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38pc harassed,  
31pc paid bribes  
while seeking  
police services

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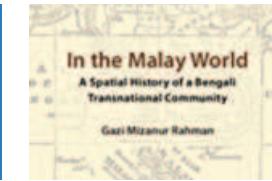
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## India's fencing along border 'unauthorised'

Such activities will hurt bilateral ties, says foreign secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has told New Delhi that the construction of barbed wire fences by the Indian Border Security Force along the Bangladesh-India border "without proper authorisation" undermines the spirit of cooperation and friendly relations between the two nations.

Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin has made this communication to Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma, who was summoned to the foreign ministry yesterday amid tensions touched off by the recent BSF activities along the border.

"Such activities, particularly the unauthorised attempts to construct barbed wire fencing and the related operational actions by BSF, have caused tensions and disturbances along the border," Jashim Uddin said in a media statement yesterday.

Also, Dhaka will push for the cancellation of any "unequal agreements" related to Bangladesh-India borders at a director general-level meeting of the border forces of the two countries scheduled for February.

Speaking at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retired) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that due to the BSF's recent fencing activities, tensions arose in five border areas, including Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Lalmonirhat, and the Tin Bigha Corridor.

**Home Adviser Jahangir Alam accused the previous Awami League government of granting India "unequal opportunities" through MoUs.**

"Thanks to the strong position of the BGB and locals, India has been forced to halt its activities. I extend my gratitude to them for their role in this matter."

He added that various issues have risen along the border due to some "unequal agreements" signed during the previous government's tenure.

Jahangir Alam said four border-related Memorandums of Understanding have been signed between the two countries since Bangladesh's independence.

Asked at a separate press briefing in the foreign service academy, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said those four agreements are the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement for the disposal of enclaves and disputed lands; the Joint Indo-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities 1975; the Land Boundary Agreement Protocol 2011; and the Coordinated Border Management Plan 2011.

The home adviser said that, of those agreements, the 1975 MoU specifies that no defence development activities can take place within 150 yards of the zero line.

"Another MoU states that any development activities cannot occur within the 150 yards of the zero line without mutual consent. Any such work will require prior agreement between the two nations."

He said India has already fenced 3,271km of the 4,156km-long border with Bangladesh, leaving approximately 885km unfenced.

Jahangir Alam accused the previous Awami League government, which was in power between 2009 and 2024, of granting India unequal opportunities through MoUs,

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After a break during the July-August movement, the construction of the Dhaka-Ashulia Expressway, the second such expressway centring the capital, is now going on in full swing and saw almost 50 percent progress till December last year. Once completed, this 24km expressway – stretching from Dhaka airport to Dhaka EPZ – will be connected to the partially-opened Dhaka Elevated Expressway. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Next polls to be 'best ever and historic': Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the government is planning to make the upcoming general election of Bangladesh "the best ever and historic."

"We want to make it an example, a historical example," Yunus said during a meeting with Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen.

Yunus also encouraged Norway to use Bangladesh as a regional distribution hub for their products

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ATTACK ON TRADERS  
Emon among  
10 sued for  
attempted  
murder

SHAFIQUL ALAM  
AND  
MUNTAKIM SAAD

Friday's attack on two computer traders in the capital's Elephant Road took place as they refused to pay extortion money to the gang of top criminal Sanjidul Haque Emon, says the case statement.

However, sources said the attack might be linked to a power struggle between two top criminals – Emon from Hazaribagh and Imamul Hasan Helal, alias Pichchi Helal, from Mohammadpur -- who are allegedly attempting to dominate the Multiplan Centre traders on Elephant Road.

The two were released on bail after the August 5 political changeover.

Two computer shop owners -- Wahedul Hasan Dipu, president of Elephant Road Computer

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## Top criminals on extortion spree

SHAFIQUL ALAM  
AND  
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In November last year, a contractor secured the work to demolish a building in Dhaka's Moghbazar for Tk 16.5 lakh. Shortly afterwards, members of a local gang arrived at the site and demanded Tk 3 lakh to allow the work to proceed.

"We have been handling construction projects in Dhaka for over a decade. While we are no stranger to extortion, the situation has worsened over the last few months as unprecedentedly high amounts are being demanded in the name of top criminals," the contractor told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

"We even had to abandon a project in Bhashantek due to a similar extortion threat," he added.

The contractor initially paid Tk 100,000 to two gangs to resume the work in Moghbazar.

Sources claimed that one of the gangs operates under Zeesan Ahmed, a top criminal reportedly residing in a Middle Eastern country now. This

newspaper could not independently verify the claim.

A close associate of Subrata Bain, the leader of the other gang, however, denied his involvement in the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star anonymously, he said, "Dada [Subrata] is not involved in any extortion activities. Other gangs are using his name."

Mohammad Razu, officer-in-charge of Hatirjheel Police Station, said they did not receive any information about Subrata's involvement in extortion. "If evidence emerges, we will take necessary legal action," he said.

Subrata's whereabouts are unknown, but people who knew him said he was sighted in Bangladesh after a long time recently.

With a good number of similar incidents reported in recent months, a climate of fear permeates businesses in Dhaka. Contractors in the construction sector are being forced to pay or stop work under threat, while businesspeople in other sectors are targeted with abduction or attacks.

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**'ILLEGAL PLOT ALLOCATION'**  
**ACC sues Hasina, her daughter**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her daughter, Saima Wazed (Putul), have been sued for irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with its Dhaka Integrated District Office, ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain told reporters yesterday.

According to the case statement, Saima Wazed, the prime accused, concealed information about ownership of housing or apartments by her and her family members within the jurisdiction of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) and abused Hasina's (second accused) authority as a public servant by influencing and colluding with 14 public officials involved in the allocation process to secure Plot-017 on Road-203 in Sector-27 of the Purbachal project despite her ineligibility.

This action violated laws and policies governing the allocation of plots in the Purbachal New Town Project.

ACC DG Akhtar said, "The charges have been filed under sections 161, 163, 164, 409, and 109 of The Penal Code, 1860, along with section 5(2) of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947."

Fourteen other individuals have also been named as accused in the case. They are: Saiful Islam Sarkar, administrative officer, Purabi Goldar, senior assistant secretary, Kazi Wazi Uddin, additional secretary (administration), and Shahid Ullah Khandaker, secretary

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**VAT hike to improve tax-GDP ratio  
Says CA press secy**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has been compelled to raise VAT on some commonly consumed products to improve revenue collection and stabilise the country's economy.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the statement at a press briefing at the Foreign Services Academy yesterday.

He said capital flight and erratic development expenditure by the previous government have left the economy in a fragile state.

"We need macroeconomic stability, and a good tax-to-GDP ratio is an indicator of that. However, our tax-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world. In the last five months, we have had a significant shortfall in revenue collection."

"We had a revenue collection target of Tk 1,69,000 crore [in the last five months], but we

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Halima, who lives near the Khulna Railway Station, woke up to see these two puppies shivering amid the heavy winter fog yesterday morning. She made sure to get some warm clothes to cover them up while they sleep. The dogs are not at risk as this particular rail track

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**First HMPV case of the year reported**

DGHS issues guideline

### SYMPTOMS

- COUGH
- WHEEZING
- FEVER
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH (DYSPNEA)
- RUNNY OR STUFFY NOSE
- SORE THROAT
- RASH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 30-year-old woman has been found infected with the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), the first case of the disease in Bangladesh this year, according to health officials.

Halimur Rashid, line director of Communicable Disease Control Programme of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the woman from Kishoreganj also tested positive for Klebsiella Pneumoniae, a variant of pneumonia.

"The condition of the woman deteriorated due to pneumonia, not HMPV," said Halimur, adding that the patient is currently under treatment at Infectious Diseases Hospital, Mohakhali.

First identified in the Netherlands in 2001, HMPV spreads through direct contact between people, or when someone touches a contaminated surface.

HMPV is transmitted through respiratory droplets, direct contact with infected individuals, or contaminated surfaces. Infections are most common during late

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MY DHAKA

# VISUALLY BIMURTO

## an exhibition of contrasts, connections

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

"It's a wonderful experience to see the works of two artists from different mediums in the same exhibition -- works that seem to express their inner thoughts in two different ways, yet woven together by a single thread," these words from a visitor, Nuzhat Jahan, perfectly encapsulates the exhibition Visually Bimurto by Habibur Rahman and Shamsad Rahman.

Held at Gallery Chitrak in Dhanmondi, Dhaka, this exhibition (running till January 15) marks the first collaborative showcase of the Rahmans in Bangladesh.

There is an immediate sense of immersion for those visiting the gallery, a quiet pull into the layered and shared space the Rahmans have constructed.



Here, the tangible and the abstract converged, forming a narrative that is as much about space as it is about the emotion and distinct identity of the artists.

Habibur Rahman's work carries



PHOTO: COURTESY

the imprint of his architectural training, transformed into complex compositions that challenge perceptions of depth and dimension through mediums as simple as graphite or colour pencils on paper. And, in contrast, Shamsad Rahman's works on silk imbued in vibrant colour, echoes the textures and patterns of nature, with a warm celebration of femininity.

Curator Efat Razowana Reya shed light on the artists' journey and her experience of curating for this exhibition. She mentioned, "In my year plus journey working with the artists, I noticed a palpable synergy between them, which reflects their shared foundation in architecture, while allowing their distinct voices to

shine through, and it resulted in a duo exhibition like this."

"You can notice here; I have placed the work of Shamsad at the centre space of this exhibition hall, and the works of Habibur surrounding them throughout the rest. It actually reflects their lives and journeys as artists. They practiced art together wherever they went."

Habibur Rahman's art is bold and directly communicative with the viewer, often catching them off guard as if struck by a bolt from the blue upon entering the exhibition space. His use of simple mediums like graphite, charcoal, or ink on paper, with a basic flow of lines and shapes, feels surprisingly profound because of his

ability to communicate so much.

One intriguing feature about most of his works exhibited was that each piece employs a distinct type of lines, shape, or style which either glide naturally across the canvas, filling the spaces with effortless flow, or are placed in a way throughout the canvas that clearly reflects his mastery on architectural drawing and his profound understanding of space, form and composition.

On the other hand, Shamsad Rahman's works reflect the elegance of femininity through her silk painting skills, enhanced by her technical expertise and deep understanding of the natural world.

Silk, as a medium, has its own agenda, hence it demands a collaborative effort to paint on silk. The dye flows and bleeds in its natural course, creating an aesthetic that feels organic yet intentional. Rahman's love for silk developed during her stay in the Middle East, where she was captivated by the vibrant nature of the Moghul and Persian artworks. Her works on silk distinctively feature the use of photographs and microelements from nature through skilful painting and photo manipulation techniques.

This exhibition is a milestone not only for the Rahmans, but also for the local art enthusiasts. By bringing their collaborative vision to Dhaka, this exhibition offers a fresh lens, through which to view the confluence of visions shaped by architectural precision and the boundless creativity of visual elements.

BNP won't form govt alone: Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will not form a unilateral government even if the party wins 200 seats in the next parliamentary election, said BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"The 31 point proposal was formulated collectively by 42 parties, including the BNP. Even if the BNP wins 200 seats, it will not form a government alone, as implementing the 31 points must be achieved through a national government," he said.

He made these remarks while addressing a discussion as chief guest on the 31-point state reform proposal held in the capital's Banani.

Khasru said the BNP and 42 other parties jointly carried out the movement that toppled the Awami League-led government.

The BNP leader acknowledged that students played the biggest role in the movement. However, the contributions of other stakeholders should not be underestimated, he added.

He warned against divisions over taking credit for the movement and urged everyone to remain united to secure people's rights in the future.

The BNP leader said, "We have been working to fix the state structures for several years. Bangladesh will not become a communal country."

"Ziaur Rahman emphasised merit-based politics, and the BNP continues to follow that path. However, the participation of the youth [in politics] will be the most critical aspect of Bangladesh's future," he said.

Around 250 students from private universities across Dhaka and other parts of the country attended the discussion.

### DHANMONDI GOLD HEIST

## 3 arrested, 50 tola gold recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested three individuals for their alleged involvement in a heist at a jewellery shop in Dhanmondi's Shimanto Sambhar Shopping Complex.

Md Rubel, 28, Shafiq alias Sohel, 35, and Saddam Hossain, 31, were arrested in drives conducted in Cumilla's Companyganj and Muradnagar areas between January 9 and January 11.

Gold ornaments weighing around 50 tola were also recovered from their possession, said Mohammad Nasirul Islam, DMP's joint police commissioner (DB South), at a press briefing held at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

On January 3, a gang of criminals looted the shop, Crown Diamond and Jewellers, on the ground floor of the shopping complex.

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## India's fencing along border 'unauthorised'

FROM PAGE 1

which have now led to the disputes over barbed wire fencing at 160 locations.

He stressed that these challenges stemmed from written permissions granted by the previous government. "These permissions should not have been issued."

He also said, "A major problem arises from the written assurances that allowed India to carry out certain activities. One of the significant issues pertains to the Tin Bigha Corridor."

Under the 1974 agreement, he said, Bangladesh handed over Berubari to India after parliamentary ratification. In return, India was supposed to provide Bangladesh with access to the Tin Bigha Corridor, but it failed to fulfil this

commitment.

"They would open the corridor for an hour and then close it for another hour. Later, in 2010, a new agreement was signed to keep the corridor open for 24 hours. However, this [2010] agreement also allowed India to construct a border fence on the zero line at Angarpota."

"Now we face challenges in opposing this construction as Bangladesh signed this agreement."

At the meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma, Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin expressed serious concerns over BSF's recent activities along the border.

He called upon the Indian government to advise all authorities concerned there to refrain from any provocative activities that could

stoke tensions along the shared border.

He hoped the matter would be discussed at length in the upcoming BGB-BSF DG-level talks.

After the meeting, Pranay Verma told journalists they discussed New Delhi's commitment to ensuring a crime-free border, effectively addressing the challenges of smuggling, movements of criminals and trafficking.

"We have an understanding with regard to fencing the border for security, the two border forces -- BSF and BGB -- have been in communication.

"We expect that the understanding will be implemented and there would be a cooperative approach to combatting crimes along the border."

ARMED WITH MACHETES

The release of some top criminals after the political changeover last year fuelled the concerns, said police officers and victims.

