eight years. The government may be compelled to take on more loans in order to clear foreign arrears to ensure the continued supply of power and fertilisers. While this approach may offer a short-term solution, the government must ultimately prioritise increasing revenue collection, as it is the only sustainable long-term solution to the debt servicing challenge. In this context, it is disappointing that the interim government has recently increased VAT and supplementary duties on nearly 100 goods and services, despite concerns that these measures could further fuel inflation.

Instead, the government should focus on addressing tax evasion, which remains a significant issue. The previous government also erred in neglecting this problem and relying on indirect taxes, which are inherently regressive. We urge the interim government to reconsider its policy approach and emphasise progressive taxation as a means to manage the growing debt burden.

Ensure safety of our winter guests

Urgent actions needed to safeguard migratory bird sanctuaries

The gradual decline of migratory birds in our water bodies, such as haors, beels and lakes, demonstrates our failure as a host. Every winter, these birds travel thousands of kilometres to escape the biting cold of their homelands for Bangladesh's warm tropical waters. In recent years, instead of finding a safe and welcoming sanctuary, these waterfowl—especially those coming to Hakaluki Haor in Moulvibazar and Sylhet—have been subjected to rampant poaching, noise, and plastic pollution, according to a report by *The Daily Star*. They also face food shortages because of the declining fish population and the depletion of aquatic vegetation in the haor.

Although the Hakaluki Haor has been designated as an ecologically critical area and a Ramsar site of international importance, the use of nets and poison baits to capture birds has not stopped. Furthermore, rivers flowing into the haor often carry plastic, polythene and other dumped waste, polluting the wetland. On the other hand, in artificial lakes, such as those in Jahangirnagar University, migratory birds suffer from the menace of noise and air pollution. According to an Ekattor TV report, noise from the nearby construction sites and loudspeakers scares the birds away in the only preserved lake on the green campus, which, in recent times, has lost many of its waterbodies, filled in to erect new buildings.

The arrival and nesting of migratory birds in our country is not only essential because it is a scenic, natural wonder, but also because migratory birds perform important ecological functions by moving nutrients between habitats and across landscapes. Therefore, it is not enough to declare a wetland or a water body an environmentally important zone on paper. Visible actions are required to safeguard these sanctuaries. To achieve this, the government, in collaboration with environmental activists and organisations, should run awareness campaigns to educate local communities about the importance of migratory birds. Local people should also be economically empowered and involved in safeguarding these sanctuaries so they refrain from poaching, overfishing, and resorting to other harmful practices.

Additionally, the government must enforce policies to mitigate plastic, noise and air pollution. Use of polluting consumer and commercial products must be restricted and gradually replaced with environmentally friendly materials. Finally, strict legal actions should be taken against polluters and poachers to discourage such behaviours. To re-establish our reputation as a hospitable nation, we must ensure that our water bodies are safe for migratory birds.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Amelia Earhart's first solo flight



On this day in 1935, Amelia Earhart, one of the world's most celebrated aviators, made the first successful solo flight from Hawaii to California, a distance longer than that from the United States to Europe.

REVIVING DEMOCRACY

A 10-step proposal for election road map 2025



Prof Syed Munir Khasru is chairman of the Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), an international think tank.

SYED MUNIR KHASRU

Bangladesh stands at a crossroads, navigating a tumultuous journey marked by political uncertainty, precarious law and order situation, and economic disruption and downturn. The events of the past year, from the July uprising that ousted the Awami League government to the appointment of an interim administration led by Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, have rekindled hopes of a freer, fairer and more democratic future. Yet, as we step into 2025, it is evident that the challenges of political instability, economic stagnation, and governance inefficiencies have not been fully addressed, casting a shadow over the nation's prospects. The looming uncertainty and resulting anxiety do not bode well for a country on a tricky path to transition from an autocratic regime to hopefully a democratically elected government that will govern well and fulfil people's legitimate socioeconomic and other aspirations.

Despite the interim government's assurances of electoral reforms and democratic progress, ambiguity persists regarding the timeline for the next parliamentary election. While the chief adviser's announcement of potential election dates in late 2025 or first half of 2026 offers some clarity, conflicting demands from major political parties like the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and divergent visions within the administration have sown seeds of discord. The lack of consensus on the electoral road map risks further polarising the political landscape, undermining the very stability the interim government was tasked to foster.

The reform commission tasked with delivering systemic changes in governance and economic management represents a critical opportunity to recalibrate the nation's trajectory. However, its progress has been slow, and the extension of its tenure until January 15 highlights the complexity of the task. Meanwhile, inflationary pressures, high interest rates, and stagnating private investment continue to erode the purchasing power of citizens and discourage economic growth. The business community remains apprehensive, with political instability and law-and-order concerns threatening both trade and investment.

responsibility, this author proposes a suggestive electoral road map that hopefully can serve as a good starting point for both the interim government and political parties to come together and provide the general public clarity on where we are heading as a nation in 2025 and beyond. In providing the road map, I have mostly relied on the analysis of historical data from previous credible elections held in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008. With the reform commission's tenure extended until January 15, the road map and suggestions will hopefully aid the government in navigating this crucial phase. For the sake of simplicity, the road map is laid out in the diagram, which is then used to walk through the steps in detail.

The proposed 10-step election road map

After the submission of reports by all the reform commissions by January 15, 2025 (except the judiciary reform commission), the proposed road

representative per commission. Since student representatives are already in the reform commissions, their representation has been ensured through existing arrangements, and it is up to the interim government as to what kind of role they would play in this process. Similarly, whether the Awami League and Jatiya Party will be invited is a matter of decision by the interim government. These recommendations are meant

administrative reforms. Due legal processes will be undertaken by the next parliament, ensuring continuity of the reforms that were agreed upon in the February 10 official declaration.

6. Feb 15-Aug 30: Election Commission

For the Election Commission (EC), the following steps are crucial for ensuring a transparent and inclusive electoral process.

*** Voter list update:** The EC will create an accurate voter list by verifying data through biometric IDs and adding newly eligible voters. It will also remove duplicates and deceased individuals to prevent fraud. Drawing lessons from 2008, when a complete voter list overhaul led to the registration of more than eight crore voters, the modernised systems in place today are expected to make this process more streamlined and less time-consuming.

*** Resource mobilisation:** The EC will allocate essential resources and polling logistics, with a focus on ensuring accessibility, particularly in underserved areas, to effectively accommodate participation of all voters.

*** Field-level appointment:** Trained field officials will be appointed to manage voter registration and oversee polling logistics and administration.

*** Consultation with political parties:** The EC will engage with political parties to build consensus on key election-related matters, fostering trust and collaboration.

*** Announcement of election schedule:** After completing preparations, the EC will announce the election schedule, allowing political parties to undertake campaigns and inform voters of their political manifesto.

7. Apr 1: Armed forces
The armed forces are to return to barracks but remain available as a strike force, with selective deployment, if necessary, particularly during elections. The prolonged presence of armed forces in public life goes against the spirit of both their service code of conduct and the democratic values of a country heading towards a credible election.

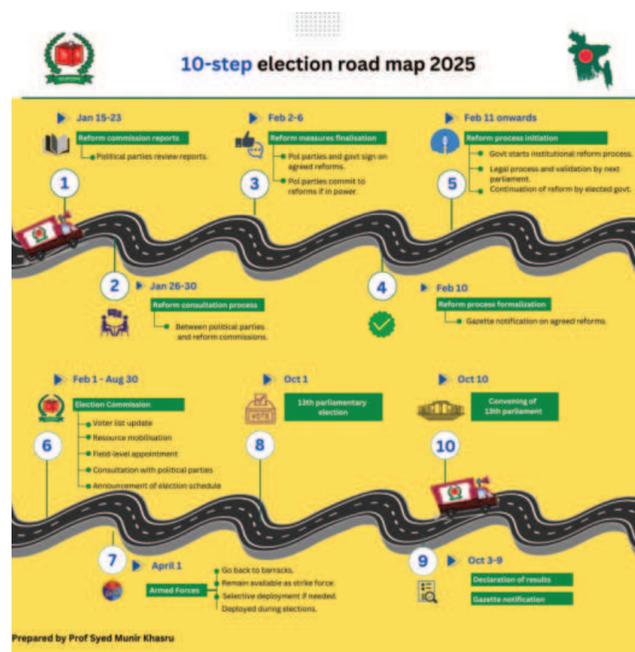
8. Oct 1: Parliamentary election
The parliamentary election will be conducted to establish a representative government. Marking a long overdue step in addressing the Bangladeshi people's right to a fair and democratic electoral process. Between now and then, there are almost 10 months, which is three times more than the average life of the caretaker government that was mandated under the constitution for holding elections until it was revoked by the Awami League.

9. Oct 3-9: Declaration of results
Within this time frame, election results will be tabulated and officially announced through gazette notifications by the EC.

10. Oct 10: Convening of 13th parliament
The newly elected parliament will convene, signifying the restoration of democratic governance and the beginning of a new legislative term focused on implementing the agreed-upon reforms.

The road ahead
An elected government is indispensable for safeguarding Bangladesh's democratic identity, ensuring accountable leadership, and meeting people's socioeconomic aspirations. It is vital to restore stability, addressing critical national challenges, and rebuilding public confidence. The proposed road map outlines a structured approach to achieving a credible electoral process and underscores the urgency of collaborative action to secure a sustainable democratic future.

Delay and deferral without a legitimate reason cannot bode well for the country. Nor would it be wise for the political parties not to finally rise to the occasion and irrevocably commit themselves to the much-needed reforms, without which the supreme sacrifice made by students and people in July-August risks going in vain. We lost one such opportunity in 1991 and can't repeat the same mistake in 2025.



Election Year	BNP	Awami League	Jamaat-e-Islami	Jatiya Party	Independent	Others
1991	140	88	18	35	3	16
1996	116	146	3	32	1	2
2001	195	58	17	14	7	9
2008	30	230	2	27	4	7

Note: The "Others" section groups smaller parties with minimal seats, like Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Workers Party of Bangladesh, etc.

The stakes are high, and the need for leadership is paramount. A transparent and inclusive electoral process is essential to mitigate tensions and pave the way for democratic renewal. Without this, the country risks prolonged instability that could jeopardise both political stability and economic progress. It is not clear to this author why providing a road map has become such a big issue for the interim government, whose main task is to hold a free, fair, credible and participatory election, while initiating reforms that, among others, would ensure that we never go back to the dark ages of repressive rule that was unleashed in 2009-2024. Common sense says that they are not mutually exclusive and can be achieved in tandem if the political parties are willing to walk the talk on reform. Unfortunately, their poor history of reform and often misrule make people legitimately apprehensive of their true intent.

As a concerned, conscientious citizen compelled by a sense of

map commences with 10 clearly identified phases between January 15 and October 10, 2025, to complete the journey from initiation of reform measures to transition to democracy.

