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PUBLIC ADMIN REFORMS Cluster system may be proposed for ministries

Commission likely to suggest reducing number of ministries, divs to 30 from 55

BAHARAM KHAN

The Public Administration Reform Commission is likely to recommend reducing the number of ministries and divisions to 30 from 55 to improve coordination and slash the government's operational cost.

It may also propose allowing political appointments for personal secretaries (PS) to the prime minister, ministers, the Speaker, and other senior policymakers in the government.

Led by Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, the reform commission is deliberating whether to suggest the introduction of clusters of ministries and designating officials of certain cadres to a particular cluster.

Besides, proposals to divide the country into four administrative provinces and upgrading the standard of Bangladesh Civil Service exam questions are expected, said sources with knowledge of the matter.

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 50pc promotions to DS reserved for non-admin cadres
- Personal secretaries of high-ups to be political appointees
- Country may have four administrative provinces
- Ministries could be grouped in 5 or 6 clusters
- Govt employees' associations may have restrictions

The commission is expected to submit its recommendations on January 31 with a view to building a pro-people, accountable, skilled, and neutral public administration.

CLUSTER SYSTEM

The reform commission is planning to recommend five or six clusters of ministries and divisions where officers of certain cadres would be working, said the sources.

For example, a cluster focused on food security may include ministries like agriculture, food, environment, fisheries and livestock, and disaster management.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

2018 NATIONAL POLLS
ACC to probe
roles of Hasina,
ROs, chiefs of
police, Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has decided to probe the roles of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, chiefs of police and Rab, returning officers, and others in the December 30, 2018, national polls.

During a press briefing yesterday, ACC Director General (prevention) Akhtar Hossain said allegations of various irregularities, such as ballot box stuffing the night before the election, voter fraud, falsely reporting voter turnout above 90 percent at certain centres, illegal financial transactions, and abuse of power to ensure the victory of certain candidates, have been reported by various media and filed with the ACC.

A five-member team has been formed to probe these allegations, said Akhtar, adding that the team would analyse videos, reports from local and international media, election result sheets, and other necessary materials to prepare and submit their findings.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Palestinians set up a new tent camp in Gaza City yesterday to shelter people expected to return to northern Gaza after being displaced to the south by Israel's order.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday met UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos, Switzerland.

PHOTO: PID

Help bring back
laundered money
Yunus urges global leaders
at World Economic Forum

UNB, Davos

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called on Bangladesh's international allies to help in the recovery of substantial amounts of stolen money.

Prof Yunus made the call during his meetings with world leaders on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos, Switzerland.

The chief adviser met Antonio Guterres, UN secretary general; Wolfgang Schmidt, head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks, Federal Chancellery of Germany; King Philippe of Belgium; Paetongtarn Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand; Ignazio Cassis, federal councillor, Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Switzerland; and Felix Tshisekedi, Congo's president; among others.

The chief adviser urged the global leaders to send top experts, think tanks, journalists, and international

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Draft cyber ordinance gets a scrubbing

9 provisions scrapped; once effective, most cases under DSA, CSA to be dismissed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the new cyber protection law comes into effect, a majority of the cases filed under its predecessors -- Digital Security Act and Cyber Security Act -- will automatically be dismissed.

Defamation, cyberbullying, and hurting of religious sentiments, among others, will be decriminalised, said the ICT Division secretary and the division's policy adviser at a press conference held at the ICT Tower yesterday while unveiling the amended version of the

draft Cyber Protection Ordinance.

On December 26, 2024, the cabinet had approved the draft, but the draft drew flak from different quarters as it retained much of the controversial provisions of its predecessors.

At the press conference, Secretary Shish Haider Chowdhury said the government has scrapped nine provisions in the draft Cyber Protection Ordinance that were remnants of the DSA and the CSA.

These provisions criminalised, among

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Make right to vote a
fundamental right
Constitution reform body proposes

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Constitutional Reform Commission proposes voting to be recognised as a fundamental right, so that people can seek legal remedies if it is violated.

Members of the commission say that this constitutional recognition will allow people to go to courts if they cannot exercise their voting rights.

This change will also help rid the country of elections in which many people cannot cast their votes and compel the Election Commission to arrange free and fair elections.

The reform commission proposes expanding the fundamental rights to include food, shelter, vote, and internet.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

NBR revises down VAT, SD on 9 items

	BEFORE	AFTER	REVISED
Mobile phone use	20%	23%	20%
Internet	0%	10%	0%
Restaurant	5%	15%	5%
Non-AC hotel	7.5%	15%	10%
Auto-workshop	10%	15%	10%
Branded clothing store	7.5%	15%	10%
Non-branded clothing store	7.5%	15%	7.5%
Sweetmeat	7.5%	15%	10%
Trade VAT on medicine	2.4%	3%	2.4%

SOURCE: NBR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue yesterday revised down the value added tax and supplementary duty (SD) on nine goods and services, including mobile phone usage, internet services and medicine.

The revision comes nearly two weeks after the government hiked the rates of about 100 goods and services, drawing criticism that the move would stoke inflation, which has remained over 9 percent since March 2023.

VAT on clothes, restaurants, sweets, non-AC hotels and motor workshops has been slashed, said the NBR in a press release.

The NBR restored SD on mobile phone usage to 20 percent from 23 percent and withdrew the 10 percent SD on broadband internet services.

Trade VAT on medicine has been rolled back to the previous rate of 2.4 percent, down from 3 percent, while VAT on restaurants has been

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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HALDA VALLEY TEA LOUNGE

A hidden gem for TEA LOVERS IN DHAKA

RBR

As I seated myself in the Halda Valley Tea Lounge, seeing the way the welcome drinks were served left me in awe.

A transparent chawan or Asian tea bowl, as it is called, had a brew of the bud and the tea leaf, which were a mild tint of olive green. Alongside it a glass jar of detox water with tangerines and lemons skewers. The small and fancy detailing in serving set the tone of the café.

I was really missing an authentic tea house or lounge in Dhaka, and finally, this aesthetically pleasing place did justice to my imagination of how a tea



PHOTO: COURTESY

lounge should look.

Halda Valley Tea is not something that needs an introduction to Dhaka readers, but their almost hidden café, located at YN Center 6/A Rd II/3, Dhaka, serving tea that is exclusively plucked from their garden at Narayanhat, Fatikchhari Upazila, Chattogram, is worth a preamble.



The prosperous tea estate, spread around 500 hectares of land amidst the Khagrachhari and Sitakundu hill ranges, offers tea varieties that can be in direct competition with global tea market produce. Their distinctive emerald green and flattened leaves of green tea, finest young green silver hairy buds of white tea, clean chocolate brown with golden hue tea grains of strong black tea, and the famous Red Robe Oolong Tea which has an earthly aroma with floral hints, are a result of hard work to incorporate state-of-the-art technology and unpolluted environments to become one of the best tea estates of Bangladesh.

Recently, the lounge cheered our winter pitha season, with platters of bhapa pitha, chitoi with an assortment of dry fish, mustard, mint chutneys, soft pillow-like patishapta filled with coconut shavings drenched in

molasses, narikel puli, date juice, rice flour flatbreads with duck curry, and the quintessential Bengali winter must-have dessert, the payesh.

"This was done on a trial or experimental basis; I sort of wanted to add a fun variation to our existing menu. The live station of pitha making always brings in an animated charm," says Dr Labiba Yasmin, Director of Operation, Halda Valley Food & Beverage.

The pithas were freshly made after the orders were taken, which kept the taste authentic. They sourced rice flour, and coconuts from the chawki in old Dhaka, but their date juice and molasses were exclusively ordered from Jashore. The only drawback of this festival was that it was not hyped



enough, meaning Dhaka residents were not aware of it.

Halda Valley Tea Lounge has always been low-key when it comes to marketing, but trust me, their weekend breakfast is worth mentioning.

Their chefs are trained in continental and Mughal cuisine. They share a sample tasting with Labiba and she adds her spin to the recipe, if required.

"Our paya, served in the breakfast menu, is a game changer. It is the same recipe I use at home. Our rezala is an authentic Dhakai shahi recipe where I added grated mawa, poppyseed, and almond -- a note I took from my mother. I discouraged the chef's adding of tomato puree, which gives it an Indian twist.

So, these small changes and variations have made our weekend breakfast a success," she shared.

All these rich deshi foods, gulped down with cups of chai like shahi, masala, malai or Mughal chai recipes, fill your mind with a kind of fuzzy warmth. They use tea grains sourced only from their garden; thus, these cups boast their favourite Golden Eyebrow Black Tea.

However, their Dragon Well Green Tea makes for their café favourite Moroccan Mint tea. Their Arabian tea menu is a crowd pleaser, especially the Egyptian karkade tea with rose petals. So, at the end of this gruelling week, try a soothing tea.

NBR revises

FROM PAGE 1
brought back to 5 percent from 15 percent.

However, three to five-star hotels will continue to be subject to a 15 percent VAT rate as they can claim input tax credits.

VAT on the merchandise made by clothing brands has been lowered to 10 percent from 15 percent, while those from non-branded stores will be subject to 7.5 percent VAT. Earlier, VAT on both branded and non-branded outlets was 7.5 percent.

VAT on sweet shops has been reduced to 10 percent, reversing the earlier hike of 15 percent.

Non-AC hotels now face a 10 percent VAT, down from 15 percent, but it's higher than the earlier rate of 7.5 percent.

VAT on automobile workshop services though has been kept at 10 percent despite stakeholders' demands for a reduction to 5 percent.

The recent tax hike sparked an outcry from various quarters, including economists, policy analysts, rights bodies and political parties.

Some stakeholders also staged demonstrations to push for a reversal of the decision.

Talking to this newspaper, SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the interim government deserves appreciation for reducing VAT and SD charges on certain items. "But there are several items closely tied to daily life, and they require reconsideration."

The increased VAT and SD charges have already led to price hikes of essentials such as soap, tissue papers and detergent.

This situation poses a threat to the livelihood of ordinary people. With Ramadan approaching, this might further ignite competition among sellers to increase prices on several goods. Therefore, these decisions demand urgent revision," he added.

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

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

The hike in indirect taxes comes as overall revenue collection fell by about 1 percent in the first half of the fiscal year, increasing pressure on the government to borrow from domestic and foreign sources.

The NBR should scrutinise its policies more thoroughly before implementation, said Selim Raifan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

"It [the NBR] should refrain from making ad-hoc decisions and focus on increasing revenue coverage in the income tax net," said Raifan, also a professor of economics at Dhaka University.

Cluster system may be proposed for ministries

FROM PAGE 1

Officers appointed to these ministries would rotate and work across these ministries and departments, they added.

Sources in the public administration ministry said a similar cluster system was recommended by the last reform commission in 2000, and a draft policy for activities of the clusters was also prepared in 2013.

However, some influential officials from the admin cadre prevented its implementation, the sources claimed.

"If the cluster system is introduced, admin cadre officers will no longer have the same level of control over various ministries as they have now. This is why the system was not implemented," said an official from the cabinet division.

The reform commission is considering a proposal to bring down the number of ministries and divisions to 30. It could be even between 25 and 28, said a source.

If approved, this will bring down the operational cost and help coordination, the source said.

Currently, the government has 55 ministries and divisions. The interim government has already decided to merge two divisions at the home ministry.

Several officials said they believe it could be a good move since some ministries and divisions do not have much workload and could be merged.

Asked about the possible impact of this, public administration expert Firoz Mia told this newspaper, "If experienced politicians and a skilled bureaucracy work together, cutting down the number of ministries would not be a problem."

"However, under the current circumstances, it may disrupt public services."

He added that introducing such changes would first require forming a team of skilled individuals.

ACC to probe roles of Hasina, ROs, chiefs of police, Rab

FROM PAGE 1

Asked whether the allegation of involvement of then election commissioners would be investigated, he said, "The team can probe anyone if they feel it is necessary."

