



PHOTO: ANIMAL WELFARE TEAM OF DHAKA UNIVERSITY

PAWS AND COMPANIONSHIP

# A surprising friendship in the city

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As the CNG-run auto-rickshaw pulled away, I stepped onto the culvert, the cool evening air wrapping around me like a cloak. Just ahead, a pack of stray dogs roamed the street, their loud barking echoing in the quiet night. A jolt of fear shot through me; this was not the first time I had encountered them, but each meeting felt uniquely unsettling.

One dog, likely the leader of the pack, caught my eye. It approached me with a confident swagger, its dark fur gleaming under the streetlight. My heart raced, imagining the sharpness of its teeth and the potential for danger. The moon was hidden behind thick clouds, shrouding the night in darkness, and I was only yards away from a graveyard. If the pack decided to chase me, I could easily tumble into the muddy, polluted Ramchandrapur Canal flowing beneath the culvert.

As I stepped forward, the leader snarled, “g-r-a-w, g-r-a-w!” My heart skipped a beat. The streets of Dhaka at night transformed into a kingdom for stray dogs, their bravado magnified

in the dimly lit, quieter environment. They marked their territory, barking and howling as if the city belonged to them.

I made my way across the culvert, which was more than half occupied by the pack. When I glanced back, I saw the leader following me, its eyes



glowing ominously in the low light. I froze, feeling the chill of fear creep into my bones. I silently prayed the dog would lose interest. With a deep breath, I managed to move away slowly, and gradually, the pack faded from view. It was a night ruled by anxiety.

Stray dogs often form small packs at night, scavenging for food in garbage piles and street corners. Unlike

pampered indoor dogs, these strays lack consistent access to food, shelter, and medical care. Their lives revolve around survival, often leading them to become bolder in their night-time explorations.

The following night, I approached my walk home with a new strategy.



As I neared the culvert, I decided to offer some snacks to the “platoon commander”. To my surprise, the dark-coloured dog showed signs of gratitude, wagging its tail and sitting beside me. At that moment, I felt a sense of connection and wondered what I should name him. Kalu seemed fitting.

Just then, a loud bark rang out

from a distance, and Kalu responded in kind. I could almost picture their conversation: the distant dog inquiring, “What’s going on over there?” and Kalu replying nonchalantly, “Nothing to worry about.”

On another occasion, Kalu greeted me with a friendly demeanour, as if to say, “Hi, buddy,” and surprisingly escorted me all the way to my home. Normally, I avoid walking the streets late at night, cautious of the potential dangers lurking in the shadows. But with Kalu, the innocent stray by my side, I felt a newfound sense of security.

With each encounter, I realised that perhaps these stray dogs were not just wild beasts, but rather, resilient survivors navigating their urban jungle. As I continued my late-night walks, Kalu became a comforting presence, reminding me of the unexpected friendships that can emerge even in the most unlikely of circumstances.

In the heart of Dhaka, under the watchful gaze of the moon, a bond was forming – one that turned fear into companionship in a city teeming with life.

## Yunus flies to Switzerland to attend WEF

AGENCIES

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus left Dhaka for Davos, Switzerland early today on a four-day official visit to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum.

An Emirates flight carrying Yunus and his entourage left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 1:00am, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam told BSS.

During his visit, the chief adviser is expected to hold bilateral talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Finland President Alexander Stubb, King Philippe of Belgium, and Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, among others.

A separate dialogue on Bangladesh will also be held at the WEF where global business leaders and CEOs of various international organisations will join, reports UNB.

Besides, top officials of the European Central Bank, Meta and Amnesty International are also

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



## Touhid leaves for China on 4-day official visit

Trade, economic issues on agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday left for China on a four-day official visit aiming to add a new dimension to the existing Dhaka-Beijing relations as the two countries celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations this year.

This is his first bilateral official trip and it will focus on lowering interest rates on loans, exchanging hydrological information, advancing medical treatment cooperation, and encouraging greater Chinese involvement in resolving the Myanmar situation.

Touhid will sit with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and jointly launch the programme for the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. He will also meet Chinese Communist Party leaders

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



## New uniforms unveiled

FROM PAGE 1

attacks after their excessive use of force leading to the deaths of hundreds of protesters during the July uprising.

Over the years, police have been criticised for being used as a tool to silence voices, restrict free speech, and maintain control over the political landscape. These not only undermined the integrity of the police but also eroded public trust in law enforcement agencies.