Names of criminals like Subrata, who was among 23 people listed by the police as "top terror" in 2001, have emerged in connection with incidents of extortion. The others include Abbas Ali alias Killer Abbas, Sanjidul Hassan Emon, and Imamul Hasan Helal alias Pichchi Helal.

Subrata's gang has reportedly been active in Moghbazar, Malibagh, Eskaton and surrounding areas; Abbas in Mirpur, Kafrud and Bhashante; Emon in Dhanmondi, New Market and Mohammadpur Beribandhi; and Helal in Mohammadpur and Agargaon.

Of them, Helal was even named in a murder case filed with Mohammadpur Police Station on September 21 last year.

Hafizur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of the police station, said, "We have filed several extortion cases in recent months. We act on complaints regardless of who is involved."

Regarding Helal, Hafizur said, "We are conducting drives to arrest him, but his whereabouts remain unknown."

Then a Chhatri Dal leader, Helal was arrested on January 12, 2000. He was released on bail on August 16 last year.

In the latest incident, Helal's brother Wahedul Hasan Dipu was among two computer traders who were hacked allegedly by Emon's gang on Elephant Road on Friday night. A case has been filed against Emon and nine of his associates with New Market Police Station in connection with the regulations, and plastic pollution.

Along with Wahedul, president of Elephant Road Computer Baboshayee Kallyan Samity (ECS), Ehteshamul Haque, joint general secretary of Multiplan Shop Owners Association, was hacked by a group of around 20

Several employees of the school, requesting not to be named,

At the meeting, Jashim Uddin also referred to the recent killing of a Bangladeshi citizen by BSF in Sunamganj and expressed concern and disappointment over such persistent border killings despite repeated commitments from the Indian authorities to pursue a non-lethal strategy to stop killings.

He strongly called for urgent action by India to stop recurrence of such incidents; conduct enquiries into all the border killings; and take action against those responsible.

Jashim Uddin added that Bangladesh believes such issues should be resolved through constructive dialogues, in accordance with existing bilateral agreements, and in a way that upholds peace and tranquility along the border.

CONFIRMED A TENDER

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## ACC sues Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

of housing and public works ministry; RAJUK officials, including Anisur Rahman Mia, former chairman, Md Khurshed Alam, member (estate and land), Kabir Al Asad, member (administration and finance), Tammooy Das, member (development and control), Md Nasir Uddin, former member (planning), Major (engr) Shamsuddin Ahmed Chowdhury (ret'd), former member (development), Hafizur Rahman, deputy director (estate and land-3), Habibur Rahman, deputy director (estate and land-3), Sheikh Shahinul Islam, director (estate and land-2), and Md Nurul Islam, member (estate and land).

According to the ACC documents, Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, had six plots of land allotted to herself, her son Saieeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed, younger sister Sheikh Rehana, her

son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, and her daughter Azmina Siddiq, in violation of existing regulation.

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

This is the fourth probe by the ACC against Hasina, after her fall on August 5. While Saima, Radwan, and Azmina are facing corruption probes for the first time.

On December 17, 2024, the ACC launched a probe into allegations of embezzlement totalling Tk 80,000 crore against Hasina and her family members from nine projects, including the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

On December 22, 2024, the commission also launched an investigation against Hasina and Joy over allegations of laundering \$300 million to the United States.

## First HMPV case

FROM PAGE 1

winter and spring, and symptoms range from mild cold-like illness to severe respiratory conditions, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, according to IEDCR.

Halimur said the infected woman is a homemaker, who has no history of travelling abroad. Her husband lives abroad, but he has not visited the country recently.

He said the woman resides in Narsingdi, where she contracted the virus. HMPV and a bacterial infection has made her condition somewhat complicated.

Addressing concerns about the HMPV virus, Halimur told The Daily Star that there is no need to panic

### WHAT TO DO?

Use masks

Cover your nose, mouth while sneezing, coughing

Dispose of used tissues immediately in a covered trash bin

Wash hands with soap or use a hand sanitiser

Avoid contact with infected individuals

Maintain three-feet distance from the infected

Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth

Stay home if there is a fever, cough, or breathing difficulties

washing hands, maintaining hygiene, and staying hydrated.

Halimur also mentioned that individuals with two or three underlying health conditions, as well as those under the age of five and above 65, are at greater risk of being infected with this virus.

There is currently no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment for HMPV. Management focuses on supportive care, including hydration, fever reduction, and in severe cases, oxygen therapy or mechanical ventilation. Most people recover on their own within seven to 10 days, according to IEDCR.

Meanwhile, the DGHS yesterday issued a seven-point directive, including wearing masks and washing hands with soap and water, to prevent the spread of HMPV.

Earlier on January 8, Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of IEDCR, said HMPV was first detected in Bangladesh in 2017. Since then, it has been identified almost every year to some extent. However, no casualty has so far been reported.

Although the virus has been detected in many individuals so far, there is no record of significant complications, she said, adding that there is currently no reason to panic about the HMPV virus.

In a statement on that day, Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW), civil society advocacy and monitoring network dedicated to improving the health system in Bangladesh, called on the health authorities to strengthen surveillance, enhance diagnostic capacity, and ensure the availability of medical resources before the disease enters the country.

On January 6, India confirmed its first three cases of HMPV in the southern state of Karnataka and Gujarat, officials and media reports said.

News of the current outbreak of the disease followed an announcement by China's National Administration of Disease Control and Prevention that it was testing a new reporting protocol in response to pneumonia cases, reports Deutsche Welle.

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Lawyer sues Hasina, Joy over attempted murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and 91 others were sued yesterday on charges of making an attempt to kill a female lawyer during the mass uprising on August 4 last year.

Nupur Akhter, a lawyer of Dhaka Bar Association, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Saitur Rahman.

After the hearing, the magistrate recorded the statement of the complainant and asked the officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station to register the complaint as a first information report (FIR), said a staffer of the court.

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former law minister Anisul Huq, former South

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A man hops over the rail lines despite an oncoming train just 15-20 feet away from him. Even worse, three children sit on the front of the train. A slight misstep or mistiming could lead to an accident. The photo was taken in the Mohakhali Rail Gate area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**Polls by this year vital**  
BNP tells EU envoy; discusses election roadmap, reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Holding national elections within this year is imperative since a country cannot run itself under an undemocratic governance for long, said BNP yesterday.

The party conveyed this message to European Union (EU) Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller when he visited the BNP chairperson's office in Dhaka's Gulshan around 3:30pm.

The party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Moyeen Khan and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, and the chairperson's foreign affairs advisory committee member Shama Obaid were present at the meeting.

Afterwards, Khasru briefed journalists highlighting BNP's stance on the importance of restoring democracy through the elections.

He said, "A country cannot run under an undemocratic process for long. Undemocratic governments lack political weight, mobilisation capacity, and public engagement. They don't receive feedback from the people. That is why we emphasised the urgency of transitioning to a democratic process as soon as possible."

The discussions also touched on the election roadmap, reforms, and state of the economy.

On reforms, Khasru said, "Reforms that achieve

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**TK 57.13CR GRAFT**  
Court orders to confiscate ex-MP Henry's properties

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate and freeze all movable and immovable properties of Jannat Ara Talukder Henry, a former Awami League lawmaker from the Sirajganj 2 constituency, in a case filed over amassing Tk 57.13 crore illegally.

Judge Md Zaki Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Asif Al-Mahmud, an assistant director of the ACC, submitted an application in this regard, according to an ACC official present in court.

ACC Public Prosecutor Md Rezaul Karim Reza submitted the application.

The ACC official said these properties should be frozen and confiscated to ensure a fair investigation.

On January 6, Henry was shown arrested in a case filed on December 25, 2024.

**Take steps in 7 days to stop air pollution**  
HC directs govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing serious concern over the current levels of air pollution in Dhaka, the High Court yesterday directed the government to take effective measures in seven days to stop air pollution in the capital.

It also ordered the authorities concerned to implement the nine directives issued by this court in February 2020 to stop Dhaka's air pollution and to submit a compliance report before this court by January 23.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debasish Roy Chowdhury delivered the order during hearing of a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2019.

Following the same petition, the HC in February, 2020, issued nine directives on the authorities concerned to keep this pollution in check.

The directives are: covering goods in trucks and other vehicles transporting soil/sand/waste in Dhaka; covering soil/sand/cement/stones/construction materials in areas under construction; sprinkling water on the roads by the city corporation; ensuring compliance with tender conditions for road/culvert carpeting/pit works; seizing vehicles emitting black smoke; determining the time limit for movement of vehicles as per the Road Transport Act and stopping the movement of such vehicles after the expiry of the time limit; closing illegal brick kilns; closing all tyre factories operating without environmental licences; taking steps by the city corporation to ensure that daily waste bags are filled in markets/shops and their removal.

## SEEKING POLICE SERVICES

**38pc faced harassment, 31pc paid bribes: study**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty percent of 2,040 university-level students who participated in a recent survey reported paying bribes or facing harassment while seeking police services, while only 10.5 percent experienced smooth service.

The study, conducted by Dhaka University's Department of Development Studies found that 37.9 percent of respondents faced harassment, 9 percent relied on government officials' recommendations, 31.2 percent used bribes, gifts, or political influence, and 11.2 percent reported never receiving any service.

Respondents alleged that police often avoid accepting complaints against powerful political leaders or government officials.

Conducted by the Centre on Budget and Policy Research Group on Governance and Public Policy,



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Independent commission
- 2 Keep force free from political interference
- 3 Conduct ethics training
- 4 Set up public complaint centres
- 5 Publish complaint, probe progress weekly

the study employed a mixed-method approach, including 20 focus group discussions with 250 participants from nine institutions.

Of the total 2,040 respondents, 1,038 were students from public universities, 395 from private universities, 508 from colleges affiliated with the National University or other public universities, and 99 from Fazil and Kamil madrasas.

Among the respondents, 35.7 percent were aged 22-23, 30.2 percent were 20-21, 22 percent were 24-25, 5.1 percent were 25 or older, and 7 percent were under 19.

The findings, presented yesterday at the Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of Dhaka University, were shared by Professor Kazi Maruf Islam at a seminar titled "Building a People-Friendly, Accountable and Professional Policing System in Bangladesh 2.0:

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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**1,184 suspected muggers held in 103 days: DMP**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday announced that they have arrested 1,184 suspected muggers across the capital in the past 103 days as part of preventive measures to curb crimes.

Mohammad Nasirul Islam, DMP's joint commissioner (DB-South), shared this information during a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre.

In response to a query about the rising incidents of mugging in the capital, Nasirul said several measures have already been implemented to address the issue.

Checkpoints have been set up by the Detective Branch (DB) and local police across various locations in the city, and their numbers have been increased. Alongside regular patrols, intelligence surveillance has also been intensified, he said.

He mentioned that ongoing operations are being conducted to dismantle mugging rings by analysing the criminal database and identifying their networks.

The DB and local police are conducting operations in crime-prone areas with the help of informants, he added.

Sharing arrest statistics, the DB official said 98 suspected muggers were arrested in October, 148 in November, and 564 in December from different parts of the capital. In the first 11 days of January, 374 individuals were apprehended.

Nasirul expressed hope that bringing offenders to justice and ensuring they remain in prison after legal proceedings will help reduce the number of muggers and alleviate the problem over time.

**'Now is the time to pursue stories without fear'**  
Shafiqul says country seeing unprecedented media freedom

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is experiencing "unprecedented media freedom" as it transitions to democracy, said Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday.

Speaking at the launch of the "Development Media Forum" by Oxfam at a city hotel, he said, "We haven't used security agencies, administrative orders, or repressive laws to muzzle people's voices over the last five months."

Encouraging journalists to ask tough questions, Shafiqul said, "You can criticise me, the panel of advisers, and the chief adviser. You have that freedom."

Highlighting the role of the media, he said, "For democracy to be institutionalised, media freedom is crucial. Now is the time for journalists to pursue any stories without fear."

Shafiqul criticised unchecked development projects, both public and private, for harming the environment and marginalised communities.

"Powerful lobby groups harm nature in the name of job creation. Is it development?" he asked.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



People try to salvage whatever they can after a fire broke out at a garage near the truck stand in Dhaka's Tejgaon area yesterday around 8:00am. Six trucks and several shops in the area were gutted due to the blaze, which was eventually doused around 9:00am. Authorities are investigating the matter and the cause of the fire could not be known immediately.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## JULY UPRISING Constable opened fire on protesters on August 5 Prosecution tells ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Constable Sujon Hossain opened fire on a peaceful procession at Chankharpool, Dhaka, on August 5 last year. He was seen firing while lying on the ground, kneeling, and standing in the middle of the road as police shot at protesters, leading to seven deaths that morning.

The prosecution presented this account yesterday to the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) while Sujon, a member of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn), was produced before the court.

"A video capturing Sujon's actions went viral on social media, where he appeared very arrogant and fired numerous shots," Prosecutor BM Sultan Mahmud told the tribunal.

The prosecutor submitted evidence suggesting that Sujon carried out the attacks on student-led protests.

Sujon was shown arrested in a case on charges of crimes against humanity.

The tribunal directed the prosecution to submit the investigation report by February 23 and ordered that Sujon remain in detention until then.

The three-member bench, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumdar, chairman of the ICT, issued the order.

Hours before Sheikh Hasina fled on August 5, many students and people gathered at Chankharpool to march toward Shahbagh. However, police blocked their path, and members of the police and APBn opened fire to disperse the crowd, as shown in videos that went viral on social media.

## Tea workers deserve better: Sarjis Alam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Tea workers are living in dire conditions, said Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, yesterday.

"I am speechless seeing the tea workers' houses, especially as mothers and sisters live in such conditions," he said at a rally in Kamalganj, Moulvibazar.

After visiting several tea gardens, Sarjis questioned the Awami League government's commitment to tea workers. "Did Sheikh Hasina's attention ever reach the tea gardens, from Gopalganj to Kamalganj? Have the brothers and sisters working here been forgotten?"

He criticised the inadequate weekly rations of 3.5kg of flour provided by garden management, calling it insufficient for families. "Just look at the workers' faces to understand their struggles," he added.

He also addressed the lack of healthcare. "Garden hospitals have empty beds and no medicine. How can doctors provide treatment without resources?"

Sarjis announced plans for a national rally this month to demand justice for tea workers.

"We will not stop until their demands are met," he said.



Students and faculties of Jahangirnagar University bring out a procession on the campus to celebrate the institution's 55th anniversary yesterday. They marched carrying colourful banners and placards, honouring the university's rich history.

