

JULY UPRISING Proclamation to take some more time

16 parties, organisations stress unity at meeting with CA; BNP questions need for declaration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The July uprising proclamation will be made after intensive discussions with all stakeholders and consensus of all political parties.

This decision was made at a meeting between 16 political parties and organisations and Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday.

The BNP at the meeting questioned the necessity of the proclamation five and a half months after the uprising, but said if the proclamation turned into a political or historical document, the party would respect it.

Several leaders at the meeting proposed forming a committee with representatives from students and political parties that would prepare the proclamation. Further discussions can take place on finalising the proclamation.

Two political parties and pro-BNP 12-party alliance boycotted the meeting. They cited insufficient time given to them for proper preparations. The 12-party alliance termed the meeting "a staged drama".

After yesterday's meeting, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said, "All of them [meeting participants] said that such a document is necessary. A consensus was reached that the proclamation must acknowledge the contributions of everyone..."

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"We were born from unity and unity is our strength."

Prof Muhammad Yunus
Chief Adviser



Two injured protesters try to get up after police charged truncheons, used stun grenades and water canons to disperse their procession. They took out the procession towards the Secretariat to protest an attack on an indigenous group on Wednesday. The photo was taken near Shikkha Bhaban.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Govt to retract VAT decisions on some items, services

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue is set to revise down the value added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on a number of items including mobile phone usage, internet services, medicine, clothes and restaurants as public outcry became deafening.

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POLITICAL PARTIES Elect leaders by secret ballot

2 reform commissions push for internal
democracy, fund transparency

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and DIPAN NANDY

Two reform commissions have proposed changing laws to ensure democracy within political parties and promote transparency and integrity in their

financing, including election funding.

The Electoral Reform Commission recommended that leaders of all central and local committees be elected through secret ballot by general members.

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7 hurt as cops foil march for adivasis

Govt vows to bring
perpetrators to justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven persons were injured yesterday as police used water canons, lobbed sound grenades and charged batons to disperse a protest march towards the home ministry against the attack on an indigenous group and its supporters the day before.

Six of the injured were students.

On Wednesday, at least 20 people were injured when members of Students for Sovereignty assaulted an indigenous group protesting outside the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) office in Motijheel over the removal of the term "adivasi" (indigenous) from textbooks.

In protest, students and other protesters under the banner of "Aggrieved Student-Masses", on Wednesday night announced a march towards the home ministry.

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REFORM PROPOSALS Major parties taking time to react

MD ABBAS

Two leftist political parties have voiced strong criticism of the proposed changes to the fundamental principles in the preamble to the constitution.

Some of the proposals, however, have been received positively by these parties.

Meanwhile, the BNP, Jamaat-e-

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Beacon Pharmaceuticals PLC Honored with SAP ACE Award 2024 in Game Changer Category

Beacon Pharmaceuticals has achieved a momentous milestone by winning the **SAP ACE Award** 2024 in the Game Changer Category, a highly esteemed recognition that highlights excellence in technology-driven transformation. The award ceremony, held on 14th November 2024 in Mumbai, celebrated organizations that have demonstrated innovative practices, leveraging SAP solutions to drive remarkable business results.

This year, Beacon Pharmaceuticals stood out among 209 competing companies from the Asia-Pacific-Japan (APJ) region, emerging as the only company from Bangladesh to receive this prestigious accolade. This recognition underscores Beacon Pharmaceuticals' commitment to innovation, excellence, and leadership in the pharmaceutical sector.

The implementation of SAP has enabled Beacon Pharmaceuticals PLC to streamline and unify its business processes, creating a centralized system that ensures data accuracy and integrity. This transformation, achieved in partnership with PwC, has revolutionized operations, establishing Beacon as a leader in adopting cutting-edge

technology within the pharmaceutical sector. Representing the company at the award ceremony, Mr. Jalal Uddin FCA, CFO & Head of IT, and Mr. Sharif Razi Al Mahmud, Head of Enterprise Systems, proudly accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

This achievement is a testament to the relentless efforts of the Beacon SAP team, whose dedication and expertise have been pivotal in realizing this transformation. It also reflects the visionary leadership and unwavering support of the Beacon Top Management, including the Chairman, Managing Director and the Directors.

Beacon Pharmaceuticals' recognition on such a significant platform highlights the organization's role as a trailblazer in the industry, setting new benchmarks for innovation and excellence.

This success not only brings honor to Beacon Pharmaceuticals PLC but also places Bangladesh prominently on the global stage as a hub for technology-enabled business transformation.

Beacon Pharmaceuticals remains committed to driving further innovation and excellence, reaffirming its leadership in the pharmaceutical industry.

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Democracy can help Bangladesh to next chapter
Says US envoy to India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti has said that a swift restoration of democracy in Bangladesh is in its best interests.

"I think we have an opportunity. Both of us [India and US] want to see democracy and democratic elections to be established in Bangladesh as soon as possible and that can help Bangladesh open its next chapter," Garcetti said in an interview with the Indian television channel *Wion* yesterday.

The outgoing US envoy said both the US and India want to see a peaceful and democratic South Asia.

"We share these principles. We are coordinating together on that. We spoke about it: whether Bangladesh or any country, religious minorities should not be persecuted.

"It is not about the past, it is about what we can do together, and India and the US have never acted together more closely than today."



Palestinians gather to receive food aid being distributed in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Proclamation to take some more time

FROM PAGE 1

"It will take some time ...," he said about how long it would take to prepare the proclamation.

The issue of proclamation surfaced as the Students Against Discrimination and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee on December 30 said they would formally proclaim the uprising the next day. Student leaders also said the "Mujibbadi" constitution would be invalidated.

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

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

The Students Against Discrimination and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee also threatened demonstrations if the proclamation was not made by January 15.

Yesterday, in his opening speech of the meeting held at the Foreign Service Academy, Prof Yunus said his government was the outcome of the unity the people demonstrated during the uprising and asked political parties to extend their support to the government.

"When we work alone and suddenly

see you are not around us, we feel weak," he said, adding, "We were born from unity and unity is our strength."

He said the government called for the meeting after students who led the uprising came to him and told him that there would be a proclamation and insisted on him being part of it.

Prof Yunus said if the proclamation was unanimous, then it would be good for the country and it would enhance Bangladesh's image globally.

A total of 27 representatives of the BNP, Jamaat, Ganosamhati Andolok, Gono Adhikar Parishad, National Democratic Party, Gono Front, Basad (Marxist), Students Against Discrimination, AB Party, Khelafat Movement, Jasad, Rashtora Sonskar Andolok, Khelafat Majlis, Islami Andolok Bangladesh, and Nizam-e-Islami joined the meeting.

After the meeting, leaders of Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee said the proclamation would be a historic document of a new political settlement for a democratic Bangladesh.

Member Secretary of Students Against Discrimination Arif Sohel said, "The document will have historical significance in the establishment of a prosperous and democratic state and the July movement will be recognised globally."

"Further discussions will be held regarding what should be included in the document to reflect the aspirations of the students and people who took to

the streets in July."

Convenor of Jatiya Nagorik Committee Nasiruddin Patwary said Bangladesh cannot move towards the democratic transition without this document.

"For this reason, we have called upon all democratic forces and the people who are committed to democracy, who have fought for it over the last 15 years, to unite through this declaration," he said.

BNP's standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the most urgent matter was to maintain the anti-fascist national unity, which was created through the July uprising.

Regarding the proclamation, he said, "There were some discussions about the proclamation, and political party leaders gave their suggestions. We questioned whether the declaration on the July uprising, after five and a half months, was really necessary. If it is, its political, historical, and legal significance needs to be determined.

"... We want to make an inclusive political statement with all the political parties who have been involved in the anti-fascist movement. We must ensure that no fascist power or fascist collaborators can plant the seeds of disunity within us.

"We must ensure that no rift is created in the unity against fascism over this proclamation. If it turns into a political or historical document, we must respect it. But while formulating

it, all relevant parties should be included, and their suggestions must be taken into account."

Miah Golam Parwar, secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islam, said all the parties in the meeting felt the necessity of a proclamation.

"However, if we rush, there might be mistakes... Time is needed and we need to exchange views with political parties and various stakeholders.

"We will provide separate proposals that will be later compiled into one cohesive declaration," he said, adding that the process should not be delayed too much as it could create room for chaos or conspiracies.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolok, said the proclamation should not be drafted hastily or carelessly.

"The issues of content as well as legal and political aspects of the proclamation must be addressed through consensus," he said.

Joint Secretary General of Islami Andolok Bangladesh Gazi Ataur Rahman said they emphasised the need for ensuring that the spirit of the July uprising is reflected in the proclamation.

On Prof Yunus' comment about feeling weak, the IAB leader said, "We told him [Yunus] that you need to understand why you are feeling weaker.

"Why is there a growing distance between you and the political parties? Why is there a lack of coordination? It is your responsibility to bridge this gap,

and if you fail to do so, we will all suffer," he said.

Asaduzzaman Fuad, general secretary of AB (Amar Bangladesh) Party, said that they proposed that the proclamation briefly mention all the historic events -- from the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to the Liberation War and all movements over the last 15 years.

"The proclamation should be concise. It will help all parties reach a consensus, as larger documents leave more scope for disagreements," said Fuad.

Hebaz-e-Islam's Senior Joint Secretary General Md Junaid Al Habib said they suggested the inclusion of Shapla Chittar incident (of May 2013) in the proclamation.

Mohammad Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said they told the meeting that the declaration must acknowledge the 2018 quota reform movement and the road safety movement. It should also clearly mention victims of enforced disappearances and killings over the last 15 years.

He said almost all political party criticised the government for sending them draft proclamation just two hours prior to the meeting.

He said all parties asked whether the draft was made by the government, the students, or a private organisation. He said the government failed to provide a clear answer.

Secretary General of Khelafat Majlis Ahmad Abdul Kader, Secretary General

ROHINGYA REFUGEES
30 children, eight women rescued by Teknaf police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police have rescued 38 Rohingya refugees after they illegally entered Bangladesh territory by crossing the Bay of Bengal through the Teknaf coastline in Cox's Bazar.

Among those rescued, eight are women, and the rest are children, said Inspector Shovon Kumar Saha, in charge of the Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre in Teknaf.

"They were rescued from Noakhaliapara in Baharchhara union Wednesday evening. They are now in police custody."

Human traffickers took them to a hill in Noakhaliapara by boat, the official said, adding that they were waiting to be taken to different Rohingya camps, where they have relatives.

"We are waiting for instructions from higher authorities. They (authorities) have been informed,

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Elect leaders by secret ballot

FROM PAGE 1

The same process of voting should be followed to form a three-member panel that would nominate candidates for national polls.

The changes in electoral laws to ensure fund transparency were proposed by the Anti Corruption Commission Reform Commission. The commission unveiled the recommendations after submitting their reports to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Wednesday.

The Electoral Reform Commission proposed changing the Representation of the People Order, 1972, under which the EC registers the political parties.

The commission suggested that people convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal be disqualified from becoming a general member or committee member of a political party.

It said a special law is needed to prevent individuals accused of serious human rights violations -- such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and attacks on journalists -- from becoming general members or committee members of any political

party if charges against them are accepted by an ICT.

The commission said that political parties should prepare a list of party members, publish it on their websites and update it once a year.

No parties should be allowed to have sycophant student, teacher or labour wings, or foreign branches under any kind of names, the commission said.

A person must be a party member for at least three years to vie for nomination in parliamentary elections.

A party will be able to take a minimum membership fee of Tk 100 and a maximum donation of Tk 50 lakh from any individual.

Donations should be received via banking channels and disclosed in the tax returns of the respective individuals.

The reform commission suggested auditing the annual income and expenditure reports submitted by registered parties to ensure transparency in their fund management.

The Electoral Reform Commission said election expenses should be fixed at Tk 10 per voter and all these expenses

PROPOSED REFORMS FOR PARTIES

- ☛ Elect leadership by members' secret ballot
- ☛ Nominate polls candidates through panel created by members
- ☛ Bar people accused of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings from party
- ☛ People convicted by ICT cannot be party members
- ☛ No separate student, teacher or labour wing
- ☛ Publicise financing and income-expenditure info

must be managed through the banking systems or mobile financial services.

It said the expenditures should be closely monitored by the EC and the returns of election expense accounts for candidates and parties will be

audited, and penalties will be imposed for discrepancies.

The ACC Reform Commission suggested that political parties and candidates disclose detailed information about their financing and

income expenditure to the public.

With the assistance of the National Board of Revenue and ACC, the EC can verify accuracy of the information provided by candidates in their electoral affidavits and take appropriate action where necessary.

All elected representatives at all levels must submit their and their family members' income and wealth statements to the EC within three months of assuming office and annually thereafter, and the EC will publish these declarations on its website, states the reform commission report.

"Political parties should not nominate individuals involved in corruption or irregularities for party positions or elections," said the ACC Reform Commission.

Its chief Iftekharuzzaman said, "We are not talking about only those convicted for corruption, but also those involved in extortion and grabbing."

"We are seeing that these people are being expelled from party posts. So, we can only hope that political parties will be firm while keeping these people out of election nomination," he said.

Prof Dilara Choudhury, a former teacher at the Department of Government and Politics at Jahangirnagar University, said the proposals to increase internal democracy and transparency in funding were positive.

"The use of black money must be stopped in politics. At the same time, democracy should be ensured among the political parties. Otherwise, there is no point in talking about democracy," she said.

"But the implementation of these recommendations depends on the political parties. Again, the Election Commission should take a proactive role so that the parties keep their financial activities transparent," she said.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said that they will review all the recommendations prepared by the Electoral Reform Commission.

Speaking at an event organised by the Reporters' Forum for Election and Democracy, he said the implementation of the proposals would depend on the decision-making authorities, the political parties, and the capacity of the Election Commission.