The KM Nurul Huda-led commission became controversial after the 2018 election as opposition parties alleged ballot box stuffing the night before election day. In January 2019, the Jatiya Oikyafront, the opposition alliance, alleged that between 30 and 60 percent of the votes were cast the night before.

The Awami League got two-thirds majority in that election.

The same month, Transparency International, Bangladesh, in a study found that stamping of ballots took place the night before election day in more than one centre of the 33 out of 50 surveyed constituencies.

According to a Shushashoner Jonno

PROMOTION TO DS

The reform commission is considering a new promotion policy for the position of deputy secretary -- a 50:50 split between the admin and the other cadres.

Currently, 75 percent of the promotions are made from admin cadre officers and the remaining 25 percent from the other cadres.

This notion elicited a strong reaction from the administration cadre officers. Many of them are lobbying intensely to have the proposal changed.

Sources in the commission said most of the members support a merit-based, 100 percent exam-driven promotion system for the position of deputy secretary. The exams would be open to officers from all cadres.

However, the commission chairman was in favour of keeping 50 percent of the spots for admin cadre officials, the sources said.

APPOINTMENTS OF PS

Officials from the administration cadre are generally appointed as the PS to government high ups. However, when governments change, they often face setbacks, including delays in promotions or being made officers on special duty (OSD), considered a punishment, said sources.

Last month, a BNP committee on public administration reforms, formed to come up with the party's stance before the commission, proposed appointing non-civil servants as PS to ministers.

The committee submitted the report to the reform commission on December 9.

Ismail Zabiullah, a member of the committee, said many officers who serve as PS to ministers are competent but often get accused of becoming biased towards a party.

"Therefore, we have proposed appointing officers from outside the cadres for these positions," said Ismail, also a former secretary.

The Daily Star contacted the reform commission chief and four other members, but they declined to comment.

FOUR PROVINCES

The commission may propose dividing the country into four administrative provinces. The commission's chairman verbally communicated this proposal to the government, but details could not be known, sources said.

The provinces -- Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, and Khulna -- could be made out of a broader strategy to ensure decentralisation, the sources said.

The commission members believe the current local government system is not functioning effectively. To bring about fundamental changes to local governance, the provincial system would be good, they said.

CHANGES IN BCS EXAMS

The reform commission is set to suggest significant changes to the BCS exam questions.

According to sources, the commission views that the standard of the questions is not at a satisfactory level. "The standard is at the SSC level. It has to be upgraded," said an official involved with the commission.

Sources said measures would be taken so that candidates totally relying on guidebooks don't get the coveted jobs.

EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

The commission is thinking whether to allow government employees to form associations. This issue was discussed at one of the commission's meetings, but no decision has been made so far.

Some commission members think the employees can form associations for their welfare only.

However, other members think that the association could evolve into something resembling a CBA (Collective Bargaining Agent).

A decision on the matter will be made soon, said an official.

Draft cyber ordinance

FROM PAGE 1

others, defamation, cyberbullying, "hurting of religious sentiments", and allowed for search and arrests without warrants.

Even though vague wording like "hurting of religious sentiments" was removed from the new draft, it, however, includes a provision criminalising the dissemination of content that incites hatred among religious and ethnic communities.

"Hate speech will be defined as per the Penal Code," said Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, the policy adviser (ICT Coordination & Reform) of the ICT Division.

The Daily Star obtained data from Centre for Governance Studies' DSA Tracker and found that 44 percent of the cases filed under the DSA for "hurting religious sentiment" were against the religious minorities, particularly the Hindus.

"We wanted to ensure that no political government can abuse this law to target anyone. However, no matter how foolproof a law is, if the political equilibrium and political system do not amend itself, all laws can be abused," said Taiyeb.

According to the new draft, once a case is filed and it goes to court, the judge can dispose of the case even before the investigation stage.

The new draft has narrowed the scope for arrests without a warrant only to cases in which critical information infrastructure of the country is under threat.

The latest draft also criminalises sexual harassment online, and specifically mentions blackmail, revenge porn, and targeting of minors. The fines for committing those crimes go up to Tk 20 lakhs, and carries a three-year jail term.

The new law also criminalises online gambling with a jail term of two years and a Tk 20 lakh fine.

The law guarantees access to the internet as a right for every citizen.

Make right to vote

FROM PAGE 1

The body proposes merging the 2nd and 3rd sections of the constitution to form a new chapter on "fundamental rights and liberty".

Chief of the commission Prof Ali Riaz said, "Voting rights are fundamental and cannot be violated under any circumstances. The citizens' voting rights were violated during the last three elections. And there was no remedy because voting rights are not recognised as fundamental."

"If voting is recognised as a fundamental right, then courts will have the authority to compel the authorities concerned to ensure it. Citizens will at least have legal protection through the courts. We hope the courts will function independently, and justice will prevail."

"Voting rights of Bangladeshi citizens have been violated on various occasions, including in the era of military rule."

According to article 102 of the constitution, "The High Court Division on the application of any person aggrieved, may give such directions or orders to any person or authority, including any person performing any function in connection with the affairs of the Republic, as may be appropriate for the enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of this Constitution."

The last general election in January 2024 was widely criticised as it was not competitive and inclusive. Awami League leaders ran as independents to make the polls appear competitive.

During the 2018 election, opposition parties alleged that ballot boxes were stuffed the night before election day.

In January 2019, Transparency International, Bangladesh, in a study found that stamping of ballots took place the night before election day in more than one centre in each of the 33 of the 50 surveyed constituencies.

In the 2014 election, 153 lawmakers

ICT turns down Ziaul's petition challenging its jurisdiction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday rejected a petition challenging the tribunal's jurisdiction to hold the trial of Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan, who is accused of keeping people in secret prisons after abducting them.

Justice Golam Mortuza Majumder, who led the three-member bench, stated that the petition was "not maintainable and premature".

The trial proceedings can go on, according to Mohammad Tajut Islam, chief prosecutor of the tribunal.

Ahsan's lawyer Nazneen Nahar argued that the ordinance, which included enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity, was unconstitutional, and as the government lacked the authority to amend the ICT Act 1973, the amendments were invalid.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

'RMG WORKER KILLING' SC stays HC bail of journo Rupa, Shakil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge has stayed a High Court order that granted bail to Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at Ekattor Television, and Farzana Rupa, its principal correspondent, in the garment worker Rubel murder case during the uprising.

Justice Md Rezaul Haque, chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC, passed the order on Tuesday after a petition was filed by the state challenging the HC bail order.

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Sarjis steps down from Shaheed Smriti Foundation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sarjis Alam, a coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination, has resigned as general secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation.

He shared this information in a post on his verified Facebook profile yesterday's morning.

"I am no longer the general secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation. Changes have been made to the foundation's constitution, structure, and working process to accelerate its progress," he wrote.

He said the executive committee will now oversee the foundation's operations, with the chief executive officer (CEO)

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Stop using
loud horns,
black glass
DMP urges people
to use footbridges,
zebra crossings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drivers must stop installing loud horns and black tinted glasses on vehicles. Pedestrians must use foot-over bridges and zebra crossings where available, said a public notice issued by Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday.

Signed by DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali, the notice said any driver or pedestrian failing to comply will face legal actions through regular operations and mobile courts.

Drivers often use their horns unnecessarily or excessively. Sometimes they even use illegal high-decibel horns, which poses significant health risks to those nearby, the notice added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Students of Medical Assistant Training Schools (MATS) blocked Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday to realise their four-point demand, including recruitment to vacant positions in the 10th grade and the creation of employment opportunities. The protest caused severe gridlock, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Reforms should reflect people's aspiration

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The reforms that are being discussed must align with the aspirations of the people to uphold the unity achieved through the July mass uprising, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They made the remarks at a discussion titled "National Unity: Why, On What Basis, and Which Path?" organised by a platform named "Unity for Bangladesh" at Dhaka University.

In his keynote speech, political analyst Tuhin Khan said, "In election-centric politics, polarisations are inevitable. However, if the government or the political leadership fails to take effective steps on the discussed issues unitedly, it will undoubtedly undermine the aspirations and achievements of the July uprising."

"The greatest political challenge at this moment is to transform the discussion of unity into a fruitful and actionable process rather than limiting it to political rhetoric or formalities."

TUHIN KHAN, Political Analyst

"With this in mind, everyone should think sincerely about the process of unity," he added.

He said political parties are expressing their concerns about

the reform initiatives of the interim government. "They are worried whether these reform efforts will create a new political reality and whether that reality will be favourable for them."

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir said he regarded post-uprising fragmentation in the unity of political parties as a natural phenomenon.

"I don't see any reason to be worried. Every political party or group operates based on its goals and principles... Differences among political parties are natural," said the veteran journalist.

He added people are repeatedly sacrificing their lives to realise the unfulfilled promises of the Liberation War.

He said one of Awami League's major misdeeds was to abolish the provision for referendums.

"Changing a company's rules

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Khaleda Zia
acquitted in
sabotage case

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Cumilla

A Cumilla court has acquitted BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 35 others in a sabotage case filed with Chaudhogram Police Station in 2015.

Judge of Cumilla Additional Sessions Judge Court-1 Afroza Jesmin passed the order on Monday, said Public Prosecutor Advocate Kaimul Haque Rinku yesterday.

According to the case statement, a covered van was vandalised and torched

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Dhaka airport
gets 2 bomb
threats in a day
No explosives found, say
officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) received two bomb threats in a single day yesterday, prompting emergency security measures and heightened vigilance.

The first incident involved a Dhaka-bound Biman flight from Rome, while the second threat was sent hours later, targeting the airport.

The initial threat came from a WhatsApp message sent to the official number of an Armed Police Battalion (APBn) duty officer. The message, traced to a Pakistani phone number, claimed that 34 kilogrammes of explosives were aboard flight BG 356 from Rome, set to detonate upon landing at HSIA. The plane made an emergency landing at 9:20am, and all 250 passengers and 13 crew members were safely evacuated.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan said the sender described the message as a warning rather than a direct threat. They speculated that an opposition group may have planted the explosives to gain international attention.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Man found
hanging from
tree at DU
identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man found hanging from a tree in the Dhaka University area yesterday has been identified as Abu Saleh from Keraniganj upazila.

Khalid Monsur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said a national identity card was found with the body.

The CID crime scene unit confirmed the identity by matching the fingerprints with the NID server. Shahbagh police, in association with fire service teams, recovered the body around 9:00am.

Later, it was handed over to the family after an autopsy, Monsur added.

He said locals believe the man lived on the sidewalk and had mental health issues.

"Preliminary findings suggest he climbed the tree on Tuesday night and hanged himself. Further investigation is underway," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

ROBBERY PLOT
Four, including two
army men, arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police claim to have foiled a robbery plot and arrested four suspects, including two army members, near Banani Star Kabab restaurant early yesterday.

The suspects, along with several others still at large, were preparing to rob a house in the capital's Moghbazar area, believing Tk 30-40 crore was stashed there, according to a case statement filed with the Banani Police Station.

Mohammad Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, a sub-inspector of the Banani Police Station, filed the case.

The arrestees are identified as Salam Sheikh, 36, Saibel Jon Sagar Rozario, 55, Md Abu Hanif, 32, and Rabiu Alam, 32.

As per the case statement, Salam acted as an informant for the group, while Rozario, who allegedly used a fake identity card, claimed himself to be a reporter for an online television channel.