PHOTO: AURITRO SATTAR

### Lawyer sues

FROM PAGE 3

City Corporation mayor Fazle Noor Taposh, former Detective Branch of Police chief Harun Or Rashid and DMP joint commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarker are also among the accused.

In her complaint, Nurpur said she took part in the student movement at Mohammadpur around 3:00pm on August 4 last year, where she was shot.

Later, she was admitted to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

Hasina is now facing 235 cases, including 205 for murders, 18 for crimes against humanity and genocide, three for abduction, 12 for attempted murder, and one for attack on a BNP procession.

### 38pc faced harassment

FROM PAGE 3

Students' Expectations and Reform Proposals."

Students highlighted police officers' tendency to favour individuals based on social and economic status, with many respondents accusing police of being a political tool for the ruling party.

Around 70 percent of respondents recommended enacting and implementing laws to ensure police remain free from political interference.

Another 63.09 percent emphasised the importance of police ethics training, focusing on responsibility, political neutrality, and good practices.

Additionally, 68.5 percent suggested establishing anonymous public complaint centres, while 8 percent advocated increasing police manpower.

Nearly 70 percent urged the publication of weekly updates on complaint and investigation progress on

police station websites. About 25 percent suggested arranging monthly public hearings at police stations to improve accountability.

A significant 80 percent of respondents called for a politics-free, independent police commission, while 50 percent proposed establishing such a commission to oversee recruitment processes.

Respondents recommended the commission manage recruitment exams, handle human resources issues, and ensure police accountability.

Moreover, 42.79 percent advocated conducting recruitment exams through the Public Service Commission, while 40.93 percent called for regular salary increases, especially for lower-ranked officers.

To modernise police services, 31 percent of participants suggested installing body cameras on uniforms, while 30 percent advised digitising services.

### Now is the time

FROM PAGE 3

Press Institute Bangladesh Director General Faruk Wasif said it is time to question whether inequalities have increased under the Awami League in the name of development.

"The so-called development narrative of past years failed to ensure freedom, serving instead to establish authoritarianism," he said.

Swedish Ambassador Nicolas Weeks highlighted the challenge of misinformation but pledged Sweden's support for good journalism in Bangladesh.

"Media can promote social justice and be the voice of the underrepresented," he added.

Oxfam Bangladesh Country Director Ashish

Damle said the organisation aims to enhance knowledge sharing and bridge local and global perspectives for better reporting on key issues, including climate change, gender equality, and social justice.

The event featured journalists, development practitioners, and diplomats discussing the media's role in fostering sustainable development and public debate.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
JANUARY 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

### VAT hike to improve

FROM PAGE 1

have collected around Tk 1,26,000 crore, meaning a shortfall of Tk 42,000 crore.

"In this situation, we may not be able to meet payments for debt servicing."

As such, Shafiqul added, the government has decided to increase VAT on some products.

When reporters queried if it would drive up inflation, he replied that higher revenue was needed to ensure that the value of taka does not go down.

He also said the tax revenue would be spent on people's welfare.

"We are not saying this will not impact the standard of living. We are saying that it will be minimal," said the press secretary.

He said there were different rates of VAT, and the government is trying to bring those to a simplified 15 percent rate to cut the

tax leakage.

The interim government has also been trying to cut public expenditure to offset the widespread misuse of public money during the ousted regime, the press secretary said.

He said the government is communicating with other countries about bringing back wealth lost to capital flight, but it is a time-consuming process. He called it the government's top priority.

When asked why the government is bowing down to the International Monetary Fund's pressures to increase taxation, the press secretary said that getting the IMF loan will open doors to loans from other development partners.

At the press briefing, Shafiqul was joined by the Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretaries Apurba Jahangir and Abdul Kalam Azad Majumder and Assistant Press Secretary Shuchismita Tithi.

### 3 arrested

FROM PAGE 2

CCTV footage showed the criminals broke the lock of the shop, stole the ornaments and exited it in just eight minutes when the employees went out for Friday prayers at around 1:00pm.

Following the incident, shop owner Kazi Akash filed a case with the Dhammandi Model Police Station, stating that unidentified burglars had broken the locks of the showroom and stolen gold ornaments weighing 159 tola, valued at approximately Tk 2.50 crore.

Rubel was apprehended on Thursday while travelling home to Cox's Bazar. His confession led to the subsequent arrests.

Further interrogation revealed the location of the stolen gold, which was traced to a jewellery shop in Companyganj Bazaar. There, 28.14 tola of gold ornaments and 21 tola of melted gold were recovered.

"In total, 50.8 tola of stolen gold, valued at approximately Tk 70 lakh, have been recovered. We have identified the those involved in the heist. Efforts are underway to apprehend the rest of the culprits and recover the rest of the stolen gold," said Nasirul.

### Polls by this year vital

FROM PAGE 3

consensus should be implemented immediately. There is no justification for delaying such measures."

Khasru also expressed BNP's willingness to support any economic initiatives taken by an interim government that benefits the country.

"BNP has its own economic programmes,

which we will implement if we are elected by the people," he said.

In response to questions from the reporters, he said, "Everyone understands that there is no way out of the current situation without elections. That is why the subject of elections is being repeatedly brought up in discussions."

### Request for Information: Data Center Consultancy Services

BRAC Bank PLC. delivers a full array of banking services to individuals as well as business entities with a network of 187 Branches, 74 Sub-branches, 329 ATMs, 446 SME Unit Offices and 1,114 Agent Banking Outlets. Currently the bank is seeking for vendor(s) to provide Data Center Consultancy Services.

A Request for Information (RFI) for Technical Offer Submission is issued for the mentioned purpose. The RFI along with details of the bidding process can be found on the bank's website <https://www.bracbank.com/en/information/e-tender>

Interested eligible bidders are requested to submit the technical offer as per the mentioned bidding process.

**BRAC BANK**

অসম আবিষ্কার

১। প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম

২। কাজের বিবরণ

৩। দরপত্র এহসেনের তারিখ

৪। দরপত্র এহসেনের শেষ তারিখ

৫। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। ২১ ই. বেংগল, মোমেনশাহী সেনানিবাস।

২। কোল্পনা প্রশিক্ষণ সেন্ট নির্মাণ এবং গ্রান্টসক্রেট বিবিধ

প্রশিক্ষণ দ্রব্যসামগ্রী ক্লায়।

৩। অভিযানিক ও নিরাপত্তা সংস্করণ বৃক্ষিকরণ বাবদ বিভিন্ন

দ্রব্য সামগ্রী ক্লায়।

৪। বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে পরবর্তী ১৪ দিন পর্যন্ত।

৫। বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে পরবর্তী ১৪ তম দিন পর্যন্ত।

৬। সিডিউল ক্লায়ের মুন্তম ১৪ দিন পর ১৫তম দিনে (সরকারি

বন্ধ থাকলে অফিস খোলার দিন)।

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/১৮

১২/০১/২৫

GD-125



Janata Bank PLC.

Head Office

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

Tel: +8802-356514, Fax: 88-02-954644, Telex: 675840 JBD BJ

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

**Invitation for e-Tender**

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

Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Publish Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1061265	JBPLC/ITPSCM/Proc-21/OTM/UPS Battery/2024	Tender for Procurement of Online UPS Battery with other equipment for CDC of Janata Bank PLC, following Open Tendering Method (OTM).	09/01/2025 17:30 PM	27/01/2025 12:30 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Ready stock will be preferable and goods must be delivered after 05 days from contract sign.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

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

(Mohammed Shakhawat Mousain)

Deputy General Manager

GD-126

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

District Primary Education Office

Chittagong



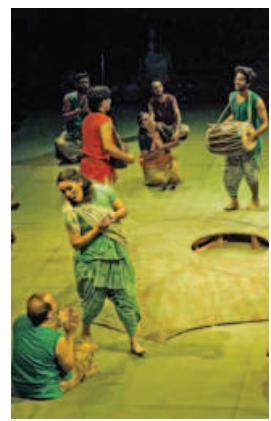
WHAT'S  
THE HAPS?Play:  
'Khona'

Experience the timeless tale of *Khona*, a powerful play written by Samina Luthfa and directed by Mohammad Ali Haider. Through captivating performances and stunning visuals, the production explores themes of wisdom, resilience, and class struggles, while addressing pressing gender and class issues that remain relevant today.

**Date:** Friday, January 14

**Time:** 7pm-9pm

**Venue:** Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy



# What a debut, SUMAIYA SHIMU

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Famed television star Sumaiya Shimu made her OTT debut in the final episode of *Dui Shaw*, appearing in *Beshura*. Her performance mesmerised audiences, as she blended seamlessly into the role. The talented actress made her acting debut in 1999, and went on to work on numerous television projects.

When asked about how she came to work with Nuhash Humayun, the actress said, "Nuhash originally reached out to me. I wasn't sure about being part of the series at first, because it involved filming outdoors. However, after meeting with Nuhash and having a conversation, I felt that it was a project worth pursuing, and that it would turn out well. That's how I decided to begin my journey in the OTT space."

*Beshura* was filmed in Sitakunda, and following its release both Nuhash Humayun and Sumaiya Shimu have been getting appreciation for the work. Shimu, in particular, is receiving praise from all quarters.

She shared, "Even after the shoot, many weren't aware of the project. But once the promo aired, it caught everyone's attention. I've received numerous calls, including from journalists. After



PHOTO: COLLECTED

that, everyone became aware of it. The fact that so many people have reached out to inquire about it has filled me with joy."

Reflecting on her experience of working with Nuhash Humayun, the TV star revealed it was a wonderful experience. "Among the new generation of directors, Nuhash stands out. He has earned admiration and respect for his work, even internationally. His pre-production approach is exceptional. He is always composed and gave us artists a lot of freedom. As a director, he communicated his vision for the camera with clarity."

Regarding her experience in the OTT space, Shimu highlighted its advantages, crediting its high budgets, greater attention to detail, and consistent professionalism.

In response to being asked about future projects, Shimu said, "I'll take on the work I'm passionate about, provided the right opportunities come my way. Nuhash's project was one such example."

As her career starts to flourish in the OTT space, Sumaiya Shimu eagerly anticipates more roles that resonate with her desire for meaningful and impactful work.

"There are many stories in the Sundarbans—tales of Bonbibi, bandits, and local myths. I, however, focused on the region's politics for *Feu*'s story to stem from."

The story, written by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman and Romel Rahman, is set against a real historical backdrop. Dhiman and Siddiq Ahmed penned the screenplay. The director infused the series with his personal experiences from Mongla, his region, and his knowledge of local politics.



## Chorki's 'Feu' follows the Marichjhapi massacre

The history of the Marichjhapi massacre, a dark chapter in the Sundarbans, forms the foundation of Chorki's upcoming web series *Feu*. Set against the backdrop of the 1979 massacre, the series explores the intersection of politics and humanity, highlighting the brutal treatment of refugees.

The atrocities that occurred during this period inspired *Feu*, a fictional web series directed by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman for the OTT platform Chorki. Dhiman explained,

## Three-day mobile data packages return

FROM PAGE 12

logic doesn't apply to the younger generation. It would be an insult to their intelligence to suggest that they cannot choose from a variety of packages," he added.

Previously, the operators were limited to offering a maximum of 40 packages. Now, there are no restrictions on the number of products, data volume or validity.

However, the packages come with limits: 200MB for per hour, 3GB for one day, 5GB for two day and 8GB for three day.

The new directive requires operators to provide unlimited packages that include both validity and data volume.

Offering packages between 12:00 AM and 6:00 AM is prohibited. Any unused data -- both main and bonus -- must be carried forward.

The mobile operators are barred from giving gifts to retailers. In emergency situations, the operators may offer free data, call minutes or SMS with post-facto approval.

The operators can send no more than three promotional SMS to each customer per day.

Earlier, only three unlimited packages (25GB, 50GB and 75GB) were allowed. Now, mobile operators can

offer unlimited packages based on customer demand, though a time limit must be set for unlimited data plans.

For loyalty point redemption, operators were previously limited to offering telecom products. Now, they can offer both telecom and approved non-telecom products.

International roaming, the Internet of Things, and corporate and SME services remain excluded from this directive.

Additionally, the mobile operators have been advised to optionally provide 200MB of free data each month to all active users to promote digital inclusion and increase internet usage.

The story, written by Sukorno Shahed Dhiman and Romel Rahman, is set against a real historical backdrop. Dhiman and Siddiq Ahmed penned the screenplay. The director infused the series with his personal experiences from Mongla, his region, and his knowledge of local politics.

"We welcome the directive as it creates opportunities for us to deliver innovative services to our customers, ultimately enhancing their overall experience," said Tanveer Mohammad, chief corporate affairs officer of Robi.

The directive will enable Banglalink to offer more straightforward, customer-centric products while simplifying operations, said Taimur Rahman, its chief corporate and regulatory affairs officer.

"We welcome the directive as it creates opportunities for us to deliver innovative services to our customers, ultimately enhancing their overall experience," said Tanveer Mohammad, chief corporate affairs officer of Robi.

The country's largest operator however called for flexible and principle-based guidelines/directives as it can "play a significant role in bringing more people under digital inclusion, helping to reduce the digital divide".

He emphasised the need for consistent policymaking, criticising the contradictory approach of reducing package options at one point without justification and later reinstating them. "Such inconsistent decisions,

combined with rising internet taxes, are limiting individual internet usage and leading to a decline in per user internet consumption," he added.

Telecom operators welcome the measures in the new directive.

"We believe this is a timely initiative for a data-driven digital society -- this will greatly alleviate the accumulated dissatisfaction of consumers using digital services," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi.

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be returned.

"That's the intention of the interim government. How to bring them back," he said.

One of the key figures involved in the property purchases related to Tulip is Shayan Rahman, the son of Salman F. Rahman, a billionaire and former adviser to Hasina. Shayan Rahman used an offshore trust to buy a £1.2 million property in Golders Green, London, which was used by Sheikh Rehana, Tulip's mother.

Shayan is currently under investigation by the Bangladesh Criminal Investigation Department for laundering more than \$80 million out of Bangladesh, with funds allegedly funnelled through Dubai.

Salman F. Rahman was arrested after attempting to flee the country, and his son's whereabouts remain unknown.

Shayan Rahman is also known for his ties to the British Asian Trust, an anti-poverty charity founded by King Charles. He reportedly donated over £25,000 to the charity, and Charles publicly praised him for his support during a gala dinner at Buckingham Palace.