DHAKA

73 noted citizens slate attack
Protests held countrywide; 500 citizens demand reinstatement of word 'Adivasi' in textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventy three prominent citizens yesterday condemned the attack on indigenous students and supporters, stating that it contradicts the principles of building an inclusive state and tarnishes the image of the state and government.

In separate statements, they said the attack selectively targeted activists vocal about establishing the rights of indigenous communities.

In a statement, 27 noted personalities said they believe that police inaction in such crimes reflects the insensitivity of the state, further exposing the systemic oppression faced by indigenous communities.

The statement pointed out that the acceptance of demands to remove the term "indigenous" from textbooks, along with the violent attacks on protest programmes that left indigenous students and citizens bloodied and injured, indicates an effort to establish a communal state, undermining the multicultural essence of Bangladesh.

The signatories include former

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People in various parts of the country yesterday protested the attack on an indigenous group and its supporters in front of the NCTB office in Motijheel on Wednesday. They demanded the arrest and trial of those involved in the attack. The photos were taken in Dhaka and Mymensingh.

PHOTO: STAR

PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION **57pc graduates struggle to get jobs: study**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 57 percent graduates in Public Health discipline face significant challenges in finding jobs in relevant fields, according to a new study by Bangladesh Health Watch (BHW).

Their barriers to employment include limited job and research opportunities in public health sector, lack of curricula designed to develop job-ready skills, and a shortage of qualified educators, according to the report, titled "State of Professional Public Health Education in Bangladesh (2023-2024)," launched at an event held at BRAC Tower in Dhaka's Mohakhali yesterday.

It was the ninth report published by BHW, a civil-society platform that has been publishing reports on various health issues since 2006.

Highlighting key findings of the study, Mahruba Khanam, coordinator (research) of BHW, said non-medical graduates face more challenges than their medical counterparts, and public university graduates encounter more difficulties compared to those from private institutions.

The study, conducted in November 2023, involving 300 undergraduates of different institutions, revealed that graduates from public institutions such as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Jahangirnagar University face the highest challenges, while those from North South University face the least.

Respondents from BSMMU reported the most employment challenges (82pc), followed by JU (over 64pc),

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Prioritise reforms in public health education

Collaborate between public, private institutions

Maintain curriculum standards

Integrate public health into governance frameworks

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti Corruption Commission Reform Commission has recommended comprehensive changes to reduce bureaucratic influence and strengthen the ACC's autonomy.

In a report submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Wednesday, the commission proposed 47 recommendations focusing on institutional, financial, and operational reforms to enhance the ACC's effectiveness and independence.

The recommendations are divided into three categories. In the institutional and financial management category, the report stressed relying on the ACC's own human resources.

INSTITUTIONAL, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

It recommended increasing the number of directors general from 8 to 12, while dividing their responsibilities into sub-divisions – Administration, Finance and HR, Prevention and Public Relations, IT, Training, Research and Development, Legal and Prosecution, Investigation, Special Investigation, Secret Investigation, Money Laundering, and Internal Discipline.

The reform commission also recommended introducing competitive, open processes for appointing secretaries through advertisements, allowing government employees to apply on a contractual basis, subject to getting leave from their original organisations.



KEY PROPOSALS

- ▢ Increase number of DGs
- ▢ Appoint secrs thru open, competitive process
- ▢ Enhance internal recruitment, reduce deputation
- ▢ Set up separate salary structure for ACC staff
- ▢ Create independent ACC fund

We (the commission) want the ACC to be independent and effective, but its independence is not limitless. The ACC must be accountable, with recognition for successes and accountability for failures.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman
 Head of the Reform Commission

Similarly, for DG and director positions, except for those appointed through deputation, the commission has recommended

competitive and open processes.

However, the commission suggested reserving 60 percent of DG posts and 75 percent of director posts for internal candidates, provided they meet eligibility criteria.

It proposed to fill a maximum of 10 percent of positions through deputation at each level. But deputation for judicial or law enforcement roles will not count toward this limit.

The commission advised abolishing Rule 54(2) of the ACC (Employee) Service Regulations, 2008 – which allows dismissing employees with a 90 day notice and salary but without any justification – to ensure independence and security for ACC employees.

It also recommended establishing a separate salary structure for the ACC, with salaries at least double the national structure, along with risk allowances for officials involved in investigations, secret inquiries, and related tasks.

The commission suggested creating the ACC's own fund, sourced from the government-approved annual budget and 10 percent of fines or confiscated assets collected through ACC cases.

It also suggested introducing annual salary increments and performance bonuses for officials and employees from the ACC's own fund, under specific policies.

OPERATIONAL REFORMS

The reform commission has advised immediately forming a permanent prosecution unit as per the ACC

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MBBS entry test today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The MBBS admission test for the 2024-25 academic year in the country's public and private medical colleges is scheduled to be held today.

The one-hour exam will begin at 10:00am and continue till 11:00am at 19 test centres.

This year, a total of 1,35,261 applicants are vying for 5,380 available seats in the 110 medical colleges in the country, according to the Directorate General of Medical Education.

As such, 25 candidates will compete for each seat this year, six more than it was for the 2023-24 academic year.

At present, there are 37 public medical colleges, 67 private medical colleges, one Armed Forces Medical College, and five private Army medical colleges in the country.

The Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) admission test is scheduled for February 28.

Family refuses Eye Hospital's explanation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of Bangladesh Eye Hospital & Institute issued a statement regarding the alleged incident of "wrong treatment" in the case of an 18-month-old child.

The treatment provided to the child was a "recognised and standard procedure, not a surgical operation", they claimed yesterday in a statement.

However, family members of the child disagreed with this explanation, asserting that the doctor verbally admitted to the mistake. They said the hospital's statement, which mentions the doctor's error, contradicts their denial of wrongdoing.

Signed by Kazi Mezbahul Alam, chief operating officer of the hospital, the statement said the 18-month-old child, Irtiza Ariz Hasan, was brought to Dr Shahedara Begum, a consultant pediatric ophthalmologist and strabismus surgeon, for eye treatment. The treatment involved no surgery.

Due to the child's young age, the procedure was conducted in the operation theatre under anesthesia instead of in the outpatient department, according to the statement.

The doctor initially examined both eyes and then removed a foreign body (eyelash) from the right eye. Later, after speaking with the parents, she returned to the operation room to remove another eyelash from the left eye, the statement said.

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 The Daily Star 3

JULY UPRISING

Tribunal orders data preservation

DU CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday ordered the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) to ensure that no information related to the mass uprising in July and August is deleted and that all digital data is preserved.

The order was passed by a three-member bench of the tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumdar, following the filing of a petition.

Chief Prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam briefed journalists after court proceedings.

He said, "The data detailing incidents during the mass uprising, stored with NTMC and BTRC, is automatically deleted after a certain period."

"The court has instructed the relevant authorities to ensure that this crucial data is preserved separately, as it may be needed for judicial purposes in the future," he added.

"The court has also instructed telecom operators and internet service providers to assist the ICT investigation agency in conducting a comprehensive investigation," he further said.

A prosecutor of the tribunal told The Daily Star that data is typically stored on NTMC and BTRC servers for six months. After that, if the data is not preserved, it is automatically deleted.

A request is made to the court to preserve the data within six months, and the court, upon considering the matter, directs the relevant authorities to preserve the data.

3rd terminal set to open by year-end Says CAAB chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much anticipated third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport will open for passengers by the end of this year as 99 percent works of the structure has already been completed.

"Some minor works of the terminal building need to be done and we are hopeful that the remaining works will be completed by March," Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan said yesterday at a press conference at the CAAB headquarters in the capital.

He said they are determined to start operation of the third terminal by this year at any cost. Aircraft will be able to use new apron area of the third terminal within a week.



The third terminal project, costing Tk 21,300 crore, commenced on December 28, 2019. The government contributed Tk 5,000 crore, while the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) provided the remaining funds.

Upon full-fledged operation of the third terminal, HSLA's annual passenger and cargo handling capacity is expected to triple.

The annual passenger handling capacity of the HSLA would be 24 million (including the old terminals). At present, the Dhaka airport can handle eight million passengers and 5,00,000 tonnes of cargo each year.

During the press conference, the CAAB chairman also discussed the ongoing projects at various airports, including Sylhet, Cox's Bazar, Jashore and Saidpur airports.

Addressing a query about the third terminal's

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Encroachers operate their illegal coal and sand business on a portion of land that is part of the Turag river. Despite Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority marking the land that belongs to the river with the triangle-shaped pillars seen between the two trucks at the bottom left, encroachers have continued to operate their businesses here with little regards. The photo was taken in the Amin Bazar area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

HOOMGUTI KHELA

A rural game that withstood the test of time

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

In Phulbaria upazila of Mymensingh, the shivering cold of winter couldn't dampen the spirit of hundreds who gathered in Laxmipur to witness a spectacle of heritage.

The 266th annual Hoomguti Khela, a game steeped in over two centuries of tradition, brought together people of all ages, castes, and creeds for a day of vibrant celebration.

At the heart of this unique event is a 40-kilogramme brass ball, affectionately called the "Guti". The game's essence lies in skill, strategy, and teamwork as participants work to hide and transport the heavy ball to their designated villages while evading their opponents.

"This game has been part of our tradition for generations," said Abdul Jabber, a 70-year-old resident of Laxmipur village. "In my youth, I used to play it myself during the Poush Sankranti festivities."



Legend has it that Hoomguti Khela was introduced by two influential zamindars -- Maharaja Shashikanta Acharya Chowdhury of Muktagacha and Hemchandra Roy of Boilor in Trishal. According to Md Abdul Kalam, a local journalist, the zamindars devised the game to resolve disputes over land demarcations, testing the strength and strategy of their subjects.

"This is the 266th edition of the event, held every year during Poush Sankranti or Pahura as we call it locally," said AB Siddique, convener of Hoomguti Khela Smriti Sangsads, the organising committee.

On Tuesday, the entire Laxmipur area transformed into a vibrant hub of festivity. Four teams -- East, West, North, and South -- competed to take the Guti from Boroita in Deukhola to their respective villages. The challenge was simple yet demanding: hide the Guti from opposing

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A child sits with two kittens in her lap, providing warmth to them during the winter morning. As temperatures drop, both humans and animals struggle to deal with the cold so this five-year-old has come up with a creative solution. The photo was taken from the Khulna Railway Station area yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Sarjis leads 'March for Felani' Makes 5-point demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Student leader and Jatiya Nagorik Committee chief organiser Sarjis Alam led the "March for Felani" programme in Kurigram yesterday, presenting a five-point demand to address border-related violence.

During a press briefing at the Independence Victory Monument in Kurigram town around 10:30am, Sarjis demanded justice for Felani Khatun, who was killed at the border in 2011, along with an end to border killings and the use of deadly weapons in the area.

"If another innocent life is lost, hanging from the barbed wire fence like Felani, we will launch a long march

through the fence itself," he said.

"Whoever comes to power in Bangladesh must not act as brokers for any foreign country or group. If they do, they will meet the same fate as Hasina," he added.

The event was attended by key figures of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee including joint chief organiser Nizam Uddin, joint convener Atiq Mujahid, central organisers Abu Sayeed Leon and Shakib Mahdi, and central coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement Rifat Ridwan.

Following the press briefing, participants marched to Felani's house in Ramkhana village of Nageshwari upazila.

Farmer dies of electrocution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A farmer died of electrocution in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat yesterday.

The deceased is Abu Bakar, 55, of Sundrahabibi village, said police.

Bakar was electrocuted and died on the spot after he came in contact with an electric cable of an irrigation pump while he was preparing a field for paddy cultivation at Sundrahabibi village around noon, said Selim Malik, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station.

Women leading change thru vermicompost

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Amilu Nasrin, a farmer from Borichhara village in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila, began producing vermicompost at her home about 10 years ago, despite facing criticism from relatives and locals.

Her initiative to produce organic fertiliser from animal waste not only brought her financial stability but also inspired other women in the village to follow her example.

Currently, 30 women farmers in the village are commercially producing 15-20 tonnes of vermicompost each month, selling it to farmers across the upazila.

"I participated in a training programme organised by the Department of Agricultural Extension in 2015 as a community member. That's where I first learned about vermicompost and was inspired to start producing it at home with the help of the local agriculture office," Amilu said.

"Although many relatives and locals criticised me, my husband supported me. We started with a small setup of three vermicompost rings, 2,000 earthworms provided by the DAE, and locally collected cow dung to produce the fertiliser," she added.

"It took about two months to turn the cow dung into vermicompost, which my husband used for growing vegetables and fruits, reducing our dependence

on chemical fertilisers. Soon, other local farmers began buying the organic fertiliser from us, and we haven't looked back since," Amilu said.

Her husband, Ahmedur Rahman, said he now relies primarily on vermicompost instead of chemical fertilisers for cultivating crops.

"For one bigha of land, cultivating vegetables requires at least 50 kilogrammes each of TSP and urea fertilisers. Using

She currently produces about three tonnes of the fertiliser each month.

Inspired by Amilu, 30 other women in the village have started producing vermicompost at their homes.

Anni Khatun, another woman farmer in the village, said, "It costs about Tk 2,500 to produce a tonne of vermicompost, which can be sold for Tk 10,000."

Shahnaz Parvin, another farmer, echoed her.



organic fertiliser, I no longer need TSP and use only 25kg of urea, significantly lowering costs while achieving similar yields," he said.

By using just 2 maunds of vermicompost costing Tk 800, Ahmedur said he saves Tk 3,000 per bigha of land.

"Many local farmers are now using vermicompost, and its demand is increasing," Amilu said.

According to the DAE in Pabna, the district produces around 24,000 tonnes of vermicompost annually, with 6,000 tonnes coming from Ishwardi upazila alone.