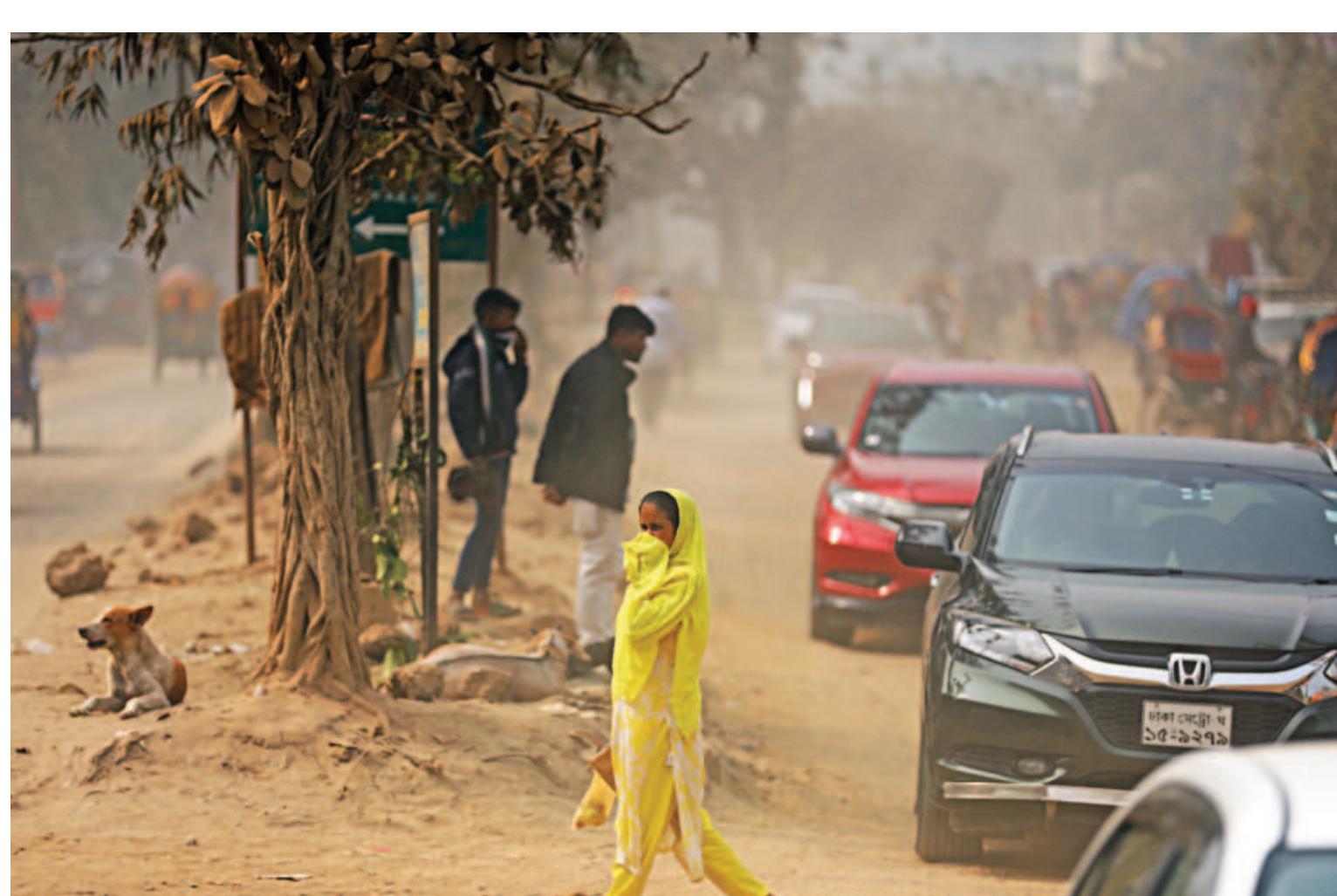
Hanif is a corporal with the Army Headquarters' Overseas Operations, and Rabiu is a soldier stationed at Mirpur Cantonment.

Police recovered several items from the suspects, including three sets of army uniforms with nameplates (Yasin, Nazmul, and Parvez), three pairs of boots, two rank badges for a major, a hammer, screwdrivers, a microphone, a camera, and three mobile phones.

A microbus used by the group was also seized.

Rasel Sarwar, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, told The Daily Star, "We arrested four individuals, including two army members, and informed the Army Headquarters about the incident.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



A woman covers her face as she walks through a cloud of dust and fumes to cross the street in the Madani Avenue area of Baridhara. Dhaka's deteriorating air quality continues to pose serious health risks to its residents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Youth dies as bike falls into ditch

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man lost his life when a motorcycle fell into a ditch in Pirojpur's Mathbaria upazila on Tuesday night.

The accident occurred around 11:00pm at an under-construction bridge site near Jhawtala Bazar, said Ahmed Anwar, officer-in-charge of Bhandaria Police Station.

Rakib Jomadder, 23, son of Kabir Jomadder from Bhogiratpur in Mathbaria, died on the spot, police said.

His friend Subrato Halder, 21, son of Rabindronath Halder from Chandipur in Indurkani upazila, was injured.

Rakib, a restaurant manager in Dhaka, got married on January 18, according to family members.

Jonny Jomadder, a cousin of the deceased, said Rakib and his friend were returning to Mathbaria from Bhandaria on a motorcycle.

"While riding the motorcycle, Rakib mistakenly entered the under-construction bridge instead of taking the diversion road and fell into a ditch," he added.

Subrato, who sustained serious injuries, was rushed to Bhandaria Upazila Health Complex and later transferred to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Water management needs better

FROM PAGE 5

and research system; Dr Samiya Selim, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh; and Dr Manshee Bal Bhargava, national president of the Water Resources Council, among others.

The book consists of abstracts from 72 papers presented in the International Water Conference in the last 10 years, selected across 10 different thematic areas including governance and policy, water justice and water rights, gender and women, solution and water management, community and social aspects, water quality and pollution, biodiversity and ecology, GIS and remote sensing, technology and innovation, environment and urban planning.

The book was reviewed by Emeritus Professor Dr Ainun Nishat, an eminent water resources and climate

Global action

FROM PAGE 5

we can scale up initiatives that save lives by targeting air quality improvements. The government is focusing on investments that prioritise saving lives over creating extravagant infrastructure," she said.

"The demand for climate justice must centre on mitigation. While countries like Bangladesh have had voluntary obligations historically, the Paris Agreement now extends this framework globally. Mechanisms like Article 6 and Article 6.4 pose challenges in ensuring fair responsibility sharing, but they also offer opportunities for carbon trading and collaboration," Rizwana said.

change expert, and Dr Sofia Khanom, senior research fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS). Farah Kabir, country

director of ActionAid Bangladesh, and Ibrahim Khalil Al-Zayad, chairperson of ActionAid International Bangladesh Society, were also present at the event.

Four, including two

FROM PAGE 3

An army team later arrived and took custody of the two personnel, assuring us they would be tried under army law."

The ISPR confirmed the arrests and said the two members would face trial according to army regulations.

Police produced the other two suspects, Salam and Rozario, before a Dhaka court yesterday evening, seeking a seven-day remand. After the hearing, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Shahin Reza granted a three-day remand for interrogation.

During the remand hearing, Sub-Inspector Yeadul Haq of Banani

Police Station submitted a forwarding report detailing the suspects' alleged activities and the items recovered.

The police, however, did not disclose details about the owner of the Moghbazar house targeted by the suspects, either in the case statement or in the forwarding report.

The army team that retrieved the detained personnel included Warrant Officer Md Saiful Islam and several other members from the Dhaka Army MP unit, as noted in the report submitted in the court.

Reforms should

FROM PAGE 3

requires an AGM; similarly, changing the constitution requires a referendum. Just as a company cannot be governed without its memorandum and articles of association, constitutional amendments must be endorsed by the people through a referendum," he added.

Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal, a member of BNP chairperson's advisory council, said the student leaders who led the movement should not have become part of the government.

They could have been a strong pressure group, remaining outside the government, he said. "This is a reality, even though many might not openly admit it. It would have been better if they had stayed out of the government," said Alal.

Zonayed Saki, coordinator of Gonoshamati Andolan, said, "The interim government was formed based on general consensus, but that does not mean it is beyond criticism. Everyone has the right to express their views. We want to build a democratic state."

Saki said reforms are necessary for elections, as are elections for fundamental structural reforms.

"The reforms we are planning must align with the will and aspirations of the people. Everyone should be included in the reform process. A new political party should not emerge from within this government but rather from the people themselves," he added.

Rajshahi University Central Students' Union former vice-president Ragib Ahsan Munna said the 2024 uprising has created new demands, and to implement these, the old governance structure must

"Buses were diverted via Bangla Motor, while cars and smaller vehicles were rerouted through Minto Road due to severe congestion," he added.

Shahidul Alam, a private service employee, was seen stuck on Elephant Road around 2:00pm.

So was Samia Islam. She said she was traveling to Karwan Bazar and got stuck at Khamarbari for about 30 minutes at 4:30pm.

Rezaul Karim, who came to Labaid Hospital in Dhanmondi, had to wait an hour in traffic on Mirpur Road due to gridlock.

Abdul Hannan, assistant commissioner (Traffic, Ramna) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the blockade at Shahbagh caused severe congestion on the roads.

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Farmers irrigate their field of bottle gourd plants early in the morning. Sown in October, the gourds are set to be harvested in early February. Farmers will then sell each piece for Tk 30-50 depending on size. The photo was taken in Kandalgati of Jhalakathi district recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Court orders ACC to seize Nafeez Sarafat's Dubai properties

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to confiscate a three-bedroom flat and a five-bedroom villa in Dubai belonging to former Padma Bank chairman Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat.

Judge Md. Zahir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Md. Masudur Rahman, who is the head of an enquiry team, submitted an application in this regard. ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam moved the application on behalf of the anti graft body.

An investigation by The Daily Star titled "Parking wealth under the Dubai sun," published on January 7, revealed details of properties in Dubai owned by 19 Bangladeshi individuals, including Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat.

According to the report, Nafeez
SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Global action key to tackle climate change

Environment adviser tells workshop

UNB, Dhaka

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan has called for unified global action to confront the challenges of climate change. She spoke about the importance of minimising environmental harm while striving to meet mitigation targets during a capacity building workshop on Paris Agreement Article 6 Implementation, held at the Department of Environment in Agargaon, yesterday.



Together, we must work to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Failure to do so will endanger the existence of vulnerable countries like ours. Let the urgency of this crisis inspire us to achieve our future aspirations," Rizwana said. "Mitigating through trading comes with a price, but it also offers opportunities to improve governance standards and operational efficiency. For instance, Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects in the energy sector can address gas emissions and improve efficiency across industries," she added.

"With modest investment,
SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Water management needs better policies: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday opined that the challenge regarding water management in Bangladesh lies in transforming existing knowledge in appropriate policy framework.

They also said policymakers should keep it in mind that a river is not just a flowing body of water, but a living entity comprising water, energy, biodiversity and sediments.

The speakers further said climate change is turning water

management a complex issue since water is a finite resource.

They made the remarks while addressing an event on launching of a book by ActionAid Bangladesh, titled "10 Years of Water Discourse in Bangladesh: The Contribution of Water Museum", at a city hotel.

Contributors of the book include Professor Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, executive director of the Centre for Alternatives; Dr Haseeb Md Irfanullah, consultant on environment, climate change,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Dengue claims another life

STAR REPORT

At least one dengue patient died and 32 infected patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The deceased was under treatment at a hospital in Dhaka South City Corporation.

With this, the total number of deaths rose to nine while that of cases rose to 972, of which 596 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Currently, 196 dengue patients are undergoing treatment, 89 of whom are from outside Dhaka. A total of 767 patients were released till Tuesday, 505 of whom were from outside Dhaka.

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International Convention City, Bashundhara, Dhaka.