1. Jan 15-23: Reform commission reports
In this phase, political parties will review the reports and recommendations submitted by the reform commissions. To ensure ownership of the reform process by the political parties, they will send representatives to participate in the consultation process with the commissions. Representation criteria are suggested based on electoral performance in the past credible elections (1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008) and the number of members of parliament (MPs) elected by each party. It is proposed that parties with the largest representation in any of these four parliaments should be invited to send three representatives for consultation with each reform commission, while other smaller parties will send one

these commissions will just be another bundle of paperwork with no practical relevance for the people.

3. Feb 2-6: Reform measures finalisation
During this phase, political parties and the government will finalise the agreed-upon reforms. As an intent of goodwill, the political parties will sign the agreed reforms, which they commit themselves to implementing, if and when they are in power after the elections.

4. Feb 10: Reform process formalisation
The government will complete formalities related to reform proposals, including issuing official gazette notifications that should formalise the agreed-upon changes, setting the stage for implementation.

5. Feb 11 onwards: Reform process initiation
The government will initiate the implementation of institutional and

RESTRICTING DHAKA UNIVERSITY

When safety meets public outrage



BLOWN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Dhaka University is located at the heart of Dhaka, a city that stands by the Buriganga River with mostly northward expansion. Over the last 400 years, we have seen relatively little growth in the southern part of the town and the south bank of the river. The narrow alleys of Old Dhaka can be one contributing factor. The presence of some sensitive sites may also have stifled its growth. Dhaka University, initially spread across 600 acres of lush green Ramna, but later reduced to 275 acres in the last 100 years, is one such site. Together with the Pikhana BDR compound and Azimpur graveyard, the university campus limits the scope of the city's expansion.

Compare the city map to a human face, and you'll see the campus near the jawline and neck. The university authority's recent decision to regulate traffic flow at all seven main entrances has brought the spatial issue back to the surface. But we need to be cautious in portraying Dhaka University as a mere physical space. It is the symbolic heart of Bangladesh. If it misses a beat, the whole nation feels it. If it beats too often, the entire body pulsates with energy and emotion. We have witnessed this phenomenon during various protests and uprisings. It is not an overstatement to suggest that every political movement that shaped the nation's consciousness has its origin in Dhaka University. As a living palimpsest with layered memories of the past, the university serves as an essential energy base that empowers individuals and creates a space for activism and intellectual rigour. Restricting the flow of the public into the campus, therefore, has both physical and symbolic consequences.

Prior to Victory Day, the university decided to limit campus mobility. Evidently, it prioritised self-protection over public accessibility. The exercise of autonomy by the university could potentially be detrimental to the public good. A group of teachers, representing the University Teachers' Network (UTN), recently met the vice-chancellor requesting him to reconsider the decision of blocking public thoroughfares. Engaging students to control traffic has further attenuated the situation.



Dhaka University is a part of the urban fabric.

FILE PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

Newspapers and podcasts have reported on how students assisting the police force are constantly confronting passersby and preventing them from entering the campus. Their near-vigilante attitude has far-reaching consequences.

Let me begin by considering the concerns that led the administration to restrict mobility on campus. The presence of outsiders poses security challenges such as theft, harassment, accidents, crimes, substance abuse, and trespassing. Noise and overcrowding can disrupt the academic environment, hindering learning, research and intellectual activities. Recently, permitting a mass rally in the nearby Suhrawardy Udyan made this particularly evident: punters virtually took over the entire

campus, littering and urinating everywhere. The political tension persists, and it's impossible to ignore the fear of the ousted faction resuming its full fury on campus. The proctor says he must prioritise protecting his students. His statement pits the needs of a few (campus residents) against those of many (general public). As a state-funded university that hosts numerous city corporation-owned roads, the DU administration must adopt a

or take a second ride to move through the campus. This is disproportionately affecting non-affluent citizens, leading to an increase in both travel time and cost. With so much focus on cars and rickshaws, there seems to be little control over pedestrians. On Thursday, thousands of former paramilitary men walked through the campus to gather at Shahbagh. And there were no stops for pedestrians. But the restriction

What's even more dangerous is that the university has recruited student volunteers to serve as gatekeepers, who lack proper training in crowd management and proper gear to differentiate themselves from the general public. Heated exchanges with frustrated members of the public are becoming commonplace, which can easily spiral into violence. Some video footage shows students overstepping their authority. Their actions can damage the university's reputation and question the administration's leadership. Confrontational incidents involving students may result in legal challenges against the university. Some of the comments made by the students suggest that they see themselves as separate or superior to the general population. This can deepen social divisions and breed resentment among the public. If this situation persists, students run the risk of losing the solidarity and goodwill that they garnered during the July uprising.

Conversely, over-reliance on students for enforcing access policies suggests a failure of institutional governance. It signals that the university administration lacks the capacity to implement policies through proper channels, such as trained security personnel, advanced technology or infrastructure improvements. A confrontational dynamic between students and the public can lead to long-term polarisation, undermining the shared civic identity that DU symbolises. DU, being a university committed to sustainability, must place a high priority on inclusion. Students should not serve as gatekeepers for decentralised agencies of power that impose discipline and punishment on the public. Instead, it should portray itself as a democratic space that upholds the public's "right to the city" and not a privatised space that turns the campus into a contested and polarised site.

Since the problem concerns security, the solution lies in the employment of trained security teams for campus management. The university must hold stakeholders' meetings and devise strategies such as bypass roads, tunnels, and designated lanes for rickshaws, bikes or cars to effectively manage traffic flow through the campus. DU must not lose its reputation as a civic space for organising public events and cultural programmes. While we must control access to sensitive or academic zones, we should maintain open access to areas such as hospitals, libraries, or museums. Dhaka University, I believe, has the intellectual acumen and pragmatism to balance safety with access and preserve the university's role as a shared, civic space.

barred access for patients in ambulances or passengers in cars and motorcycles from travelling. Despite possessing a DU car sticker, the slow identification and rerouting of unauthorised vehicles created a bottleneck, delaying me from approaching the checkpoint by almost an hour. I could see how the decision to divert traffic had led to public resentment.

Anyone who has read the comments on traffic alert groups on social media will notice a growing voice against the university's relocation from its current location to the outskirts of the city. People now associate DU with gated areas such as cantonments and housing societies due to its exclusionary policies.

more pragmatic approach when managing access to key public facilities. The campus houses Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Skirts BIRDEM Hospital and BSMMU. It houses or is adjacent to two public academic centres (Bangla Academy and Shishu Academy), one vital research centre (Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission), two national parks with historical significance, one public library, many schools and commercial centres, and access to a flyover leading to the national highway. There is no rational way the university can deny access to essential services for the sake of institutional convenience.

The restriction has forced many passengers to walk from the metro rail station

A political culture that refuses to change



Azmin Azran is digital features coordinator at The Daily Star.

AZMIN AZRAN

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Tuesday embarked on a long-anticipated journey abroad for medical treatment. The chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)—whose imprisonment, health deterioration, and subsequent treatment became a politically charged issue for years during the Awami League regime—has gained tremendous sympathy for the hardship she has endured. As a result, her journey to London, which reunited her with her eldest son Tarique Rahman after seven years, has become something of a watershed moment in the country's recent political history.

BNP, which has been politically stifled by the Awami League, understandably looked to capitalise on this moment. However, the way BNP activists descended upon much of North Dhaka on Tuesday night to bid their

party chief farewell, choking the city's most vital artery—the Airport Road—with sheer numbers is an approach that lacked creativity and freshness. It stank of an all too familiar tendency of our political parties to construct cults of personality, something much of Bangladesh has violently rejected in the recent past and has been trying desperately to move past.

For an outside observer, it must be baffling that the BNP, having witnessed what the actions of the last 15-plus years did to the Awami League in three short weeks last summer, never even considered the fact that if they didn't play fast and loose with people's precious time like Sheikh Hasina used to, it would set a nice contrast in the minds of voters and the young generation.

For BNP, this Tuesday was an opportunity.

If they could only get Khaleda Zia on the plane without majorly disrupting life in the world's densest city, and have some strategically placed public relations agents on popular media to discuss this refreshing approach and focus on the former two-time prime minister's steadfast commitment to not compromise with an undemocratic foe and the culmination of a years-long familial separation, the party may well have been cruising on the journey to wiping the memories of the horrendous five-year period when it was last in power.

In truth, every day since August 5, 2024 has been a day of opportunity the BNP has missed. The Awami League's ouster, the mountain of legal troubles facing Awami League politicians, and the general rejection of its influence across all facets of life in the country have certainly been a victory for BNP. Yet, to solidify this victory, the presumptive prime political force in Bangladesh has to distance themselves from the one that has just been booted.

The BNP faithful might say that this is an unnecessary exercise. The party has forever been the furthest possible thing from the Awami League due to the decades-long animosity between the rivals. Yet, in the minds of those who remember 2001-2006 and those

who don't remember that time but have been told stories of corruption, misrule, and the perennial threat of bombings that haunted those days, BNP is part of the same political culture that birthed the authoritarian juggernaut that the Awami League became.

In fact, history supports this perception. BNP and the Awami League were the two major stakeholders of the post-Ershad democratic restructuring, and they subsequently split the honours in the four elections since, whose credibility has been largely accepted. While the Awami League has emerged victorious—by a long margin at that—in the cursed contest of inflicting misery on the people of Bangladesh, BNP too has been a participant.

There is little doubt that BNP is poised to benefit greatly from the aftermath of August 5, 2024, but if it wants to be seen by history in a light that is a shade separate from that which cloaks the Awami League, it must shake things up.

The political culture that seeks to elevate one politician, or a political family, to a position any greater than a regular citizen of the country is a political culture that must end. It was refreshing to hear that some in the BNP leadership called for more sense on Tuesday night, but that call went unheard. For millions in Dhaka, it was like being haunted

by a nightmare, when yet again, a politician's flight abroad took priority over the journey of every ambulance, emergency vehicle, public bus or a simple homebound employee after a long day.

All BNP members achieved on Tuesday night was reassuring themselves that they too could call on the numbers that the Awami League boasted in its heyday. But people already know that BNP is the biggest party in the country right now. What people don't know is if it has the capacity to show the bare minimum respect to its potential constituents, which Awami League never showed in all its years of power.

This lack of respect—this disregard for public welfare—is what makes a popular, elected government fester into one that needs to turn its guns on the public to stay in power.