Asked whether Tulip's properties should be investigated by the ACC, Yunus said, "Absolutely."

He added that the commission should look at the "whole thing".

He also said that, if feasible, the properties bought by AI allies outside the country using illegal wealth should

prime minister's ethics watchdog. A Downing Street spokesman said it was "completely untrue" to suggest the party had drawn up a shortlist of candidates to replace her, as reported by some media.

These properties are not currently under formal investigation, but Yunus urged the Bangladesh Anti-Corruption Commission to look into them as part of its ongoing inquiries into corruption and embezzlement under Hasina's regime.

According to The Times report, one of these properties was a Hampshire home bought by an offshore company named in the Panama Papers. This particular company was connected to two Bangladeshi businessmen with ties to the Awami League. Tulip, who has previously spoken out against the use of offshore trusts to evade financial transparency, now faces intense scrutiny over her family's dealings.

Tulip has denied any wrongdoing and described allegations against her as politically motivated.

The reports have triggered a storm in the UK, with opposition Conservative MPs calling for Tulip to resign. However, UK Prime Minister Kier Starmer has said he has full confidence in Tulip.

Tulip has referred herself to the UK

minister, to five London properties bought with the help of offshore companies.

In his remarks, Yunus expressed disbelief at the situation, noting that it was an "irony" that Tulip Siddiqi, an anti-corruption minister in the UK, had been linked to these controversial properties.

While Yunus did not call for Tulip's resignation, he emphasised that her defence of the properties raised serious ethical questions.

"Maybe you [Tulip] didn't realise it, but now you do. You should say: 'Sorry, I didn't know [at] that time, I seek forgiveness from the people that I did this and I resign.' But she is not saying that. She's defending herself."

The scandal comes amid wider allegations of corruption surrounding Hasina's government.

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be returned.

"That's the intention of the interim government. How to bring them back," he said.

One of the key figures involved in the property purchases related to Tulip is Shayan Rahman, the son of Salman F. Rahman, a billionaire and former adviser to Hasina. Shayan Rahman used an offshore trust to buy a £1.2 million property in Golders Green, London, which was used by Sheikh Rehana, Tulip's mother.

Shayan is currently under investigation by the Bangladesh Criminal Investigation Department for laundering more than \$80 million out of Bangladesh, with funds allegedly funnelled through Dubai.

Salman F. Rahman was arrested after attempting to flee the country, and his son's whereabouts remain unknown.

Shayan Rahman is also known for his ties to the British Asian Trust, an anti-poverty charity founded by King Charles. He reportedly donated over £25,000 to the charity, and Charles publicly praised him for his support during a gala dinner at Buckingham Palace.

Asked whether Tulip's properties should be investigated by the ACC, Yunus said, "Absolutely."

## SYRIA SANCTIONS RELIEF EU to tackle issue at end of month

REUTERS, Riyadh

European foreign ministers will meet at the end of January to discuss the lifting of sanctions on Syria, the EU foreign policy chief said yesterday in Riyadh ahead of a meeting of top Middle Eastern and Western diplomats and Syria's new foreign minister.

Kaja Kallas, the EU foreign policy chief, said the foreign ministers would convene in Brussels on Jan. 27 in an effort to decide how the 27-nation bloc would relax sanctions on Syria.

After 13 years of civil war, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad was ousted in a lightning offensive by insurgent forces led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) a month ago. The group has since set up a caretaker government in Damascus.

Any European decision to ease sanctions would be conditional on the new Syrian administration's approach to governing, which must include "different groups" and women and "no radicalisation", Kallas said, without elaborating.

"If we see the developments going to the right direction, we are ready to do the next steps... If we see that it's not going to the right direction, then we can also move back on this."

The conference, the first such meeting of Western and regional leaders hosted by regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia since Assad's ouster, comes as Damascus urges the West to lift sanctions to help funding flow more freely.

In a press conference held after wrapping up the conference, Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said he stressed "lifting the unilateral and UN sanctions imposed on Syria as continuing... sanctions will hinder the aspirations of the Syrian people to achieve development."

The US, Britain, the European Union and others imposed tough sanctions on Syria after a crackdown by Assad on pro-democracy protests in 2011 that spiralled into civil war. But the new reality in Syria has been complicated by sanctions on HTS - and some leaders - for its days as an al Qaeda affiliate.

Germany, which is leading the EU's discussion on sanctions, on Sunday proposed allowing relief for the Syrian population, but retaining sanctions on Assad allies who "committed serious crimes" during Syria's war.

"Syrians now need a quick dividend from the transition of power, and we continue to help those in Syria who have nothing, as we have done all the years of civil war," said German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock.

The United States on Monday issued a six-month exemption of its sanctions for transactions with governing institutions in Syria to try to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance and allow some energy transactions.

British foreign minister David Lammy joined the Riyadh talks along with ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as the UN special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen.



A child feeds another a spoonful of food as they sit atop graves at a cemetery where families displaced by conflict are taking shelter in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Top Israeli security delegation in Doha for Gaza talks

REUTERS, Jerusalem

A top level Israeli security delegation arrived in Qatar yesterday for talks on a Gaza hostage and ceasefire deal, a spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, in a possible sign of so far elusive agreements nearing.

Qatar and fellow mediators Egypt and the United States are making renewed efforts to reach a deal to halt the fighting in the enclave and free the remaining 98 hostages held there before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan. 20.

Netanyahu's office said on Saturday that the delegation includes Mossad Head David Barnea, the head of the Shin Bet domestic security service Ronen Bar and the military's head of the hostage brief, Nitzan Alon.

Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, met on Saturday with Netanyahu, after having met on Friday with Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Israeli and Palestinian officials have said since Thursday that some progress has been made in the indirect talks between Israel and militant group Hamas but did not elaborate. The sides have been keeping a

tight lid on the details being worked out.

It is unclear how they will bridge one of the biggest gaps that has persisted throughout previous rounds of talks: Hamas demands an end to the war while Israel says it won't end the war as long as Hamas rules Gaza and poses a threat to Israelis.

Since October 7, 2023, more than 46,000 people have been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials, with much of the enclave laid to waste and gripped by a humanitarian crisis, and most of its population displaced.

On Saturday, the Palestinian civil emergency service said eight people were killed, including two women and two children, in an Israeli airstrike on a former school sheltering displaced families in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip. The Israeli military said the strike had targeted Hamas militants who were operating at the school and that it had taken measures to reduce the risk of harm to civilians.

Later on Saturday, the Gaza Civil Emergency Service said five people were killed and several others were wounded in two Israeli strikes. One of the two strikes killed three people in a house near the Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City.

## Emon among 10 sued for attempted murder

FROM PAGE 1

Baboshayee Kallyan Samity (ECS), Ehteshamul Haque, joint general secretary of ECS Computer City (Multiplan Centre) -- were attacked by criminals with sharp weapons around 10:40pm Friday.

attack.

The first information report (FIR) states that after August 5, the accused began demanding money from the Multiplan Centre traders. When they refused, the accused threatened them.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Wahedul, who was elected ECS president on December 28 last year, said he received a phone call from someone identifying himself as Chanchal a few days before the ECS election.

"During the conversation, another man, who introduced himself as Emon, joined the call, and demanded a monthly payment from me that I refused," he said, adding that he then hung up.

Wahedul, however, denied any involvement of his brother Pichchi Helal in the incident.

SN Nazrul Islam, DMP

additional commissioner (crime and operations), told this newspaper that the attack might have been due to disputes over the formation of the market committee and extortion.

"Top criminal Emon has been accused in the case, while the complainant is the elder brother of another top criminal Pichchi Helal," he said.

Nazrul added that they would also investigate whether a rivalry between the two top criminals played any role in the attack.

Emon and Pichchi Helal were among 23 gangsters listed by the police as "top terror" in 2001.

Emon, 52, was made the key accused in the case.

Meanwhile, police

yesterday arrested Asiful Haque Asif alias Jhontu, 32, and Kawsar Mridha, 24, in connection with the

attack.

Ehteshamul

and Wahedul, along with other traders in the market, resisted the extortion and harassment, which led to the accused becoming enraged. Then they carried out the attack, according to the case statement.

Ehteshamul

was hacked during the

attack, is now undergoing

treatment at a city

hospital.

denied any involvement of

his brother Pichchi Helal

in the incident.

SN Nazrul Islam, DMP

1/8/26-1/23, পর্যবেক্ষণ-১২, দাকা-১২১১৬, মোবাইল ০১৭৬৯-৭২১০১০

ই-মেইল: regoffice@bsmrmu.edu.bd, ওয়েব: www.bsmrmu.edu.bd

তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২৫

### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের ২০১৩ সনের ৪৭ নং আইন দ্বারা প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিএসএমআর মেরিটাইম ইউনিভার্সিটি, বাংলাদেশ-এর জন্য নিয়োগিত শূন্য পদসমূহে কর্মসূচী ও কর্মচারী নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রক্রিয় বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হইতে আবেদনপত্র আহবান করা যাইতেছে:

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম ও পদ সংখ্যা	গ্রেড ও বেতনক্রেতু	সর্বোচ্চ বয়স	মন্তব্য
১.	দেবকশন অফিসার-০১ (এক)			
২.	পার্বলি রিলেশন অফিসার-০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১১, বেতনক্রেতু ২২,০০০-৩০,০৬০/-		
৩.	প্রোটোকল অফিসার-০১ (এক)			
৪.	লিগাজ অফিসার-০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১০, বেতনক্রেতু ১৬,০০০-৩০,৬৪০/- (সিডিল)- ০১ (এক)		
৫.	উপ-সহকারী প্রক্রেতু	গ্রেড-১০, বেতনক্রেতু ১৬,০০০-৩০,৬৪০/-		
৬.	হিসাব সহকারী- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১১, বেতনক্রেতু ১২,০০০-৩০,২৩০/-		
৭.	সহকারী অভিটোর- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১২, বেতনক্রেতু ১১,০০০-২৫,০০০/-		
৮.	অফিস সহকারী কাম ভাটা প্রসেসর- ০৫ (পাচ)	গ্রেড-১৩, বেতনক্রেতু ১১,০০০-২৬,৫৯০/-		
৯.	ইলেক্ট্রিশিয়ান- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১৬, বেতনক্রেতু ১১,০০০-২২,৪৯০/-		
১০.	অফিস সহায়ক- ০১ (এক)	গ্রেড-১০, বেতনক্রেতু ৮,২৫০-২০,০১০/-		

*Alchin*

বিএসএমআর মেরিটাইম ইউনিভার্সিটি, বাংলাদেশ

GD- 124

## Russia claims new villages in eastern Ukraine

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday claimed the capture of two villages in eastern Ukraine where its forces have been steadily advancing for months.

The defence ministry said the southern group of forces had captured the village of Yantarnie in the eastern Donetsk region, around 10 kilometres (six miles) southwest of Kurakhove, a key logistics hub that Moscow claimed to have seized last week.

On Saturday, Russia's army said it had also taken new territory northwest of Kurakhove.

The defence ministry said Sunday that Russian troops had also captured the village of Kalinove in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

The village is on the western bank of the Oskil River, which for a long time formed the front line between the two armies in the region.

But a Ukrainian official said Thursday that Russian forces had managed to establish a bridgehead on the western bank after crossing the river. Russia's army has spent months making attempts to cross the river, which also cuts through Kupiansk, a city recaptured by Ukraine.

## Myanmar junta air strike kills 15

AFP, Bangkok

A Myanmar junta air strike killed at least 15 civilians and wounded 10 others at a market in a gold-mining area in northern Kachin state, a spokesman for an ethnic rebel group that controls the area told AFP yesterday.

The junta has been accused of carrying out multiple attacks on civilian targets as it struggles to quell resistance to its 2021 coup.

The latest attack happened around 11:00 am on Saturday, Colonel Naw Bu, a spokesperson from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), told AFP.

"All those killed were civilians including gold miners and local shopkeepers," he said.

The KIA, which can call on around 7,000 fighters, has been battling the military for decades for autonomy and control of local resources in Kachin state.

## Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL)

(A Company of Petrobangla)

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Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.

গ্যাস জাতীয় সম্পদ, এর অপচয় রোধ  
করে আন্তর্যামী নামিত পালন করুন

### Invitation for Tender

#### Invitation for Hiring of 6(Six) Minibuses including Manpower



"জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা  
সর্বোচ্চ অগ্রাধিকার"

GAS TRANSMISSION  
COMPANY LIMITED

MINISTRY/ DIVISION

2 Agency

3 Procuring Entity Name

4 Procuring Entity District

5 Invitation For

6 Invitation Ref. No & Date

7 Procurement Method

8 Budget and Source of Funds

9 Division Name

10 Tender Package Name

11 Tender Publication Date

12 Tender Selling Date

13 Tender Closing Date and Time

## Govt must reverse anti-poor decisions

Raising VAT, duties on over 100 products will make life more difficult

The National Board of Revenue's (NBR) decision to hike the value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on more than 100 products is unwise and poorly timed, especially considering the persistent inflation and rising food prices. As economists and business leaders have pointed out, such a decision in the middle of the fiscal year is unlikely to bode well for the economy.

The increase in VAT and SD on arguably non-essential products—such as mobile phones, broadband internet, medicine, imported fruits, tissue paper, motorcycles, and liquefied petroleum (LP) gas—is apparently intended to meet one of the conditions of the IMF for its \$4.7 billion loan support. Under the IMF programme initiated in 2023, Bangladesh needs to raise its tax-to-GDP ratio by increasing tax revenue collection. However, the country has so far fallen short of the targets. To achieve the IMF-recommended ratio, the government must collect an additional Tk 12,000 crore this fiscal year. The IMF is reportedly considering making the tax collection target a Quantitative Performance Criteria (QPC)—a mandatory benchmark for unlocking instalments under the loan programme. This puts immense pressure on the government to boost revenue mobilisation to secure the next tranche of the IMF loan.

But the question is whether drastically raising VAT and SD on products that are not necessarily luxurious is the right strategy. Indirect taxes such as VAT and duties are inevitably passed on to the end consumers. But people's purchasing power has not kept pace with inflation and rising food prices in recent years. Furthermore, as one businessperson told our correspondent, businesses are likely to either evade taxes or increase product prices to absorb the higher VAT burden. Additionally, even in this digital era, many business transactions remain untraceable, and revenue collection is not fully automated. As a result, meeting the revenue collection target by raising VAT and SD rates—a decision made without consulting stakeholders or experts—seems overly ambitious.