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বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটি অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন

সিকিউরিটি কমিশন ভবন, ই-৬/সি আগারাগাঁও, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর প্রশাসনিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৭

Ref.No.BSEC/Admin/13:46/2024-68

Date: 20/01/2025

Request for Expressions of Interest For Selection of Consulting/Audit Firm (National)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Finance / Financial Institution Division
2	Agency	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission
3	Procuring Entity	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
5	Assignment Name	Special Audit on the financial statements of <i>Shinepukur Ceramics Limited</i> , for the last 5 (Five) financial years (years ended on 30 June 2020 to 30 June 2024).
6	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Consulting/Audit Firm (National)
7	EOI Ref. No.	Ref. No. BSEC/Admin/13:46/2024/68 and Date: 20/01/2025
8	Procurement Method	Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
9	Budget and Source of funds	Own Fund
10	EOI Closings Submission date, time & place	With all supporting documents, the EOI must be delivered on or before 10 th February, 2025 at 12 pm (BST), Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
11	EOI Opening date, time & place	10 th February, 2025 at 12:30 pm (BST), Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
12	Brief Description of the Assignment	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission is seeking an Audit/Consulting firm for conducting Special Audit on the financial statements of <i>Shinepukur Ceramics Limited</i> , for the last 5 (Five) financial years (years ended on 30 June 2020 to 30 June 2024) by following the Schedule-A (guidelines for conducting special audit of listed companies) formulated under rule 14(3) & 14(4) of the Securities and Exchange Rules, 2020. Detail TOR can be collected from the Procuring Entities Office.
13	Experience, Resources & Delivery Capacity Required	Listed Auditors of BSEC Panel Auditors are requested to submit the EOI. The EOI's will be evaluated on the basis of the following and short list will be made in accordance with the "Rule-115 of Public Procurement Rule (PPR)-2008": 1. Background of the firm's (limited to two pages). 2. The firm must have 10 (Ten) years General Experience (General experiences of the firm's limited to two pages) 3. The firm must have at least 3 Specific experience in conducting special audit of Public and Private Limited Companies (Work Completion Certificate must be provided otherwise the firm won't be shortlisted). 4. The firm must not be enforced or punished by BSEC and FRC. 5. Availability or appropriate skills or experts among staff demonstrated capacity to handle such assignment. 6. Managerial ability such as Human Resources & Logistics supports (Office & branch premises, computer and hardware accessories, Telephone, Office Equipment, vehicle Facility etc.)
14	Other Details (if applicable)	(a) EOI as well as forms/supporting documents attached shall be written in English. All pages of original documents (copies) should be duly attested by competent authority. (b) Interested firm(s) will be required to submit the EOI in closed format mentioning the name and address of the applicant, EOI no. & date and be addressed to the EOI issuing Authority in 2(two) hard copies, 01(One) marked as "ORIGINAL" and another as "COPY" in separate envelope and the soft copies of EOI must be submitted in a pen drive in PDF and Word format. Both the "ORIGINAL" and "COPY" shall have to cover within a single envelope to the address below before the EOI closing date & time. The applicant shall mention the page no. serially in every page of submitted EOI document. EOI will be opened on 10 th February, 2025 at 12:30 pm (BST), just after closing time. In case of any unavoidable circumstances such as strike, civil commotion, Govt. declared holiday etc. EOIs will be received and opened on the following working day. Upon receipt of EOIs the interested firm(s) those are deemed best suited to perform the assignment will be short listed. There after Request for Proposal (RFP) document will be issued to the short-listed firm(s). The consulting firm(s) will be selected based on Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method in accordance with the procedures set out in the PPR 2006 and PPR 2008 of GOB.
15	Phasing of Services and Time for performing & Reporting	Special Audit reports for the years ended on last 5 (Five) financial years must be delivered within 3 (three) months from the date of signing the contract.
16	Name of the Official Inviting EOI	Rana Das
17	Designation of the Official Inviting EOI	Assistant Director
18	Address of the Official Inviting EOI	Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.

The Client shall not responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firm's in connection with the preparation on delivery of the EOI. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOI's/Proposal without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Rana Das

Assistant Director

Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission

GD-241

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Food
Directorate General of Food
Procurement Division
16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka
www.dgfood.gov.bd

Date: 22/01/2025

No. 13.01.0000.093.46.015.2025-53

International Tender Notice for Import of Non-Basmati Parboiled Rice
(Package-07, FY- 2024-2025)

International tender in sealed cover are invited from bona fide traders for supply of 50,000 (Fifty thousand) (5%±) Metric Tons of Non-Basmati Parboiled Rice. The particulars of international tender are furnished below:

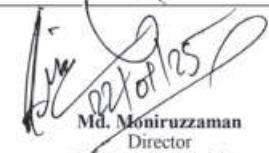
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	
1	Ministry/Division
2	Agency
3	Procuring entity name
4	Procuring entity code
5	Procuring entity district
6	Invitation for
7	Invitation Ref. No. & Date
8	KEY INFORMATION
9	Procurement method
10	FUNDING INFORMATION
11	Budget and source of fund
12	Development partners (if applicable)
13	PARTICULAR INFORMATION
14	Project/ programme / code (if applicable)
15	Project/ programme name (if applicable)
16	Package No.
17	Package name
18	Notice publication date
19	Selling of tender schedule
20	Date and time of closing
21	Date and time of opening
22	Name and address of the office(s):
23	Selling tender documents
24	Receiving place of tender
25	Opening place of tender
26	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)
27	INFORMATION FOR TENDERER
28	Eligibility of tenderer
29	Brief description of goods or works
30	Brief description of related services
31	Price of tender document (Tk.)
32	Mode of payment
33	Crop year
34	Validity of the offer
35	Quality & Specification:
36	Quality parameters
37	Specification
38	Margin of tolerance with claim for deviation beyond specification
39	Rejection
40	Moisture (maximum)
41	Broken grain (Maximum)
42	Foreign matter (Maximum)
43	Dead, damaged & discoloured grains (Maximum)
44	Radio-Activity (maximum)
45	All the parameters must be limited to percentage mentioned against each item individually and separately.
46	Pack No.
47	Identification of shipment
48	Country of origin
49	Location
50	Tender security amount (US\$)
51	Shipment period
52	PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS
53	Name of official inviting tender
54	Designation of official inviting tender
55	Address of official inviting tender
56	Contact details of official inviting tender
57	(i) Incomplete, conditional tender and alternate offer shall not be considered. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders partly or wholly without assigning any reason.
58	(ii) Tenderer who has been awarded two NOAs (Notification of Award) waiting for signing the contract or has signed two contracts but shipment under any of the contracts has not yet set sail for destination, shall not be eligible to participate in the tender.
59	(iii) Tenderer who had been awarded NOAs (Notification of Award) earlier but could not execute contract by submitting PG (Performance Guarantee) on time, shall not be eligible to participate in the next two tenders.
60	(iv) Tenderer whose bid-bonds had been forfeited twice for not submitting PG or signing contract on time, shall not be eligible to participate in the tender for the rest period of the current financial year, whether the money accruing from the bid-bonds so forfeited is deposited to the Government treasury or not;
61	(v) Tenderer whose whole PG (Performance Guarantee) had been forfeited for non-supply of the contracted quantity, shall not be eligible to participate in the tender for the rest period of the current financial year, whether the money accruing from PG so forfeited is deposited to the Government treasury or not.

All the parameters must be limited to percentage mentioned against each item individually and separately.

Pack No.	Identification of shipment	Country of origin	Location	Tender security amount (US\$)	Shipment period
Pack-07	50,000 MT (±5%) Non-Basmati Parboiled rice on CIF Liner out term	Any country of the world except Israel	Chattogram Port-60% and Mongla Port-40%	US\$ 300,000 (Three hundred thousand) in favour of Director General of Food for 50,000 MT Parboiled rice (±5%) in the form of a Bank Draft/Pay-Order (No Bank Guarantee is allowed)	40 (forty) days from the date of opening of the L/C. Note that at least 50% of the total quantity must be shipped within 25 days of opening of the L/C.

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

26	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Moniruzzaman
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Director (Procurement)
28	Address of official inviting tender	Office Chamber of Director (Procurement), Room No. 501, Directorate General of Food, 16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka.
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: +88-02-41050178 E-mail: dpoc@dgfood.gov.bd
30	(i) Incomplete, conditional tender and alternate offer shall not be considered. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders partly or wholly without assigning any reason.	
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Md. Moniruzzaman
Director
Procurement Division
Directorate General of Food
Phone: +88-02-41050178
Email: dpoc@dgfood.gov.bd



বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটি অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন

সিকিউরিটি কমিশন ভবন, ই-৬/সি আগারাগাঁও, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর প্রশাসনিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৭

Date: 20/01/2025

Request for Expressions of Interest For Selection of Consulting/Audit Firm (National)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Finance / Financial Institution Division
2	Agency	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission
3	Procuring Entity	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
5	Assignment Name	Special Audit on the financial statements of <i>Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.</i> for the last 5 (Five) financial years (years ended on 30 June 2020 to 30 June 2024).
6	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Consulting/Audit Firm (National)
7	EOI Ref. No.	Ref. No. BSEC/Admin/13:44/2024/67 and Date: 20/01/2025
8	Procurement Method	Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
9	Budget and Source of funds	Own Fund
10	EOI Closings Submission date, time & place	With all supporting documents, the EOI must be delivered on or before 12 th February, 2025 at 12 pm (BST), Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
11	EOI Opening date, time & place	12 th February, 2025 at 12:30 pm (BST), Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
12	Brief Description of the Assignment	Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission is seeking an Audit/Consulting firm for conducting Special Audit on the financial statements of <i>Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.</i> for the last 5 (Five) financial years (years ended on 30 June 2020 to 30 June 2024) by following the Schedule-A (guidelines for conducting special audit of listed companies) formulated under rule 14(3) & 14(4) of the Securities and Exchange Rules, 2020. Detail TOR can be collected from the Procuring Entities Office.
13	Experience, Resources & Delivery Capacity Required	Listed Auditors of BSEC Panel Auditors are requested to submit the EOI. The EOI's will be evaluated on the basis of the following and short list will be made in accordance with the "Rule-115 of Public Procurement Rule (PPR)-2008": 1. Background of the firm's (limited to two pages). 2. The firm must have 10 (Ten) years General Experience (General experiences of the firm's limited to two pages) 3. The firm must have at least 3 Specific experience in conducting special audit of Public and Private Limited Companies (Work Completion Certificate must be provided otherwise the firm won't be shortlisted). 4. The firm must not be enforced or punished by BSEC and FRC. 5. Availability or appropriate skills or experts among staff demonstrated capacity to handle such assignment. 6. Managerial ability such as Human Resources & Logistics supports (Office & branch premises, computer and hardware accessories, Telephone, Office Equipment, vehicle Facility etc.)
14	Other Details (if applicable)	(a) EOI as well as forms/supporting documents attached shall be written in English. All pages of original documents (copies) should be duly attested by competent authority. (b) Interested firm(s) will be required to submit the EOI in closed format mentioning the name and address of the applicant, EOI no. & date and be addressed to the EOI issuing Authority in 2(two) hard copies, 01(One) marked as "ORIGINAL" and another as "COPY" in separate envelope and the soft copies of EOI must be submitted in a pen drive in PDF and Word format. Both the "ORIGINAL" and "COPY" shall have to cover within a single envelope to the address below before the EOI closing date & time. The applicant shall mention the page no. serially in every page of submitted EOI document. EOI will be opened on 12 th February, 2025 at 12:30 pm (BST), just after closing time. In case of any unavoidable circumstances such as strike, civil commotion, Govt. declared holiday etc. EOIs will be received and opened on the following working day. Upon receipt of EOIs the interested firm(s) those are deemed best suited to perform the assignment will be short listed. There after Request for Proposal (RFP) document will be issued to the short-listed firm(s). The consulting firm(s) will be selected based on Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method in accordance with the procedures set out in the PPR 2006 and PPR 2008 of GOB.
15	Phasing of Services and Time for performing & Reporting	Special Audit reports for the years ended on last 5 (Five) financial years must be delivered within 3 (three) months from the date of signing the contract.
16	Name of the Official Inviting EOI	Rana Das
17	Designation of the Official Inviting EOI	Assistant Director
18	Address of the Official Inviting EOI	Securities Commission Bhaban, E-6/C, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Administrative Area, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.

The Client shall not responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the firm's in connection with the preparation on delivery of the EOI. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOI's/Proposal without assigning any reason whatsoever.