Ishwardi upazila has become a major agricultural hub in the country, with fruits like litchi and mango and various vegetables being cultivated successfully.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the Office of the Registrar, are invited from the Bangladeshi nationals for filling up 1 (One) permanent vacant post of Lecturer in the Department of Disaster Science and Climate Resilience.

Pay scale: Tk. 22,000-53,060/- for Lecturer (National Pay Scale -2015).

QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in both Honours and Master degrees in Disaster Science and Management with a first division/a minimum GPA 4.25 out of 5.00 in both SSC and HSC examinations. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for the candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Honours and Master degrees. Candidates having a Ph.D. in the relevant field and research publications(s) in a quality journal may get preference. Relevant notes and conditions apply. (For details, see the Dhaka University Website).

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials, mark-sheets/Grade Sheets and proof of experience along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 750/- (seven hundred fifty) only, payable to the Registrar, should reach him on or before 09.02.2025. Applicants already in service must apply through the proper channel.

GD-166

Committee formed to review Press Accreditation Policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a 17-member committee to review the Press Accreditation Policy 2022.

The committee was formed under the directive of the Chief Adviser's Office, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The notification said the committee will be chaired by Sarwar Alam, press secretary to the president, with Mohammad Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan, deputy chief information officer of the Department of Information, serving as the member secretary.

The committee's mandate is to reassess the policy and provide recommendations for necessary additions, amendments, and refinements.

It will submit its report to the secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting by February 10, the notification added.

No alternative to Jamaat for peace Says Shafiqur Rahman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday claimed that there is no alternative to the party in order to establish peace in the country.

"There is no alternative to Jamaat-e-Islami in order to establish peace in the country. If you want peace in the country, you should come under the banner of Islam," he said while addressing a road meeting in front of Madhukhali Akhchashi Kalyan Bhaban in Madhukhali upazila, Faridpur.

The Jamaat ameer was on the way to Magura when he joined the meeting organised by the party's Madhukhali municipal unit.

"Bangladesh is our birthplace. We are all living here together irrespective of caste, religion. May Allah accept our devotion and bless us so that we can work together to build a new Bangladesh....," he said.

Hundreds of Jamaat leaders and activists from Madhukhali, and neighbouring upazilas joined the event.

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY BANGLADESH

Office of the Superintending Engineer
Civil Circle, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229.

File No. 30.31.0000.421.04.011.25.1789

Date: 15/01/2025

E-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concerned that e-Tender is invited and published in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of works for the following Tender. Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the website www.eprocure.gov.bd

Sl No	Tender ID	Brief description of Works	Tender Reference No.	Last date & time of selling	Last date & time of submission
01.	859014	Reconstruction of damaged slab in front of Biman Hangar from GSE Maintenance apron (North side) towards north at HSIA, Kurmitola, Dhaka.	30.31.0000.401.14.242, 23.20602421, Date: 27-07-23	09-Feb-2025 16:00	10-Feb-2025 14:00

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

নং-৩০, ৩১, ০০০, ০১১, ১২, ০০১, ২৫/২৩

তারিখ: ১৬/০১/২০২৫ খ্রি

(A.H.Md Nuruddin Chowdhury)
Superintending Engineer (C.C)
Civil Circle, CAAB, Dhaka-1229.
email:- supengcivil@caab.gov.bd

GOVT. OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (EED)
LALMONIRHAT

Invitation for e-GP Tender (LTM) TENDER NOTICE NO: e-Gp-17/XEN/EED/LAL/4931-SHED/2024-2025

Memo No : XEN/EED/LAL/2025/17

Date: 15/01/2025

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The Tender who have registered in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is eligible to participate in this Tender. The fees of downloading the e-Tender documents of following Packages from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branches up to the following date and time.

Sl. No	Package No.	Name of Works	Tender ID	Last Date & Time of Selling Documents	Last Date & Time of Opening Documents
01	4931-SHED/2023-24/13	Repair and renovation works at Govt. Alimuddin Degree College, Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat.	1043264	02-Feb-2025 Time 17:00	03-Feb-2025 Time 11:00
02	4931-SHED/2023-24/12	Repair and renovation works at Hatibandha S S Govt. Model High school, Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat.	1043263	02-Feb-2025 Time 17:00	03-Feb-2025 Time 11:00
03	4931-SHED/2023-24/11	Repair and renovation works at Govt. Josimuddin Kazi Abdul Goni College, Patgram, Lalmonirhat.	1043262	02-Feb-2025 Time 17:00	03-Feb-2025 Time 11:00
04	4931-SHED/2023-24/10	Repair and renovation works at Dohogram Govt. high school, Patgram, Lalmonirhat.	1043261	02-Feb-2025 Time 17:00	03-Feb-2025 Time 11:00
05	4931-SHED/2023-24/09	Repair and renovation works at Patgram Hujur Uddin Govt. Girls high school, Patgram, Lalmonirhat.	1043260	02-Feb-2025 Time 17:00	03-Feb-2025 Time 11:00

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

(Md. Sultan Mahmud)
Executive Engineer (Add. Charge)



ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

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Pay scale: Tk. 22,000-53,060/- for Lecturer (National Pay Scale -2015).

QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates

Academy debunks Oscars cancellation rumours amid wildfires

The Academy has dismissed baseless rumours about the cancellation of the 97th Academy Awards, scheduled for March 2, amid the ongoing Los Angeles wildfires.

The speculation originated from a report by The Sun, falsely claiming that a "secret contingency plan" was in place, involving Hollywood figures like Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep. However, Academy officials confirmed that no such advisory committee exists and no plans to cancel the event are under consideration.

While some adjustments, such as extended nomination voting and postponed events, have been made, the Oscars will proceed as planned. The ceremony, employing over 1,000 locals, aims to uphold its tradition while supporting wildfire relief efforts.

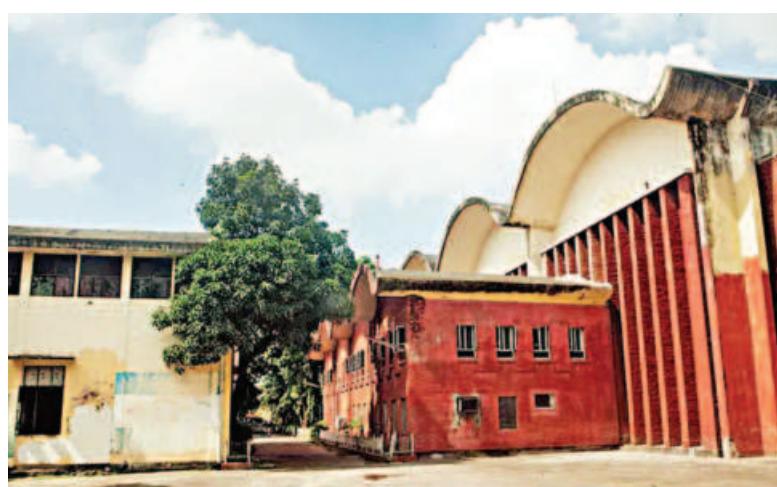


BFDC cuts rental fees to attract filmmakers

In a bid to revive the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) and encourage filmmakers to return, rental costs for studio floors and equipment have been slashed. The new rates, effective for six months, aim to lower production expenses and boost activity at the largely idle facility. Under the revised scheme, rental rates for floors 1 and 6 have been reduced from Tk 2,550 and Tk 6,500 to Tk 2,000 and Tk 5,000, respectively. Floor 2 rates without air conditioning have dropped from Tk 5,100 and Tk 13,000 to Tk 4,000 and Tk 9,000, while air-conditioned rates now stand at Tk 4,000 and Tk 11,500, down from Tk 5,100 and Tk 18,540.

A Red Dragon camera now costs Tk 3,000, down from Tk 6,120, with similar reductions for Sony cameras and editing machines.

Several conditions apply to the new pricing structure, including pre-approval for external equipment and electricity charges based on usage.



Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC)

NEWS

30 children

FROM PAGE 2

and actions will be taken as per their instructions."

Inspector Shovon said the refugees are from different parts of Myanmar.

Earlier on January 5, Border Guard Bangladesh detained 36 Rohingya refugees, including women and children, while they were trying to enter Bangladesh via a trawler at Sabrang Mundardail in Teknaf. They were later sent back to Myanmar.

Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sheikh Ehsan Uddin said efforts are underway to gather more information about the rescued Rohingya refugees.

He added that law enforcement agencies have been directed to work together to prevent the illegal entry of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh.

HMPV-infected

FROM PAGE 12

Rahman, special assistant at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said based on scientific research so far, deaths caused by the HMPV are extremely rare.

He said the deceased patient was initially affected by Klebsiella pneumonia and subsequently suffered multi-organ failure, which led to her death. She had underlying conditions, obesity and thyroid dysfunction.

He further emphasized that this virus typically does not cause death. Individuals suffering from the flu should avoid public gatherings and wear masks.

The symptoms of this virus resemble those of seasonal flu, including cold, cough, body aches, and a runny nose. There is no significant difference between this virus and regular flu, he said.

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

Infections are most common during late winter and spring, and symptoms range from mild cold-like illness to severe respiratory conditions, such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

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 the IEDCR.

Complaint filed with ICT

FROM PAGE 12

because the law and order situation was very poor at the time. We have found a video clip showing how Mugdho was killed by the police. Now we hope for justice."

"There was a debate about who fired at Mugdho. We have collected some evidence, including CCTV footage of the killing scene, and we are now certain that Mugdho was shot dead by the police," said Mugdho's another brother Snigdho.

Expressing frustration over the officer in charge of Uttara East Police Station fleeing, Dipto, said, "We know that a few days ago, the officer-in-charge of the East Police Station escaped. It was absurd. We can easily understand that he was allowed to go by someone."

On July 18, Mugdho, 25, was seen distributing water to protesters after law enforcement fired teargas to disperse them in Azampur, Uttara.

In a video shared on social media by his twin brother, Snigdho, Mugdho was seen helping the demonstrators moments before his death.

Speaking to journalists, Hasanul said, "On the night of December 13, 2013, around 12:30am, Fazey Ahmed was taken to the rooftop of his house, assaulted, shot, and thrown off, leading to his death."

Yunus to fly to Switzerland

FROM PAGE 12

geopolitics and ways forward to improving peoples' lives.

TRUMP'S OATH-TAKING Spokesperson Rafiqul said following the tradition, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US, Asad Alam Siam, will attend President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20.

"There is a tradition and as per the tradition, this time too, foreign mission heads in the US have been invited. We have a note verbal on it," he said.

In another development, Rafiqul said the government has sent the information sought by the UN Fact-Finding Mission to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"We were waiting for the information from the home ministry. We have received the information and sent it to the UN."

Earlier there was a report that the home ministry was delaying in providing information as required by the UN Fact-Finding Mission, which was probing the human rights

pierced through his right ear after law enforcement opened fire. He was already dead when his friends took him to Crescent Hospital. Mugdho was a master's student at the Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

HASINA SUED AT ICT

Another complaint was lodged with the ICT yesterday against 41 people, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, over the murder of Fazey Ahmed, ex-nayeb-e-ameer of Lakshmipur Jamaat-e-Islami, in 2013.

Hasanul Banna, the victim's son, filed the complaint with the office of the chief prosecutor of the tribunal.

The complaint accused Hasina, former home minister Muhibuddin Khan Alamgir, PM's defence adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former additional director general of Rab Ziaul Ahsan, former CEO of Rab II Tarek Sayeed Mohammad, and 36 others over the killing.

Speaking to journalists, Hasanul said, "On the night of December 13, 2013, around 12:30am, Fazey Ahmed was taken to the rooftop of his house, assaulted, shot, and thrown off, leading to his death."

violations during the July uprising.

The spokesperson said he had no idea when the UN mission would complete the report and make it public.

Asked if the government would review the agreements or MoUs signed with India over the last 15 years, he said the ministries that inked the deals may do it if they need to.

Anyone could see those uploaded in the Indian external affairs ministry's website, he said while responding to a query about why the deals are not made public.

Asked why Bangladesh foreign ministry does not upload those, he said, "You may say it is for bureaucratic complexity."

Rafiqul said so far 13 people injured during the uprising have been sent abroad for better treatment and two of them returned home after receiving treatment.

He added that the government has no information on what status former prime minister Sheikh Hasina is staying in India.

PORI MONI'S Tollywood debut today

Bangladeshi actress Pori Moni makes her Kolkata debut today with the release of *Felu Bakshi*, directed by Debraj Sinha. She stars as Labanya in this thriller alongside Soham Chakraborty and Madhumita Sarker. Due to visa issues, Pori Moni could not join the film's promotions in India.

In a statement, Pori Moni expressed her confidence in the role: "I felt I could portray the character well. How well I portrayed the character is for the audience to decide."

The film follows Soham Chakraborty's character, *Felu Bakshi*, a tech-savvy Bengali detective with a passion for food and mystery-solving, as he navigates a case centred around Labanya.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

138th WFMP: 'The British Comedy Show'

The Dhaka University Film Society, in collaboration with the British Council, presents the 138th edition of the World Film Manifestation Program (WFMP), titled *The British Comedy Show*. This event offers audiences a tribute to British comedy with screenings of six classic films over two days at the British Council Bangladesh.

DATE: SUNDAY-MONDAY | JANUARY 19-20

TIME: 11 AM-7 PM

VENUE: BRITISH COUNCIL BANGLADESH



Saif Ali Khan stabbed multiple times, under observation in ICU



Indian actor Saif Ali Khan is recovering in Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital after being stabbed at his West Bandra residence on Thursday morning. Unidentified assailants broke into his home, stabbing him multiple times, causing serious injuries to his neck and spine.