Another similar move that goes against the interests of consumers was the suspension of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) and the Department of Agricultural Marketing's truck sale programmes for essentials and agricultural products. It is unclear why the government would halt such pro-poor measures.

Instead of relying on indirect taxes that disproportionately affect the poorer sections of society, the government could have considered alternatives such as imposing a wealth tax or intensifying efforts to collect income taxes through targeted drives. The numerous tax exemptions granted to institutions and businesses without clear rationale should also be reviewed and restructured. Similarly, government expenditure could be reassessed to eliminate unnecessary costs. Such measures can still be taken instead of summarily raising VAT and duties. Finally, the government should engage with the IMF to renegotiate loan conditions, particularly those tied to the credit programme initiated by the previous regime. The bottom line is, poor and middle-class citizens must be spared additional monetary burden at this critical time.

## Surge in hospital superbugs alarming

Authorities must take this invisible threat seriously

It is alarming to learn about the spread of drug-resistant microorganisms in our hospitals. According to a report by this daily, a recent study published in the British scientific journal "Nature" has revealed alarming levels of airborne, multidrug-resistant bacteria in the air of several hospitals in Dhaka. This highlights the grave health risks facing patients and healthcare workers, as exposure to these pathogens can lead to infections that are difficult to treat.

We have known for quite some time about the drug resistance in people caused by the indiscriminate use of drugs, especially antibiotics, often without prescriptions. Last year, the National Antimicrobial Susceptibility Report revealed that multi-drug resistance in people had reached an all-time high of 82 percent. The incidence of hospital-acquired infections (HAIs) caused by prolonged stays is also common knowledge. The latest research shows that one can be susceptible to drug-resistant infections by just breathing the air in hospitals. Conducted in four hospitals and two ambient locations, the study has identified harmful bacteria in the particulate matter (PM)—tiny particles in the air—collected from there. Among the 11 types of bacteria found in the air, many are known to cause serious HAIs like pneumonia and urinary tract and blood infections.

Moreover, the PM levels recorded in those hospital environments also exceeded both national and WHO standards, with Dhaka Medical College Hospital recording the highest concentrations. This interplay between air pollution and bacterial growth, as the lead researcher of the study has said, "added a new dimension to the battle against antibiotic resistance." Indeed, researchers attribute the spread of airborne superbugs in hospitals to overcrowding, outdated infrastructure, poor ventilation, and old furniture—problems that, frankly, are common in most public hospitals in Bangladesh. The combination of these conditions is allowing bacteria to thrive and spread.

We urge the government to take decisive action to address this threat. Hospitals must be a place that heals patients suffering from diseases and infections—not a breeding ground for new, more dangerous infections. The problems identified in the above study show where corrective actions need to be taken. Improving hospital infrastructure, enforcing stringent infection control protocols, and upgrading ventilation systems should all be done with equal importance. Additionally, the authorities must address the overuse of antibiotics through stricter regulations.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### 'J'accuse' published

On this day in 1898, French author Émile Zola published an open letter in the newspaper *L'Aurore* denouncing the French general staff for its role in the 1894 treason conviction of Jewish French army officer Alfred Dreyfus.

# EDITORIAL

## Raising VAT and shrinking social protection are unwise moves

### MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

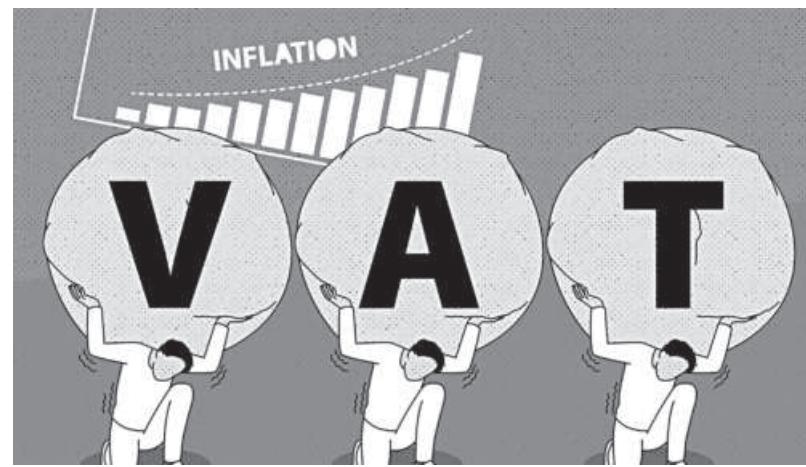
### FAHMIDA KHATUN

As the people of Bangladesh continue to struggle to make ends meet during a high inflationary period, two recent government decisions are considered to have worsened the situation. First, the interim government raised the value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on more than 100 products and services on January 9 through two ordinances. Second, a programme of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), launched in October 2024 to sell oil, lentils, and rice in trucks to low-income people, has been cancelled.

The VAT and SD on a number of items have been raised substantially. For example, VAT on sweets, clothes, and restaurant meals has been raised by 7.5-15 percent—100 percent increase. In some cases, the increase is even 200 percent. VAT at the production stage and SD on imports like fruit juice and colours have also increased. SD on mobile phone service has been increased by three percent.

These changes in the middle of the fiscal year are unexpected and unwanted as the economy faces significant challenges, including high inflation, low investment, low job

The previous government did not take any meaningful measures to control inflation, which has been on the rise for nearly three years. The interim government is struggling to control high inflation as well. In December 2024, average inflation declined slightly, dropping to 10.89 percent from 11.38 percent of the previous month. Similarly, food inflation was 12.92 percent in December 2024, slightly lower than



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

**There should be ample supply in the market for consumers to buy at affordable prices. The government has to make enough procurement of essential agricultural products, including rice, at a just price from the farmers. It also has to import fast to stabilise the prices of essentials.**

creation, and low economic growth. Several factors are responsible for low economic growth, including an already fragile economy left by the previous Awami League government, disruptions in economic activities during the July uprising, disturbances in the law and order situation following the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, and a lack of confidence among domestic and external economic players.

13.80 percent in November 2024. However, both average and food inflation rates are still very high, as wages and salaries have not increased at the same rates. The monetary policy has been adequately tightened by increasing policy rates, but it has yet to impact the inflation. Besides, without supply-side management, inflationary pressure will not ease up. There should be ample supply in the market for consumers to buy at affordable prices. The government has to make enough procurement of essential agricultural products, including rice, at a just price from the farmers. It also has to import fast to stabilise the prices of essentials. Effective market management must be carried out to ensure the supply of commodities.

Understandably, the unexpected increase of VAT and SD is aimed at meeting the target of tax collection during FY2024-25 as set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Bangladesh borrowed \$4.7 billion from the IMF in January 2023, agreeing to fulfil more than 30 major

and minor conditionalities. One of the conditions is to raise the tax-GDP ratio by 0.5 percent each year till 2026. Unfortunately, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has failed to fulfil the target set by the government in the national budget for about a decade. The NBR has to raise an additional Tk 12,000 crore in FY2024-25. It will be more difficult to fulfil the IMF target in the current fiscal year due to the recent political upheaval and economic instability. But the decision to fill the revenue gap by increasing VAT and SD is an inappropriate measure for several reasons.

First, this will increase the prices and fuel inflation further. Hence, the Bangladesh Bank's efforts to control inflation through contractionary monetary policy will take longer.

Second, VAT is an indirect tax passed on to consumers irrespectively

of their income status. Even though the government tried to explain that most of these items are not consumed by the poor and thus they will not be affected, in reality, everyone will be impacted in one way or another. Some items are essential, and people will have to buy even if prices go up. For example, people from all income strata need food and clothes. Of course, the government has reduced tariffs on several imported items to ease pressure on their prices. Unfortunately, the benefit of tariff reductions on imported goods is not passed on to consumers due to dishonest traders. The market management mechanism is very poor at reversing such unethical practices. So, the decision to increase VAT will further erode the purchasing power of fixed-income households.

Third, there is also a possibility that the goal to collect more revenue through increased VAT may not materialise. Due to economic hardship, people may reduce their purchases with increased VAT. Fourth, the business community

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FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN  
The focus on recycling shifts responsibility from the producer to the consumer, perpetuating what researchers call the 'plastic paradox.'

## The plastic paradox

### The crisis that won't recycle itself

Uswatun Mahera Khushi  
is assistant professor of local government and urban development at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University.

Md Zahurul Al Mamun  
is a climate change researcher and analyst.

**MD ZAHURUL AL MAMUN and  
USWATUN MAHERA KHUSHI**

If we take a closer look at the failure of international efforts to combat plastic pollution, exemplified by the Fifth UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5), one thing stands out: the resistance from oil producing nations to capping plastic production. According to Eunomia data, China, the US, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia were the top five plastic producers in 2023. These nations, heavily invested in the petrochemical industry, consistently prioritise profit over environmental protection. This treaty had the potential to be a game-changer—possibly as impactful as the 2015 Paris Agreement—yet competing economic interests left it on shaky grounds.

Now, a question might arise in one's mind: why? Because plastics are made from fossil fuels, and over the past 15 years, petrochemicals—especially plastics and oil additives—have become a critical pillar of the oil and gas industry's survival. Moreover, the plastics industry is the fastest growing source of industrial greenhouse gases (GHGs). Groundbreaking research from Carbon Majors shows that just 100 active fossil fuel producers, including ExxonMobil, Shell, BHP Billiton, and Gazprom, are responsible for a staggering 71 percent of industrial GHG emissions since 1988. In 2019 alone, the production and incineration of plastic led to GHG emissions equivalent to those from 189 coal-fired power plants. Over the last 30 years, they have prevented political decisions against climate change, raised scientific doubt, and stopped any development that could regulate

nearly triple by 2060. This linear "take-make-waste" model is unsustainable. A staggering 79 percent of plastic waste accumulates in landfills or the environment, 12 percent is incinerated, and less than 10 percent is recycled. This raises a critical question: why has recycling failed so dramatically?

Plastics are inherently more complex than other recyclable materials, like metal or glass, due to their heterogeneous nature. Each type of plastic contains unique chemical additives—such as colourants, stabilisers and fungicides—that enhance functionality but complicate recycling. Even polyethylene terephthalate (PET), one of the most recyclable plastics, degrades in quality with each recycling cycle, accumulating toxins that contaminate new products.

What's more, not all plastics are created equal. PET makes up only about six percent of global plastic production, while other types, like polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP), are recycled even less frequently due to their distinct chemical structures and the presence of additives. These additives, designed to make plastics more durable, flexible and transparent, often combined during the recycling process, further degrading the quality of the material.

A common example is multilayer plastics—composites made from combinations of

products throughout their lifecycles. Besides that, these policies lack clarity, and responsibilities across the supply chain fall through the cracks, leaving implementation is still up in the air. Furthermore, the focus on recycling shifts responsibility from the producer to the consumer, perpetuating what researchers call the "plastic paradox."

To drive real change, the government must enforce stringent policies that hold manufacturers responsible, or progress will remain elusive. Local governments are critical in implementing waste management policies but often lack the funding, technical expertise and accountability frameworks needed to enforce policies effectively. Lack of reliable data further complicates matters. Effective policymaking requires accurate information to guide decisions, and Bangladesh currently lacks a robust system for data collection, dissemination, and analysis, as well as dashboards to track progress. Without accurate and actionable data, even the most well-intended policies risk falling flat.

Local governments are uniquely positioned to collect and monitor data on waste generation and recycling rates, but they need the tools and support to perform this role effectively. Empowering municipalities with the necessary resources and authority can

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plastic, aluminium and paper—frequently used in food and medical packaging. These materials are virtually unrecyclable with current technologies, illustrating how design choices can render recycling ineffective from the outset.

Recycling is not just a technical challenge—it's an economic one too. Sorting and processing plastics is labour-intensive and costly. Caps, labels, and differing grades of plastics require meticulous separation, which often costs more than the value of the recycled material itself. The result is a process so complex and expensive that new, high-quality plastics remain more profitable and marketable than recycled alternatives.

Another significant obstacle to effective plastic recycling is the lack of transparency from manufacturers. Many manufacturers keep their chemical formulations proprietary, making it difficult for recyclers to identify and eliminate hazardous substances. This secrecy undermines efforts to create a truly circular recycling system, allowing hazardous substances to remain in circulation.

**The path forward**  
Bangladesh recognised the plastic problem early by banning single-use plastics in 2002 under the Bangladesh Environmental Conservation Act. It later introduced the National 3R Strategy for Waste Management (2010) and Solid Waste Management Rules (2021). However, on paper, these policies seem magnificent, but in practice, they are malevolent. You might ask: why?

These policies failed to utilise the transformative power of corporate accountability through the "polluter pays" principle and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks, which require manufacturers to manage the environmental and social impacts of their

bridge the data-policy-implementation gap and drive meaningful change.

The final piece of the puzzle is consumer awareness. Consumers have the power to demand sustainable packaging and avoid or support businesses prioritising the environment. International best practices like Germany's bottle deposit scheme, which boasts a 98 percent return rate for empty packaging, demonstrate how consumer-driven solutions can significantly reduce waste. Adapting such practices in Bangladesh could foster a culture of reuse and refill, cutting plastic waste at its source.

#### A paradigm shift

The dream of a circular plastic economy—where plastics are endlessly reused and recycled—has morphed into a nightmare. Instead, plastics have spread across the planet like a deadly virus, threatening ecosystems and human health. The plastics industry continues to thrive because the true costs—on health, climate and biodiversity—are shifted onto the public.

Real solutions demand nothing less than a systemic overhaul—from redesigning packaging and improving waste management infrastructure to holding producers accountable. We need a complete transformation in how plastics are produced, used and perceived. Transitioning from a disposable culture to a circular economy requires innovative business models, consumer behaviour shifts, and accountability across the entire supply chain. Bans alone won't work—they haven't in the past, and they won't in the future—unless the entirety of plastics use is strictly monitored and regulated. Without such reforms, resistance will grow, progress will stagnate, and we risk replacing meaningful action with superficial greenwashing.

production. The alarming part is this: if we don't curb plastic pollution, it could derail efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. From oil extraction and plastic production to product use, recycling and disposal, the entire lifecycle of plastics leaves a trail of destruction.