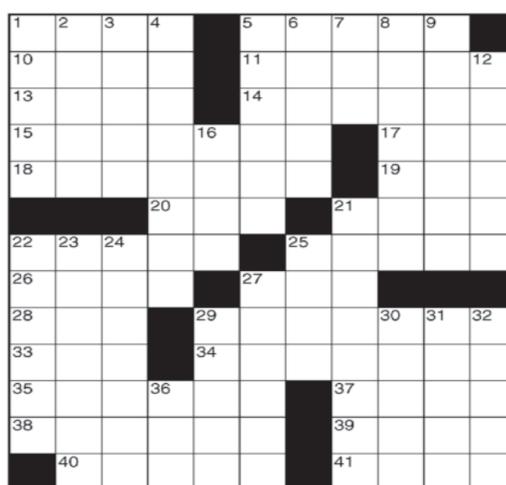
The BNP, on Tuesday night, made a clear show of its lack of respect for the people whose support they hope will carry them into power. In the next election, the support of the blindly faithful may just carry the party over the line into the parliament (or the presidency, depending on constitutional reforms), but if its attitude towards the public does not change, it too runs the risk of eventually festering into some form of the disease that kills before it's violently cured.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Torture device
5 Carell of movies
10 Lotion additive
11 Broadway's Bernadette
13 Gaunt
14 Bored by routine
15 Stuck, so to speak
17 Wedding words
18 Signifies
19 Light metal
20 Farm animal
21 Blanchett of "Tár"
22 Like ghost stories
25 Finishes last
26 Chuck of "Meet the Press"
27 "2001" computer

- 28 Hosp. parts
29 Gets rid of
33 Cut off
34 Fretting
35 Confused
37 Past due
38 Century division
39 Resting on
40 Heads, to Henri
41 Departed

- DOWN**
1 Overly eager
2 Without aid
3 Movie barbarian
4 Computer need
5 Book parts
6 Watches over
7 Greek vowel
8 Harvard motto
9 Learned
12 Boulders
16 Tiny
21 Diner side dish
22 Unemotional
23 Tiara's kin
24 Newspaper revenue source
25 Hot flow
27 Door parts
29 Electronics component
30 Country division
31 Wyoming's — Range
32 Used a broom
36 Diet no-no



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Tamim penalised over Hales incident

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal received one demerit point along with a warning for breaching Level 1 Article 2.6 code of conduct during his side's fifth Bangladesh Premier League T20 match against Rangpur Riders on Thursday.

Match referee Neeyamur Rashid Rahul confirmed the development to The Daily Star on Friday morning and added that they took the decision based on the umpires' report and evidence. Tamim accepted the charges, which means there was no need for any hearing.

"As per evidence, we sent the CoC [Code of Conduct] against Tamim Iqbal. We have given him a warning with one demerit point," Neeyamur said.

After the match between Barishal and Rangpur, a heated exchange of words between Tamim and Rangpur's English batter Alex Hales took place at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

Tamim was visibly more aggressive during the altercation while Hales also seemed to have said something to him.

"We have also heard about Hales [Alex]. But we had no evidence against him.

What Hales said in the press conference, we can't count it as it would be a one-sided thing," Neeyamur said, adding that Tamim was not given any fine for the incident.

After the match, Hales had said that Tamim was asking him about some past incidents.

"I don't know. He was upset about something. He was getting very personal. He was asking if I was embarrassed for getting banned over drugs in England. He was saying if I was still taking drugs. And he was very rude and that was really a shame," Hales told Channel 24 during an interview.



'It's been tough to get over the heartbreak'

Dhaka Capitals had high expectations from their star English batter Jason Roy in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League but the 34-year-old batter disappointed as he could make only 19 runs in two matches, both in losing causes. After only two matches, Roy left for Dubai yesterday to take part in IIT20 for Sharjah Warriors. Before leaving Bangladesh, the 2019 World Cup winner talked to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan regarding his short stint in BPL, his observations on the evolution of the tournament and his plans with international and franchise cricket. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

The Daily Star (DS): You had a short stint in this year's BPL. How was it for you overall?

Jason Roy (JR): Obviously disappointing to lose two games. I think tonight [Thursday] was a big one for us. We should have probably won this one. But a heavy amount of dew was out there. It was incredibly difficult for the bowlers to control the ball. I would like to come here for a bit longer next time so that I can get a bit of feel for the team and really help produce some match-winning stuff. But it's been really enjoyable overall.

DS: You have played in the BPL in the very early stage of your career in 2011-12. Now it's the 11th edition. Have you found any differences or changes after all these years?

JR: It's always a good standard and it's always great. More often, the pitches have been good. And the crowd absolutely love it. It's always nice to play in front of passionate people.

I've played for Chittagong Kings twice [also played for Sylhet Sixers before]. This year it's just different environment, different pitches and different everything about it. It's nice to say that I have played all over the world and I have done well in all those franchise tournaments. That's a very nice feeling for me. And one day when I have to sit in six to seven years later, I can look back and be very proud of the effort.



DS: You have played for England for so many years. Along with your personal milestones, you also won 50-over and T20 World Cups for England. With the ICC Champions Trophy coming up, do you have any regrets over missing out on playing in the tournament?

JR: There is no regret. This is not my decision. I would love to still be there. In my head, obviously I feel I can still perform incredibly well at that level, especially in the 50-over stuff. But they are strict about picking younger players and that's completely fair. So it's been difficult to take. Obviously the last few years have been hard to get over. It's a bit of a heartbreak you know, like losing a nice girlfriend or something like that. It's been tough to get over the heartbreak but I'm really enjoying my lifestyle now. My life is now looking after my family and travelling around the

world to do something that I love.

DS: Who, according to you, are the favourites for the Champions Trophy?

JR: England win and that's easy (laughs). Who knows? Actually I have no idea what's going on. There are lots of international teams playing incredible cricket. It's hard for me to put finger on a team as all teams have some incredible players. So if they can fire, it's going to be a great tournament.

DS: Do you have any plan to retire from international cricket anytime soon?

JR: I have no plan to retire from international cricket. If I get selected, I'm free to play. I can't just go, turn up and play unfortunately, as much as I wish I could. I'm going to get some performance, play a lot of cricket and do well so that I can get selected again.



Mohammedan stay perfect in BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club handed a 3-1 defeat to Rahmatganj MFS in Munshiganj yesterday, extending their winning streak to seven matches in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

The outcome leaves Mohammedan in pole position with a maximum 21 points, six points ahead of second-placed Rahmatganj, who have played seven matches as well.

Having suffered a bitter elimination from the Federation Cup group stage following a 1-0 defeat against archrivals Abahani on Tuesday, Mohammedan shifted their full focus to the league. Determined to claim their maiden professional league title, the Black and Whites also avenged a 1-0 defeat to Rahmatganj in their Federation Cup opener.

At Birshrestha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium, Mohammedan had to wait until the extra time of the first half to break the deadlock through Razu Ahmed Zisan, before Malian forward Souleymane Diabate provided a 2-0 cushion in the 64th minute. Five minutes later, Nigerian Emmanuel Sunday put the game to bed.

For Rahmatganj, Ghanaian Samuel Boateng -- who struck six goals against Dhaka Wanderers Club -- netted a consolation goal to raise his tally to 11 goals in seven matches.

In the day's other matches, Brothers Union handed a 4-1 defeat to Wanderers in Gazipur -- climbing up to third position with 14 points -- Fortis FC drew 1-1 with Bangladesh Police FC in Mymensingh, and defending champions Bashundhara Kings came from behind to inflict a 4-1 defeat on Fakirerpool Young Men's Club at Dhaka's Kings Arena.



TRIUMPH AT COURTSIDE

Bishwa Ekadosh win DS Futsal Tournament 2025

SPORTS REPORTER

At the picturesque artificial football turf at Courtside in the capital's Madani Avenue, The Daily Star employees yesterday spent an enthralling day at The Daily Star Futsal Tournament 2025, and, at the end of it all, the sports department's team, Bishwa Ekadosh, emerged victorious.

A total of 13 teams of newsmen-turned-amateur booters gave their all on the battlefield, demonstrating passion, enthusiasm, and a spirit of camaraderie in 17 games of seven-a-side action, beginning in the morning.

As the players strove for victory on the field, their colleagues and family members cheered them on from the sidelines, while children frolicked around in the open fields at Courtside, the event's venue partner.

Eventual winners, Bishwa Ekadosh, had a bumpy start, drawing 0-0 against Digital Strikers in their campaign opener, but they bounced back against Copa Shamsu,

beating them 1-0 in a must-win game to qualify for the last four as group champions.

In the first semifinal between Bishwa Ekadosh and Snap Shooters, comprised of photojournalists, both teams failed to score in the stipulated time, and the penalty shootout also ended 2-2 after five attempts apiece. In sudden death, the Bishwa Ekadosh keeper saved a shot and then converted from the spot to send his teammates into raptures.

In the final, Bishwa Ekadosh outclassed business development's Sales Warriors -- who arrived into the match after thrashing HR and admin department's Myrmidons 3-0.

The regular time, however, saw no goals despite a one-sided affair, and the final went down to the penalty shootout, which Bishwa Ekadosh won 2-0 to claim the inaugural tournament.

The intra-office tournament was held as part of the celebrations for The Daily Star's 34th Anniversary on January 14.

Neuer back for Bayern

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer will make his comeback on Saturday at Borussia Moenchengladbach after a rib injury, but his replacement Daniel Peretz will be sidelined for several weeks, coach Vincent Kompany said on Friday.

Neuer broke a rib during a rough challenge that also earned him his first career red card in their German Cup loss to Bayer Leverkusen on Dec. 3.

Israel international Peretz stepped in until the winter break, but he twisted his ankle in training earlier in the week and will now be sidelined for several weeks.

"There is good luck that Manuel is back with us and bad luck that Daniel will be missing for some weeks," Kompany said. "We don't know yet for exactly how long. Hopefully at the end of the month or start of next month, Daniel will be back."

Bayern are in top spot on 36 points as the Bundesliga resumes after the three-week winter break, with a four-point lead over champions Bayer Leverkusen.

They also travel to Feyenoord in the Champions League on Jan. 22.

The Bavarians have lost five of their last nine away games at Gladbach, more than against any other team in the same period.

Kompany will also be missing in form Jamal Musiala -- the attacking midfielder, who has scored nine league goals so far, is out with the flu.

"I have said it before that Jamal...cannot be replaced one-for-one," Kompany said.

Jahangirnagar University
Department of Microbiology
Savar, Dhaka 1342, Bangladesh

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

আহাঙ্গীরনগর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের মাইক্রোবায়োলজি বিভাগ থেকে
"Development of novel vaccines and rapid diagnostic kits for viral diseases in the poultry of Bangladesh" শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের জন্য বিগত ০৮.০১.২০২৫ ইং তারিখে প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং (IFT) Ref No.: Microb/2024-25/(OTM)067 অনিবার্য কারণবশত: বাতিল করা হলো।

স্বাক্ষরিত/-
প্রফেসর ড. মো: আনোয়ার খসরু পারভেজ
মাইক্রোবায়োলজি বিভাগ
আহাঙ্গীরনগর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়।

ক্রি-৫৯/০১/২৫ (২.৫'x২)

Department of Public Administration
University of Dhaka

Executive Master of Public Administration (EMPA)

Lead with Impact
Govern with Insight

20% Scholarship for Admission Topper
Stipends for the Semester's Top Performer

Admission Open for Spring 2025
One Year Program

Special Focus on

- Innovation and Change Management
- Climate Change and Disaster Management
- Human Resource Management
- Public Policy Analysis

SCAN for Details

Department of Public Administration
11th Floor, Faculty of Social Sciences Building
University of Dhaka

Application Deadline:
30 January 2025

Admission Test:
07 February 2025

Eligibility

- 4-year Bachelor degree in any discipline from UGC approved universities: Minimum CGPA 2.50 out of 4.00 or second class
- SSC & HSC or equivalent: Minimum GPA 3.50 out of 5.00 or second division

9661920 ext. 6661, 6662
+8801711985186
+8801400985186
www.dupublicad.com
empa@du.ac.bd
https://www.facebook.com/dupublicadministration/



“The level of competitiveness in LaLiga lowers a bit the points you need to win the title. The fact that Atletico are there also generates uncertainty and I think it will take less than 90 points to be champions.”