Khan underwent surgery and is now in stable condition, though he remains under close observation in the ICU. Police have launched an investigation, with officials confirming the intruder remains unidentified. Saif's PR team confirmed that his surgery was successful, and doctors are optimistic about his recovery. The actor's family, who were present during the attack, are safe, according to police reports.

Govt to retract VAT decisions

FROM PAGE 1

The previous VAT and SD rates will be restored for many of the goods and services, The Daily Star has learnt from NBR officials involved with the proceedings.

On January 13, 2008, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against him.

On August 6, 2014, Babar was indicted in a case filed against him for dodging Tk 2.65 crore income tax between the 1999-2000 and 2008-09 fiscal years. The case is now pending with the Special Judge's Court 5 of Dhaka.

On October 10, 2018, Babar was given the death penalty in the August 21 grenade attack cases filed in 2004.

On January 30, 2014, Babar was sentenced to death in connection with two cases filed over the 10-truck arms cases.

On October 4, 2007, the ACC filed a bribery case involving the murder of Bashundhara Group Director Humayun Kabir Sabir, accusing six people, including Babar.

The case is now pending with the Special Judge's Court 3 in Dhaka.

Babar is also an accused in four cases filed for the murder of former finance minister Shah AMS Kabir and the murder attempt on former minister Suranjan Sen Gupta in Sylhet.

Only 3- to 5-star hotels will remain under the 15 percent VAT rate as they claim the input tax credit.

"We will issue an order in this regard soon," he said.

The move follows mounting pressure from restaurant owners, who had threatened to strike indefinitely in response to the increased VAT.

As part of their protests, a group of people yesterday thronged in front of the NBR headquarters in Agargaon and demanded a rollback to the previous VAT rate.

The VAT on own brand clothes will be brought down to 10 percent from the existing 15 percent. Earlier, the VAT on own-brand garment outlets was 7.5 percent.

Considering the high inflation, VAT on the garment sector has been reduced slightly, an NBR official said.

Meanwhile, the NBR is likely to reduce the VAT rate on sweet shops to 10 percent. It was earlier increased from 7.5 percent to 15 percent.

In addition, the VAT rate on non-AC hotels is likely to be reduced from 15 percent to 10 percent. It was 7.5 percent earlier.

The NBR yesterday exempted the VAT on e-books to lower costs for students, said Md Bodruzzaman Munshi, second secretary for VAT policy at the NBR.

The decision is expected to ease the financial burden on students

and promote access to educational resources, Munshi said.

Previously, students had to pay 15 percent VAT at the import stage and 5 percent at the local stage.

Meanwhile, Finance Advisor Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday defended the VAT price hike when accosted by reporters after a meeting of the advisory council committee on government procurement at the secretariat.

"We have increased the prices of a few items through VAT. How many phone sets and foreign fruit juices do people buy? Why should we reduce VAT on imported fruit juices?"

He said he does not think that the prices of goods will increase only because of the additional VAT.

"Today, we reviewed the impact of medicines, clothing and other daily necessities on the common people. You will know later. And the price impact in some places may have been due to VAT. It was also due to the supply system. There is manipulation."

Asked what happened at the governor's retreat of the Islamic Development Bank that Salehuddin attended in Saudi Arabia this week, he said: "The organisation gives us a huge amount of money, especially for gas and fuel oil. This time, we have requested money to pay for fertiliser as well and they have agreed to do so."

UK Tory leader acknowledges party's 'mistakes'

AFP, London

UK opposition leader Kemi Badenoch yesterday vowed to rebuild public trust in her Conservative party following its historic general election defeat to Labour last year.

Britons booted the Tories from power in July after 14 consecutive years in government dominated by austerity, Brexit, a cost-of-living crisis and bitter factional infighting.

"I will acknowledge the Conservative Party made mistakes," the 45-year-old said in pre-released extracts of a speech, pledging to tell "the truth, even when it's difficult to hear".

INTERNATIONAL

What are the details of truce deal in Gaza?

AFP, Doha

PRISONER HOSTAGE SWAP

Qatar said Wednesday that Israel and Hamas had agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza starting on Sunday and a hostage and prisoner exchange after 15 months of offensive.

Thirty-three Israeli hostages will be released in the first, 42-day phase of the agreement that could become a "permanent ceasefire", said Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

Those first released would be "civilian women and female recruits, as well as children, elderly people... civilian ill people and wounded", he said.

Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said on Tuesday Israel was "prepared to pay a heavy price -- in the hundreds" in exchange for the 33 hostages.

ISRAELI POSITIONS IN GAZA

During the initial, 42-day ceasefire Israeli forces will withdraw from Gaza's densely populated areas to "allow for the swap of prisoners, as well as the swap of remains and the return of the displaced people", Qatar's prime minister said.

Negotiations for a second phase would commence on the "16th day" after the first phase's implementation, an Israeli official said. This phase would cover the release of the remaining captives, including "male soldiers, men of military age, and the bodies of slain hostages", the Times of Israel reported.

Israeli media reported that under the deal, Israel would maintain a buffer zone within Gaza during the first phase.

Israeli forces were expected to remain up to "800 metres (yards) inside Gaza stretching from Rafah in the south to Beit Hanun in the north," according to a source close to Hamas. Israeli forces would not fully withdraw from Gaza until "all hostages are returned", the Israeli official said.

END TO THE OFFENSIVE

Joint mediators Qatar, the United States and Egypt will monitor the ceasefire deal through a body based in Cairo, Sheikh Mohammed said, urging "calm" in Gaza before the agreement comes into force.

There was "a clear mechanism to negotiate phase two and three", Sheikh Mohammed added.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer stands with Ukrainian officials as he examines the wreckage of a vehicle along a street in Kyiv yesterday. Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a landmark 100-year partnership agreement to deepen security ties and strengthen their countries' relationship.

PHOTO: AFP

'An earthquake struck'

Say Palestinians as air strikes in Gaza crush joy of ceasefire deal

AFP, Gaza City

After news of a ceasefire agreement sparked mass rejoicing in Gaza, residents woke up yesterday to columns of smoke, rubble and more deaths following new Israeli air strikes.

"We were waiting for the truce and were happy. It was the happiest night since October 7," said Gaza resident Saeed Alouloush, referring to the Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the war in 2023.

"Suddenly... we received the news of the martyrdom of 40 people," including his uncle, Alouloush said. "The whole area's joy turned to sadness, as if an earthquake struck."

The latest strikes came after Qatar and the United States announced a fragile ceasefire deal that should take effect on Sunday.

AFP has contacted the Israeli military for comment.

Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, told AFP yesterday that at least 73 people had been killed in Israeli air strikes since the announcement on Wednesday.

Among them were 20 children and 25 women, he said, with around 200 others wounded.

As day broke, crowds gathered to inspect and clear the remains of a building reduced to rubble, where chunks of concrete lay interspersed with rebar and personal items scattered across the site.

The scenes mirrored those in other parts of the densely populated territory of 2.4 million people, most of whom have been displaced at least once since the offensive broke out in October 2023.

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, AFP journalists saw stained metal mortuary stretchers stained in red as staff drained them of the blood of the dead in a strike.

In Gaza City's Al-Ahli hospital, where several strike casualties were taken, grieving families knelt by the white shrouds enveloping their loved ones' bodies.

Rescuer Ibrahim Abu al-Rish told AFP that "after the ceasefire was announced and people were happy and joyful, a five-storey building was targeted, with over 50 people inside".



HRW warns 'fraying' rights system faces new Trump threat

AFP, United Nations

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday blasted the "craven unwillingness" of governments to defend international norms and institutions last year, while warning that Donald Trump's return to power will compound pressure on the world's "fraying" rights system.

From Gaza to Sudan, Haiti and Ukraine – 2024 saw rights violations "at the most extreme," HRW chief Tirana Hassan told AFP in an interview.

Worldwide elections and deadly conflicts over the past year challenged

the "integrity of democratic institutions and the principles of human rights and humanitarian law" – but many governments "have failed the test," the 500-page document said.

It noted mounting repression in Russia, India and Venezuela as well as continuing devastation from the wars in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine.

These conflicts and other humanitarian crises, marked by the "craven unwillingness of many governments to stand up to suffering and abuse," exposed the "fraying of international norms meant to

protect civilians and the devastating human cost when they are flouted," according to the report.

It called out authoritarian governments – including in Russia and Mali – for violating democratic norms, while also slamming liberal democracies, saying they were "not always reliable champions of human rights at home or abroad."

Hassan pointed to US President Joe Biden continuing to provide Israel with weapons, despite mounting evidence they have "been used in the commission of war crimes and the killing of civilians" in Gaza.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7, 1971 speech, his declaration of independence, and the proclamation of independence, which were included in the 5th, 6th, and 7th schedules, respectively.

He said these must remain parts of the constitution.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, said the government would discuss the recommendations with political parties to reach a consensus.

"After thoroughly analysing the proposals, we will provide our opinions to the government," he said, declining to comment further.

When contacted, three standing committee members of the BNP declined to comment before discussing the proposals within their party forum.

"We will clarify our position on the proposals of the Constitution Reform Commission after holding discussions in our party forum," Iqbal Hossain Mahmood Tuku, one of the three, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar also told this newspaper they would not comment on the proposals before discussing these within their party forum.

He said the Jamaat had requested the BNP to hold discussions on the proposals with political parties and stakeholders, and they would provide their opinions during the talks.

Nasiruddin Patwary, convener of the Jatiya Nagarik Committee, said that his organisation would refrain from commenting until the full proposals of the commission were released.

"We will provide our formal opinions through a press release once the commission submits its complete report," he told the newspaper.

Saiful criticised the recommendation to exclude

UK hospital standards 'collapse'

Says report as patients dying in corridors

AFP, London

UK patients are "coming to harm" with hospitals so overwhelmed people are dying in corridors awaiting treatment amid a "collapse in care standards", a report said yesterday.

In the latest indictment of Britain's beleaguered state-funded National Health Service, nine in 10 NHS nurses surveyed by the country's nurses union said "patient safety is being compromised".

Nearly seven in 10 (66.8 percent) said they were delivering care in "overcrowded or unsuitable places" on a "daily basis", including in corridors, converted cupboards, car parks and even bereavement rooms.

"The experiences of over 5,000 nursing staff across the UK highlight a devastating collapse in care standards, with patients routinely coming to harm," said the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

The report condemned the "normalisation" of so-called "corridor care", with nurses unable to access life-saving equipment in cramped spaces. One nurse in east England said corridor care in their hospital trust was "not an exception, it's the rule".

Last month, some 54,000 patients in emergency departments in England had to wait over 12 hours until a hospital bed was available, up 23 percent from December 2023.

The report is a result of a Royal College of Nursing request at the end of December, asking members to fill out a short survey.

The report includes "the heart-breaking comments" of the thousands of nursing staff working across the UK, the RCN said.

DHAKA FRIDAY JANUARY 17, 2025

MAGH 3, 1431 BS

The Daily Star

7

Fire-wrecked Los Angeles gets a break as winds drop

Threat of blazes remain as dry condition persists

AFP, Los Angeles

Fire-wrecked Los Angeles got a break late on Wednesday as dangerous winds dropped, giving hope to weary firefighters still battling to snuff out deadly blazes.

More than a week after fires fanned by hurricane-force gusts began a destructive march that has left two dozen people dead and large areas of the city in ruins, forecasters said the end was in sight – at least for now.

Onshore breezes were set to bring much-needed moisture over the coming days, forecasters at the National Weather Service told AFP.

There will be "a big improvement for tonight and tomorrow, though there'll still be some lingering areas of concern," Ryan Kittell of the National Weather Service told AFP, though he warned there was another possibly perilous dry system in the offing early next week.

The Palisades fire, which together have scorched more than 40,000 acres (16,000 hectares) were still smoldering Wednesday.

Battalions of firefighters from across the United States, as well as from Mexico, were working to tamp down hotspots that could still flare, Los Angeles City fire chief Kristin Crowley told reporters.

"Infrared flights last night indicated there are still numerous hot spots burning within the fire footprint, and very close attention was paid to address any flare ups swiftly as to prevent any fire spread outside of the perimeter," she said.

With tens of thousands of people still displaced by the fires, life was far from normal in America's second biggest city.

But children whose schools were damaged or are still affected by evacuation orders were welcomed into other institutions.

Stay-at-home mom Caroline Nick took Emery, 11, and Andrew, 7, to Nora Sterry Elementary on Wednesday after their own school was lost to the blaze.

Nick, whose home was destroyed in the Palisades fire, said the children needed whatever semblance of normality they could get.