#### The recycling myth

For decades, we have been told that recycling is the answer to the plastic crisis. But the reality paints a much more depressing picture. The world produces around 430 million metric tonnes of new plastic annually. If we stay on this path, global plastics use is expected to

# Living in fear

Nazia Adnin  
is digital distribution lead in Bangladesh for Deutsche Welle (DW), the German national public broadcaster.



NAZIA ADNIN

"We're survivors. We control the fear. And without fear, we are all as good as dead. Do you understand?" These words by Forrest Bondurant, portrayed by Tom Hardy in the movie *Lawless*, resonated with me deeply. The character's philosophy about survival and fear seemed distant and theatrical when I first watched the film. But recently, I lived through my own experience of being "controlled by fear," and the source of that fear was none other than those entrusted to protect us: our law enforcement agencies.

It began in May last year, when I learnt that members of a law enforcement agency in Bangladesh were investigating my background and my family's political affiliations. To gather this information, they resorted to harassing my mother over the phone.

My crime? I am a journalist working for an international news organisation, Deutsche Welle.

Despite finding nothing suspicious about my family or me, their attempts to intimidate me continued. They even tracked down my former residence, where I hadn't lived in a decade, and contacted the property owner, who now resides in Australia. The intent was clear: to instil fear without directly confronting me.

When I reached out to them, they identified themselves as being from the cantonment and demanded detailed personal information. For a time, their strategy worked. Fear crept into my life, dictating my every move. I worried constantly about being followed, abducted or harassed. Worse, I feared for my family's safety, especially my mother's.

The irony is that I, a law-abiding, tax-paying citizen, had to seek protection from international colleagues and organisations to feel safe in my own country. I had committed no crime, yet I felt like a criminal. The experience made me question whether my dream of working for an international media outlet like Deutsche Welle was worth the emotional toll.

My father, an honest banker who led a simple life, instilled in me the values of integrity and hard work. I have always upheld these principles in my career as a

journalist. But even this wasn't enough to shield me from the harassment. It became evident that the goal wasn't justice or security but control—an attempt to force allegiance through intimidation.

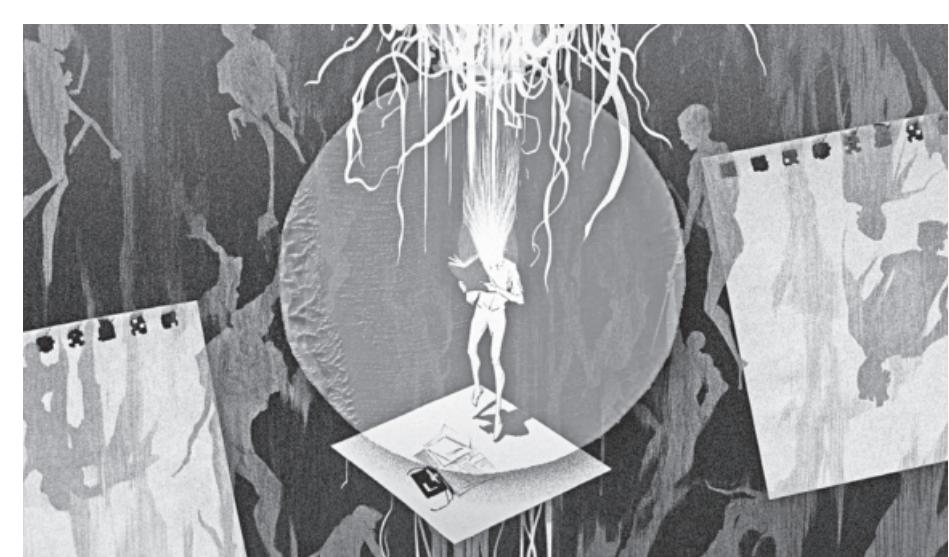
I was being coerced to support the authorities, regardless of my professional or ethical stance. The message was clear: dissent would have consequences.

The shame lies in being treated like a criminal in the country where I was born

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and raised—a country that prides itself on its democratic ideals. Why did I have to live in fear? Why was my mother subjected to mental trauma for something she didn't understand? Who will take responsibility for the stress and fear inflicted upon us?

These questions have haunted me for months, and I fear they will remain unanswered. However, I hold onto hope that as Bangladesh moves forward, this era of living in fear will end. I dream of a future where every citizen, regardless of their profession or affiliations, can live without intimidation—a future where democracy means freedom, not fear.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

**ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড**  
**EASTERN REFINERY LIMITED**

(বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর একটি অংশ প্রতিষ্ঠান)

### দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড (ইআরএল) এ মেইটেনেনেস পার্কে নির্বাচিত কাজগুলি করার সকলে নির্ধারিত সিলিঙ্কে এ স্থানের বর্তুল দরপত্র আবাসন করা যাচ্ছে।

১। সরপুর মৃগ ও তারিখ	ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড এর টার্পিং ইনসিল সটিউচন-২০২৫ এ গ্রান্টের বিনিয়োগ পার্কে নির্বাচিত পার্কে নির্বাচিত প্রক্রিয়াকল এবং কাজগুলি টিউবের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
২। সরপুর প্রক্রিয়া	ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড এর টার্পিং ইনসিল সটিউচন-২০২৫ এ গ্রান্টের বিনিয়োগ পার্কে নির্বাচিত পার্কে নির্বাচিত প্রক্রিয়াকল এবং কাজগুলি টিউবের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
৩। সরপুর কাজ করার তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০৫/২০২৫, ১০:০০, ৩২,০০০,২৫, তারিখ: ১০/০৫/২০২৫ প্রিয়।
৪। সরপুর কাজ করার তারিখ ও সময়	ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড, টার্পিং পার্কে নির্বাচিত পার্কে নির্বাচিত প্রক্রিয়াকল এবং কাজগুলি টিউবের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
৫। সরপুর কাজ করার তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০২/২০২৫ প্রিয়, বিকাশ ১৭ ১:০০ ঘটিকা প্রক্রিয়াকল এবং কাজগুলি টিউবের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
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১০। সরপুর কাজ করার তারিখ	এসিসিটেক রেফাইনারী লিমিটেড এর অধিকারী কাজগুলি করার স্থানে নির্বাচিত সিলিঙ্কে এ স্থানের বর্তুল দরপত্র আবাসন করা যাবে।
১১। সরপুর কাজ করার তারিখ	ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড, টার্পিং পার্কে নির্বাচিত পার্কে নির্বাচিত প্রক্রিয়াকল এবং কাজগুলি টিউবের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
১২। সরপুর অশ্বগ্রহণের যোগাতা	ট্রেক লাইসেন্সের হাতে হবে, ট্রেক লাইসেন্স (সময় মাসের ক্ষেত্রে, প্রতি মাসে ১০০০ টাকা)।
১৩। সরপুরে মৃগ	১৮,০০০/- (এক হাজার পাঁচশত) টাকা মাস (অবসরত্বেও)।
১৪। সরপুরে সিলিঙ্কেটিং মাসি বা আবাসন	৮০,০০০/- (ষাষ্ঠি হাজার) টাকা মাস (অবসরত্বেও)।
১৫। কাজ সম্পর্ক করার সময়কাল	৩০ (তিথি) দিন।
১৬। কাজকাল	সঞ্চ ভাইসেন্স স্বার্বী সময়কাল মডেলের প্রয়োগে করা যাবে।
১৭। সরপুর আবাসনকারী	আবেশীয়া মৃগজা হাস্পান, মাসেজার (ইয়েসিপ্যাল), ইস্টার্ণ রিফাইনারী লিমিটেড, টার্পিং পার্কে, চট্টগ্রাম-৮২০৮, মেসন্ট ০২ ৩০৩০ ০১২৬৭-৯, এবং একটি অন্য আবাসনকারী স্থানে আবাসন করার ক্ষেত্রে

# AN UNTOLD HISTORY OF BENGALI Migrants in Malaya and Singapore

**A sizeable Bengali diaspora became visible in British Malaya during the late nineteenth century. It gradually created social and cultural spaces alongside other migrating communities, such as the Chinese, Tamils, and Burmese.**

GAZI MIZANUR RAHMAN

During the 1980s and 1990s, a new wave of Bangladeshi migrants, comprising mainly unskilled workers, led to a widespread perception of Bengali migrants as itinerant labourers and temporary workers in the Malay Peninsula. However, one may ask: Did Bengalis not migrate to the Malay world before the 1980s? The answer to this question can be found on every page of the book *In the Malay World: A Spatial History of a Bengali Transnational Community*, published by Cambridge University Press. Despite the significant historical mobility of Bengalis in the Malay Archipelago and their contemporary prominence, as reflected in the more than a million-strong Bengali diaspora in the region, their historical studies remain almost

a hierarchy with four harbour managers representing Gujaratis, Bengalis, Malays, and East Asians. The Portuguese and Dutch East India Companies colonised Malacca in 1511 and 1641, respectively. Malacca was ceded to the British in 1824 through the Anglo-Dutch Treaty.

With the arrival of Europeans in the Bay of Bengal waters, Bengalis were introduced to Malaya through various avenues, including enslavement and later as imperial subjects. Europeans integrated Bengali enslaved people into the global slave trading network. During the 1620s, the Dutch frequently visited Chittagong to purchase Bengali enslaved people captured by the marauding Portuguese, known as Feringhi. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 enslaved people, and possibly more, were taken by the Dutch from various regions, including the Bengal-Arakan border. The Dutch employed them as domestic servants or agricultural labourers in their colonies.

#### Colonial Connectivity and Bengali Mobility

With the establishment of the British colonial administration and trans-regional networks in the 1830s, Bengali mobility into the Malay world took a relatively stable form. The maritime Bay of Bengal and land routes became robust avenues of mutual communication between 1830 and 1851. During this period, the Straits Settlements (consisting of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore) were administered from Calcutta. In the following years, the Straits Settlements came under the direct control of the Governor-General of India, an arrangement that continued until it became a crown colony in 1867. Moreover, the print media of



PHOTO COURTESY: GAZI MIZANUR RAHMAN.

**Mushahid Ali (b. 1941), a Bangladeshi descendant.**

transition from one sector to another, where they met other Bengali workers.

"We came from Taltala Village under Balaganj police station in Sylhet. My father, Munshi Asmat Ali, and my uncle Muniruddin came to British Malaya in 1922. They worked in unskilled jobs along the west coast of Malaya; from Penang, they went to Batu Gajah in Perak to seek work in the tin mines as boilermen or engine drivers. Eventually, they went to Ampang, Selangor, where there were other people from East Bengal, particularly Sylhet. They worked there for a while before moving south to Johor. While Asmat Ali found work as a boilerman in Kota Tinggi at Sungei Besi Tin Mine, Muniruddin went to Singapore in 1939 to seek work at the British military base and eventually settled there. In those days, the British encouraged the people of Sylhet to come to Malaya."

Mushahid Ali, son of Munshi Asmat Ali (1893–1982), was born and grew up in Johor. He moved to Singapore in 1949 to pursue better education. After finishing college, he started working as a reporter for a newspaper and later worked at Radio Television Singapore from 1963 to 1966. He resumed his studies at the University of Singapore in 1966, graduated, and eventually joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as a diplomat in seven countries, including Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, England, Japan, and Cambodia, and retired in 2001. Presently, he is working as a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University. His three offspring work

Tamils, and Burmese. Mirza Abdul Majid (1906–1973), commonly known as M. A. Majid, was a towering figure among the Bengali diasporic community in the Malay world. He migrated from Sylhet to Singapore in the 1920s and married a Chinese woman. He was well-known in Singapore's public life and had good connections with colonial administrators. In 1938, M. A. Majid took steps to secure the interests of the working classes, including the Bengalis. He noted the grievances, injustices, and unemployment faced by Bengali seamen in Malaya. He urged foreign shipowners to improve the working conditions of Asian seamen. In the 1930s, more than 60 per cent of Bengali lascars remained unemployed indefinitely in Singapore, and the Master Attendants' Office was indifferent to their grievances.

In her oral testimony, Shafiyah Khatoon recalls how Majid and his Chinese wife became a key example of a transnational family in the Malay Peninsula. Majid and his wife, Hamidah Binte Abdullah Sani, had ten offspring. In 1965, the eldest daughter of Majid, Khatoon, married Kamsani Hasan, a mixed Malay. Hasan's father was an Indonesian Malay, and his mother was a Bruneian royal family by marriage. Hasan's maternal aunt, Mrs. Kadayang Amas Ampuan Salleh (commonly known in the family as Maskatun), was the first wife of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (the twenty-seventh Sultan of Brunei Darussalam). Khatoon visited her husband's relatives in Brunei on several occasions from 1969 onward. Hasan had a close connection with

government system in Singapore. After the Legislative Council election in 1948, Majid formed a political party, the Singapore Labour Party (SLP), to protect labourers' interests. He was the 'principal organiser' of the party. Majid had good connections with prominent contemporary politicians, including David Marshall, Tengku Abdur Rahman, and Lim Yew Hock. They used to visit Majid's house and discuss contemporary political issues in British Malaya.

Mrs. Hena Sinha was born and brought up in Burma. After her marriage, A. C. Sinha and Mrs. Sinha, along with her mother-in-law, disembarked from Rangoon Port for Singapore. Her daughter-in-law, Dolly Sinha Davenport, recollects her married life and described her transnational family in the following words:

"I have three offspring. Ranjit was the father of two kids. One kid is with Davenport [after the death of Ranjit, Mrs. Sinha married Brand Davenport]. My eldest daughter is settled in the USA. She got married to an American who had two sons. My son, Robin Sinha, is a doctor, settled in Singapore, and married a Chinese girl. The youngest daughter, Roya, is settled in Singapore... She got married to a boy who is mixed race, mother Chinese and father Irish. Brand [her second husband] was an Anglo-Indian. His father was pure English, and his mother was mixed-race."

During the postcolonial period, Dolly Sinha was popular among Bangladeshi migrants. She completed her Bar-at-Law in 1977 and practised at the Singapore Court for nineteen years. She opened a law firm named Dolly Sinha Davenport and Co. She recalls that when she was practising law in the 1980s, people called her office the 'Little Bangladesh High Commission' because most of the injured or maltreated Bengali workers came to her office for legal assistance.