PATHWAYS TO A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

Balancing sustainability, equity and industry growth in the RMG sector

Oxfam in Bangladesh in collaboration with The Daily Star organised a roundtable discussion titled "Pathways to a Just Energy Transition : Balancing Sustainability, Equity and Industry Growth in the RMG sector" on January 13, 2025. Here, we publish a summary of the discussion.



Ashish Damle,
Country Director,
Oxfam in Bangladesh

The emphasis on justice within the energy transition has always been central to Oxfam's discourse. Through our work with various communities, including workers and affected populations, we have observed that transitions driven by market forces can have adverse impacts if not addressed through appropriate policies.

Oxfam's primary focus has always been to assess the impacts of these transitions. We have identified three or four key areas of concern and have actively voiced them, particularly given Bangladesh's position as one of the largest garment producing nations and a major supplier to European countries. Our advocacy extends beyond Bangladesh to

Bangladesh's position in global negotiations.



Dr Mohammad Emran Hasan, Head of Climate Justice & Natural Resources Rights, Oxfam in Bangladesh & Keynote Speaker

Energy transition is regarded one of the most plausible solutions to protect humanity from the most severe consequences of climate change. When it comes to the fair share of carbon, the Global North has already surpassed its limit. However, it turns to an unjust, colonial approach as they keep using fossil fuels while prescribing transitions for developing countries.

Despite Bangladesh's minimal carbon footprint, energy transition is essential to meet global demands. The Earth receives about 1.52 million



RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Advocate for patent-free just energy technologies to enable local manufacturing in countries like Bangladesh, particularly for the garment industry.
- » Align just energy transitions with global commitments, ensuring private sector engagement and addressing the geopolitical shifts that undermine progress.
- » Strengthen policy dialogues and create a robust framework, enabling unified commitments for Bangladesh to take a leadership role in global climate discussions.
- » Establish a centralised, authoritative repository of data to support evidence-based decision-making and strengthen Bangladesh's position in global energy negotiations.
- » Shift focus from energy security to energy sovereignty to reduce reliance on imports.
- » Implement a comprehensive strategy for the generation, distribution, and transmission of renewable energy.
- » Prioritise the adoption of energy-efficient technologies within all sectors including RMG.
- » Subsidise the clean energy sector through government support rather than reliance on taxation.
- » Support small and medium RMG factories with funding and modern machinery to progress industrialisation.
- » Hold international buyers accountable as sustainable guidelines evolve, ensuring technical support.

Europe, the UK, and the US.

Firstly, we have consistently raised the issue of whether just energy technologies are being made patent-free. For garment industries, acquiring these technologies is often a necessity. However, since they are not patent-free, they cannot be manufactured locally. This creates a challenging situation where countries like Bangladesh are forced to import these technologies.

Secondly, we recognise the need to align just energy transitions with broader global commitments. Last year, COP29 essentially failed to meet its targets. By 2024, the Paris Agreement's threshold was surpassed, with global temperatures rising by 1.6 degrees Celsius instead of the agreed 1.5 degrees. These developments disproportionately affect countries like Bangladesh. Amplifying these voices on a global scale is critical, especially given the geopolitical shifts and the resurgence of fossil fuel-focused political campaigns. If business interests are not adequately addressed during the adoption of just energy transition technologies, it would be a grave oversight. It is very important to have solid engagement with the private sector.

Thirdly, there is a significant deficit in policy dialogues, resulting in a lack of a robust policy framework. This creates systemic weaknesses in negotiations. For Bangladesh to progress, strong and unified commitments are crucial. While efforts have been made in the past, they often remain isolated. It is the right time for Bangladesh to take a leadership role by collaborating with the top 20 climate-impacted countries. Sustained leadership in this area could strengthen the country's position on the global stage, as Bangladesh is one of the most affected by these transitions.

Lastly, when addressing the just energy transition and technologies in Bangladesh, it is imperative to rely on solid, substantiated data and research. Although data exists, it often lacks consolidation. A centralised, authoritative repository of data is essential for substantiating arguments and strengthening

war exposed its fragility. Price spikes in oil and LNG disrupted supply chains, causing power plant shutdowns, despite years of investment. This underscores the need for energy sovereignty rather than mere security, as reliance on imports leaves Bangladesh vulnerable to external shocks.

COVID-19 and power shortages further strained industries, particularly the RMG sector, which depends on captive power. However, LNG and gas shortages, along with recent price hikes, have limited its effectiveness. Experts agree that captive power alone cannot sustain the sector. Bangladesh must focus on energy sovereignty by maximising domestic resources, such as gas, and investing in renewables like solar and wind. Policies should be tailored to the country's unique context, prioritising local expertise to ensure a sustainable energy future.

Wasirul Rahman Tonmoy, Sr. Coordinator, Capacity Development, Manusher Jonno Foundation

A just energy transition to renewables involves both technical and social aspects. Our focus is on the social dimension, advocating for energy access as a human right, particularly for marginalised groups such as women, labourers, ethnic minorities, and coastal populations vulnerable to climate change. A study of 23 policies revealed a glaring omission: none explicitly included women in terms of access to energy or renewable benefits, as seen in policies like the National Energy Policy 2004 and Renewable Energy Policy 2008.

These policies also overlook the risks of job displacement due to automation, particularly for marginalised women, and fail to address the equitable distribution of benefits or skill gaps. The lack of coordination among policies hinders progress, as technical experts often neglect social challenges, and human rights advocates struggle with technical aspects. Bridging this gap requires inclusive policies that integrate both technical and social considerations to ensure an equitable transition. Gender-sensitive budgeting and reducing bureaucratic barriers are essential.

Sohanur Rahman, Executive Coordinator, YouthNet Global

Given the existence of a Just Energy Transition platform in Bangladesh, my key question is: what are the primary challenges in implementing a just energy transition within the RMG sector? How can we address the vulnerabilities of climate-affected individuals who migrate to Dhaka, join the RMG industry, and face compounded challenges? What measures can ensure their protection and resilience during this transition? We are striving to achieve sustainable goals where just and equitable results are reached at the finish line. Inclusive growth is the way forward.

Azad Abul Kalam, Manager – Just Energy Transition, ActionAid

Since 2010, Bangladesh's energy sector has grown rapidly through rental and quick rental initiatives, with the government showcasing it as a key success. However, the 2021 Ukraine

it is crucial to ensure the active participation of trade unions, a stance supported by Oxfam to foster meaningful community engagement.

Md Mahfuzur Rahman Mishu, Foreign Affairs Editor, Jamuna Television

We often discuss renewable energy, yet lack a comprehensive plan, with minimal input from entrepreneurs and experts. Projects like Pairsa and Ruppur have overlooked critical factors. For a sustainable RMG sector, prioritising eco-friendly energy solutions aligned with brand indicators is essential to prevent the loss of vital remittance flows.

FAIZA TUBA, Programme Manager, Laudes Foundation

When discussing patents, it's worth noting that Bangladesh remains the second-largest apparel manufacturing industry—a remarkable achievement rooted in homegrown efforts. However, when it comes to a just energy transition, Bangladesh must adopt a place-based approach, tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each region with people at its core.

In terms of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the private sector is largely excluded in the discussion. If they are not engaged effectively, reducing emissions will be extremely difficult and we cannot hold them accountable if they did not sign up in the first place. This highlights the urgency for comprehensive needs assessments as a central priority in our planning efforts.

Shahriar Ahmed Chowdhury, Head of Centre for Energy Research, United International University (UIU)

Despite previous heavy investments in fossil fuels, often linked to tax evasion, a similar level of investment could shift towards renewable energy. However, the reality is that solar energy is heavily taxed in Bangladesh, with 11% on solar panels, 38% on inverters, and 58% on batteries and structures.

For the RMG sector, lifting the upper limit on net metering would help accelerate renewable energy integration. Many RMG factories, being multi-storey, lack space for rooftop solar installations. Allowing factories to set up solar systems in any location with a wheeling charge would make solar energy more accessible and cost-effective, with rooftop solar costing around 4-5 Taka per unit versus 10 Taka or more from the grid.

EPZs operate as utility clients, but companies within these zones cannot buy electricity directly from solar providers. Utility organisations act as intermediaries, adding their margin. Net metering does not function effectively within EPZs due to resistance from utilities. A solution could be ensuring these organisations

earn comparable profits from rooftop solar systems as they do from traditional utility services.

Finally, there is no comprehensive nationwide grid study, and renewable energy targets have been set unrealistically. The Renewable Energy Policy set a target of 5% by 2015 and 10% by 2020, yet in 2024, we have barely reached 3%. Feasibility studies are needed to set more realistic targets.

Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan, Domain Coordinator- Water, Food and Climate, Helvetas Bangladesh

To progress, we must assess current needs and evaluate how closely we follow expert-mapped renewable energy projects. The book Prospects of Renewable Energy Transition in Bangladesh's RMG Industry by Oxfam and CPD offers valuable insights. However, a key challenge remains: lack of trust among academicians, practitioners, and policymakers.

We must increase renewable solar energy use in the RMG sector through solar rooftops and grid integration. Bangladesh's access to global support mechanisms like the CTCN provides an opportunity for responsible technology transfer, with BGMEA and BKMEA potentially establishing funds for these efforts. Providing solar stoves to female garment workers could effectively promote renewable energy adoption.

Abdullah Hil Rakib, Managing Director, Team Group

The high cost of LNG, which requires foreign currency and is limited by our reserves, highlights the need for internal energy audits. These audits, focusing on production, captive electricity use, and industrial distribution, could significantly improve efficiency. While the government offers green funds and public private partnership policies, proper incentives are needed to drive green transformation.

Many small factories lack the eligibility or motivation to implement necessary changes. Comprehensive energy audits across the RMG and non-RMG sectors would help identify the 28% energy waste, costing billions annually. By focusing on reducing energy costs, exploring local gas sources, and adopting strategies like "reduce, recover, report, and renew," we can save both energy and foreign exchange. Improving energy efficiency in factories would reduce production costs and align with government policies.

While Bangladesh has 233 globally recognised green factories, which consume 20-30% less power than conventional factories, widespread adoption requires greater policy support. Post Rana Plaza, investments in resilience have reduced power consumption, yet renewable energy remains untapped.



Dr. Munjurul Hannan Khan, Executive Director and Founder, Nature Conservation Management (NACOM)

The government's investments in renewable energy are reasonable, given its global ambitions, but Dhaka has yet to establish the required infrastructure.

Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) trained around 30,000 people in renewable energy, yet their contributions have fallen short. In the garments industry, equitable access must ensure fair opportunities across the value chain, addressing inequalities. Widespread awareness and education are crucial, with all stakeholders—including the government, businesses, and workers—sharing responsibilities. Ministerial level coordination, backed by political will, is vital for success.



Faruque Hassan, Former President, BGMEA

We are advocating for rooftop solar energy, particularly in areas with major projects.

However, investment is lacking, despite this being a well-supported area in the past. The adoption of solar energy requires the integration of various components, which demands financial support. Bureaucratic obstacles, taxes, and corruption hinder progress. The government should subsidise the clean energy sector rather than relying on taxes. Bangladesh Bank and IFC currently offer green finance services.

Small and medium factories with outdated machinery struggle to industrialise further, facing financial challenges. Around 230 factories in Bangladesh have received internationally recognised certification. We aim to involve more brands and buyers, with H&M and Bestseller supporting a 500 MW wind power project expected soon.

International buyers must also take responsibility as sustainable practices evolve. Technical, policy, and financial support are essential to expanding green factories. The apparel and garment industry depends on two core raw materials: cotton and petrochemicals. Both sectors face challenges, and hybrid production processes may offer solutions.



Tanjim Ferdous, In-Charge, NGOs & Foreign Missions, Business Development Team, The Daily Star & Moderator

The RMG sector is recognised as the backbone of Bangladesh's economy. This significant sector has been facing challenges, particularly due to global energy scarcity and the war in Ukraine, which have created an unstable situation. Additionally, the rising cost of electricity and the growing need for a sustainable and uninterrupted energy system are becoming increasingly pressing concerns.