AHQ, E IN C'S BRANCH, WORKS DIRECTORATE, DHAKA CANTONMENT

INVITATION FOR RE-TENDERS

Dated: 12 January 2025

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES

1. Sponsoring Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defense				
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services				
3. Procuring Entity Name	E in C				
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka				
5. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
6. Budget and source of Funds	GOB, Development Budget				
7. Development Partners (if applicable)	None				
8. Project /Programme Name (if applicable)	Establishment of 99 Composite Brigade for Safety and Security of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project.				
9. Selling of tender will commence from	21 January 2025 (During Office hour).				
10. Selling of tender will Close on	03 February 2025 (During Office hour).				
11. Last date & time of submission of Tender	04 February 2025 at 1200 hours.				
12. Date & time of opening of Tender	04 February 2025 at 1230 hours.				
13. Name & Address of the Office(s)	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka & AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment				
Selling Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
Receiving Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
Opening Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	<p>a. MES enlisted contractors Class 'B' & 'C' for lot no. 15(a).</p> <p>b. On receipt of DGFI clearance with others Govt. Department (equivalent classes) contractors may also apply for tender.</p> <p>c. Contractors having experience in similar works with enlistment in other Govt., Semi Government & Autonomous Organization may also apply.</p> <p>d. Having experience of similar work mentioned in lot no. 15(a) amounting Tk. 3,75,00,000.00 for each lot in single tender during last 05 (Five) years.</p>				
15. Brief Description of Works					
Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of Tender Document (Non Refundable)	Tender Security in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay order/ Bank Guarantee in favour of AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Canton (Taka)	Completion Time in weeks/ Months
1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Supply & Installation of Water Tender and Hydraulic Scissor Lift including ancillary works for Brigade Headquarter of 99 Composite Brigade under Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project at Sheikh Russel Cantonment, Janzira at Shariatpur	Padma Multipurpose Bridge	8,000.00	15,13,000.00	06 (Six) Months	
16. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
17. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
18. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment.				
19. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Fax No. 9832882, Tel No. 9832870				
20. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders					

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১৬/০১/২৫

BIPUL KUMAR GOON

SE

For Director of Works

Works Directorate

Engineer in Chief's Branch

Dhaka Cantonment

Tel: Mili: 8711111 Ext: 2874

Civil: 9832874

GD-173

A new chapter for the nation

Submission of four commission reports brings momentum in reform process

We welcome the submission of reports by four reform commissions to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on Wednesday, bringing momentum into the interim government's state reform drive as it can now engage with key stakeholders based on the framework provided through these (and other upcoming) reports. As Prof Yunus has aptly called it, this marks the beginning of "a new chapter" for Bangladesh. In the coming days, the proposals submitted by the commissions on constitution, elections, police, and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) are expected to be discussed and debated at length to ensure consensus, with the talks with political parties likely beginning in mid-February. One hopes all this will lead to an outcome desired by citizens by the end of the drive.

The first signs, however, are encouraging, as the four reports propose sweeping changes targeting the systemic flaws that facilitated unchecked executive power, electoral manipulation, and institutional decay. Among the most crucial proposals are those aimed at restructuring the constitution and the electoral system. Expanding people's fundamental rights to include food, clothing, shelter, education, internet, and voting, the Constitution Reform Commission has proposed replacing "nationalism," "socialism," and "secularism" with equality, human dignity, social justice, and pluralism as state principles, with democracy the only core principle retained from the 1972 constitution. Key proposals also include a bicameral parliament, two-term limits for president and prime minister, allowing MPs to vote against party line (except in finance bills), decentralising the judiciary, forming a National Constitutional Council, stronger opposition-led parliamentary oversight, etc.

Meanwhile, the Electoral Reform Commission has recommended significant changes to enhance the Election Commission's powers and ensure its accountability. Key proposals include empowering the EC to suspend elections for up to 90 days with Supreme Court approval, disqualifying individuals accused of serious human rights violations from elections, holding all elections under a caretaker government, requiring political parties to conduct internal elections, banning their student, teacher or labour wings, online voting by expatriates, etc. The reform commission also called for the reintroduction of the "No Vote" option. Similarly, the reports of the commissions on police and ACC lay down pathways to address systemic flaws in these vital institutions and ensure accountability.

At the heart of this process lies a singular goal: to restore democracy in its true form and prevent the return of authoritarianism. The success of these recommendations, therefore, must be measured not by their adoption alone, but by their faithful implementation. If we are to build a future where state power is exercised in service of the people rather than against them, any reforms must be pursued with an unwavering commitment to public interests. This is where the role of political parties—who will be tasked with implementing the reforms after the next elections—becomes crucial. They must credibly demonstrate their commitment to this process, including by undertaking intra-party internal reforms, while citizens too must actively take part in it. Without the collaborative efforts of all, the change sought through the July uprising will remain unfulfilled.

The new Bangladesh must be inclusive

Attack on Indigenous rights activists deeply alarming

We strongly condemn Wednesday's attack on an Indigenous group and its supporters while they were protesting the removal of graffiti from textbooks featuring the word *Adivasi*. The assault, which left at least 20 people injured—including three Indigenous persons in critical condition—goes against the very spirit of the July uprising. We commend all, including student leaders, who unequivocally denounced this act of intolerance.

The incident reportedly occurred when the group "Aggrieved Indigenous Student-Masses" gathered in front of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) office in Motijheel to protest the textbook revision. Meanwhile, the attackers, under the banner of "Students for Sovereignty," had already taken position at the site. At one point, they swooped on the Indigenous group, hitting them with cricket stumps. One student, Rupaiya Shrestha Tanchangya, who had actively participated in the July uprising, was beaten so severely that she later required 12 stitches on her head.

According to a report by *The Daily Star*, the violence could have been prevented had the police acted decisively. An eyewitness told *Prothom Alo* that police neither intervened to protect the Indigenous protesters nor restrained their attackers. However, just a day later, police were rather quick to deploy water cannons and sound grenades against activists marching toward the home ministry to protest Wednesday's attack. This raises the question: does everyone enjoy the same rights in the new Bangladesh?

The NCTB authorities, for instance, pandered to the whim of the "Students for Sovereignty" group when they demonstrated on Sunday for the removal of *Adivasi* graffiti from textbooks, making the change the very next day. They did not even see the need to consult all stakeholders before taking such a decision. Should this be the norm in a country where over 90 percent of the population belongs to the majority ethnic group? Should we not show greater responsibility in including minority voices and ensuring that their rights are protected—rather than deciding for them what they should or should not be called?

The attitude displayed by the attackers and police disturbingly echo the tendencies of the fascist regime which represents of all ethnicities, religions, and genders united to overthrow just months ago. We urge the government to take a firm stance against anyone who fosters division, spreads false narratives against minorities, or violates the rights of others. It must hold Wednesday's attackers accountable, and protect the rights and dignity of ethnic minorities.

EDITORIAL

We never got a chance to reform our state and politics like now



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is the editor and publisher of
The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

This may turn out to be Prof Muhammad Yunus's most lasting legacy. He gave a chance to the poor to break out of the shackles of poverty through microcredit. He is now giving Bangladesh a chance to break out of all its political, governance, and institutional shackles to march forward with democracy, equality, justice, and tolerance. With one stroke, he is literally opening up a rare chance to carry out fundamental reforms in some of the vital areas that we have been unable to do over the last 54 years.

While we congratulate the chief adviser and his team for this grand work, we must not forget to thank the real heroes who opened the door for all these reforms for us: the students, a section of teachers, intellectuals, civil society leaders, a section of the media, and, of course, the general public.

Independence in 1971 gave us the first opportunity to build a democratic and egalitarian state. We got a second chance when Gen HM Ershad fell and democracy was restored after a coordinated mass uprising led by the alliance of political parties. We missed both these opportunities. Now, historically, the students' nation-building role is not new; they played pivotal roles in the Language Movement of 1952, and the democratic and anti-military movements of the Pakistan period in the late 1950s and 1960s. Their role, including that of our rural youth, during our *Muktijuddho*, was the most glorious. They were at the forefront of the anti-Ershad movement in the 1990s, and then the student-led mass movement in July-August 2024 that has given a new opening to build the Bangladesh that was the dream of the Liberation War martyrs.

When Sheikh Hasina fell, instead of going for an immediate election, instituting a self-corrective process was the right—and historic—decision. The idea to form reform commissions was a most appropriate one. The choice of areas to concentrate on were right. The selection of individuals to head the commissions received general acceptability, though the relative absence of a woman head of commission (except one) marked a serious lapse. Finishing the work of four commissions within the stipulated time also testifies to their efficiency and sincerity.

Our initial study of the reports of the four commissions, submitted on January 15, indicates that the recommendations are quite substantive, though some seem based more on emotion than clear judgement.

Recommendations of the Constitution Reform Commission are very significant. We support the introduction of the bicameral system,

limiting the tenure of a prime minister to two terms, introduction of the National Constitutional Council, and reintroduction of the caretaker government system. However, we think holding elections after every four years may be counterproductive as it shortens the tenure of an elected government to implement their plans and projects. Also, elections are a hugely expensive affair and involve massive logistical tasks, which a country like ours may find burdensome.

Reforms of the election system and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) are vital. We want to emphasise police reforms because, of all the state

commissions, and others that are expected to follow, must be subject to a genuine national debate. The first thing that needs to be guaranteed is openness. There should be no name-calling and "tagging" because of the views expressed, which will prevent the type of genuine discussions that we need. The chief adviser has correctly focused on discussions with political parties. We think an additional attempt should be made to engage think tanks, specialised rights groups, religious and ethnic minorities, etc. The media should reach out to its readers and viewers and try to expand both the depth and reach of the discussion.

As for the political parties, they should approach the reform proposals with national interests in mind, and not that of their parties. There is no denying the fact that after the restoration of democracy in 1991, Bangladesh has been ruled by only two parties—the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)—though both had allies while in power. With Sheikh Hasina's fascist rule, we may be tempted to forget that

practically had none till 1991—was the main cause of our failure. The notion that the opposition is considered the "government in waiting" or the "shadow government", and as such commands a place within the power structure, had no place in the thinking process of the treasury bench. On the other side, the opposition thought that making the government dysfunctional by never cooperating with them in parliament was their objective, which terribly weakened the system. Let's not forget the public suffering and damage to the economy that were caused by incessant and irrational hartals.

This newspaper has published dozens of reports, editorials, and op-eds pleading with the ruling party to give due respect and status to the opposition, while begging the opposition not to boycott the House. It was all to no avail. The result was the gradual weakening of the parliament, the parliamentary system, and finally democracy.

While reforms of so many state institutions are under discussion, we cannot miss the fact that we need to



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus with the heads of the four reform commissions that submitted their reports on January 15, 2025.

PHOTO: PID

institutions, the police, in our view, have been maligned and misused the most. A study conducted by the International Truth and Justice Project (ITJP) and Tech Global Institute (TGI), which was released on January 14, showed how our police force was turned into a brutal, inhuman and bloodthirsty force, which proves the urgent need to totally transform the force from an anti-people institution to a pro-people one. The most difficult task will be changing the mindset of the police members. They have been conditioned to hate demonstrators and consider every protester as an "enemy." They have little training on crowd control, except to beat them up or shoot to injure or kill.

All recommendations of the four

BNP ruled us for 10 years since Ershad fell.

The basic mistake made by both AL and BNP during the period of 1991-2006 is that they did not consider the parliament to be the House of the People, but rather as an extension of the ruling party, because the treasury bench had the majority. The fact that even as the minority of few, the parliament offered a much better chance for the opposition to voice dissent. But in our case, the unfortunate trend was to boycott parliament. It would always start with a walkout for hours, followed by boycott for days, then weeks, then months and finally resignation. Our lack of experience in operating within a parliamentary form of constitutional structure—we

reform our political parties too.

Prof Yunus's move to set up a consensus commission is a highly commendable one. Dialogue with all political parties is the way to go forward. However, there is also the critical responsibility of the political parties to take the whole process seriously and honestly. We urge them to bring their concern to the table, argue with facts and logic, but finally come to a consensus. Once we are able to do that, political parties must pledge publicly that whichever party is voted to power by the people will honour their pledge, and through resolutions in the new parliament, they will bring them all into our governance structure through amending both the constitution and the relevant laws.

Remembering Satyendra Nath Bose

Dr Golam Newaz is professor of mechanical engineering at Wayne State University in Michigan, US and fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). Anique Newaz has an MPhil degree in South Asian Studies from the University of Cambridge, UK.

GOLAM NEWAZ and ANIQUE NEWAZ

This month, we remember the great physicist Satyendra Nath Bose, an outstanding academic at Dhaka University (DU) in 1921-1945. Known in Bengal as Satyen Bose, he was born in then Calcutta on January 1, 1894. Bose was hired as a reader in physics in DU's inception year. At that time, he had five journal publications; three of them were in *Philosophical Magazine* published in England, and two were written with Meghnad Saha, his friend and classmate. His most significant contribution to physics was on Planck's radiation formula. His work gave new insight between the old quantum theory of Planck, Einstein, Bohr and Sommerfeld, and the new quantum mechanics of Heisenberg, Dirac and Schrödinger. In June 1924, the first research paper Bose wrote in DU was sent to Albert Einstein, who recognised its merit and translated it into German. The paper was titled, "Planck's Law and the Light Quantum Hypothesis." It was published in the *Zeitschrift für Physik*, the premier journal in physics

in those days. The publication of this paper, which was only four pages long, immediately raised Bose's profile as an international scholar of repute and his association with Einstein remained a beacon of light throughout his life as a physicist. He was only 30 years old when he published this paper.

Meghnad Saha was Bose's good friend. Both attended the Presidency College and graduated together in 1913 and 1915 with BSc in physics and MSc in mixed mathematics from the University of Calcutta. In both examinations, Bose stood first and Saha second, and later they were selected by the University of Calcutta to teach advanced physics courses, a monumental task then as most journals on physics were in German or French. Only the *Philosophical Magazine* was in English. These journals were difficult to obtain in Calcutta. Saha learnt French and German and Bose learnt some German. They struggled to obtain Einstein's papers on Special Theory of Relativity

(1905) and General Theory of Relativity (1916) and translated them from German to English. They managed to publish the translated works and used them to teach advanced physics and other related subjects to postgraduate students in the University of Calcutta.

SN Bose's recruitment at DU was by the institution's first vice-chancellor, PJ Hartog. Hartog wanted to hire faculty members, who had an interest and capability in research to build Dhaka University more than just a teaching institution of higher learning. Bose felt that at the new university, he would be away from the more crowded University of Calcutta and have a "freer" hand to pursue his interests in physics. Hartog ensured support for a study leave that Bose sought, and DU gave him a handsome grant for his study leave to Europe. Special funds were also provided to secure Bose's family needs in Dhaka. Bose visited reputed laboratories in Europe and met many luminaries, including Einstein in Berlin in 1925.