CARLO ANCELOTTI, Real Madrid head coach



Arne slots right in as LIVERPOOL SOAR

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

The Flying Dutchman – the infamous supernatural ghost ship from the Pirates of the Caribbean – daunting if one looks at its reputation, yet relentless in its endeavors in wreaking havoc across the seas.

Such has been the impact of Liverpool's Dutch manager Arne Slot across competitions. Under the 46-year-old former Feyenoord boss, The Reds have been soaring this season, leading both the Premier League and the Champions League standings, while also competing for two other cups – the FA Cup and the Carabao Cup. They already have a six-point lead at the top of the league, with a game in hand over second-placed Arsenal, and have a 100 per cent record in Europe in the six games they have played.

Slot has already made a record-breaking start at Liverpool, winning 20 of his first 26 games in all competitions and losing just twice in this period. This stunning streak of results and the ease with which he has achieved them undoubtedly establishes the fact that he has slotted right in following the departure of Jürgen Klopp and picked up from where the German had left things.

While many understood the magnitude of the shoes Slot had to fill, there were many who said it would be nothing short of a miracle if the Dutchman could get things up and running and replicate the kind of



results as well as maintain the juggernaut-like footballing force Klopp had managed to turn his Liverpool into. And one could not blame them.

Manchester United and Arsenal both dipped following the departures of Alex Ferguson and Arsène Wenger, so it was not a far-fetched thought that the same would happen to Liverpool when Klopp stepped aside.

One of the keys to Liverpool's

seamless transition from Klopp to Slot is that the two managers have similar playing styles. Both prefer a four-at-the-back formation and an attacking trio with inverted wide forwards. The midfield make up is slightly different but is ultimately still about energy and robustness off the ball.

The familiarity with the previous system has undoubtedly aided Liverpool's surge, but their starman Mohamed Salah and his red-hot form from the outset has been the hallmark of The Reds' daunting attacking displays. With 18 goals and 13 assists in the Premier League, the 32-year-old has the most goal contributions – 31 – amongst players in Europe's top five leagues, and this promises to be his best-ever season at Liverpool.

Salah's contract expires this summer, and with Liverpool showing reluctance in renewing it, the Egyptian superstar appears to have accepted he will be playing elsewhere next season. He is determined to make this final season one to remember. "There is no progress there. We are far away from any progress. So, we just need to wait and see," Salah told Sky Sports last week. When asked about the prospect

of winning the Premier League this season, he added: "It's my last year in the club so you want to do something special for the city."

Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk and right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold will also be without contracts at the end of the season. The Dutch defender revealed that he was in talks for a renewal, while sources said Liverpool rejected an offer from Real Madrid for Alexander-Arnold.

Despite all of these outside issues, Slot's Liverpool seem to be steadfast in maintaining their increasing standards. When the talk is centered around standards, however, no one can deny what rivals Manchester City has achieved since Pep Guardiola took charge in 2017-18. Guardiola's side sits sixth on the table with 34 points and has already surrendered their hopes for the title this season.

"I'm looking at the next game to try and win three points... I wouldn't say it's impossible because in football there are no impossibles but right now Manchester City is completely out of the title race, no question about that, it's too late for us," winger Bernardo Silva told Sky Sports in an interview published on Thursday.

A lot of work is yet to be done for The Reds, and with other contenders like City, Arsenal, and Chelsea not at the peak of their consistency, Liverpool is now a strong favourite to win their second Premier League title this season.

BUNDESLIGA

It was the 27th time that Bayern Munich led the league at Christmas. The record 32-time champions have gone on to win the title from here on 23 out of 26 previous occasions.

However, defending champions Bayer Leverkusen are again in contention, currently sitting in second place.

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GD	Points
Bayern Munich	15	11	3	1	34	36
Bayer Leverkusen	15	9	5	1	16	32
Eintracht Frankfurt	15	8	3	4	12	27
RB Leipzig	15	8	3	4	4	27

SERIE A

The Scudetto race sees Napoli currently leading the standings, while Atalanta and defending champions Inter Milan have games in hand that could allow them to overtake Napoli, making it very hard to predict who is going to finish first at the end of season.

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GD	Points
Napoli	19	14	2	3	18	44
Atalanta	18	13	2	3	23	41
Inter Milan	17	12	4	1	30	40
Lazio	19	11	2	6	6	35



KEY STATS

PREMIER LEAGUE

Most Goals: Mohamed Salah (Liverpool) - 18
Most Assists: Mohamed Salah (Liverpool) - 13
Most Clean Sheets: Matz Sels (Nottingham Forest) - 9

LALIGA

Most Goals: Robert Lewandowski (Barcelona) - 16
Most Assists: Lamine Yamal (Barcelona) - 9
Most Clean Sheets: Alex Remiro (Real Sociedad) - 10

SERIE A

Most Goals: Mateo Retegui (Atalanta), Marcus Thuram (Internazionale) - 12
Most Assists: Nuno Tavares (Lazio) - 8
Most Clean Sheets: Yann Sommer (Internazionale) - 9

BUNDESLIGA

Most Goals: Harry Kane (Bayern Munich) - 14
Most Assists: Florian Wirtz (Bayer Leverkusen), Harry Kane (Bayern Munich), Michael Olise (Bayern Munich), Marvin Ducksch (Werder Bremen), Vincenzo Grifo (Freiburg) - 7
Most Clean Sheets: Peter Gulacsi (RB Leipzig) - 8

Contrasting LaLiga scenes in 2024 WHAT NEXT?

NABID YEASIN

Last season, around this time, there was a surprise package in Girona in the top three of LaLiga. However, a year later, the Spanish league has returned to the status quo, with Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Atletico Madrid – the three giants of Spain – occupying the top three spots on the table at the end of 2024.

Nevertheless, there were twists and surprises in the league, particularly between the two archrivals – Real Madrid and Barcelona.

Real Madrid began 2024 in a fashion that could not be associated better with any other team than Los Blancos – by winning the UEFA Super Cup for a record sixth time after getting things rolling with a 2-0 win over last season's Europa League champions Atalanta.

However, things began to unravel for Real Madrid thereafter. With fresh injuries piling up on the old ones, and their star signing Kylian Mbappe only a shadow of his mesmerising self, Real looked to be grasping for air at least for the first quarter of the season.

Mbappe joined Real on a free transfer from PSG at the start of the 2024-2025 season, ending a transfer saga that rumbled on for years. His arrival created the impression that club president Florentino Perez had assembled another 'Galacticos', with Mbappe joining a star-studded lineup featuring Brazil's Vinicius Junior and English midfielder Jude Bellingham.

Despite the fanfare, Real lacked their usual spark as the domestic season unfolded.

Meanwhile, their archrivals, Barcelona, soared, despite undergoing a significant leadership change, with Hansi Flick replacing Xavi Hernandez as head coach.

Flick's Barca looked rejuvenated, with a glaring change in tactics that saw them play fast-paced football with a high defensive line, roaring to seven wins on the trot in LaLiga with a 2-1 loss to Monaco in the Champions League appearing as a minor blip till that point.

Barca's winning run in LaLiga was halted



by a 4-2 loss at Osasuna in September last year, but Real's concerns about losing the title defence magnified when Flick's men arrived at the Santiago Bernabeu and thrashed Los Blancos 4-0 in October – with Flick becoming the first Barcelona manager in 29 years to win his maiden Clasico clash by a margin of four or more goals.

The ecstatic and somewhat over-the-top celebrations by Barcelona players after the

first Clasico of the season underscored its significance – the Catalans had ended Real Madrid's 42-game unbeaten run in LaLiga, denying their archrivals the chance to equal their own record of 43-game unbeaten at a stretch between 2017-18.

However, that marked the peak of Flick's men this season so far. They witnessed their form dip rather quickly, with a loss away to Real Sociedad and draws at Celta Vigo and Real Betis before having to swallow the hardest pills of defeats at home against lowly



Las Palmas and Leganes.

However, for Barcelona, what must have stung them worse than those unfortunate losses was relinquishing the top spot in LaLiga to Real Madrid. They dropped down to third with 38 points from 19 games, five behind leaders Real Madrid who have played an equal number of matches and seemed to have rediscovered their mojo after a lackluster start to the season.

But, when it comes to holding a strong position in the league, Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid must feel most secure with the way they have ended 2024. They briefly held the summit of LaLiga before Real Madrid edged ahead last week with a dramatic late comeback victory over Valencia to kick off 2025. Atletico will find confidence in the fact that they accumulated 41 points, just two shy of leaders Real Madrid, with a game in hand.

Simeone's Atletico underwent significant changes last summer. The arrivals of Julian Alvarez and Alexander Sorloth bolstered their attack, while Conor Gallagher strengthened the midfield, and Robin Le Normand reinforced the defence.

Changes were only made to personnel in the Atletico ranks as Simeone's style of play remained consistent – solid at the back and clinical upfront. These traits were on full display in Atletico's last LaLiga game, where they came



from behind to secure a 2-1 win against Barcelona, courtesy of Sorloth's last-minute stoppage-time goal. Despite Barca dominating possession (63%) and taking 19 shots compared to Atletico's five, Simeone's men walked away victorious, maintaining their status as the league's best defensive unit with just 12 goals conceded so far.

Although Real Madrid opened 2025 with their postponed match against Valencia – delayed due to severe floods in November – the full-throttle action in LaLiga is set to resume this

week.

With Real Madrid yet to visit Barca and host Atletico in the league for the reverse fixtures between the three Spanish giants, it is to be seen whether the script of 2025 follows the contrasting pattern of the year before or ends up offering something entirely different. Whatever might be in store, the three-horse race in LaLiga looks poised to go down to the wire.

week.

THE NATION'S LARGEST ROD MANUFACTURER

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

BSRM
building a safer nation

Terminal 3,
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

Proud Construction Partner

SHAH CEMENT

No let-up in upward trend of rice prices

Various govt steps to bring down prices yet to yield any results

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS

There is no sign of rice prices going down despite the government's efforts to stabilise the staple market, including expansion of Open Market Sale (OMS) programme and the move to accelerate imports.

Some of the rice varieties have seen Tk 0.5 to Tk 1 hike per kg this week at retail level, compared to last week.

Prices of almost all varieties have been increasing over the past three weeks.

The interim government has announced an expansion of the OMS programme across the country to help families cope with inflation, as retail prices of kitchen essentials continue to soar in the local market.

The programme's first phase will begin on January 12, and sales will continue until February, according to food ministry officials.