TAHSAN to host 'Family Feud'

Globally popular show *Family Feud* is coming to Bangladesh through OTT platform Bongo. The programme will premiere on a television channel on January 27, and subsequently be released on the OTT platform. Renowned musician and actor Tahsan Khan will host the show.

A press conference was held at a five-star hotel in the capital on Tuesday.

Regarding his role as host, the singer said, *'Family Feud'* has captured the hearts of audiences in more than 75 countries worldwide, and now it's here in Bangladesh. I feel deeply honoured and delighted to host such an international show for the first time."

Special episodes of the programme will feature well-known personalities such as Manoj Pramanik, Shahnaz Khushi and Brindaban Das, among others.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Papia Sarwar to receive posthumous Rabindra Padak



The 43rd Jatiyo Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad will posthumously honour the revered Rabindra Sangeet singer Papia Sarwar, with the Rabindra Padak.

The award honours her remarkable contributions to Bengali music. Her unique voice and masterful interpretations of Rabindra Sangeet and modern Bangla songs have cemented her enduring legacy.

The event set to be held at the Chhayanaut Shangskriti-Bhavan auditorium in the capital's Dhammandi area from January 23 to 25, will additionally feature performances and discussions aimed at celebrating the lasting impact of Rabindranath Tagore's works on Bengali culture.

She served as general secretary and later as an executive committee member of the Jatiyo Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad, promoting Tagore's works.

Sabina Yasmin set to return to music

After her courageous battle against cancer, the iconic singer Sabina Yasmin is ready to make her musical comeback through two major events in Dhaka on January 31 and February 1, followed by a stage show in Chattogram.

She expressed her joy at returning, saying, "By Allah's grace, I am returning to music. Music has been my life for six decades, and it is where I find my greatest



happiness. Coming back to music feels wonderful."

The songstress shared that several music directors have approached her about recording new songs. She therefore intends to work on new recordings alongside her stage performances.

She is set to rehearse with instrumentalists from January 26 to 28 to refine her skills before the shows.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Totodine Deri Hoyer Jai'

Experience an unforgettable evening of music, storytelling, and reflections on past times as the acclaimed urban folk band Kaaktaal is set to grace the stage this month. Through their captivating melodies, during the **Totodine Deri Hoyer Jai** event, embark on a journey where moments merge, time weaves its threads, and gently fades away.

DATE: FRIDAY | JANUARY 31
TIME: 6PM ONWARDS
VENUE: BANGLADESH MILITARY MUSEUM

'Chaalchitro' to stream on Hoichoi this February

The much-anticipated film *Chaalchitro*, which initially released in theatres on December 20, marked Ziaul Faruq Apurba's debut in Tollywood. OTT platform Hoichoi has now officially announced that the film is set to release on February 7.

The storyline of *Chaalchitro* is centred around a 12-year-old case.

Notably, director Pratim D Gupta revealed plans for a sequel just seven days after the film's theatrical release.



The next installment will pick up where the first part concluded. Produced under the banner of Friends Communication, the film features Ziaul Faruq Apurba alongside an ensemble cast including Raima Sen, Tota Roy Chowdhury, Anirban Chakrabarti, Bratya Basu, and Shantanu Maheshwari, among others.



Berlinale to feature 'Shudhu Takar Jonno' by Tabib Mahmud and Rana Mridha

Indian Bengali film *Baksho Bondi* (Shadowbox) has been nominated for the prestigious 75th Berlin International Film Festival. It notably features the title track sung by Bangladeshi's *Gully Boy* famed duo, Tabib Mahmud and Rana Mridha.

The song, titled *Shudhu Takar Jonno*, was written and composed by Tabib Mahmud, with music arranged by Shubhro Raha. The 75th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival announced the list of selected films yesterday, with *Baksho Bondi* featured in the Berlinale Perspectives category. This section showcases 13 films from emerging directors worldwide.

Earlier in 2023, Tabib and Rana made waves with their song *Chap Nai*, which was featured in the Indian series *Kaala*, directed by Bejoy Nambiar for Disney+ Hotstar.

NEWS

Trump targets US diversity scheme

FROM PAGE 16
receive government contracts from hiring employees from marginalized backgrounds - what the order called "illegal DEI discrimination and preferences" - and asked government agencies to identify private companies that might be subject to civil investigation.

In a government memo issued on Tuesday, federal agencies were told to put diversity staff on paid leave "immediately" - specifically by 17:00 local time (22:00 GMT) yesterday.

The order also stipulates that federal and private-sector employment preferences for military veterans could continue.

Trump signed a memorandum that ends a Biden administration initiative

to promote diversity in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), ordering the FAA Administrator to immediately stop DEI hiring programmes, the White House said.

He also touted a huge AI project in a shock-and-awe start to his second presidency -- but faced defiance including a rare public dressing down from a bishop.

Flanked at the White House by the chiefs of Japanese giant Softbank, Oracle and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, Trump announced a venture called "Stargate" which will "invest \$500 billion, at least," in AI infrastructure in the United States.

"This monumental undertaking is a resounding declaration of confidence in America's potential,"

said Trump.

Trump also faced fresh criticism from an unexpected and powerful voice Tuesday when a Washington bishop told him from the pulpit that he was sowing fear among America's immigrants and LGBTQ people, reports AFP.

"I ask you to have mercy, Mr President," the Washington National Cathedral's Mariann Edgar Budde told an unsmiling Trump, seated in the front pew for the customary inaugural service next to his wife Melania.

Early yesterday, Trump blasted Budde on his Truth Social platform, calling the Episcopal bishop "nasty" and demanding an apology.

Laid-off

FROM PAGE 16

Yesterday's demonstrations demanding the reopening of the factories began at 3:00pm in the Kashimpur (Mouzar Mil) area on the Chandra-Nabinagar highway. The protests blocking the highway caused massive traffic jams, leading to sufferings of passengers.

At one point, the agitated workers vandalised a number of vehicles. They also attacked journalists and damaged their motorcycles, said Abu Taleb, senior assistant superintendent of police of Gazipur Industrial Police 2.

Rafiqul Islam, officer in charge of Kashimpur Police Station, said a truck and three buses were torched during the protests. The situation remained tense late into the night.

"As students, they have every right to do so. But as a nation and as a party, we cannot be part of that. We have our own narrative," he said, adding that over the last 15 years, the BNP has fought.

"And 1971 is our very existence, our Liberation War. Neglecting these and emphasising only 2024 will not be acceptable."

"I've said this before, I somehow feel that there is an attempt by a group to downplay 1971."

"I can't exactly tell you, but I feel there might be some thoughts or efforts to push 1971 into oblivion."

"You all know that who will benefit by doing so. I don't want to say it," he said.

In his interview, Fakhrul said the issue of banning the Awami League is entirely up to the people.

Norwegian media group Schibsted Media, owner of major newspapers in Norway and Sweden, said yesterday that it was cutting 13 percent of its workforce in the face of falling print circulations and stagnating advertising revenue.

Around 350 full-time staff positions will be cut by the group, which currently has some 2,800 employees in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Poland, it said in a statement.

18,000 workers in depths of despair

FROM PAGE 16

able to travel to Malaysia has gripped these families, many of whom are now grappling to repay loans they had taken to pay the recruiting agencies.

Md Ratan, a man from Tangail, took a loan to pay Tk 4 lakh to a recruitment agency. "I am drowning in debt. The loan instalments and interest are unmanageable. I've had to sell land just to survive," Ratan said.

Md Kawser, who paid Tk 6 lakh, expressed similar frustration. "The government's negligence has worsened our situation. Every assurance feels hollow," he lamented.

Md Khulkun, another worker who missed the deadline for entry into Malaysia, said, "I was promised I'd be sent by January. But now the interest on my loans keeps growing, and I can't even bear my family's basic expenses. We want to go to Malaysia by February."

After the debacle under its watch, the previous regime failed to make any progress in resolving the crisis in the last two months before its ouster.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's visit on October 4 last year after the political changeover finally cast

BNP, Khelafat Majlis

FROM PAGE 16

Kader said the major issues on which they reached an agreement with the BNP include forging unity among anti-fascist political parties, continuing inter-party dialogue to consolidate national unity, completing the necessary reforms quickly, and holding national elections by 2025.

Other key points are controlling commodity prices, improving the law and order situation, playing a positive role in upholding Islamic values and protecting religious harmony, ensuring the speedy trial of those involved in murder, disappearance, and torture, and promptly withdrawing the false cases filed against ulama and political leaders and activists during the Awami regime.

Khelafat Majlis, one of the components of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, had quit the BNP's coalition in 2021, reportedly under duress from the then Awami League government.

This was the first time the party held a formal meeting with the BNP after leaving the alliance.

The meeting is seen as very significant, as it was held a day after Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolon Bangladesh announced they would work together in the interests of the country, Islam, and humanity.

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and

a ray of hope for the distraught families of the stranded workers.

During a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, Anwar said he would consider the entry of the 18,000 Bangladeshi workers as soon as possible if all conditions are met.

The interim government then made repeated assurances to address the plight of these workers. But as the wait got longer, the workers formed a human chain in front of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in Dhaka, demanding urgent action on December 29 last year.

They withdrew their protest after receiving assurances that their demand would be met.

The workers blocked the Karwan Bazar roundabout in Dhaka yesterday as frustration boiled over again. Police removed them after an hour and a half.

Later, they marched to the ministry and blocked the road in front of it, staying until 1:00pm.

Once again, Adviser Asif Nazrul assured them they would be sent to Malaysia in phases, starting in late March or early April.

Speaking to the protesters, the adviser

promised that workers with BMET cards and visas would begin travelling to Malaysia by the end of March in phases.

"Those without BMET cards but with visas will be prioritised next. Workers without visas or BMET cards were advised to reclaim their passports and funds from the recruitment agencies, with the ministry offering support through local police stations if agencies refused to comply," he told them.

The ministry's Secretary Ruhul Amin said two committee members in Bangladesh and one in Malaysia were formed to address the issue.

"We've held a joint meeting with Malaysia and plan another next month. If all goes well, we hope to send these workers to Malaysia by late March or early April," he said.

The crisis came after Malaysia reopened its labour market to Bangladeshi workers in 2022, following a four-year suspension due to recruitment irregularities.

Between August 2022 and April 2024, nearly 450,000 Bangladeshi workers migrated to Malaysia, making it the second largest job market for Bangladeshi after Saudi Arabia.

Only farmers

FROM PAGE 16

commander added.

At the meeting, Col Md Imran Ibne A Rouf, sector commander of BGB, Raishahi, led the Bangladesh team, while Arun Kumar Gautam, DIG of BSF's Malda sector, led the Indian team. Lt Col Golam Kibria and I19 BSF Commander Suruj Sing were also present at the meeting.

Tensions between the two forces had recently escalated due to the BSF's alleged construction of a barbed wire fence near the zero line at the Chouka border on January 7 and the felling of mango trees in Bangladesh by Indian nationals near the Chouka and Kirangani border areas on January 18.

2 stabbed

FROM PAGE 16

Sub Inspector Maruf Ahmed, told this newspaper that unidentified people were made accused since the attackers had face masks. He added the family suspects a man named Yasin Sikdar, who had been arrested on charges of kidnapping Kader's brother Mintu Sikdar four months ago, was involved in the attack.

Mintu alleged Yasin and his associates had been threatening the family since their release on bail.

A senior police officer, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that they suspect "transactions of money" might be a reason behind the attack.

What's next for Digital Financial Services in Bangladesh?

AMEERA FAIROOZ

Bangladesh's digital payments infrastructure has undergone multiple shifts over the past few years, with Mobile Financial Services (MFS) emerging as a key contributor. During the Covid-19 pandemic, mobile money played a crucial role in enabling millions of people to access digital financial services (DFS) for their daily needs. As the impact of the pandemic eased, mobile money usage surged in 2022, surpassing pre-Covid levels.