As for the Rab, the Police Reform Commission formed by the interim government has even proposed assessing the need for Rab by reviewing its past activities and allegations of human rights violations, such as extra-judicial killings.

The commission also recommended introducing measures to combat custodial torture, legal harassment by the police, extortion, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances.

According to officials, the police provide three sets of uniforms to their around 2.14 lakh members every year. Around 5,000 people work in Rab on deputation from different forces, including the armed forces. They also get three sets of uniforms in a year. Some 51,000

Ansar, and 17,000 Battalion Ansar personnel get two sets of uniforms every year.

**TEARGAS FOR BGB**

The advisory committee also approved the purchase of non-lethal weapons, such as stun grenades and teargas, for Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Adviser Jahangir said these purchases would be made very soon.

Referring to recent tension at the Chapainawabganj border, he said, “You have seen that the BSF [India’s Border Security Force] has non-lethal weapons, but the BGB does not have these.”

Last Saturday, tension flared over an altercation between Indian and Bangladeshi citizens over the cutting of tree branches and harvesting paddy. Hundreds of people from both countries gathered at the border, and they threw brick chunks at each other.

BSF fired teargas and stun grenades to control the crowds, according to BGB officials.

In reply to a question about lethal weapons, Jahangir said, “They [BGB] already have lethal weapons. Whether they will use those weapons or not will depend on the situation.”

Asked how India will take Bangladesh’s move to buy non-lethal

weapons for the BGB, he said, “There is no scope for India to consider this negatively as they already have these weapons.”

Asked about border agreements with India, he said foreign-related issues generally progress slowly. “There is a director general-level conference between the BSF and BGB in February. We have also formed a committee led by our home secretary to scrutinise and identify at which points the problems are.”

The home ministry then would send a letter to the foreign ministry, and the foreign ministry would inform India that Bangladesh wants these agreements to be revisited.

Earlier this month, the home adviser accused the previous government of granting India unequal opportunities leading to disputes over barbed wire fencing at 160 locations along the border.

**FOREIGNERS**

The advisory committee also discussed the issue of foreign nationals overstaying in Bangladesh.

“We issued a circular stating that many people in our country are residing illegally or have overstayed their visas. Previously, the official number of such individuals was 49,226, and this figure has now decreased to 33,648,” Jahangir said.

## Jt Interrogation Cell evidence destroyed

FROM PAGE 1

evidence underscores the coercive power of this culture of impunity,” added the report.

“His actions, ostensibly to shield perpetrators of past crimes, went against his own self-interest and professional integrity.

“During Sheikh Hasina’s rule, a culture of impunity became entrenched within the security forces. It was evident in our conversations with the officers of both civil and military forces that not only did most of them never expect to be ever held accountable for their crimes, they also did not necessarily view the crimes as crimes.”

Talking about the security forces, the report stated, “Enforced disappearances of people accused of being terrorists, for instance, were regularly brushed aside [by officials it interviewed] as insignificant and not worthy of the commission’s attention. Similarly, custodial torture was nonchalantly described as a routine matter, indispensable to crime fighting.

“This pattern of doctoring of evidence and non-cooperation was not isolated to the DGFI. Across various security forces, evidence of crimes spanning over 15 years has been systematically manipulated. It was done not only by those in power till August 5, 2024 ..., but also by those who assumed leadership afterwards.

“It reveals the pervasive and coercive nature of the culture of impunity, which compels even those not originally directly involved in the commission of offences to protect and perpetuate it.”

The report said that some prison guards used to be kind towards victims but were compelled to commit crimes.

“Whilst many prison guards shared the cruelty of their high-ups, a number of prison guards were reportedly kind—sharing food, information, and expressing empathy by acknowledging the innocence of the detainees. To the prisoners, they excused their inability to confront the injustice they personally oversaw by pleading that they were slaves to command.”

The report quoted the testimony of a survivor who was thrown in front of an oncoming vehicle.

The victim, a supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami, recounted how a police officer, while throwing him in front of the oncoming vehicle, apologised for doing so by saying, ‘Please forgive me. I have no choice’, said the report. The person survived because the vehicle was able to swerve at the last moment.

The report said that women were forcibly disappeared along with their children. “For example, one female victim we interviewed was detained for a month while she was pregnant, with her three-year-old and

18-month-old children incarcerated alongside her. She reported being beaten by a male officer despite being pregnant,” said the report.