Prior to his return from Europe, a professorship in physics opened up at DU. Bose applied for it. Einstein wrote him a recommendation letter, so did Prof Sylvain Levy from France. Bose did not have a PhD, so Dr DM Bose from the University of Calcutta was offered the position. When he declined,

SN Bose was offered the position. He led the Department of Physics as a professor and chair from 1927. He also served as the dean of the Faculty of Science in the 1930s. He provided leadership in the foundational years to develop the physics department at DU into a strong research department and to organise the science faculty into an admirable branch of the university. Curzon Hall became the epicentre of research at DU. In 1945, prior to the 1947 Partition, he left Dhaka and took up the Khaira Professorship at the University of Calcutta and retired in 1956. He passed away in Calcutta in 1974.

The paper Bose had sent to Einstein in 1924 provided the basic framework for the existence of Bose-Einstein condensate. The experimental verification came much later in 1995 in laboratories in the US. American physicists Eric Cornell, Wolfgang Ketterle and Carl Wieman were awarded the Nobel Prize in 2001 for proving the existence of the Bose-Einstein condensate. Bose leaves a remarkable legacy in quantum physics for his work at DU. In November this year, Dhaka University organised a three-day international conference on Bose-Einstein statistics to celebrate 100 years of his achievement and legacy.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE DEAL

Can life start again in Gaza?



Yousef Sy Ramadan
is the ambassador of Palestine to Bangladesh.

YOUSEF SY RAMADAN

After 467 days of massacre committed by the occupationist state of Israel—under the leadership of the fascist Benjamin Netanyahu—the people of Gaza can now dream of waking up to sounds and smells different from what they have been accustomed to: bombs, drones, gunpowder, and corpses. On January 15, Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire deal that had been on the table since May last year. The next day, however, the Israeli cabinet delayed voting on the deal, accusing Hamas of backtracking although Hamas had accepted the agreement that was announced. It was expected that the deal would come into effect on Sunday, but the cost of the latest delay only means that more Palestinian lives will be lost, as it has been for each and every day that Netanyahu decided to pull out of ceasefire agreements.

Previously, the Biden administration seemed reluctant to apply enough pressure. The answer to the questions "Why now?" and "Why not months ago?" lie in the change of leadership in the US, in my opinion. In December, President-elect Donald Trump warned that if Israeli hostages in Gaza were not released, "it will not be good for Hamas and it will not be good, frankly, for anyone. All hell will break out." As I see it, this could not have been done by the outgoing President Joe Biden, as it long eluded his administration. President-elect Trump shares a friendship with Netanyahu, who reveres him. I suspect the delay from Netanyahu's side could also be until Trump takes office on January 20, so his resume will have the ceasefire written on it

changed, and it may serve Netanyahu more to accept the deal this time than to reject it. And there could be two reasons for it. First, a trade-off could have been offered, which could possibly be related to the annexation in the West Bank that Trump supported during his first term. The other possibility could be that Trump asserted that this war

and starving its residents to death. The truth is he did not even achieve partial victory. He failed to eliminate Hamas, he failed to free the hostages, and he failed to undermine the resilience of Palestinians.

The ceasefire deal agreed upon also includes exchange of hostages, including Palestinian hostages held in Israeli prisons, and withdrawal

the success of the deal, though his incoming administration is filled with staunch pro-Israel figures.

But, say, the deal endures, then what awaits the day after the war ends? For Netanyahu, he must face the arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for heinous war crimes. He will have to face the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians, and most importantly, the abject failure to protect Israel's security on October 7, 2023. Israel as a state will have to reckon with genocide committed by its people, and the utter dehumanisation of Palestinians.

For Palestinians in Gaza, the ceasefire deal brings cautious optimism. As it was announced, the people of Gaza celebrated—an unusual sight in the rubble-filled strip. Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Deir-Al-Balah in Central Gaza, said, "For a couple of hours, people turned this whole area into a stage of celebration, something we are not used to seeing here as the area used to be a stage for funerals for the victims of war and a space filled with agony and sadness." Till the deal comes into effect, Israel will continue to commit massive atrocities, ending lives of innocent people as a reward for Netanyahu's hardline government, which believes a ceasefire to end mass suffering is akin to "surrender." Only when the ceasefire deal will go into effect will there be a sliver of hope that life can start again in the devastated Gaza Strip. But the ceasefire must not be conflated with liberation of the Palestinian people. The life that Palestinians have lived in an "open air prison" in Gaza is one of endless pain and violence committed against them by Israel. The life the whole generation of orphaned children will now live, after the genocide, is one scarred with bloodshed, trauma, and the battle to access basic human rights.

For the Palestinians, we must first be united as one, share our dreams, work together to achieve the hopes of our people, and not allow foreign interference that tries to impose on us solutions that do not meet our ambitions to fully recover our rights. Above all, we must stand by our brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip to provide them with all the material and moral support we can, to alleviate their suffering and heal their wounds. Families have been wiped out, lives have been uprooted, and for those who survived, their hearts have been permanently broken.

Liberation of Palestinians will only happen the day we have the right to self-determination, the day we are treated as human beings with the right to live the way we want. As Palestinians were killed in their homes, the US and Israel, the perpetrators, talked about who would run the strip. The Biden administration has, for months, been trying to form an international security force that would work alongside an interim Palestinian administration to deal with civilian affairs. The US and Israel do not have the right to determine "who will run the strip." The day the world understands what's wrong with that criminal school of thought, we can start thinking about Palestinian liberation. But the resilience and movements around the world must continue for us to achieve our freedom.

Palestinian lives remain on the line till the ceasefire comes into effect, and rebuilding Gaza will be a task too difficult to put into words. There are many lessons Palestinians have learnt from this war, and things have forever changed after the most brutal war in our history. The world must reflect on the past 15 months of a horrendous genocide that happened in front of our eyes, on our screens, with the support of the powers that be. We must reflect on the biggest failure of humanity in modern times. At the same time, we Palestinians must also thank all those who have stood by our people and provided support in all its forms, most notably the people of Bangladesh.



People celebrate in central Gaza on January 15, 2025 as news spread that a ceasefire deal had been reached between Israel and Hamas, aimed at ending more than 15 months of war and genocide.

PHOTO: AFP

instead of Biden's.

Netanyahu's extremist cabinet has been against this deal; far-right ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich have publicly ranted about how awful the deal is. Now, why would Netanyahu agree on a ceasefire that would cause division in his coalition? (When Ben-Gvir says he will bring down the "government," it essentially means he will quit the coalition.) The political calculus seems to have

was no longer in the best interest of the US, but since he is unpredictable and reactive, Netanyahu, who faces criminal charges but wants to stay in power, would not risk going against the assertive incoming president.

In the end, Netanyahu did not achieve the "absolute victory" he spoke about, unless victory for him means the killing of thousands of children, women and men, destroying more than three quarters of Gaza. The hope lies in Trump's ability to ensure

of Israeli forces from Gaza in the first phase, which Netanyahu was opposed to. More importantly, the second phase of the deal promises "a permanent end to the war." There remains possibilities that this could be a temporary respite for the citizens of Gaza, and Netanyahu's commitment to the deal will face its biggest test in the second phase. The hope lies in Trump's ability to ensure

For the Palestinians, we must first be united as one, share our dreams,

Understanding the rising concern of HMPV



MUSHTUQ HUSAIN
is former principal scientific officer of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

Over the past few weeks, there have been anxious discussions about human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in several countries, including Bangladesh. Hospitals in China, where the ongoing spread has originated, have been alerted as an increasing number of people have become infected with this virus. This has led to speculations about the possibility of a new pandemic. Although this virus is not new to Bangladesh or the world, the concerns have not subsided.

A closer look at HMPV
Viruses capable of causing infections can emerge in various ways. To survive, a virus can mutate. When these mutations become extensive, the virus can appear in a new form. A virus may alter its structure to infect humans and gain the ability to cause disease. Animal-borne viruses can mutate to infect humans. Additionally, new viruses can emerge from the combination of viruses from animals, birds, and humans.

HMPV was first identified in the

Netherlands in 2001. Bangladeshi scientists detected the virus in the country soon after. This virus has existed in the world before and is believed to date back to the 1950s. The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has been monitoring this virus as part of its respiratory virus surveillance programme since 2017. Since the latest bout started, one HMPV-infected patient with other complications died in Dhaka on January 16.

Like other respiratory viruses such as influenza, RSV, and COVID, HMPV spreads through sneezing and coughing. If a person comes into contact with clothing or any objects contaminated with an infected person's sneeze or cough or touches their nose or mouth after shaking hands or hugging the infected person, they can contract HMPV. This disease has a history of spreading through contact with infected individuals and their respiratory droplets.

Scientists have classified various forms of this virus. However, it is



HMPV was first identified in the Netherlands in 2001.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

still unknown whether HMPV has undergone significant changes or mutations. So far, this virus is not capable of causing severe illness in humans, and the death rate is very low. However, since it can spread from person to person, it needs to be constantly monitored.

Symptoms and potential hosts
The symptoms of HMPV infection are similar to those of the influenza

virus. An HMPV-infected person may experience fever, sneezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and sore throat. In some cases, the disease may become more severe, leading to pneumonia.

Those at a higher risk include individuals with a weakened immune system, such as children and elderly people over 60 years old, individuals with chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, or those

requiring kidney dialysis, as well as people with asthma, compromised immune systems due to medication, and pregnant women.

Treatment and prevention
There is no direct antiviral medication for treating HMPV. In this case, symptomatic treatment is provided. Additionally, ensuring proper care for the patient is essential. This virus

typically resolves on its own within 7-10 days without any medication. However, precautions should be taken to ensure that the illness does not become severe for other reasons.

HMPV has not yet reached a state where it could create a situation similar to the COVID pandemic. However, the more the disease spreads, the greater the risk that this virus could develop the ability to cause severe illness. On the other hand, it may also weaken.

HMPV prevention should be approached in the same way as preventing other respiratory diseases. Some key measures to tackle it include regularly washing hands with soap at intervals, covering our nose and mouth with a tissue, cloth or elbow when sneezing or coughing, and maintaining distance from infected individuals. Moreover, infected individuals should wear mask, and those in close proximity to them should also use masks. If a patient has a fever, they should rest. If symptoms do not subside after three or four days, similar to other viral fevers, medical advice should be sought.

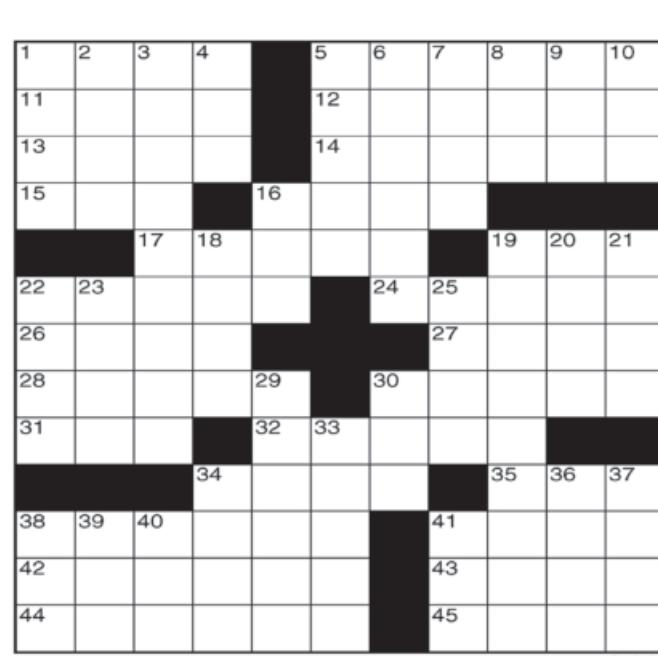
If a large number of patients exceeds hospital capacity, it is considered an emergency public health situation. Therefore, it is crucial to monitor whether the number of HMPV infections is increasing and to ensure that hospitals, laboratories, and epidemiological institutions remain vigilant and prepared to handle any emergency situations.

ACROSS

- 1 Wanes
- 5 Try to win
- 11 Enthusiasm
- 12 Shrewd
- 13 Risqué
- 14 Right away
- 15 Bible boat
- 16 Singer Baez
- 17 Left over
- 19 Used to be
- 22 Loser to Truman
- 24 River through Nantes
- 26 Way to go
- 27 Pants part
- 28 "Olympia" painter
- 30 Heart, for one
- 31 Texting letters of shock
- 32 Young pigeon
- 33 Close
- 35 Vacuum's lack
- 38 Perfect place
- 41 Realty unit
- 42 Job ad datum
- 43 Tattoo site
- 44 FBI employees
- 45 "You there!"

DOWN

- 1 Poet Pound
- 2 Yellowstone animal
- 3 Start of a golf stroke
- 4 Crafty
- 5 Mist
- 6 Lebanon neighbor
- 7 School on the Thames
- 8 Merriment
- 9 Mel of the Giants
- 10 Old auto
- 16 Crested bird
- 18 Singer Seeger
- 19 Some offensive players
- 20 Open space
- 21 Glimpsed
- 22 Band sample
- 23 Midterm, for one
- 25 Gumbo veggie
- 29 Casual top
- 30 Unconscious
- 33 Wharves
- 34 Reach across
- 36 Fancy flower
- 37 Budget amount
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- 39 Price setting
- 40 Bullfight cheer
- 41 Nile serpent



TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

L	U	S	T		A	L	T	A	R
A	N	T	E	S	C	A	R	L	A
S	P	A	N	I	S	H	M	A	I
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ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Shards of clarity

Review of 'What Kingdom' by Fine Gråbøl
(Archipelago Books, 2024)

Gråbøl makes the text shift from foggy recollections to instances of stark clarity in these scenes. In Aitken's translation, the second person point of view places the reader in the body experiencing this dissociation.