Speaking to The Daily Star on Thursday, 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.

In November, the National Board of Revenue withdrew duties and regulatory taxes on rice imports. It also lowered the advance income tax from five percent to two percent.

The government then allowed 277 private entities

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



In this aerial view taken from a helicopter shows burned homes in Malibu, Los Angeles County, California, US, on Thursday. Inset, the wind whips embers while a firefighter battles a fire in the Angeles National Forest.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

HUSH MONEY CASE Trump spared jail or fine Judge grants him unconditional discharge

REUTERS, New York

US President-elect Donald Trump will not go to jail or pay a fine over his criminal conviction stemming from hush money paid to a porn star, a judge ruled yesterday, but the sentencing will place a judgment of guilt on his record.

Justice Juan Merchan's sentencing of Trump, 78, to unconditional discharge closes a case that had loomed over his bid to retake the White House just days before his Jan. 20 inauguration.

By granting an unconditional discharge, Merchan would place a judgment of guilt on Trump's permanent record - without any other legal penalty such as custody, a fine or probation.



Trump pleaded not guilty and has vowed to appeal the guilty verdict. He appeared with his lawyer on TV screens beamed to the courtroom with two American flags in the background.

"It's been a political witch hunt," Trump said before sentencing, wearing a red tie with white stripes. "It was done to damage my reputation so I would lose the election and obviously that didn't work."

"I'm totally innocent, I did nothing wrong," said Trump, who did not testify during the six-week trial last year.

Now that he has been sentenced, he is free to pursue the appeal, a process which could take years and play out

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

JULY UPRISING Conspiracy, greed causing rift in unity Says Jamaat secretary general

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar yesterday said a conspiracy and greed are causing a rift in the unity among students and the public that existed during the July uprising.

He made this remark while speaking at a workers' conference held at Bhabanipur Muktijoddha College ground in Gazipur Sadar Upazila.

"We want to build this new Bangladesh through a free, fair, participatory, and credible election. But there are obstacles as well. I wonder what conspiracies or greed is causing the split...," Parwar said.

"We should move forward with the election after necessary reforms," he added.

Parwar said those who want an election without reforms cite

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Gaza death toll 40% higher than recorded

Says Lancet study; Israeli forces bomb a group of Palestinians in eastern Gaza City

AGENCIES

Research published in The Lancet medical journal yesterday estimates that the death toll in Gaza during the first nine months of Israeli offensive was around 40 percent higher than recorded by the Palestinian territory's health ministry.

The number of dead in Gaza has become a matter of bitter debate since Israel launched its military campaign against Hamas.

Up to June 30 last year, the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza reported a death toll of 37,877 in the offensive.

However, the new peer-reviewed study used data from the ministry, an online survey and social media obituaries to estimate that there were between 55,298 and 78,525 deaths from traumatic injuries in Gaza by that time.

Meanwhile, Gaza's rescue service yesterday said in a brief statement on Telegram that the Israeli forces bombed a group of Palestinians near the Shujayea roundabout in the east of Gaza City, reports Al Jazeera online.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

Five Reovirus cases found for 1st time in Bangladesh IEDCR says there's nothing to worry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has found the presence of reovirus for the first time in Bangladesh.

The virus was found in the samples of five individuals, and none of them experienced significant health complications. All five have recovered and returned home after treatment, according to the IEDCR.

IEDCR Director Professor Tahmina Shirin told The Daily Star that the institute recently tested samples from 48 individuals showing symptoms similar to the Nipah virus. Among them, the reovirus was found in the five persons.

They took the sampling as part of IEDCR's routine research on new pathogens in collaboration with

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

2024 hottest year on record

Say US scientists; EU data shows average global temperature was 1.6C above preindustrial levels

AGENCIES

2024 was the hottest year on record, breaking the previous record set in 2023 and pushing the world over a critical climate threshold, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

All of the 10 hottest years since 1850 have occurred in the past decade.

The data supports separate figures released by European Union scientists this week that also found

Blazing temperatures in 2024 require trail-blazing climate action in 2025.

ANTONIO GUTERRES
UN Secretary-General

2024 as the hottest in recorded history. It also showed that the year was 1.6C (2.8F) hotter than pre-industrial times, the first time the temperature went beyond the internationally agreed threshold of keeping long-term temperatures below a 1.5C (2.7F) rise.

However, NOAA data shows the year was 1.46C (2.6F) warmer than the era prior to humans burning huge volumes of planet-heating fossil fuels.

Nasa, which also released its temperature data yesterday, concurs that 2024 was a record year, being 1.47C (2.6F) hotter than the pre-industrial era.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Tamim retires, ends Champions Trophy talks

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh's longest-serving opener Tamim Iqbal announced his retirement from international cricket through a social media post yesterday, putting an end to all speculation regarding a potential return to the national team for the upcoming Champions Trophy.

The selectors had approached Tamim during the ongoing Sylhet phase of the Bangladesh Premier League, presenting the 35-year-old with an opportunity to rejoin the squad. While the southpaw listened to their proposition and mulled over his prospects, he ultimately decided against making a comeback.



Tamim believed the discussions surrounding his potential return - both on social media and in the press - were interfering with the focus of the national team ahead of a major tournament, beginning on February 19.

"I have been away from international cricket for quite some time. That distance will not be reduced. My stint in international cricket has ended.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Durbar Rajshahi's Ryan Burl (R) and Akbar Ali were all during their 28-run victory against Khulna Tigers in Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sinner favourite as Djokovic eyes elusive record

REUTERS, Melbourne

Jannik Sinner will launch his Australian Open title defence under a stubborn doping cloud but the whiff of scandal may do little to halt the Italian juggernaut.

Sinner remains the man to beat at Melbourne Park even as doping officials seek a two-year ban for the world number one for failing two drugs tests last March.

The saga failed to derail Sinner during a stellar season as he put the distractions aside to win eight titles, including a second Grand Slam crown at the U.S. Open and a maiden ATP Finals trophy.

Sinner may face a cooler reception than usual for a defending champion at Melbourne Park but it will likely take more than heckling to knock him off his game.

"It's a different feeling but we are all happy to start the season again here in Australia, in Melbourne," Sinner, who faces Nicolas Jarry in the first round, said at the tournament's draw at Melbourne Park on Thursday.

"It's called the 'Happy Slam' so we are all very happy to be back here."

Though Sinner was docked ranking points and prize-money, the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4





SHOPPING IN DHAKA

a trip down memory lane

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

I heard a friend say that no matter where she goes shopping, be it on 5th Avenue in New York, in old Delhi, or even at Chatuchak Weekend Market in Bangkok, nothing beats the pleasure she finds shopping in Dhaka's shopping districts: Chandni Chawk, Hawker's, and New Market.

I thought about it – the sentiment does have substance.

The Dhaka city shopping precinct houses Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Gausia Market, Chandni Chawk Market, Balaka Cine World, and Nilkhet Book Market, all adjacent to each other. This designated shopping quarter of the city alone has the oldest shopping area, the famous New Market, established in 1952 on 32 acres of land.

The vibrant space of New Market deserves a feature on its own. The tall arched gates of the New Market lead to vast interiors that are crisscrossed with several courtyards, footpaths, and shops, selling anything from art collections to sarees. There is a mosque inside and a car park outside in this beautiful low-price souk for people from all walks of life.

At Dhaka's historic New Market, the chief attraction might as well be its history, its famed past – that unmissable sense that generations of Dhakaites have stepped through its gateways in search of good bargains.

The memories of shopping for schoolbooks, stationaries, and backpacks, during the back-to-school time at the end of December or early January would mean browsing through comic books like Archies and Russian folklore.

My father and I would invariably drop in on the timeworn bakeries of Dhaka, like Ananda and Olympia for pasties, cake slices, boutique toffee, and a bottle of fizzy drinks. And return home with books, bags

of ghee toast, Horlicks biscuits, fruit cakes, and hot patties.

At a later age, New Market meant retail establishments such as Khan Brothers, Matching Centre, trusted watch and eye frame stores, and trinket shopping from the sidewalks inside the arcade.

The adjoining shopping precincts were diverse as well, with boutiques, restaurants, and complexes set only for grocery and kitchen markets, in addition to covered passages for foreign crockery and household accessory stores.

This shopping district is typically pedestrian oriented, with street-side buildings, and wide sidewalks filled with pop-up stalls of everything from wooden blocks to lace and banarasi sarees, it is that diverse.

"This wedding season, I garnered the courage to brave the traffic and go to Chandni Chawk – a place close to my heart. This, I did, after having failed to meet my dress-making errands at reasonable prices in all those fancy city malls. I took this trip maybe almost 25 years after my last visit. The place changed from how I remembered it as a teenager, yet the true essence of Chandni Chawk remained intact.

"I used to frequent this place, always with my cousins. Every time we received a pay slip from doing odd jobs, like translations or transcriptions, we went on a shopping spree. Buying fancy linen print yards, matching pant materials,

matching slippers, trinkets, all within Tk 500 was the ultimate fun. We were ready for our dates and family gatherings. This was the time when we needed something new to wear on every occasion. We had our favourite stores where we availed bargain buys. The recent visits brought back memories of those rickshaw trips, chilled lassi and a plate of crispy fuchka and crunchy jilapis," says N Mansoor, a corporate executive.

"I miss the New Market of my childhood days," says 73-year-old Hasna Ahmad, "My sister and I would sneak out of college to shop at the various sari shops in the market. The shop keepers were extremely cordial, greeting us with cold drinks, paying close attention to our wants, quite unlike the unprofessional treatment meted out by stores nowadays."

Hasna fondly remembers the cream rolls of the only bakery situated in New Market at that time. The rolls were a novelty of sorts in the country then and only a few bakeries would make these delicious treats.

"I would often throw a fit if my father didn't get cream rolls for me from New Market's Olympia Bakery. My sister branded me as the spoilt one but I wouldn't care and my father had to give in," laughs

Hasna.

Let's not get into Hawker's market this time around, I will only say that the place is a treasure trove of deshi and Indian saris. It is a must-visit for our expatriate Bangladeshi to stock up on the latest saree trends, while Bailey Road sari stores were exclusively for our Tangail sarees – shop after shop lining either side of the road offers you any colour or design imaginable.

Bailey Road is a one-stop shop for almost any sari that you are looking

for and especially prides itself in the abundance of local saris.

However, when Eastern Plaza, the first-ever modern shopping mall established in Dhaka during the 80s, was opened to the public, we all rushed to it for all its fancy décor and the thrill of air-conditioned mall shopping.

This was located beside the Hatirpool Bazar, and stores selling imported goods were all the rage at that time. I forgot the name, but the place had a paper store that offered

hand-made coloured paper for gift wrapping, book covers, notebooks, and all fancy stationery. It was unthinkable in Dhaka at that time, so the unique store was very popular.

Old shopping areas like Elephant Road had Dhaka's most favoured stores, like Musko shoe store, the first departmental store of the town.

The area also catered to those with a taste for tradition, featuring shops that sold exquisite brass items and intricate wedding accessories. These stores were a go-to destination for families preparing for weddings and cultural events, offering timeless pieces that held cultural and sentimental value.