The habit of using digital payments, enforced by the pandemic, has become deeply ingrained for many, indicating a fundamental shift in consumer behaviour. Amidst pandemic-induced lockdowns and restrictions, the reliance on digital payments, including mobile money, has surged globally, contributing to the rapid expansion of registered accounts and active usage. Looking at the post-Covid figures, total MFS transactions have increased nearly threefold from 2020 till H1 2024.

BARRIERS TO SCALING DFS IN BANGLADESH

Barriers to scaling digital financial services (DFS) in Bangladesh are numerous despite the introduction of innovative products catering to diverse consumer and business needs. Mobile Financial Services (MFS), digital wallets, digital nano loans, and online payment platforms have become integral to daily financial transactions. However, the country's digital payments infrastructure requires significant development to reach its full potential.

One major challenge is the absence of interoperability across platforms, which raises transaction costs and complicates the seamless transfer of funds between financial systems. This lack of connectivity fragments the payments ecosystem and results in user friction, as consumers are forced to cash in and out frequently when navigating different services. Enhanced interoperability would enable smoother, cost-effective digital transactions and contribute to a more cohesive financial system.

Another issue is the insufficient adoption of security standards. Payment security frameworks like the Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council (PCI-SSC) and EMV are critical for safeguarding transactions, yet their slow implementation leaves systems vulnerable to fraud and cyberattacks.

A lack of incentives to encourage digital transactions further impedes the adoption of electronic payment systems. Government and regulatory bodies need to take proactive steps to offer incentives that drive greater integration and use of DFS solutions.

Poor internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas, also hinders the effective deployment of electronic payment systems. Slow and expensive internet, coupled with events like the recent six-day nationwide internet shutdown, has caused significant damage to the IT industry and eroded consumer trust in digital financial services.

Additionally, the dual role of regulatory bodies as operators in the payment ecosystem creates conflicts of interest. This overlap can result in biased decisions that stifle innovation and inhibit fair competition among stakeholders, ultimately undermining the development of a dynamic and inclusive digital financial ecosystem.

DESIGNING A BLUEPRINT FOR A ROBUST PAYMENTS INFRASTRUCTURE

To understand the challenges in the infrastructure, it is important to learn the key elements and how they piece together to form an ecosystem.

Digital identification

Bangladesh has taken leaps in developing digital identification systems, particularly with the rollout of Smart NIDs and Bangla QR. These initiatives aim to streamline transactions, enhance security, and improve access to government services. The Bangla QR system facilitates cashless transactions, while smart IDs offer secure authentication for individuals accessing

various services.

However, challenges remain in ensuring universal adoption and interoperability across different platforms and services. India's Aadhaar system revolutionised digital identification by providing a unique biometric ID to over 1.2 billion individuals, facilitating access to financial services and government benefits. While the e-KYC process has become much more efficient, there is still room for improvement in achieving widespread adoption and integration across various services.

Interoperability

The Central Bank of Bangladesh, in collaboration with the ICT Division, established the Interoperable Digital Transaction Platform (IDTP) known as 'Binimoy' in 2022. This initiative aimed to overcome the prevailing fragmentation among MFS providers and Payment Service Providers (PSPs), which inhibited seamless money transfers across different platforms.

While the initiative held promise for enhancing financial accessibility, its implementation faced hurdles. Private sector entities took a lead role in the development process, resulting in a lack of comprehensive user testing and pilot programs. Consequently, the platform encountered security vulnerabilities, leading to instances of financial malpractice within days of its launch.

Data security

While Bangladesh has taken steps to enhance data security measures, including the enactment of the Data Security Act, there are still gaps in enforcement and

digital infrastructure forward.

The key benefits of a digital data repository are numerous. By deploying multi-factor authentication services, such as a repository provides users with full control over their information, thereby enhancing privacy and data protection. Additionally, digitally stored documents streamline bureaucratic processes, eliminating inefficiencies and reducing the burden of carrying numerous physical documents. This digital transformation simplifies verification and submission procedures, offering significant convenience to users. It accommodates various document formats and facilitates digital signatures, simplifying the verification and submission process.

GLOBAL INSIGHTS: HOW INDIA AND SINGAPORE SHAPED THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE

While India and Singapore showcase advanced, integrated payment infrastructures with strong regulatory frameworks, interoperability, and consumer trust, Bangladesh is still developing its digital financial ecosystem. The country's ongoing efforts, particularly in mobile financial services and digital identity, reflect a commitment to improvement, but challenges remain. To enhance its payments infrastructure, Bangladesh can draw lessons from the successes of India and Singapore in establishing regulatory clarity, promoting interoperability, and driving consumer adoption.

Regulatory framework

Singapore has a well-established regulatory framework overseen by the Monetary

by initiatives like Fast And Secure Transfers (FAST) and Singapore Quick Response Code (SGQR). These systems enable seamless transactions between banks and payment service providers, enhancing user experience.

On the other hand, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) excels in interoperability, enabling seamless transactions across platforms. It features QR-based payments where customers can scan merchant-displayed codes for easy transfers. UPI's layered architecture enhances scalability and flexibility by building on existing systems.

CONSUMER EDUCATION AND TRUST

Government and regulatory bodies like the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have launched large-scale campaigns, such as the 'RBI Kehta Hai' initiative, aimed at educating consumers on the safe use of digital payments, which has boosted trust and reduced apprehensions around security issues.

Way forward

To develop a robust layered payments infrastructure, it is essential to evaluate existing systems and identify areas for improvement and integration. A crucial first step is addressing the digital divide, which forms the cornerstone of an inclusive payments ecosystem. This gap encompasses disparities in access to smart devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. Initiatives to subsidise smart devices, lower transaction costs, and extend reliable internet to rural areas must be prioritised. Additionally, introducing



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

compliance. Strengthening data security protocols, implementing encryption standards, and fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness are essential steps to safeguarding digital assets and preventing unauthorised access or data breaches. The vulnerability of data security has been magnified with the hacking of 25 local websites leaking sensitive information of various stakeholder groups. Bangladesh's data security and consent frameworks are still evolving, with opportunities to strengthen user rights and privacy protections.

In comparison, Singapore has stringent data protection laws, such as the Personal Data Protection Act, ensuring high standards for data security. Bangladesh can draw inspiration from Singapore's approach to data governance and explore opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing in developing robust data protection frameworks.

Data repository

While Bangladesh has made strides in its digital transformation journey, particularly within the MFS segment and the advent of digital banking guidelines, the establishment of a robust data repository remains a pivotal component that is yet to be fully realised. Drawing inspiration from India's DigiLocker, Bangladesh can leverage innovative solutions to propel its

Authority of Singapore (MAS), which promotes innovation while ensuring consumer protection and financial stability. The Payment Services Act (2019) consolidates the regulation of various payment services, providing clear guidelines for operations and licensing. This regulatory clarity fosters a competitive environment that encourages the entry of fintech companies.

Additionally, the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) offers a balanced approach to personal data protection by regulating the collection, use, disclosure, and care of personal data. It applies to all private sector organisations, regardless of size, ensuring that a wide range of entities adhere to data protection principles. Central to the PDPA is the emphasis on obtaining consent from individuals before collecting, using, or disclosing their personal data. This empowers individuals to have control over their personal information and promotes transparency in how organisations handle data. In contrast, Bangladesh's regulatory landscape is still evolving, with overlapping roles among regulatory bodies that can hinder innovation and create conflicts of interest.

State of interoperability

Singapore's payment ecosystem is characterised by high interoperability among various payment systems, facilitated

value-added services such as micro-credit and conducting financial literacy programs can drive adoption among underserved populations, creating a more equitable and inclusive payment ecosystem in Bangladesh.

By refining and "stacking" these systems, Bangladesh can achieve seamless digital payment operations. In the presence of an interoperable digital platform, a ripple effect can be generated across multiple sectors, encouraging key players to adopt these services and collaboratively address market demand.

While the country has embraced the growth of digital financial services over the years, the road ahead demands a coordinated and deliberate approach. Strengthening interoperability, enhancing data security, and fostering digital literacy are vital steps toward a robust, layered payment infrastructure. By addressing regulatory challenges and ensuring seamless integration across platforms, Bangladesh can unlock the full potential of its digital economy, driving financial inclusion and sustainable growth for the future.

Ameera Fairooz is a consultant at LightCastle Partners with a background in International Business from Dhaka University.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT



BRAC

Senior Manager, Insights & Innovation Research, Social Innovation Lab

Deadline: January 25

Eligibility:

• Master's degree or equivalent in Economics, Development Studies, Anthropology, Public Policy, Behavioral Science, Psychology, or other related fields from any recognised university.

Minimum experience: 5 years



act:onaid

ActionAid Bangladesh

Programme Officer, Implementation

Deadline: January 25

Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree in Social Science from a reputed university, with an understanding of project implementation, facilitation and training delivery, training follow-up, and impact assessment.

Minimum experience: 2 years

International Rescue Committee



WPE Caseworker

Deadline: January 22

Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree in Psychology/ Gender or Women's Studies/ Social Work/ Social Science or other relevant subjects.

Minimum experience: 2 years

SMC Enterprise Ltd.



Sales Officer

Deadline: January 25

Eligibility:

• Master's degree in any discipline, with field sales experience in FMCG or pharmaceuticals receiving preference.

Minimum experience: 2 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



"Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it."



78 million job opportunities will be available by 2030: Report

NEXT STEP DESK

A recent report titled 'Future of Jobs Report 2025' by World Economic Forum projects a net increase of 78 million jobs globally by 2030, as rapid technological advancements and demographic shifts reshape the global workforce. The report estimates that while 170 million new roles will be created, 92 million positions will be displaced, reflecting a net disruption of 22% of jobs over the next five years.

Drawing from data collected from over 1,000 companies across 22 industries in 55 economies, the report identifies technological innovations, economic pressures, and geopolitical tensions as the primary drivers of these changes. Key findings highlight the accelerating need for reskilling, with 63% of employers citing skills gap as a major challenge.

5 free courses to start your machine learning journey

MARWAN KHADEM

Curious about the buzz around AI breakthroughs and wondering how to dive in? Whether you're keen to understand algorithms or eager to teach machines how to learn, these five courses are perfect for getting started stress-free.

Machine Learning Crash Course by Google

This course consists of modules designed to teach learners basic and advanced ML concepts. It starts with essential topics like Classification, Linear Regression,

and Logistic Regression, which help you learn about building basic ML models. The course also covers some necessary data handling techniques and addresses challenges like overfitting.

Stanford CS229: Machine Learning Course by Andrew Ng

This course covers foundational machine-related topics such as supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning. It is ideal for those looking for a rigorous, detailed exploration of machine-learning concepts.

Intro to Machine Learning by Kaggle
This particular beginner course offers an accessible and easy entry point into machine learning. Designed to help you learn the core concepts, it will help you build your first machine-learning models, providing hands-on exercises and guides to solidify your learning.

Machine Learning for Everybody by FreeCodeCamp.org

This course is an extensive resource developed especially for beginners, which covers both practical and theoretical aspects of ML, including hands-on implementations. The course

also offers a hands-on approach to learning ML with Google Colab and real datasets.

Data Science: Machine Learning by HarvardX

This course is part of the Professional Certificate Program in Data Science, but you can audit it for free. It teaches you the core concepts of machine learning while helping you learn how to build prediction algorithms using data. The best part is that you will be solidifying your knowledge by applying it immediately using real-world datasets.