SARAH ANJUM BARI

Trigger Warning: Mental illness, self-abuse, suicide

Beginning to read Fine Gråbøl's *What Kingdom*, translated from the Danish by Martin Aitken, is like sitting in a silent room, alone, and a voice begins to speak as though from beside you. "Of all the hours of day and night I like the earliest morning best." With that, Gråbøl's nameless narrator introduces you to the space of the text. This space is both her mind, which feels the need to arrange its thoughts in rows, where at night these thoughts "tumble like gulls around stale bread in a greasy town", and this space is the institution in which she resides as a young person in need of psychiatric care in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The novel begins in media res and strikes up an immediate intimacy with the reader. It takes you on a tour of "Sweet Corridor's" characters and rituals. Sara, Lasse, Hector, and Marie are the narrator's neighbours on this building's fifth floor, where young adults ages 18-30 temporarily live. The facility itself is a state sponsored residence, once an old people's home and now "a kind of exploration into having a home" for individuals

suffering from psychiatric disorders who need round the clock support. Through the narrator's blinking, roving gaze, we learn about the floors below them which are similarly designed, but where the residents are permanent and where Waheed blares 50 Cent through the night. We learn to see the *Lord of the Rings* poster in the young people's corridor and the furniture that populates their rooms. We step into the rhythms of their coffee making and meal making, their sleepless nights and often difficult days, their relationships with the pedagogues on duty by day, who are different from those on duty by night. "I know what's going to happen today; the birds know. I know what's going to happen today; the treetops know, they receive the wind. No disruption in the movements of the leaves. No disruption in my hand's collusion with the mug. No disruption in the relationship of my skin to the surroundings; my nails know, and the clouds."

It feels as though the sentence itself

will slip through the cracks in these

sections, if the narrator doesn't cram

them enough with the solidity of

facts. Sensory observations, thoughts

made tangible and lined into rows,

scaffold the narrator's grasp at stability

throughout the book. By the end of the first section, titled "Sweet Corridor Law", the reader has glimpsed enough into the patterns of their days to feel initiated into the residents' existence here. But it's a gaze through cracked glass, each scene, each episode shuttling into and out of clarity within the space of one to two pages, made up not so much by patterns as arbitrary rituals that make up their own internal rhythm. Some of these episodes gleam quietly into focus through one solitary sentence on a page.

While this effect continues

throughout the novel, the text

modulates tone and psychological

clarity. On a larger, architectural

level, the airiness of "Sweet Corridor

Law" gives way to what feels like a

more constricted second section.

"Containment" seats the reader in

longer drawn moments of upheaval.

Often, we arrive at the scene after the

fact. After what sounds like a suicide

attempt by the narrator. After she has

poured boiling water on herself. Before,

and then after, she has crumpled

against an unwanted announcement

from the staff. The 'I' appears and

reappears in this section, drawing us

into realisations of hazy candour. "I get

to my feet, something wants out of my

chest, my stomach's a warm belt," the narrator shares. "I own only the illness inside me, but the rest is something they take away."

Gråbøl makes the text shift from foggy recollections to instances of stark clarity in these scenes. In Aitken's translation, the second person point of view places the reader in the body experiencing this dissociation. But in her more lucid moments, it's a third person point of view that allows a wryness to creep into the narrator's tone, as she dissects the language and protocol surrounding institutions such as the one she inhabits. "It's not just up to the contact person when a new relationship needs to be established, it's up to the residents too," she writes. "The difference is that one of them gets acknowledged for the work they put in, the other doesn't." Or, in an even more powerful pronouncement: "They call containment of the emotional register treatment."

*
Fine Gråbøl was a poet before publishing this debut novel. The signs are there in the book's sharply crafted sentences. A musicality, an attention to imagery and rhythm. But, in Aitken's English translation, these qualities do more than draw attention to pretty prose. As a reader you feel like you're being guided by an intelligent mind, by a narrator who reads deep into the people and spaces around her. Whose inner language leans towards the poetic when she's trying to find comfort in sensory detail, who swivels between the I, the you, and the we to draw the reader near and far depending on how much she's able to share. And whose acute observations of her circumstances unpack for us the gendered and capitalistic language through which their experiences under the Danish welfare system are straitjacketed.

Of the imbalances in the system, Gråbøl's narrator draws our attention to the precariousness of her and her neighbours' relationship with those looking after them. It's a connection based on a one-way stream of trust and forthrightness. The inhabitants must share their secrets, reveal themselves at their most vulnerable in order to receive effective care. But they must remember not to become emotionally attached with these people who are, ultimately, doing their jobs by offering this support, who owe the inhabitants no details of their own lives in response.

Whose availability may shift, and even stop, depending on their employers' policies. In one of her most poignant monologues in the text, the narrator admits that in her most recent stay at the hospital, she wore only the scrubs she was provided—an emotional guard against giving in to the delusion that a hospital can ever become home, however long or frequently you might stay there; that its blurring of time can ever make it anything more than a thing to be borne.

*
A movie that the narrator and her co-residents watch at the facility, often, is *Girl, Interrupted*, which is adapted from Susanna Kaysen's 1993 memoir about the author's stay in an American

psychiatric hospital when she was experiencing a borderline personality disorder. In the 1999 adaptation starring Winona Ryder and Angelina Jolie, Dr Wick, the head psychiatrist, echoes a question originally raised by Hercules in Seneca's tragedy, *Hercules Furens*.

"What place is this, what region, what quarter of the world? Where am I? Under the rising of the sun or beneath the wheeling course of the frozen bear?" Hercules wonders upon returning to a life from which he feels estranged. Dr Wick, in *Girl, Interrupted*, points out a similar crossroads facing the character of Susanna in the movie. "What world is this?" he repeats Hercules' lines, "What kingdom? What shores of what worlds?...How much will you indulge in your flaws? What are your flaws? Are they flaws? If you embrace them, will you commit yourself to hospital...for life? Big questions, big decisions!"

What Kingdom borrows its title from this palimpsest of questions, but the scene itself is given a fleeting reference in Gråbøl's novel. It's another scene from *Girl, Interrupted* that carries more weight for the facility's residents. Just before 'Sweet Corridor Law' ends, as Sara and the narrator sit watching the movie on a Friday film night, Sara shares that her favourite scene is when the girls abscond from the institution. The film should stop right there, she declares, on that note of agency taken up by characters who have been suffering psychological instability.

This is the project of Gråbøl's novel. As "Secrets", the book's last section, creeps in, Gråbøl's narrator switches to a playful, whispered 'we'. The text takes on an air of clandestine rituals being revealed—how Sara massages hair dye, a vivid red, into Marie's hair; how Lars and the narrator perform "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" to a lawn of dancing onlookers; how the residents decide to jostle the rules put in place to protect them.

As the book reaches this revelrous fever pitch, *What Kingdom* makes a final flourish in the point it has been trying to make. Stories about neurodivergence and psychological disorders can be told without decentering those who experience it. They can be told with agency given to those whose stories they are, and this can make for fascinating craft choices in a text. As a reader, I wasn't propelled through this book because it was trying to demystify—and therefore exoticise—mental health issues. I was immersed in its voice, in its perception of space and bodily experience, and I trusted that voice to give me as deep or distant a glimpse into her experiences as she herself would choose.

Sarah Anjum Bari is a writer and editor pursuing an MFA in the Nonfiction Writing Program at the University of Iowa, where she also teaches literary publishing. Her essay, "Strains", was shortlisted for the 2024 Queen Mary Wasafiri New Writing Prize. Reach her at sarah.anjum.bari@gmail.com or at [@wordsinticalon](https://www.wordsinticalon.com).

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Accounts of a joyless life

A review of 'Set My Heart on Fire' (Verso, 2024) by Izumi Suzuki

SHAHRIAR SHAAMS

Izumi Suzuki was little known outside of Japan during her short lifetime. The Japanese author and actress had remained a cult figure most of her life. Only by chance, we are told, the editors at Verso had discovered her—from a footnote in an academic paper. This led to the publication of two short story collections, *Terminal Boredom* (2021) and *Hit Parade of Tears* (2023)—science-fiction that was uncomfortably weird, inventive, and widely speculative. Her prose reflected her background in the punk scene of the time and offered a sense of dissolution that was surprisingly contemporary. The stories brought some needed attention to her works and the posthumous reputation had carried on to the latest publication, a short auto-fictional novel, where Suzuki reminisces on the life she had led in her youth. This book however exhibits little of the creativity of her otherworldly stories. Her attempt at realism is dry, flat, and so laid back that one wonders if it was worth printing.

The Izumi Suzuki in the novel and her friend Etsuko are groupies, intimately involved with up and coming blues and rock bands. It starts off with Suzuki having a fling with the same man Etsuko is

dating, a band member of Diana, the new rock outfit making waves in town. Soon, however, the novel becomes a tedious cycle of one relationship after another. Suzuki explains it as: "A man was the

healthier choice...harmless compared to drugs, I reckoned. So long as I didn't get pregnant."

The men are uninteresting; at times, they are just animals who use her. The Suzuki in the novel does not seem perturbed by that, often indulging in conversations where she gets to show off how stylishly cruel she is to them in turn. Indeed, a lot of the dialogues directed at the narrator go like this: "As a woman, you're one of a kind," "You're a romantic. But not in the way girls usually are", and "...you're just ruthless." At this point the reader realises this is the author having her own imaginary characters call her a baddie and whatnot. How can the reader take any of the story seriously after this? This was far from the mastery of her previous world-building.

Set My Heart on Fire is clearly an attempt to mirror the cold, apathetic lives of these characters, living on the sidelines of rock and roll. "I fall for people like they're characters in a TV show", the narrator says, "...I can watch three different films and enjoy them all in three different ways. That's how I can be in love with several people at once." But one wonders how much of that is just saying for style and how much of it is an honest reflection.

The conversations, as one sees, read like diary entries of confusing teenagers. The closest to self-awareness Suzuki reaches is when she says, "How could I spew out such nonsense? It just flows out of my mouth.



As long as it has a beat. The meaning is secondary. The main concern is tempo and rhythm. Aside from that, it's just whatever comes out of my mouth." That seems to be the method for writing this novel too, for

the story lacks any heart. It lacks any joy, too. In the course of writing the book, she must've forgotten that a story of miserable, empty lives should not also be a miserable, empty read.

Shahriar Shaams has written for The Business Standard, Dhaka Tribune, and The Daily Star. Find him on [Instagram @shahriar.shaams](https://www.instagram.com/shahriar.shaams).

Pak, Windies eye WTC improvements

AFP, Multan

Pakistan and West Indies vowed a strong finish when they meet in the first Test in Multan on Friday despite dragging up the rear of the World Test Championship (WTC).

Pakistan, who finished sixth and seventh in the first two WTC cycles, are currently eighth in the 2023-25 cycle, with their rivals in last place.

"This cycle is finishing so this series is significant for us as we want to become a better team by being unbeaten in home conditions," Pakistan skipper Shan Masood said.

Pakistan ended a winless stretch of 11 home Tests by beating England 2-1 in October but lost 2-0 in South Africa this month.

"We won against England so it will be important we keep that momentum against the West Indies," Masood said.

West Indies finished eighth in both previous WTCs and skipper Kraigg Brathwaite wants to end on a positive note this time.

"I think this series is very important with two Tests left in this cycle... so we want to start the year strong and that is our focus," Brathwaite said.

Soumya seeking full recovery before CT

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Retirement from international cricket has not dulled Tamim Iqbal's competitive edge one bit as the Fortune Barishal captain got into an angry exchange with Dhaka Capitals' Sabbir Rahman during their Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) match in Chattogram yesterday.

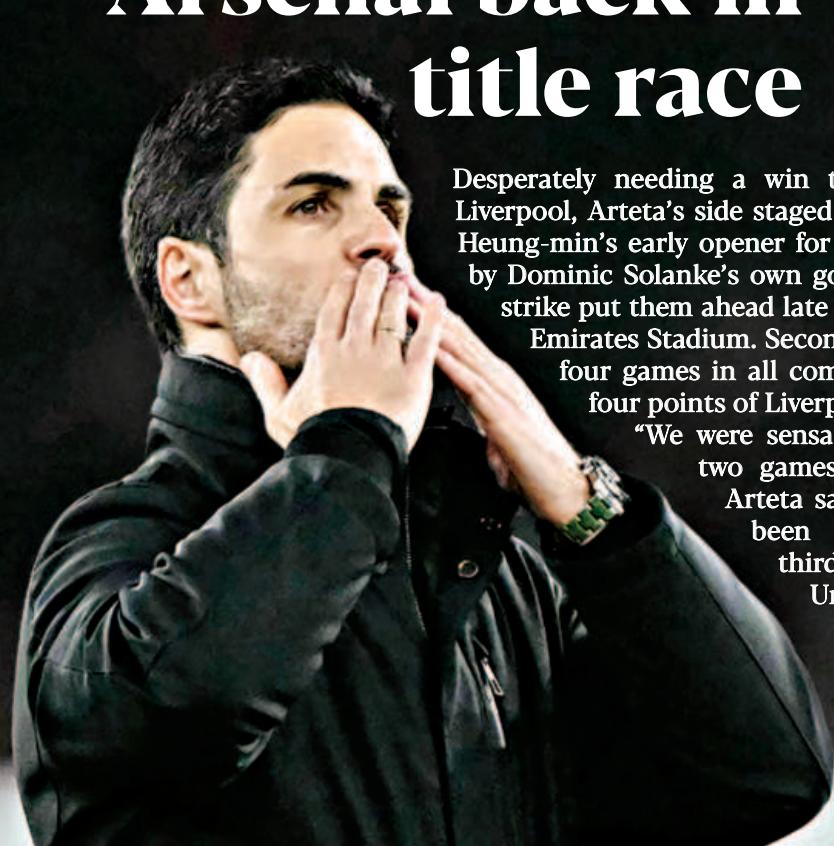
It was the first time the southpaw had undergone a batting session, and having been picked for the upcoming Champions Trophy, the Tigers' think tank will be closely monitoring how his condition develops.