In addition to traditional wares, Elephant Road was a haven for media enthusiasts. Video rental shops and cassette recording stores flourished here, serving as cultural hotspots for music and movie lovers.

Adding a touch of modern sophistication to this vibrant mix was Cats Eye, the city's first boutique experience store for men. Known for its trendy and high-quality clothing, Cats Eye quickly became a favourite among fashion-conscious individuals, introducing a new wave of style and retail innovation.

Just like these places were to the eighties Dhaka crowd, Baitul Mukarram shopping place was for seventies Dhaka. My parents' weekend meant a trip to the Stadium Market for electronics and Baitul Mukarram for everyday utilities.

This nostalgic trip to early Dhaka's shopping experience reminded me of how life was before this current online shopping experience. I am sure someone years later will muse about F-commerce, but for now, a high-five to the old shopping district of Dhaka.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS





ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

FICTION

Pills, water, trees, and blood

As most people struggled to afford the cheapest synthetic foods, the Bilals' inner circle ate lavish four-course meals, and dined with Sheikh Wazed and his cronies in grand halls, under chandelier light—glass and gold.

NADIM SILVERMAN

Nuri had just swallowed a little orange pill dry, when she noticed that the portrait of 'The Sexual Revolutionary' had been taken down from the wall of her childhood bedroom. The Revolutionary had hung there since she was a child. Her mom would tell her stories of his escapades before bed, brimming with pride, about his time at the helm of his civil service and his heroic, principled fall from grace. Without him, the room seemed empty.

Then the shouting started. Nuri traced the sound back to the living room. There, Safu, Nuri's older sister, who was usually the last person to lose her temper, was gesticulating wildly, her golden bangles rattling, her voice crackling like thunder. Her dad was turned away from the drama, hunched over his work table in the corner. And her mother, Afifa, was standing, resolute, by the kitchen door, holding in her arms the picture of The Revolutionary.

The family had spent most of the morning cleaning the apartment, trying their best to present an image of 'middle class respectability' as Nuri's father had put it. It wasn't enough. The wallpaper was still peeling, the adhesive completely dried out, and the plastic sofa covers were still ripped and bunched up at the corners.

"Amma, please don't show them that," Safu begged.

But Afifa was unmoved by Safu's histrionics and refused to put down the photo.

"Please," Safu pleaded, two freshly hennaed hands outstretched. "Give it to me. You're going to scare them away."

"What are you so worked up about? They'll be impressed. Your great grandfather was a very important man."

Nuri didn't understand why Safu was so upset. The Sexual Revolutionary had been outspoken in life, some 150 years ago, circa 1925, regularly interrupting dinner parties by discussing the importance of female pleasure. But, he had become much more reserved now that he was confined to the borders of a picture frame, and posed no threat to the discussions of Safu's upcoming nuptials.

"It's not appropriate," interjected Nuri's father. He had been tinkering with one of his favorite analog clocks, trying to right the mechanism that operated its minute hand, when this talk of The Revolutionary had started. To him, The Revolutionary was

no hero, but a rotten branch on his wife's otherwise pristine family tree; a branch that he hoped would soon be overshadowed by the addition of Maniv Bilal and the golden leaves, fair skin, clear blood, and fresh waters of his family.

"What do you know? 'Appropriate.' Maniv's parents are worldly. They go to Moscow, Shanghai, Paris. I've seen the pictures. They're modern Muslims, like we should be. Tell them Nuri!"

Nuri had been busy trying to make herself invisible. She was convinced this was the only way she would make it through the day, and was crushed to discover that her efforts had been in vain.

Discreetly, she swallowed another orange pill.

"What did you say? Something about Paris?" Nuri asked, winching her voice up like water from a well.

"What are you doing over in that corner anyway?" said Nuri's father.

"Trying to disappear..." she mumbled back.

"Shona, where are the samosas?" her mother asked.

"Oh," Nuri said with a rueful glance towards the kitchen door. If it was going to rain, as Imran had predicted, she hoped it would start now. Maybe then her family would be so distracted that they wouldn't notice the complete and utter absence of fried goods.

But the Bilals would notice.

As most people struggled to afford the cheapest synthetic foods, the Bilals' inner circle ate lavish four-course meals, and dined with Sheikh Wazed and his cronies in grand halls, under chandelier light—glass and gold.

"Nuri?" prompted her father, his voice sliding into that ominous, rasping register Nuri had spent most of her childhood fearing. He had worked over time at the plant for three weeks so that he could buy the oil, ghee, and fresh vegetables needed for the recipe. After the marriage, he'd never have to work again.

"The filling is done," Nuri offered, rather feebly.

"Oh good. The filling is done," said her mother. "We can feed them mushy potatoes and green peas. That'll give them a rosy picture, won't it? Of what Maniv can expect to eat for the rest of his life."

"I won't be the one cooking for him..." Nuri muttered. In truth, she still hoped that Safu wouldn't be cooking for him either.

"Amma, don't worry, I can make them,"

Safu offered—always ready to give.

Pretending to cough, Nuri took a third pill. "Nuri, that's not the point," lectured her father. "And Safu, you can't be handling food. Your henna has barely dried."

"I'll go finish them now," said Nuri.

"It's too late. They'll be here any second," her mother said, her knuckles turning white as she clenched The Revolutionary's frame ever tighter.

"What are we going to feed them? We have to give them something," asked her father, who looked not at his wife or his daughters, but at his beloved wall of clocks—the analogs and cuckoos, the quartzes and atomics, and the hourglass that flipped itself around on the hour every hour.

There was something a little self-flagellating about her father's obsession with time. It didn't matter if he was waiting for his food at a restaurant or using the bathroom, he was always counting the minutes and seconds, and said that since he was a child, as young as four years old, he had felt like his time on earth was quickly draining away. 'like water from a bucket.' The fact that he had defied his own premonition, living 72 long years, through floods and droughts and viral plagues, his heart still pumping, his clock still ticking, provided little comfort.

"We said 10:15? It's already 10," her father said.

It's quintessential masochism, said The Revolutionary. He enjoys the pain.

In a strange way, Nuri hoped The Revolutionary was right, though she wasn't convinced.

"Are you really not going to make the samosas?" her mother asked.

"Oh, I thought you said—" Nuri said.

The Revolutionary stared out at Nuri from the picture frame clutched at her mother's chest.

Go make the samosas, he seemed to be saying with his articulate, bespectacled eyes. Or you'll end up like me—all head and no body.

This is an excerpt from the story "Pills, water, trees, and blood".

Nadim Silverman is a Bangladeshi-Jewish writer and illustrator based in New York City. He studied creative writing at SUNY Stony Brook's MFA program and teaches English literature at Bard Early High School (Bronx).

POETRY

Kafka says

FAIZA RAMIM

It's been so long since we last spoke that I don't think I can talk to you without confessing something.

There you were, standing before me
Returning from the dead in an unsolicited resurrection.

Or maybe it wasn't unsolicited.
I was a long way from the shore
This pen in my hand, the only thing keeping me afloat

And i held on to it so tightly, my knuckles turned white

but the grip became loose
The farther i went into solitude, the more i could feel myself liquify

Until i became the body of water.
that deceives.

that never looks the same.
This is what solitude is to me.

To become farther than the farthest thing until I became a body of darkness

And they kept asking me why i looked so blue all the time

Maybe 'cause no one came close to see anything underneath.

"You know, for the longest time i wanted to be left alone.

Something about kafka and venturing too deep into solitude.

And i was content.
At least i think so.

Or maybe i had become accustomed to it.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

I found no reason to look for an out or be sad about it

"You know how it is. It is what it is."

"And what do you want now?"

I don't look at you

I don't think about it too much.

Too much time alone with yourself, doesn't let you get away with lies.

There isn't much room for secrets and i would tell you anything needed you only ask.

"I think I resurrected you"

You look at me like I'm insane. Maybe I am.

"I didn't mean to. I'm sorry it must have been an inconvenience for you; being brought from the dead. I think I only wanted you hard enough when there was a pen in my hand"

"You didn't answer my question"

And I remember being liquid,

being deeper than the deepest blue.

I remember being so sick of it all that

at dusk I swallowed the sun and became it.

Because then I was still alone but i burned.

I was destructive, I was intimidating

I was far but i was powerful.

I was hiding in plain sight.

Because only a fool would challenge a sun into a

staring contest.

Until now.

Until you.

So I confess, my Icarus, I've never had anything to

hide anyway.

"Love me"

"What?"

"Love me.

I want to know how it feels".

Faiza Ramim is a final year student of BBA at the University of Dhaka. She likes to watch sad films and write sad poems.

POETRY

New Year resolutions

MOHAMMAD SHAFIQU L ISLAM

Wishing you a happy new year!
The coming year? No, years ahead—
soar high, catch clouds and be a tree
now and then or forever,
and make promises to see
the best sunrise the following year
or rake your thoughts
with the leaves stirring in breeze.
That's the way I wish you
on the first day of the year;
that's how discursive thoughts
rally within my mind
and land in pages at midnight.
Do not forget to behold
how fast the hands of clock move
and remind you of life
you want to live—in wonder,
in mirth and memories.
Every time a new year raps
at my door, I make promises
despite knowing they're fleeting.
I make promises to keep



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

the mirror clean, to view the face
that faces prowling bats gnawing at
bones of bonds day after day.
I make a tree of promises
like I won't waste time
in the rat race of capitalist minds,
among idiots circulating their
own dogmas and comfort zones.
The new year comes
and I make promises knowing well
promises are made and broken.
Still I continue making promises
to witness the world and you
through the vines of verse and
the loupe of love, in weal and woe,
amidst fog during biting cold,
amongst multitudes on the mid-sea.

Mohammad Shafiqu l Islam, poet, translator, and academic, is Professor of English literature at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh. Email: msislam-eng@sust.edu.

Khero Khata

Khero Khata is Star Books and Literature's writing corner. In the first week of every month, we post a prompt soliciting submissions in the form of flash fiction and poetry. Selected pieces will be published in print and/or online.

This month's prompt:
Exit

Email us your submissions (500 words) at
dslteditor@gmail.com by
January 24, 2025.