**Bengali Associations and their Religious and Cultural Activities**  
By the turn of the twentieth century, the Bengali diaspora had formed various social, religious, and cultural associations. The Bengali Hindu and Muslim communities established several associations and initiated many social, religious, and cultural activities during the interwar period in British Malaya. The Malayan Bengalee Association (MBA), one of the earliest Bengali associations, began functioning in Malaya in the 1920s. Its members came from the same ethnic group and language. Fresh Bengali migrants and the descendants of those who had arrived mainly from Calcutta, Dacca, Chittagong, and Midnapore were also members of the MBA. In 1952, the MBA was formally registered, and H. K. Choudhury was its first elected President (1951–1956). After the formation of Malaysia in 1963, the MBA renamed itself the 'Malaysian Bengalee Association'.

Bengali Muslim migrants and their descendants founded the Bangiya Moslem Sammilani (the Bengal Muslim Association) in Singapore in the 1920s. The Sammilani organised various social and religious events and programmes. In 1935, they celebrated the silver jubilee of George V (1865–1936) at Rangoon Road in Singapore with a three-day-long programme. Most of the participants were Bengali lascars, merchants, and seamen. Doa selamat (prayers) was offered for the king and his empire at the Queen Street Mosque on the first day. A Bangla music concert was held on the second day, and on the last day, a special dinner was served at M. A. Majid's house, who was the secretary of the Sammilani. More than 150 guests attended the dinner. Majid wrote a congratulatory message to the Viceroy of India at this event.

Though the Bengalis from West Bengal of India and Bangladesh share common cultures, including language and food habits, they split into two communities in Malaysia and Singapore in the late 1970s. The primary reason for this separation was the independence of Bangladesh, which divided the Bangla-speaking community along national lines.

Based on a range of primary sources, including oral history interviews, the book reveals an untold history of transregional connectivity between South and Southeast Asia and the making of a diasporic space that vividly resonates today. It fills a gap in the existing historiography of Bengali historical migration and their space making in present-day Malaysia and Singapore.

**Gazi Mizanur Rahman** is an assistant professor of history at BRAC University, Bangladesh, with expertise in historical migration.



Muniruddin and his wife.



M A Majid and his wife.  
PHOTO COURTESY: FAZLUR RAHMAN KAMSANI, GRANDSON OF M A MAJID.

**During the postcolonial period, Dolly Sinha was popular among Bangladeshi migrants. She completed her Bar-at-Law in 1977 and practised at the Singapore Court for nineteen years. She opened a law firm named Dolly Sinha Davenport and Co. She recalls that when she was practising law in the 1980s, people called her office the 'Little Bangladesh High Commission' because most of the injured or maltreated Bengali workers came to her office for legal assistance.**

unseen. Three aspects are significant in examining the history of Bengali migration and their transnational community. The first aspect includes the background of Bengali migration, processes, and governance during the colonial period. The second set of issues addresses the identity of Bengalis among many Indian ethnic communities, their demographic profile, and the historical challenges and opportunities they faced. Thirdly, the contributions of Bengalis to the Malay world's economy, culture, and civil society, as well as their role in forming a cosmopolitan space in the Northeast Indian Ocean region.

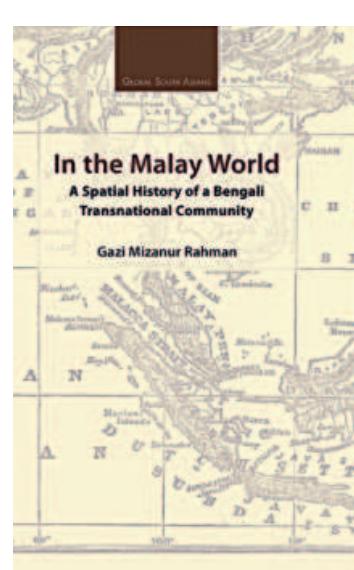
#### Pre-colonial Trajectory Across the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Sea

"A thousand years have I been roaming the world's pathways/ From Ceylon to Malaya in the darkness of night across oceans/ Much have I travelled; in the grey universe of Bimbisara, Ashoka ... A moment or two of peace she gave me, Natore's Banalata Sen" ('Banalata Sen'), a poem by Jibanananda Das, translated by Sugata Bose.

Jibanananda Das, a leading Bengali poet of the twentieth century, never travelled to the Malay Peninsula. However, in an allegorical verse in his famous poem 'Banalata Sen', an ode to the eponymous eternal woman, Das expressed that he had travelled for thousands of years from Sri Lanka to the Malay world to attain a moment of peace. His literary mind knew no bounds. Though his journey was a fantasy of love, it gives us a sense of the constant flow of Bengali mobility and culture between the two coasts of the Bay of Bengal and the Malay Sea.事实上, Bengalis voyaged to the Malay Archipelago for a thousand years. This truth fuelled the imagination of Bengali poets, as reflected in Das's verse.

Bengali connections with the Malay world go back centuries. Bengalis have been travelling widely in Southeast Asia since about the third century BCE. During the pre-colonial era, the primary connections were the circulation of goods and ideas. Chittagong port was prominent for trade and cultural dissemination. Anthony Reid and R. C. Majumder have shown that Buddhism and Islam were disseminated from Bengal to Southeast Asia. Majumder and Ganguly suggested that Bengal was extensively involved in developing cultural links between the diverse civilisations of Eastern and Southeastern Asia for nearly 1,500 years. In this respect, Chittagong and Malacca ports were crucial in exchanging cultures and commodities.

Bengali merchants conducted business in the Malay Peninsula and assisted in managing the Malacca Port at some point. A Malay nobleman, Parameswara (1344–c. 1414), established the Malacca Sultanate and founded a port in 1400. To avoid petty corruption, he established



the Straits Settlements offered 'soft' connectivity by either publishing news from Bengal or reproducing reports from Bengal newspapers.

However, a particular issue that has been encountered relates to identifying Bengalis among other South Asian migrants. Colonial records refer to migrants from different parts of South Asia using generic terms such as 'Indian', 'native of India', 'eastern Indian', and, to some extent, 'aliens' and 'others'. The term 'Bengali' was bundled with non-Bengalis, such as 'Sikh', 'Hindustani', or 'Punjabi'. Such terminological and categorical ambiguities about Bengalis hinder the remaking of the history of Bengali migration. Bengalis provide examples of mobility as convicts, indentured or kangany labourers, and 'free' migrants under British imperialism. Both colonial governments in Bengal and the Straits Settlements regulated Bengali migrations.

#### Governance of Migration and Bengali Professionals

British Malaya was rich in tin, rubber, coffee, oil, and other minerals, creating job opportunities and drawing a multiracial group of people from neighbouring areas, including China, India, and Bengal. Bengalis were involved in both professional and non-professional jobs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For instance, they worked as clerks, doctors, lawyers, accountants, coolies, shopkeepers, boatmen, security guards, vendors (bread sellers), and lascars. Bengali specialists in obstetrics and gynaecology served with dedication in British Malaya. K. C. Sinha migrated from Calcutta to Singapore in 1912 and joined as a general practitioner at Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital. His son and grandson became prominent obstetricians and gynaecologists in Singapore. Members of the Sinha family served at the Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital for almost fifty years. Mushahid Ali, a descendant of a Bengali migrant, recalls his family's involvement in tin mining and their

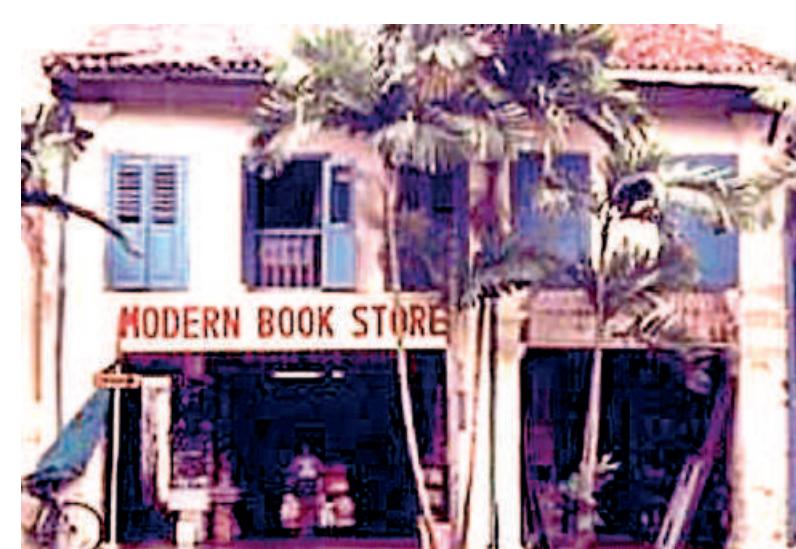
in Singapore and the USA. In his travel account, Ramnath Biswas, a globetrotter who started peddling his bicycle from Singapore in the 1930s, wrote about a Bengali grocery shop in Seremban, where Bengali migrants used to gather. According to Anwarul Haque's oral testimony, his father, Muniruddin, was an electrician and a supplier of electrical equipment in the Serangoon area. After the Second World War, Muniruddin's family resided in a shophouse on Bras Basah Road that served as both a home and a trading centre.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Bengalis owned a few bookshops. For instance, Noorul Islam's father started a bookshop named 'Modern Book Store' around 1938, located near Muniruddin's electrical equipment store.

**The Making of a Diasporic Space: Socio-political Dimensions and Civil Society**  
A sizeable Bengali diaspora became visible in British Malaya during the late nineteenth century. It gradually created social and cultural spaces alongside other migrating communities, such as the Chinese,

his three maternal cousins, namely Y. A. M. Pengiran Anak Datin Seri Setia Hjh Siti Saerah Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Basar, 1928–2013), Y. A. M. Pg Anal Siti Zubaidah Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Tangah, c. 1932–1986), and Y. A. M. Pengiran Anal Datin Seri Setia Hajah Siti Halimah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (Belabab Damit, 1935–2009). Khatoon attended the wedding of Saerah, the daughter of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, at Darul Hana (Old Royal Palace) and her funeral. The twenty-ninth Sultan of Brunei Darussalam also attended the janazah (funeral) prayer for Saerah.

M. A. Majid was not a trained solicitor, but he had knowledge of various legal issues and helped seamen and others in the court of Singapore. After WWII, Majid transitioned into national politics and stood in municipal commissioner and legislative councillor elections. In 1948, two candidates from the Progressive Party and Majid, an independent candidate, contested the Municipal South-West constituency in the first Legislative Council election. Majid endeavoured to achieve a self-



Modern Book Store, 1939.

PHOTO COURTESY: NOORUL ISLAM.



## Is this it for Shakib?

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

"The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry," is a line penned by Scottish poet Robert Burns around 250 years ago. It was the poet's personal take on how even the most meticulously planned scenarios get overturned by the cruel hand of fate.

It's unclear whether Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is familiar with this quote, but after his omission from Bangladesh's squad for the ICC Champions Trophy, where he had planned to call time on his career, he is definitely experiencing the truth of the sentiment behind this line.

The Champions Trophy, starting on February 19 in Karachi, was meant to be the 37-year-old's ODI swansong as said by the all-rounder himself in an interview before the 2023 World Cup. But unforeseen events have now removed him from that event where he almost single-handedly ensured Bangladesh's qualification.

Had Shakib not timed out Angelo Mathews in Bangladesh's 2023 World Cup encounter

against Sri Lanka in Delhi and also put forth a match-winning all-round display, featuring figures of 2-57 with the ball and a 65-ball 82 with the bat, Bangladesh, who climbed to eighth and edged Sri Lanka and the Netherlands on a better run-rate after the win, would not have qualified for the prestigious event.

Shakib has not played an ODI since that World Cup match and the last time he represented Bangladesh was in September 2024 in a two-match Test series against India. He had announced his T20I retirement last year.

His involvement with the ousted Awami League government has kept him from returning to Bangladesh. The bowling ban imposed on him by the ICC made it easier for the national selectors to drop him, as they found it difficult to rope him into the side solely as a batter.

Shakib, whose bowling action was reported as suspicious in September 2023 in a County Cricket match in England, failed his bowling test for a second time last Thursday.

"He can play as a batter as he has failed the bowling test [relating to his action]. We have considered him as a batter while making up the squad but due to the constraints brought forth due to the team combinations, we could not include him," chief selector Gazi Ashraf Lipu confirmed in Mirpur yesterday.

But the question is why would the selectors even consider him as a sole batter? The uncertainty regarding him being able to play matches at home coupled with the fact that he has not played any of the 12 ODIs the Tigers have played since the 2023 World Cup should have been enough to look towards the future.

The BCB also confirmed yesterday that Shakib can retake the bowling test as many times as he wants. Does that mean if Shakib passes the next test, he will be back in consideration as an all-rounder?

The BCB can make changes to the squad till next month. So, is there another twist around the corner or have we seen the last of Shakib in national colours?



### Capitals make BPL records tumble

Dhaka Capitals' 254-1 against Durbar Rajshahi yesterday is the highest team total in BPL history, beating Rangpur Riders' 239-4 against Chattogram Vikings in 2019.

Liton hit his maiden T20 ton off 44 balls -- the fastest by a Bangladeshi in BPL and also the joint-fastest hundred in BPL alongside Chris Gayle (for Barisal Burners against Sylhet Royals in 2012).

Liton and Tanzid Tamim's 241-run opening partnership is the highest in BPL for any wicket. It is also the highest opening stand in any franchise-based T20 tournament, surpassing the previous best of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul's unbeaten 210 in an IPL game in 2022.

Tamim became the second Bangladeshi after Tamim Iqbal to score two centuries in BPL.

Liton's unbeaten 125 off 55 is the second highest by a Bangladeshi batter in BPL - Tamim Iqbal's 61-ball 141 for Comilla Victorians against Dhaka Dynamites in 2019 is the highest.

## Liton left out as Bangladesh bet on form, youthful aggression

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced the squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, with the exclusion of batter Liton Das standing out as the main talking point.

While Liton's recent poor form made his omission less surprising, Bangladesh's selection trends often leave room for debate about inclusions and exclusions. This time, the selectors leaned towards youthful confidence and aggression over experience.

Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Lipu had sound logic for why Liton did not inspire much confidence ahead of squad selection. His run drought was the obvious reason; the other was that the selection panel saw the Soumya Sarkar-Tanzid Tamim pair as the likely opening combination for the tournament, starting February 19.

Since 2023, Liton's form has taken a dip and the manner of his dismissals has been quite similar. He was a big cause for optimism in the 2023 ODI World Cup in India but failed to live up to expectations. After the marquee event, Liton's ODI form deteriorated further, reaching a nadir in the last five ODIs where he managed just six runs.