Soumya, who had previously undertaken light running exercises since his finger dislocation, is hopeful of a complete recovery.

"It's definitely a good feeling to be back after such a long time. I practiced one day earlier, and today [yesterday] is the second day. It feels great to do it with Rangpur Riders," he told members of the media.

"I'm sticking to my process and consulting with the physio. I'll also inform the BCB physio about my updates. The faster I adjust, the quicker I can recover. My job is to practice, while they handle mobilisation and other tasks. Together, the quicker I recover, the sooner I'll return to the field. For now, the biggest target is to recover completely," added the 31-year-old.

'SENSATIONAL' Arsenal back in title race



Desperately needing a win to close the gap on leaders Liverpool, Arteta's side staged a stirring fightback after Son Heung-min's early opener for Tottenham was cancelled out by Dominic Solanke's own goal before Leandro Trossard's strike put them ahead late in the first half at the raucous Emirates Stadium. Second-placed Arsenal's first win in four games in all competitions moved them within four points of Liverpool, who have a game in hand.

"We were sensational. It was a big test after two games and not getting rewarded," Arteta said, referring to how they had been knocked out of the FA Cup third round by 10-man Manchester United on penalties on Sunday and a 2-0 loss at home to Newcastle in the League Cup semifinal first leg recently.

PHOTO: AFP

Mikel Arteta warned Liverpool that "sensational" Arsenal are back in the Premier League title race after beating Tottenham 2-1 in the north London derby on Wednesday.

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PHOTO: AFP

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
BPL
Rajshahi vs Sylhet
Live from 2:00 pm
Chittagong vs
Rangpur
Live from 7:00 pm

SONY SPORTS 2 AND 5
Australian Open
SA20
Durban Super Giants vs
Sunrisers Eastern Cape
Live from 9:30 pm

Sydney Sixers vs
Sydney Thunders
Live from 2:30 pm
SA20
Durban Super Giants vs
Sunrisers Eastern Cape
Live from 9:30 pm



English batter Graham Clark smashed a 50-ball 101, helping Chittagong Kings amass 200 for seven against Khulna Tigers in the evening game on the opening day of the Chattogram phase of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League yesterday. It was the sixth hundred in this edition -- equaling the tournament's record number of tons in a single season, with six tons also being scored in 2019. [Bottom] Meanwhile, Tamim Iqbal smashed a 48-ball 61 to help Fortune Barishal bounce back to winning ways with a resounding eight-wicket win over Dhaka Capitals in the day game.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

No plans divulged but Tamim shows SCOPE FOR WIDER RANGE

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Opener Tamim Iqbal surpassed star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan in registering the most half-centuries for Fortune Barishal, notching up his seventh fifty (48-ball 61) for the franchise in an eight-wicket win over Dhaka Capitals in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture in Mirpur yesterday.

This was not the first time Tamim had an altercation in the current edition of the BPL, as earlier he had a heated exchange with Rangpur Riders' English batter Alex Hales after a match.

Tamim's trait of taking things head on could help him keep the fire in his belly burning to compete in domestic and franchise cricket moving forward.

Like the range of strokes he still has in his armory, he also wanted to be a smooth

administration. The question had been pitched to him before but was more addressable now since his retirement and after he recently got appointed as the president of the Chattogram Division of the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB).

But Tamim felt the time was not right and did not divulge anything on the topic, saying, "No, not at this moment."

Tamim did not disappoint the

Tamim trumped Shakib in his 30th innings. The latter, however, took 22 innings to register six fifties.

Tamim also became the first player to score 1000 runs for Fortune Barishal in the BPL. Shakib sits second on that list with 659 runs in 22 innings.



executioner at the press conference. On the question of continuing on with franchise cricket, he even added a quip.

"I will try to continue... I am retired now so I also qualify for the legends league. I will play those and if the Premier League takes place in time, will play that too. If fit, will try to go on playing as long as possible," Tamim said at the press conference yesterday.

Another big question was whether Tamim intended to be part of cricket

thousands who turned up at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium with a 48-ball 61 as Barishal returned to winning ways, chasing the 140-run target with four overs and eight wickets to spare.

Still, Tamim felt the victory could've come a few overs earlier, "I feel like we should have played a bit more quickly in the middle overs. We could have finished in 14 overs, since we had wickets, I feel like we missed this trick. Other than that the batting was okay," he said.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

'Lucky loser' Lys makes most of second chance

AFP, Melbourne

Eva Lys's bags were packed and her flight booked. But now the German is into the third round of a Grand Slam for the first time after making the most of her second chance at the Australian Open.

The 23-year-old "lucky loser" defeated France's Varvara Gracheva 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 on Thursday in the second round, falling onto her back on court after sealing victory.

"I don't think I have any words to describe it yet," Lys, who is ranked 128th in the world, said.

It has been a whirlwind few days for Ukraine-born Lys.

She lost in the final round of qualifying in Melbourne last week, her hopes of making the first major of the year seemingly over.

But she hung about on the off chance that another player would drop out and 13th seed Anna

Kalinskaya did just that on Tuesday, suddenly giving Lys another Australian Open life.

She duly defeated home player Kimberly Birrell in straight sets in the first round of the main draw.

"I found out about it 10 minutes before the match so I didn't have time to get nervous," Lys, who lost in the first round at the Australian Open two years ago, said.

A "lucky loser" is a player who loses in qualifying but later gets a ticket into the main draw following another player's withdrawal, usually because of illness or injury.

"I was panicking a little bit because I didn't really prepare my drinks."

"I didn't have match clothes on so I went to the locker room, got changed straight away, and then they called my name."

Lys faces Romania's 82nd-ranked Jacqueline Cristian in the third round.

World number one and defending champion Jannik Sinner dropped a set for the first time in 14 matches but roared back to beat Australian wildcard Tristan Schoolkat 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-3 to make it into the Australian Open third round on Thursday.

Having raced past world number 49 Rebecca Sramkova 6-0, 6-2, Iga Swiatek set up a third round showdown with Britain's Emma Raducanu, who reached the third round for the first time at Melbourne Park by beating Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 7-5.

The Tunisian three-time Grand Slam finalist Ons Jabeur suffered an asthma attack in a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Colombia's Camila Osorio.



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

BSRM
building a safer nation



Proud
Construction
Partner



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM Yunus to fly to Switzerland January 21

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will be in Switzerland for the annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF) from January 21-24.

"During his four day visit, the chief adviser will join different sessions of the forum in Davos and also meet the heads of various states, governments, and international organisations," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Rafiqul Alam told a weekly media briefing yesterday.

Lutley Siddiqi, chief adviser's special envoy on international affairs, and Lamiya Morshed, principal coordinator on SDG affairs, will accompany Yunus during the visit, he said.

The WEF annual meeting 2025, with the theme "Shaping the Intelligent Age", convenes global leaders to address key global and regional challenges.

The world leaders will discuss global challenges, economy,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Babar now a free man after 17 years in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Lutfuzzaman Babar, former state minister for home affairs under the BNP-Jamaat alliance government, walked out of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj yesterday after spending 17 years in prison.

Babar's brother-in-law, Shadat Rahman, told The Daily Star that Babar walked out of the jail around 1:45pm.

He was welcomed with flowers and garlands by family members and supporters who had gathered outside the jail.

Earlier, on Tuesday, Babar was acquitted of the life sentence in the high-profile 10-truck arms smuggling case in Chattogram.

In the early hours of May 28, 2007, joint forces conducted a raid on Babar's Gulshan residence and recovered four firearms – a shotgun, a .22 bore rifle, a pistol, and a Brazilian revolver – two magazines and 297 bullets in a red-black coloured bag.

Later, he was arrested and sued over the illegal possession of firearms. After the trial, he was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment on October 30 of the same year.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Leaders of political parties pose for a photograph with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus after a meeting on July uprising proclamation at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 77 after truce accord Women, children among dead; Netanyahu says Hamas backtracking on agreements

REUTERS, Doha

Israel airstrikes killed 77 people in Gaza yesterday, residents and authorities in the enclave said, hours after a ceasefire and hostage release deal was announced to bring an end to 15 months of offensive.

The complex ceasefire accord emerged on Wednesday after mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the US to stop the offensive that has devastated the coastal territory and inflamed the Middle East.

The deal, scheduled to be implemented from Sunday, outlines a six-week initial ceasefire with the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, where tens of thousands have been killed. Hostages taken by Hamas, which controls the enclave, would be freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel.

Israel's acceptance of the deal will not be official until it is approved by the country's security cabinet and government, and a vote was slated for yesterday, an Israeli official said.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of making last-minute demands and going back on agreements.

"The Israeli cabinet will not convene

until the mediators notify Israel that Hamas has accepted all elements of the agreement," a statement from Netanyahu's office said. It was unclear what impact the latest delay will have on the deal.

Hamas is committed to the ceasefire agreement announced by mediators on Wednesday, senior group official Izzat el-Reshiq said yesterday.

Hardliners in Netanyahu's government were still hoping to stop the deal, though a majority of ministers were still expected to back it.

While people celebrated the pact in Gaza and Israel, Israel's military conducted

more attacks after the announcement, the civil emergency service and residents said.

Yesterday, Hamas fighters fired a rocket into Israel, the Israeli military said, causing no casualties.

Israeli airstrikes throughout the night and early yesterday killed at least 77 Palestinians, including women and children, raising the death toll to 46,788 people, according to Gaza health officials.

The agreement calls for a surge in humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross said they were preparing to scale up their aid operations.

- Israel delays cabinet vote on ceasefire deal
- Hamas is committed to ceasefire deal: official
- Trucks carrying aid lining up in Egyptian border town

HMPV-infected woman with comorbidity dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 30-year-old woman diagnosed with human metapneumovirus (HMPV) and multiple other health complications died at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali on Wednesday.

Sanjida Akhter breathed her last around 6:00pm, Ariful Bashir, senior consultant at the hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday morning.

"She did not die solely from the HMPV infection. She had several underlying conditions, including obesity, kidney issues, and lung complications, as revealed by X-rays," Ariful said.

Sanjida's death comes two days after she was identified as this year's first case of HMPV.

Homemaker Sanjida had no history of travelling abroad. Her husband lives abroad, but he has not visited the country recently. She hails from Kishoreganj but used to live in Narsingdi.

Apart from HMPV, she tested positive for Klebsiella Pneumoniae, a variant of pneumonia, according to health officials.

Prof Md Sayedur

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

FAREWELL SPEECH

Biden warns of Trump 'oligarchy'

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden urged Americans Wednesday to stand guard against a "dangerous" oligarchy forming under Donald Trump as he delivered a dark farewell address before stepping down next week.

In a prime-time speech from the Oval Office at the end of his single term in office, he warned of an ultra-wealthy "tech industrial complex" that he said could gain unchecked power over the American people.

"Today, an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy, our basic rights and freedoms," the 82-year-old Democrat said.

Biden began his speech by touting the legacy of his four years in office, saying it may take time to feel the benefits but that the "seeds were planted" for Americans in the future.

But he soon turned to painting a series of dangers that he said were facing the United

States, which clearly referred to billionaire Trump's close ties to the world's richest man, Elon Musk, and other tech tycoons.

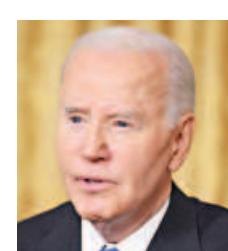
Biden warned there was a "dangerous concentration of power in the hands of a very few ultra-wealthy people" with "dangerous consequences if their abuse of power is left unchecked."

He then lashed out at social media firms, with Musk having turned X into a right-wing megaphone and Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg ending fact-checking operations in the US as he courts Trump.

"Americans are being buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation," said Biden.

"The free press is crumbling. Editors are disappearing. Social media is giving up on fact checking. The truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit."

He recalled a stark warning issued by president Dwight Eisenhower in his own farewell address in 1961 about the dangers of an out-of-control military industrial complex.



NID services return to EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to repeal the National Identity Registration law that placed NID services under the home ministry, paving the way for returning the NID activities to the Election Commission.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said the advisory council has approved the EC's request to revoke the law.

"I sincerely thank the government for swiftly approving the Election Commission's recommendation. We sent a letter on Wednesday, which was passed on Thursday," Nasir said while speaking at a programme organised by the Reporters' Forum for Election and Democracy as part of a traditional "Pitha" festival.

Four election commissioners, and Electoral Reform Commission chief Badiul Alam Majumdar also attended the event.

In September 2023, the National Identity Registration Bill 2023 was passed in parliament amid objection by opposition MPs. The bill aimed to transfer the national identity registration operation from the EC to the home ministry's Security Services Division.

About the reform commission's proposals, the CEC said, "Experts have made their recommendations considering all aspects. We will respond after reviewing these."

Badiul emphasised the importance of creating a legal framework to ensure that the EC can fulfil its responsibilities properly in the future. He also stressed the need for establishing accountability to prevent the recurrence of past irregularities.

According to him, the reform commission's survey revealed that 90 percent of respondents support holding local government elections before the national polls.



WETLANDS WONDERS

A grey-headed swamphen struts through a wetland in Chattogram. Large and striking with vibrant plumages, these birds are found in South and Southeast Asia, typically in wetlands, marshes, and along lakesides, where they can thrive amid dense vegetation and also conceal themselves from predators. As omnivorous and opportunistic feeders, they prefer plant material like seeds, stems and leaves of aquatic plants as their primary food source. While foraging, they use their long legs to wade through shallow waters. They can fly, but prefer being on their feet and are known to be quite agile on ground and in water. Though the grey-headed swamphen is currently listed as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List, habitat destruction, particularly the draining of wetlands, can affect their populations.

PHOTO: M HAIDER ALI