“A young child we interviewed recalled being held in CTC [Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit] along with her mother when the child had been only six years old.”

The report narrated another case in which a mother and her young daughter were picked up and detained overnight at the then Rab 2 headquarters.

“The next day, the daughter was thrown out of a vehicle onto the streets. According to the family, an imam found the child and returned her to them. We took this girl, now a grown-up, to suspected Rab facilities, where she was able to definitively identify one of the rooms where she had been held that night. Her mother never returned,” it said.

“In one harrowing account, a male victim described how his wife and newborn baby were brought to a police station, where the child was reportedly denied milk from its mother as a form of psychological torture directed at him,” said the report.

The report went on to say that it is highly likely that a significant portion of security personnel did not directly engage in these crimes of their own volition but were compelled to do so by their power-hungry supervisors.

## Trump returns to White House

FROM PAGE 1

**NATIONAL EMERGENCY**

The billionaire – at 78 now the oldest person ever to take the presidential oath – was set to kickstart his new term with a host of executive orders.

“I will declare a national emergency at our southern border” with Mexico, Trump said to loud cheers inside the ornate Rotunda hall, vowing to deport “millions and millions” of illegal immigrants.

Trump said his government would recognize “only two genders, male and female,” ending the current practice of providing a third gender option in some settings.

He will also pull Washington out of the Paris climate accord aimed at halting global warming.

While Trump was a political outsider at his first inauguration in 2017 as the 45th president, this time around he was surrounded by America’s wealthy and powerful.

The world’s richest man Elon Musk, Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon chief Jeff Bezos and Google CEO Sundar Pichai all had prime seats in the Capitol alongside Trump’s family and cabinet members.

Musk will lead a cost-cutting drive in the new administration.

Former presidents Barack Obama, George W Bush and Bill Clinton all attended the ceremony with their spouses – except for ex-first lady Michelle Obama who pointedly stayed away.

Trump is just the second president in US history to return to power after being voted out, after Grover Cleveland in 1893.

Another notable factor is Trump’s criminal record, related to paying a porn star hush money during his first presidential run – and a string of far more serious criminal probes that were dropped once he won the election in November.

**GLOBAL LEADERS’ REACT**

For the rest of the world, Trump’s return means expecting the unexpected.

Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Trump ahead of the inauguration and said he was open to talks on the Ukraine conflict – which Trump did not mention during his speech.

Prof Yunus, chief adviser to the interim government in Bangladesh, congratulated Trump on taking office and expressed his strong belief that the two countries will work to open

## 90-day interim govt proposed

FROM PAGE 1

a National Constitutional Council (NCC) to handle appointments of constitutional bodies like the Anti-Corruption Commission and Election Commission, and the three chiefs of army, navy, and air force.

The NCC will also appoint the chief adviser of the interim government for which the reform commission outlined a detailed procedure.

The first option is to select a suitable citizen of Bangladesh, provided that seven out of nine members of the NCC vote in favour. However, none of the NCC members will be eligible for the post of chief adviser.

If the first option is not feasible, the council may opt to appoint a former chief justice or a former judge of the Supreme Court’s Appellate Division. This decision requires the support of six of the council’s nine members.

If the council fails to agree on either of the two options, the president may be appointed as the

chief adviser, but only if the council reaches a unanimous agreement.

If these options are not materialised, the last retired chief justice will be considered for the role of the chief adviser.

If the last retired chief justice declines, the council will sequentially approach previously retired chief justices in reverse order of their retirement until a willing candidate is identified.

If none of the former chief justices accepts the appointment, the council will then consider the most recently retired judge from the Supreme Court’s Appellate Division. The council will continue to work backwards until it finds a suitable and willing candidate.

The chief adviser will be supported by an advisory council that must not exceed 15 members. This advisory council will work collectively to ensure that the interim government fulfils its primary mandate of conducting free,

fair, and impartial polls.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Prof Ali Riaz, head of the Constitution Reform Commission, said, “The recommendation for the formation of the caretaker government aims to appoint a chief of the interim government who is acceptable to all.”

He added that the proposal also aims to ensure the participation of all stakeholders so that the government alone cannot unilaterally impose decisions regarding the interim government’s formation.

Additionally, the process would ensure that the opposition’s stake is recognised and upheld during the formation, he said.

The reform commission emphasised that the selection of advisers for the interim government should not rest solely with any individual or single institution. Instead, this critical responsibility should be entrusted to the NCC, as proposed by the commission, Prof Riaz opined.