The recent ODI series in the West Indies, played on flat wickets, eventually sealed Liton's fate.

"Obviously his past history was considered, but recent history was more in consideration," Lipu said yesterday,



**“If you look at the team, there is huge competition.”**

BCB chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

### BANGLADESH SQUAD

Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Tamim, Parvez Emon, Mushfiqur Rahim, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah, Jaker Ali, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Nasum Ahmed, Tanzim Sakib, Nahid Rana.

adding that opposition analysts have been increasingly successful with their plans against Liton in white-ball formats.

"In the Windies, we scored runs and crossed 300 twice. The wicket was very good, and since Liton failed there too, it was difficult to keep our confidence in him," he said.

The argument is that batting-friendly surfaces are likely to be prepared for the global tournament, and a top-order batter still struggling with form cannot provide the required start.

Curiously, Parvez Hossain Emon has been picked as a backup opener. He is

yet to make his ODI debut and averages 12.57 in seven T20Is. In his last T20I, Emon got the team off to a flying start in the West Indies. It was his attacking approach that was considered.

"Maybe he doesn't have a huge contribution. But what we felt, what we were looking for, is aggressive batting in the Powerplay, which we saw in him," Lipu said of Emon.

However, the squad faces a lack of experience. With Tamim Iqbal retired and Shakib Al Hasan and Liton absent, the top order relies on individuals -- such as Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Tamim,

skipper Najmul Shanto, and Towhid Hridoy -- who are also battling form issues.

"Experience obviously has a lot of value, but our players have gathered enough confidence from A teams and HP tours. When you are young, there is an advantage in being more aggressive, eager to take challenges. It can also work against them, but some excitement will be there," Lipu said.

"If you look at the team, there is huge competition," he added.

Liton, however, appeared to be regaining form in dramatic fashion in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League. Playing for Dhaka Capitals in their match against Durbar Rajshahi yesterday, Liton scored the joint-second fastest century and the quickest by a Bangladeshi player in BPL history, reaching the landmark in 142 balls before ending up unbeaten on 125 off 55 balls.

He also forged BPL's highest-ever partnership and the highest-ever opening stand in T20s, combining with Tanzid Tamim (108 off 64 balls) for a colossal 241 runs, leading to a BPL record team total of 254-1.

Selector Hannan Sarkar told The Daily Star on Sunday that they will be able to make changes to the Tigers' squad in the next month. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether Liton's form, if it continues, will bring him into consideration for the Champions Trophy in the end.

## Strikers turn it around in Sylhet

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Sylhet Strikers had a woeful start in this year's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) as they lost their opening three matches and two of them were in front of their crazy home fans at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

BPL isn't a kind of tournament where home and away system is followed as only three venues -- Dhaka, Sylhet and Chattogram -- are used to host the matches of the seven different franchises, each named after different divisions.

But like in previous years, fans in Sylhet are leaving no stone unturned in showing their support for the team named after their city, and for the past week and so, from galleries to roads and hotels to restaurants, Sylhet people were seen talking about their team's underwhelming performance.

Sylhet played their first three games against tournament favourites Rangpur Riders (two games) and Fortune Barishal (one) and as expected both teams are currently leading the points table. But since they started to play against similar-strength teams, they took no time to get results -- leading to fans turning up in large numbers in every Sylhet game to cheer for their side.

On Sunday, Sylhet registered their second successive victory in the tournament when they beat Khulna Tigers by eight runs in a hard-fought contest and the victory came within 48 hours after they beat Dhaka Capitals by three wickets to open their account.

"When you play at home, there is a plus point as well as a negative point. I think the fans [of Sylhet Strikers] have so much emotion for their side and that's why they get upset and when we play well, they say good things. I think it's good because players also remain very energetic because of it," said Sylhet skipper Ariful Haque, who was criticised heavily by the Sylheti fans for his poor captaincy at the start of the campaign.

## Habib makes history for Lebanon

AFP, Melbourne

Lebanon's Hady Habib made history Sunday at the Australian Open by becoming the first player from his country to win a Grand Slam match.

World number 219 Habib is the only Lebanese ever, man or woman, to come through qualifying and reach the main draw at one of the four majors.

The 26-year-old continued his fairytale run with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) victory over China's Bu Yunchaoketin in front of a frenzied crowd out on Court 13.

He was draped in the Lebanon flag as he signed autographs after the match.

"This is probably one of the best days of my career honestly," said Habib.

"It's such an incredible feeling to get this win not only for myself but for Lebanon and Lebanese tennis."

"As you guys could see there, the crowd was absolutely wild. It made it even more special to win in front of them."

Born in America to a Lebanese father, Habib lived in Lebanon for a few years from the age of six and has been representing the country since he was 15 when he first played in the Davis Cup.



His reward is a second-round match against France's 14th seed Ugo Humbert.

"It's a huge win, especially what we've been going through as a country," said Habib.

"I think to bring something positive, especially we've been having a rough time with obviously the war. We had our other issues in the past. It's just nice to get this win for Lebanon and for the people."

"This is the biggest achievement I've had in my entire career."

## Sabalenka wants to 'keep winning'

REUTERS, Melbourne

Aryna Sabalenka launched her bid for a third successive Australian Open title with a storm of power hitting and a 6-3, 6-2 demolition of former US Open champion Sloane Stephens on Sunday.

It was by no means peak Sabalenka, with the world number one broken twice by the American in a wayward first set at Rod Laver Arena.

But on the same court where she hoisted the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup twice in two years, Sabalenka steadied with the help of her pulverising forehand to claim a 15th successive win at hardcourt Grand Slams.

"It's just an incredible feeling. I just want to keep winning as long as I can just to feel the atmosphere," Sabalenka said.

The stand-out hardcourt player in the women's game, Sabalenka stormed to a 4-0 lead over Stephens in the first set as fans were still settling in their seats.

Though Stephens broke her twice to claw back to 4-3, Sabalenka regrouped to claim the set with strong net play and customary aggression.

A few years ago, Sabalenka might have lost her head after surrendering a few games but she is now a different player. "In that moment I would get frustrated and probably would lose the first set," she told reporters.

"I'm really glad that I improved my mental toughness, let's say."



PHOTO: AFP

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## DRAFT CYBER PROTECTION LAW Women, children and minorities given back seat

Speakers say at an event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly approved Cyber Protection Ordinance-2024 largely neglects minorities, women and children, and the indigenous groups, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They also said the draft law was merely a rebranded version of the draconian Cyber Security Act 2023.

The issues were discussed at a views exchange meeting titled "Proposed Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024", organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in association with the Institute of Informatics and Development, Cyberteens Foundation and Safety Net, at the capital's Biswa Sahitya Kendra.

Supreme Court lawyer Abdullah Al Noman said the new ordinance fails to address sexual harassment of women and children in the digital space, adding that it does not clearly outline how sensitive issues should be handled or tried.

During the July uprising, as many as 250 fake accounts were created in the name of Safety Nets member Farzana Shithi.

Speaking at the event, Shithi said that people impersonating her extorted money from others, adding that AI-generated images of her were used in various TikTok videos.

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Tk 2,300cr  
anomaly found  
at Nagad

Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has so far uncovered irregularities amounting to Tk 2,300 crore at the controversial digital financial service provider Nagad.

The irregularities include unauthorised creation of Tk 600 crore in e-money and misappropriation of funds intended for social safety net programmes for the poor, said BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur at a seminar yesterday on the digital financial ecosystem.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, the central bank has taken over the operations of Nagad, a big beneficiary of the previous regime, with the objective of improving governance and handing it over to a new investor who will operate it properly.

An audit of Nagad's past activities is underway, and once it is completed, the digital financial service provider will be offered to interested parties, Mansur said at the event jointly organised by the Metropolitan

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

## DMCH doctor freed after payment of ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A doctor at the neurosurgery department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) returned home early yesterday after being released by kidnappers in exchange for Tk 1.3 lakh ransom.

Aminur Rahman, 40, from Kachuti village in Kalihati upazila of Tangail, was abducted at 6:00pm on Saturday while returning home from Gazipur's Sreepur. He was freed around 4:00am yesterday near a spot between Hotapara and Rajendrapur in Gazipur. He had injury marks all over his body, according to family members.

Speaking to The Daily Star around noon, Sreepur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Joynal Abedin Mandal said, "We have been informed by the family that the doctor returned home after a ransom was paid."

According to Aminur's cousin Syed Moazzem Hossain Milton, the kidnappers made repeated contact with the family until 3:00am and extorted the ransom in several rounds. They later abandoned Aminur, leaving him injured.

Before releasing him, the abductors took his credit card, two

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Protesting Friday night's attack on two fellow traders by armed criminals, shop owners and employees demonstrated in front of the Multiplan Centre in the capital's Elephant Road around noon yesterday. Adviser Asif Mahmud is seen arriving at the scene. He assured them of security and justice following which the traders withdrew. Story on page 1.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## EC thinking about nat'l polls only

Says Election Commissioner Md Sanaullah

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission is focused on the national polls, and not any other election, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah said yesterday.

"I would like to say categorically that our overall focus is on the national election.... Any event that may hamper the national election should not come before," he told reporters at the Nirbahan Bhavan in the capital after a meeting of the commission, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin.

Sanaullah said this as a response to whether the EC will hold local polls as a test run before the next national election.

"It's not possible to conduct all



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Strong winds threaten to spread LA inferno

Death toll rises to 16; looting reported in affected areas

AFP, Los Angeles

US officials warned "dangerous and strong" winds were set to push deadly wildfires further through Los Angeles residential areas yesterday as firefighters struggled to make progress against the flames.

At least 16 people have been confirmed dead from blazes that have ripped through the city, reducing whole neighbourhoods to ashes and leaving thousands without homes.

Despite massive efforts, including precision sorties from aerial crews, the Palisades Fire continued to grow, spreading east towards the priceless collections of the Getty Center art museum and north to the densely populated San Fernando Valley.

"The winds are potentially getting dangerous and strong again," Deanne Criswell, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told CNN.

"The biggest thing that people need to know is that this is still dangerous."

A brief lull in the wind gave way to gusts that forecasters warned could reach up to 50 miles per hour (80 kilometers per hour) early yesterday, and feed the blazes for days to come.

The winds were due to weaken later yesterday

before picking up again overnight, the National Weather Service said.

The Palisades Fire was 11 percent contained but had grown to 23,600 acres (9,500 hectares), while the Eaton Fire was at 14,000 acres and 15 percent contained.

Official figures show more than 12,000 structures burned, though Cal Fire's Todd Hopkins said not all were houses and the number included outbuildings, trailers and sheds.

In some areas, the ferocious fire left streaks of molten metal flowing from burnt out cars.

The sudden rush of evacuated people needing somewhere to live posed a growing problem for the city.

"I'm back on the market with tens of thousands of people," said a man who gave his name as Brian, whose rent-controlled apartment has burned. "That doesn't bode well."

With incidences of looting and a nighttime curfew in place, police and National Guard mounted checkpoints to prevent people getting into the disaster zones.

Two people were arrested near Vice President Kamala Harris's Brentwood house for violating the curfew order after police received reports of burglary.



### Three-day mobile data packages return

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The internet regulator has reinstated three-day internet packages in a move aimed at boosting internet usage and offering greater freedom of choice for customers.

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has also introduced per hour, one day and two-day packages.

The three-day and 15-day data packages were discontinued on October 15, 2023 -- a move that disproportionately impacted grassroots, low-income and youth segments and reduced access to telecom services, particularly the internet.

The number of data packages was previously limited under the assumption that too many options might confuse customers, said BTRC Chairman Emdad ul Bari.

"But I believe this

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## Yunus for probing UK properties linked to Tulip

Salman F Rahman's son, Shayan, linked to £1.2 million property bought by Tulip's family

STAR REPORT



Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has called for an investigation into Tulip Siddiq and her family's properties in the United Kingdom, suggesting that those might have been purchased through illicit wealth linked to her aunt, Sheikh Hasina, according to The Times.

The report claims that several London properties were linked to offshore companies and businessmen named in the Panama Papers.

In a recent interview, the chief adviser emphasised that the properties connected to Tulip should be thoroughly examined. He said that if it is found that these assets were acquired through unlawful means, they should be returned to the people of Bangladesh.

"It's about plain robbery," he said, accusing the former regime, which was toppled in a mass uprising on August 5 last year, of embezzling funds through fraudulent practices.

According to reports published in UK media, the properties in question were bought by associates of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Times report links the family of Tulip, a British MP for Hampstead and Highgate and the UK's anti-corruption

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Just hours after being snubbed from Bangladesh's squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy, Liton Das smashed a statement ton for Dhaka Capitals in their Bangladesh Premier League game against Durbar Rajshahi in Sylhet yesterday. Liton hit an unbeaten 55-ball 125, setting the record for the fastest ton by a Bangladeshi in the competition by reaching his maiden T20 hundred off just 44 deliveries, while his opening partner Tanzid Tamim scored a 64-ball 108. The duo stitched a 241-run opening stand -- the highest for any wicket in franchise-based T20s -- as Dhaka amassed 254 for one -- also the highest team total in the tournament's history -- to thrash Rajshahi by a record BPL margin of 149 runs. The previous highest win margin was a 119-run win by Chittagong Kings over Sylhet Royals in 2013.

PHOTO: STAR

## 1 dies as BNP factions clash in Kishoreganj

36 injured in BNP-  
Jamaat clashes in  
Jhenaidah, Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A local BNP leader was killed and five people injured during a factional clash in Kishoreganj's Tarail upazila yesterday.

The incident happened in Banail Bazar of Rauti union around 11:00am.

Deceased Abul Hasan, 55, was the president of BNP's Rauti union unit. Five people were also injured in the clash, said Sohel Mia, the officer-in-charge (OC) of Tarail Police Station.

According to locals and party sources, the violence stemmed from a disagreement over the draft list of councillors for the upcoming Tarail upazila BNP council on January 15.

They said on Saturday a meeting was called in Rauti to discuss the councillors' list. During the meeting, Abul Hasan and Ghias Uddin, a member of the union BNP, got into an argument over who would be on the list. The dispute escalated into a clash the next morning.

"The injured were taken to the Tarail Upazila Health Complex. Abul Hasan was declared dead on arrival," the OC said.

Shamim Mia, nephew of the

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