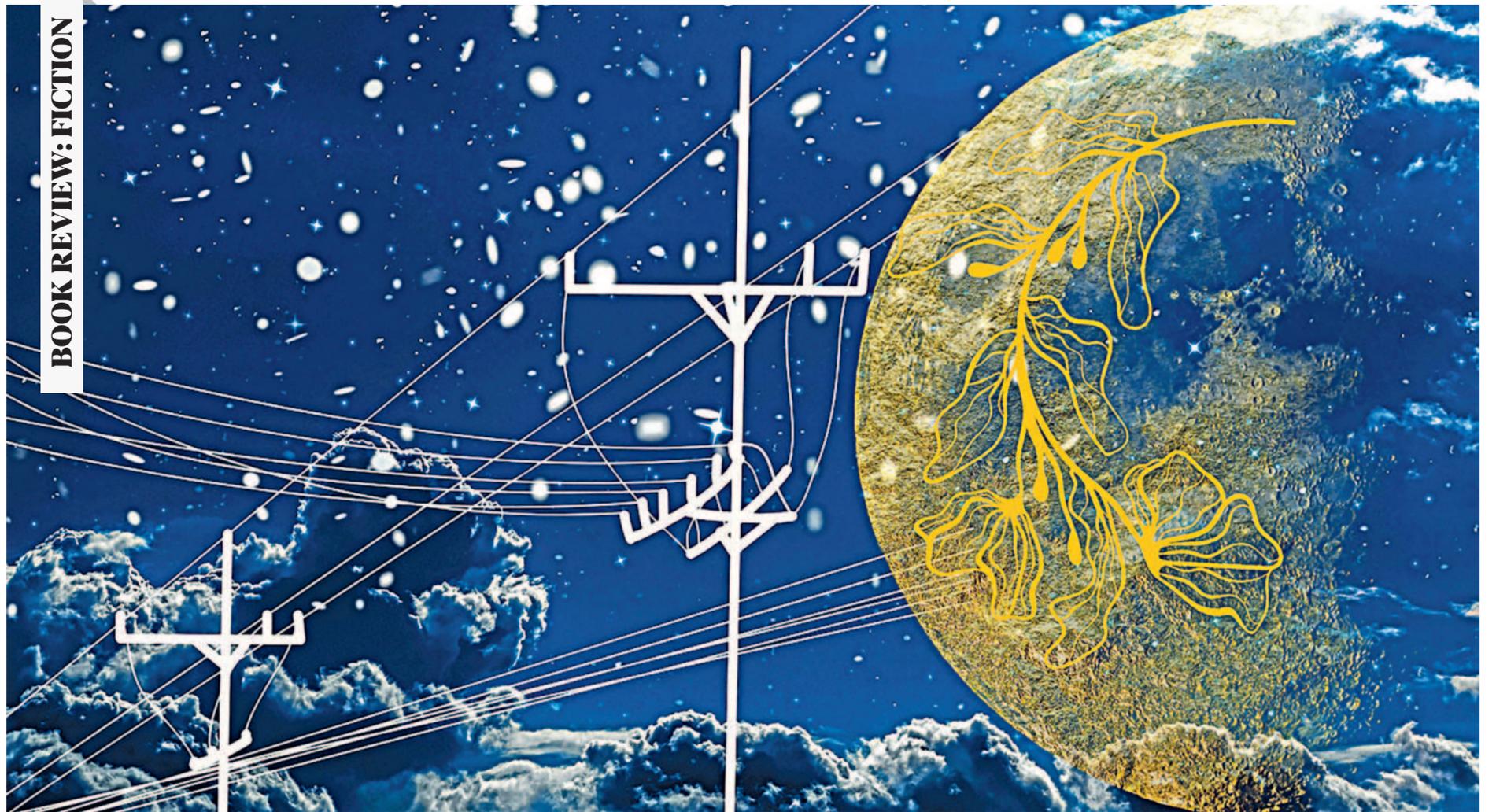


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

The apocalypse is already here

A review of 'Moon of the Crusted Snow' (ECW Press, 2018) by Waubgeshig Rice

In a twist on the popular post-apocalyptic narrative, the novel focuses on an indigenous community's response to a worldwide calamity. The outages and resulting loss of modern amenities draws a stark line between those who have retained traditional hunter-gatherer skills and those who have not.

SABRINA FATMA AHMAD

From *A Handmaid's Tale* (McClelland and Stewart, 1985) to *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic, 2008), most dystopian novels tend to set their apocalypse in an undisclosed future from the time they were written in. With our news feeds showing us mind-numbing images of human savagery every single day, it begins to feel like we're already living in the end times, and horror writers certainly have their work cut out for them.

Two years ago, Bangladesh experienced a country-wide power outage that lasted less than 24 hours, and anyone who was around at that time will recall the panic and mayhem that ensued, so soon after we had emerged from a global pandemic. It was a sobering illustration of just how dependent we have become on modern technology, and how limited our survival skills have become—a feeling reinforced earlier this year during the July revolution when the AL government shut down the internet and imposed a media blackout.

While these are nightmarish

situations for many of us, these are realities for many communities within our borders and across the world. And this forms the basis of Waubgeshig Rice's speculative fiction.

Moon of the Crusted Snow takes place in an isolated Ojibwe community in Northern Ontario. It is late fall. Snow is imminent. A sudden disruption of the electricity, cell phone service, and internet takes them by surprise. At first, these outages seem typical of the unreliable services provided by the authorities 'down south'. Days go by, however, and neither power nor communications are restored. Days turn into weeks and gradually it becomes clear that something apocalyptic has happened.

In a twist on the popular post-apocalyptic narrative, the novel focuses on an indigenous community's response to a worldwide calamity. The outages and resulting loss of modern amenities draws a stark line between those who have retained traditional hunter-gatherer skills and those who have not. As winter deepens, and emergency food supplies dwindle, those less equipped to survive die off

and their frozen bodies are piled in a makeshift morgue. Further tensions are precipitated by the arrival of Justin Scott, a white refugee, whose snowmobile trailer contains liquor and guns. In true white man fashion, Scott tries to assume leadership of the community. Interspersed within the terrifyingly mundane details of the community's slow decline into chaos and violence are flashes of the supernatural—dreams and visions that feel like prophecies, old cautionary tales told by the elders, all adding an eerie quality to an already horrific situation.

Rice's novel uses the post-apocalyptic setting to celebrate the resilience of indigenous people and to explore the challenges and possibilities of indigenous resurgence. He crafts a rich and full portrait of his community in a humble and direct style, the experience of reading which would remind readers of the tone and tenor of the "Drama in Real Life" stories from *Readers Digest* back in the '90s.

There has been some complaint among readers about the lack of exposition regarding the inciting incident of the novel, i.e., the calamity

that caused the outages, a conceit reminiscent of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); the book does not explain the calamity that has led to the setting. This sharpens the focus on the reactions of the characters, which serves some good novelistic purposes. For me, personally, the conceit works: The eerie 'jovial bully' personality of Justin Scott displays a creepiness similar to Stephen King's books. For a subjugated people, the 'why' of certain abuses that have happened becomes less important than the fact that they happened at all. One way to read the post-apocalyptic aspect of the novel is as an expression of how difficult indigenous resurgence is in present-day Canada, or really anywhere where indigenous communities have been relegated to minority status. In the wake of the ongoing turmoil in the CHT, this becomes a particularly relevant consideration for Bangladeshi readers.

The novel offers an engaging glimpse into the challenges of the Ojibwe people, who have been displaced by the white settlers. "Our world isn't ending. It already ended", laments

one of the characters, a community elder. He continues: "It ended with the Zhaagnaash came into our original home down south on that bay and took it from us. That was our world. When the Zhaagnaash cut down all the trees and took our fish and forced us out of there, that's when our world ended."

The opposing forces of forced assimilation and a struggle to retain the cultural identity in the face of 'progress', are rendered moot by the arrival of the apocalypse. How to pass on Ojibwe traditions in the face of the distractions of modern life is no longer an issue when modern life no longer exists?

In a world where an ongoing genocide has become an accepted background noise, where climate change continues to wreak havoc on every day life while political leaders pursue their usual rhetoric, a novel like *Moon of the Crusted Snow* doesn't need to work too hard to be absolutely terrifying, and I for one, cannot wait to read the sequel.

Sabrina Fatma Ahmad is a writer, journalist, and the founder of *Sehri Tales*.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Behind the screens: Unpacking the power of Bangladeshi TV ads

Review of 'Decoding Ad Culture' (Lexington Books, 2024) by Dr Harisur Rahman

MRIITKA ANAN RAHMAN

Consuming advertisements on television is a fixture of modern life—we are constantly aware when watching TV that we can buy more things, be better looking, have more fun, and treat ourselves to more. In an environment where we are a perennial audience for messages that tell us how we can improve our lives, it is natural for us to wonder what effect these messages have on us.

The conversation around ads extends beyond simply whether one can convince us to make a purchase or not. How does our history of colonialism affect the identity of ourselves that we have accepted? What kind of portrayals of gender does the contemporary local audience accept? Can an ad of foreign origin reflect the local audience simply by being dubbed in Bangla?

Although ads can be a common topic of discussion among audience members due to its wide reach, seldom has there been a structured and methodical dive into the Bangladeshi TV advertising industry and the many meanings and messages in the ads we see.

Decoding Ad Culture by Dr Harisur Rahman does just that. Rahman, a scholar of South Asian media studies, has previously

authored *Consuming Cultural Hegemony* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), which largely explored the Bangladeshi audience's cultural obsession with Bollywood. In his new book, he dives into the contemporary advertising landscape of our country, thinking about the narratives, values, and ideas we consume on a daily basis. He achieves this through extended analysis of almost 40 popular ads that aired on Bangladeshi TV between 2018 and 2023, and conducting more than 30 interviews of ad makers and audience members alike.

The book provides observations and findings that will be of interest to anyone curious about the media or familiar watching local TV in general. In the earlier chapters, we are taken case by case through many popular ads exploring their use of language, symbolism, hidden meanings, and the types of logic and ideas that are embedded

in them.

While this analysis may be of particular interest to readers who enjoy analysing texts themselves, the approachable writing and explanations for every concept that is discussed makes this book perfectly appropriate for a wider audience.

The incorporation of quotes from audience members provides us an understanding of how other viewers feel about the issues discussed by the author. The book delves into greenwashing or how ads adopt certain pro-environment narratives to make it seem their work benefits the environment.

Gender roles, acceptable beauty and body standards, middle class identity and class dynamics, the disparity in ethical standards in marketing in western and non-western markets—all become part of the conversation in exploring how these ads construct their

messages.

One of the more interesting conversations that *Decoding Ad Culture* brings to the table is of cultural hegemony from Indian and western media. It is very difficult to define which culture is "ours" or even what the definition of "our" is for a country that is as young as Bangladesh, was once colonised, and shares borders with other countries (and consequently cultures) in the region. In any media, at what point does depiction of our culture end and that of a slightly different, more dominant neighbouring culture begin? Which ideas, cultural symbols, and norms can be claimed as "local", and which are being pushed on us by the soft power of more powerful media? The answers are not so easy.

Another interesting question the book brings up is "what is real"? The book quotes Pollay when stating "cultural values in advertising are reproduced in such an idealized manner that the audience finds a similarity between themselves and the subjects of the advertisements" (1983). That begs us to ask: How much of what is shown in an ad is meant to be perceived as "real"?

If the youth in an ad converse using buzzwords young people seldom use in real life, is that meant to portray the lives of real youth in a heightened fashion or does

that represent a hyperreal world which is not meant to correspond to our society? *Decoding Ad Culture* seamlessly blends real life ad examples with theoretical components, bridging the gap between big picture ideas and the everyday products we use.

Overall, *Decoding Ad Culture* provides a truly wonderful insight into the commercials we see on an everyday basis. It is a reminder that nothing should be interpreted at a surface level—no text is simply words and actions, but layers of embedded meanings, ideas, and implications. Everything we see pushes specific values, makes assumptions about people and their lifestyles, and creates ideas of what is superior or even acceptable in society.

In a world where everything is commodified, it is difficult to maintain one's own ideas of beauty, comfort, and fun. Reading a critical text like this serves as an important reminder of the many ways messages are designed to appeal to us, and the ways in which we may engage critically with the messages to take away information in a manner that is helpful to us.

Mrittika Anan Rahman is a contributor to *Daily Star Books*.

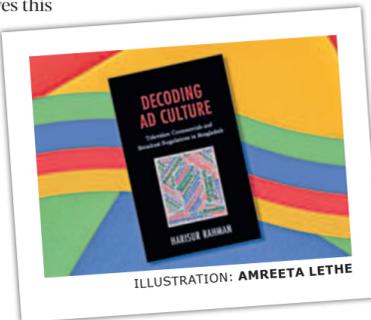


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE



Feeling the pulse of local STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

MAHMUDUL HASAN

In Dhaka, the teeming capital of Bangladesh, distance is not measured in kilometres, but in increments of time – minutes and hours, or entire portions of a morning or evening. The city's notoriously glacial traffic has made the act of commuting less about movement and more about endurance, a daily ritual of patience for its 22 million residents.

So, it is unsurprising that innovative solutions to this worsening problem would give rise to startups in Bangladesh. One of the most notable efforts to tackle this problem is Pathao, a homegrown startup launched in 2015.

The name Pathao, which translates to "send", hints at its mission: helping Dhaka's residents navigate the labyrinthine chaos of the city's streets. Its founders were spurred into action shortly after the World Bank released a sobering report titled *Can We Build Dhaka Out of Traffic Congestion?* For Pathao's founders, the answer was not to circumvent the problem, but to work through it.

Two years earlier, in 2013, another startup, Chaldal, came to the market and started reshaping how people would buy daily essentials and groceries.

Also in 2013, food delivery startup foodpanda began to generate excitement by bringing favourite restaurant meals directly to the doorsteps of its young and tech-savvy customers.

From groceries to food and commuting, these startups, founded by innovative young people, quickly became popular brands, instead of just "another company beginning the journey".

Offering innovative solutions

Experts attribute these challenges to a combination of market limitations, regulatory barriers, and structural issues.

The addressable market for startups remains limited, with less than 10 million potential customers in popular sectors like e-commerce, food delivery, logistics, mobility, education, healthcare and digital content, according to industry insiders.

The year 2024 was no exception as startup funding in Bangladesh declined by 66 percent to \$44.5 million in the first six months, according to LightCastle Partners.

as discussions regarding significant investments are underway.

A resolution of the political situation and stabilisation of the macroeconomic environment could restore confidence, potentially unlocking new opportunities for growth in the startup ecosystem and the broader investment landscape, Mashroor added.

FINTECH PROMISES

In Bangladesh, the main sectors attracting startup funding include fintech, e-commerce, logistics, education technology, and healthcare.

continues to grapple with a trust deficit, stemming from the wave of scams that engulfed the industry in 2021. Fraudulent activities left thousands of customers uncertain about recovering investments worth thousands of crores of taka.

These controversies have significantly hindered the sector's growth, which had been steadily expanding from 2018 to 2021. The turmoil became evident at the start of 2021 as customers increasingly filed complaints against various platforms.

A Bangladesh Bank inspection, initiated by the commerce ministry

industry in Bangladesh holds immense potential, driven by growing demand across sectors.

"Cities like Chattogram and Cumilla are accessible, but deliveries to remote rural areas often take more than 24-48 hours. Improved infrastructure is essential for efficient last-mile delivery," Rahul added.

HEALTH, EDTECH BUILD MOMENTUM

Bangladesh's healthcare startup sector is growing steadily, driven by increasing digital adoption and rising demand for accessible solutions.

Startups are leveraging technology to offer telemedicine, diagnostics, and subscription-based services, addressing critical gaps in healthcare access, particularly in rural areas.

However, Syvana Quader Sinha, founder and CEO of Praava Health, said technology alone will not solve healthcare challenges.

"The real problem isn't about booking appointments or visiting pharmacies; it's about trust," she said.

Patients often lack confidence in Bangladesh's healthcare system, leading many to seek treatment abroad. Sinha highlighted that while technology can enhance quality, well-trained doctors and reliable lab tests are essential for building trust.

Edtech startups in Bangladesh hold significant potential but have seen limited growth.

Shahir Chowdhury, founder and CEO of Shikho, said that while the market has matured since 2019, challenges like expensive mobile internet and inadequate funding hinder progress.

"Bangladesh has the demand and talent. What we need now is connectivity – both physical and financial – to bridge the gap," he said.

He highlighted that venture funding for Bangladesh's edtech sector is meagre compared to India, which secured \$10 billion in 2023 while Bangladesh has raised only \$17 million for edtech, with over 98 percent of the funding coming from foreign sources.

DIGITAL DREAMS SEEK POLICY BACKING

Regulatory barriers also restrict market growth. High internet costs, driven by telecom licensing and corporate policies, limit accessibility.

The financial sector remains constrained by inadequate digital frameworks and data-sharing policies. "Without consent-based APIs or pricing mechanisms for data sharing, startups face high costs in managing data," said Fahim Ahmed, CEO of Pathao.

Ahmed also pointed to a lack of quality founders focused on problem-solving and revenue generation. He stressed that stable regulatory reforms are essential for consistent investor confidence.

Accurate data is another critical challenge. Adnan Imtiaz Halim, CEO of Sheba Platform, said that misleading government statistics on internet users result in flawed forecasts. He called for affordable mobile devices, improved rural access and reduced data costs.

He also stressed the importance of giving incentives to traditional businesses and consumers to adopt technology, bridging the learning curve.

Regarding key challenges, Waseem Alim, founder and CEO of Chaldal, said they keep hitting speed-breakers due to macro issues. "Losing momentum can be fatal for a startup. It affects company culture and creativity."

"Besides, we are competing against startups in other countries to create the winning product, so when macro issues affect our plans, we fall behind in the race," said Alim.

On the positive side, the CEO said Bangladesh has a competitive advantage in terms of talent pool thanks to the country's large young population.

"Once the ecosystem matures, we can aim for creating world-changing ventures," he commented.

The Bangladeshi startup ecosystem is thriving, with over 1,200 active startups and an additional 200 plus newcomers emerging each year, according to LightCastle Partners, a management consulting firm that tracks startup funding in the country

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



The data also reports that over the past decade, Bangladesh startups collectively raised \$989 million across more than 400 deals since 2013.

Venture capital (VC), a form of private equity and financing for startup companies and small businesses with long-term growth potential, has been the primary driver of this growth, contributing \$753 million across 171 deals during this period.

International investors dominate the landscape, accounting for 92

fintech leads with significant investments in mobile financial services and digital payment solutions, while e-commerce and logistics benefit from rising online shopping demand.

However, none of these sectors has met expectations in market expansion, ecosystem building, or attracting funds.

In fintech, some startups have witnessed growth, with bKash leading

in mid-2021, revealed Evaly's massive liabilities to customers and merchants, which far outweighed its assets. This revelation uncovered a series of scams by other platforms like Eorange, Qcoom, Dhamaka, and others that adopted Evaly's flawed business model.

As a result, thousands of customers remain uncertain about recovering their money while reputable platforms still operating in the sector struggle to rebuild trust and grow their businesses.

"The unresolved issue of customers not recovering their money from fraudulent e-commerce platforms has severely damaged trust in the sector," said Morin Talukder, CEO of Pickaboo.

"Many now perceive e-commerce as a scam, resulting in minimal penetration in rural areas."

LOGISTICS STARTUPS FIND NEW PATHS

Talukder added that logistical challenges exacerbate the situation. While some reliable logistics companies exist, delivery inefficiencies remain. For instance, delivering a television can take up to four days.

Additionally, low order volumes in certain areas have made operations unsustainable for many businesses. E-commerce remains urban-centric, with fear and scepticism persisting among suburban and rural consumers, further slowing

growth. The market is progressing sluggishly, with electronic product sales particularly weak. Despite these challenges, logistic startups are finding a niche by leveraging the rise of f-commerce and supporting women-led small businesses.

Startups offer tailored solutions like last-mile delivery and cash-on-delivery services, empowering entrepreneurs to access broader markets.

"Our growth relies heavily on e-commerce, but social media has kept the sector afloat," said Biplob G Rahul, CEO of eCourier.

The number of logistics firms has declined due to the downturn in e-commerce. However, the logistics



to existing problems and logging rapid growth – these are two main characteristics that define a business model as a startup.

Now, after a decade, it is difficult to find anyone in Dhaka who has never used foodpanda or Pathao even once.

But it is difficult to find the answers to questions like are these startups truly successful? Are they generating a lot of revenue or are anywhere near achieving a valuation of \$1 billion to become the "unicorn"?

The Bangladeshi startup ecosystem is thriving, with over 1,200 active startups and an additional 200 plus newcomers emerging each year, according to LightCastle Partners, a management consulting firm that tracks startup funding in the country.

But the Bangladeshi unicorn herd so far has only one member: bKash – a mobile financial service provider founded in 2011.

So why are the remaining startups struggling to expand their reach? Do they need more time or a more favourable landscape to thrive?

TOO MANY CHALLENGES

Bangladesh's startup ecosystem is grappling with significant challenges in expanding its reach and customer base despite a decade of effort.

percent of total funds.

However, this figure pales in comparison to neighbouring India, where startup funding surged by 53.1 percent in the first eight months of 2024, reaching \$7.5 billion compared to \$4.9 billion the previous year, as reported by GlobalData and published in the Economic Times.

Fahim Mashroor, former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), said that investment in Bangladesh has slowed significantly, weighed down by political uncertainty and macroeconomic challenges.

"Startups are facing a particularly tough environment as most investors remain cautious, adopting a wait-and-see approach ahead of the upcoming elections," he added.

He also said that the volatile dollar exchange rate has alarmed foreign investors, who fear their investments could lose value due to currency devaluation, adding to the already uncertain circumstances. These factors have collectively dampened the country's investment sentiment, leading to a marked decline in activity.

He also expressed cautious optimism that this challenging phase will end within the next six months

the sector.

In 2021, SoftBank's Vision Fund 2 invested \$250 million in bKash, acquiring a 20 percent stake and valuing the company at around \$2 billion – a milestone for Bangladesh's fintech sector. However, bKash does not consider itself a startup.

Nagad has also disrupted the mobile financial sector, attracting 9 crore customers in just five years, but has been mired in controversy.

Pathao, originally a logistics company, launched Pathao Pay, a digital wallet, and Pay Later, Bangladesh's first buy-now-pay-later solution.

Other fintech startups are addressing financial challenges but have yet to secure significant funding or gain a strong foothold.

FRAGILE CONFIDENCE
Bangladesh's e-commerce sector