	ফলিত পণ্ডিত বিভাগ Department of Applied Mathematics	ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় University of Dhaka	ঢাকা-১০০০ Dhaka-1000	বাংলাদেশ Bangladesh	ফোন: ০৯৬৬৯১১৪৬৩/৭১২০, ৭১২১ Phone: 09666911463/7120, 7121 e-mail: appliedmath@du.ac.bd www.appliedmath.du.ac.bd
টেক্সার বিজ্ঞপ্তি (উন্নত দরপত্র পদক্ষেপ)					
২২ মার্চ ২০২৫					
মেমো নং: DU/AMTH/OTM/25-02/ ফলিত পণ্ডিত: ০১					
ক্র. নং	কাজের নাম	টেক্সার ভূমিকা বিজ্ঞপ্তি মৌলিক তারিখ ও সময়	টেক্সার বর্ষের তারিখ ও সময়	টেক্সার দেশের তারিখ ও সময়	যোরোজনীয় তথ্য সংযোগের ছান
১।	ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ফলিত পণ্ডিত বিভাগে অন্য ১০টি Desktop Computer, ০২টি Digital Photocopier, ০৫টি 1200VA Offline UPS, ০৮টি 650VA Offline UPS, ০৯টি Offline UPS Battery, ০৮টি Online UPS Battery, ০১টি SSD, ০৪টি Networking Switch, ০৩টি Projector Screen & ০২টি Air Condition (5.0 Ton) ইনস্টলেশন এবং সরবরাহ।	০৯/০২/২০২৫ অফিস চালকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।	১০/০২/২০২৫ সকাল ১০.০০টায়	১০/০২/২০২৫ সকাল ১১.০০টায়	ফলিত পণ্ডিত বিভাগ, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
তেক্ষণত কাজে নিউজিল মুদ্রা ৪,০০০/- ঢাকা (অব্যবহৃত যোগ্য) দরপত্র অন্য বিভাগ থাক, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, অন্যান্য ব্যাকে, টি.এস.সি. শাখার, একাউন্ট নং ৩৬০০০৩৯২ তে অন্য নিয়ে উল্লেখিত অফিস হইতে দরপত্র দানিল স্থানে করা যাবে।					
২২/৩/২০২৫ (অধ্যাপক ড. মুহাম্মদ ফেরদৌস) চেয়ারম্যান ফলিত পণ্ডিত বিভাগ, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়					

GD- 252

	UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the office of the Registrar, are invited from the Bangladeshi nationals for filling up 01 (one) permanent post of Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Dhaka in the pay scale of Tk. 56,500-74,400/- (National Pay Scale-2015).
QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates should be reputed scholars having high academic qualifications and must have a Ph.D. in Philosophy or relevant field. They must have at least 12 (twelve) years of teaching experience in a university with at least 12 (twelve) research publications in the indexed/quality journal with DOI (Digital Object Identifier). Articles published in predatory journals will not be accepted. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel. Relevant notes and conditions apply (For details, see the Dhaka University website).	
Eleven 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. 1000/- (One thousand) only, payable to the Registrar, University of Dhaka should reach him on or before 24/03/2025.	

GD-244

	UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the office of the Registrar, are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for filling up 01 (One) permanent post of Assistant Professors in the Department of Philosophy. Pay scale for the post of Assistant Professors Tk. 35,500-67,010/- according to the national pay scale-2015.
QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA of 3.50 out of 4.00 in both Bachelor and Master degrees in Philosophy with first division/a minimum GPA of 4.25 out of 5.00 both in 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 Bachelor and Master degrees. Candidates must have at least 03 (three) years of teaching experience at a university, or, at least 02 (two) years as post doctoral research or at least 06 (six) years research experience as a research/scientific officer or an equivalent position in a reputed research organization. Candidates with a Ph.D. should have at least 01 (one) year of teaching experience at a university. Applicants must have at least 03 (three) research publications in the indexed/quality journal with a DOI (Digital Object Identifier). Articles published in predatory journals will not be accepted. Candidates already in service must apply through the proper channel. 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 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, University of Dhaka, should reach him on or before 13/02/2025.	

	বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক প্রধান কার্যালয় ঢাকা	
বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০২/২০২৫	তারিখ: ০৬ মার্চ, ১৪৩১ ২০ জানুয়ারি, ২০২৫	
পুনঃ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি		
দি সিকিউরিটি প্রিন্টিং করপোরেশন (বাংলাদেশ) লিঃ, গাজীপুর-এ ফর্ক লিফট অপারেটর (পুরুষ)’ এবং ‘মুয়াজিন’ পদে নিয়োগের উদ্দেশ্যে প্রকাশিত যথাত্মে ১১/০১/২০২৩ তারিখের নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ০২/২০২৩ এবং ০৮/১/২০২৩ তারিখের নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ৫/২০২৩ এর অনুসৃতিতে বর্ণিত পদদ্বয়ে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত স্থানীয় নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে নিম্নবর্তিত শর্তবিনোদ পুনরায় দরবারত আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।		
তিনিমান ক্ষেত্রে প্রকাশিত ফলাফলের ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের ০২/০৬/২০০৯ ও ০২/০৩/২০১০ তারিখের প্রজাপন নং যথাত্মে শিম/শা:১১/৫- ১(অংক)/৮৪২ ও শিম/শা:১১/১৯-১/২০০৭/১৭৪ অনুযায়ী বর্তমানে প্রচলিত জিপিএ বা ক্ষেত্রমত, সিজিপিএ এর বিপরীতে পূর্বের ১ম, ২য় ও তৃতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী নিয়ন্ত্রণে নির্ধারিত হবে।		
(ক) এস.এস.সি বা সমমান এবং এইচ.এস.সি বা সমমান পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের ক্ষেত্রে-		
জিপিএ ৩,০০ বা তারুর্ধ জিপিএ ২,০০ থেকে ৩,০০ এর কম জিপিএ ১,০০ থেকে ২,০০ এর কম		প্রথম বিভাগ দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ তৃতীয় বিভাগ
(খ) অনুমোদিত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সিজিপিএ এর ক্ষেত্রে।		
অর্জিত সিজিপিএ		সমতুল্য শ্রেণি/বিভাগ
৮.০০ পয়েন্ট ক্ষেত্রে ৩.০০ বা তারুর্ধ ২.২৫ বা তারুর্ধ কিন্তু ৩.০০ এর কম ১.৬৫ বা তারুর্ধ কিন্তু ২.২৫ এর কম		৫.০০ পয়েন্ট ক্ষেত্রে ৩.৭৫ বা তারুর্ধ ২.৮১৩ বা তারুর্ধ কিন্তু ৩.৭৫ এর কম ২.০৬৩ বা তারুর্ধ কিন্তু ২.৮১৩ এর কম
৩. O' Level এবং A' Level এর ক্ষেত্রে একেবার সপ্টিট শিক্ষা বোর্ড হতে ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট (Equivalence Certificate), বিদেশী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে প্রাপ্ত জিপিএ ক্ষেত্রে দেশী সংস্কৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঙ্গলী কমিশন/গ্রন্থক কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃপক্ষ ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট (Equivalence Certificate) অনুযায়ী জিপিএ ও ফলাফলের তথ্য প্রদান করতে হবে।		
৪. বয়স (০১/০১/২০২৫ তারিখে): ক) বিভাগীয় প্রার্থী ব্যক্তি সকল প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়স ১৮ হতে ৩০ বছর। খ) বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের জন্য বয়স ৩৫ বছর পর্যন্ত শিখিলয়োগ্য।		
৫. অর্থাত্ব প্রার্থীদেরে ২০/০২/২০২৫ তারিখের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (erecruitment.bb.org.bd)-এ Online Application Form প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। Online Application Form-এ পরীক্ষা নিয়ন্ত্রক কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের তারিখ অবশ্যই উত্তোল করতে হবে। ২০/০২/২০২৫ তারিখ বা তৎপূর্বে যারা বিজ্ঞিতে যাচিত শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা অর্জন করেছেন শুধুমাত্র তারা আবেদনের যোগ্য হবে।		
৬. আবেদন করার সময় Application Form পূরণ করার নিয়ম ও অন্যান্য শর্তবিনোদ (erecruitment.bb.org.bd) ওয়েবসাইটে প্রাপ্ত প্রার্থী।		
৭. যাদের বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (erecruitment.bb.org.bd)-এ CV রয়েছে, তারা তাদের উক্ত CV-এর মাধ্যমেই আবেদন করবেন। প্রার্থীর নাম ও পিতার নাম এস.এস.সি/সমমানের সমন্বয়ে দেখাবে সেখানে আছে অনলাইন আবেদনপ্রয়োগে দ্বারা সেভাবে লিখিত হতে। নাম, পিতা/মাতার নাম, শিক্ষাগত মোগাদা, ১১ ডিজিটের মোবাইল নম্বর, ঠিকানা ইত্যাদি সংক্রান্ত তথ্যে অসম্ভব্য স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নেতৃত্বে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন এবং নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন এবং নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন। তবে যাদের CV নেই তারা ওয়েবসাইটে প্রদত্ত সিজিপিএ এর ক্ষেত্রে নেতৃত্বে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন এবং নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নেতৃত্বে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন।		
৮. বয়স (০১/০১/২০২৫ তারিখে): ক) বিভাগীয় প্রার্থী ব্যক্তি সকল প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়স ১৮ হতে ৩০ বছর। খ) বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের জন্য বয়স ৩৫ বছর পর্যন্ত শিখিলয়োগ্য।		
৯. অর্থাত্ব প্রার্থীদেরে ২০/০২/২০২৫ তারিখের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (erecruitment.bb.org.bd)-এ Online Application Form প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। Online Application Form-এ পরীক্ষা নিয়ন্ত্রক কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের তারিখ অবশ্যই উত্তোল করতে হবে। ২০/০২/২০২৫ তারিখ বা তৎপূর্বে যারা বিজ্ঞিতে যাচিত শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা অর্জন করেছেন শুধুমাত্র তারা আবেদনের যোগ্য হবে।		
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১১. পরীক্ষার প্রেরণ প্রক্রিয়া ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন। আবেদন ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন। নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন। নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন।		
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১৪. প্রেরণ প্রক্রিয়া ক্ষেত্রে নতুন CV তৈরি করবেন। নির্বাচিত স্থানীয় প্রার		

Expedite action to resolve Beximco crisis

Reopen closed factories, settle workers' dues

We are worried about the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the fate of workers from the 16 garment and textile factories of Beximco that suspended operations on December 15, citing a lack of export orders and financial distress. More than a month has passed since then, yet there is no resolution in sight. Tuesday's mass rally by thousands of workers from the Beximco Industrial Park in Gazipur—demanding the reopening of factories and payment of outstanding salaries—underscores their plight and the slow pace of efforts to resolve this crisis.

The 16 factories employed around 42,000 workers and officials in total, with 27,000 workers laid off at the time of closure. On January 14, the labour secretary stated that the government was trying to find employment for affected workers in other factories and attract foreign buyers for the closed ones. However, this is proving to be difficult due to Beximco's liabilities that pose a major hurdle to any acquisition. The group owes banks approximately Tk 50,000 crore in loans, over half of which have turned non-performing, according to data from Bangladesh Bank. Moreover, a state advisory council convened on January 20 to discuss selling the factories to repay these loans but deferred its decision, citing discrepancies in loan and default amounts between the financial statements provided by Beximco's state-appointed administrator and banks.

Naturally, there will be further scrutiny of these statements now, which will further delay the selling and reopening process. It will require time, something that the laid-off workers simply cannot afford as they remain without wages or alternative employment. Beximco's crisis—caused by the fall of the autocratic Awami League government of which its founder Salman F Rahman, now behind bars, was an influential adviser—had nothing to do with these workers, yet they are the ones left to bear the brunt of it. It is heartening that the convener of the state advisory council assured that every worker would receive their due benefits, and Beximco Industrial Park authorities announced on Wednesday that all dues would be paid. But this is not enough. The workers also need their jobs to survive.

We urge the authorities to resolve this crisis with the highest priority. It is understandable that businesses must operate within certain financial realities, but if Beximco cannot sustain operations, alternative arrangements must be made. Whether through restructuring, alternative ownership, or even nationalisation, as demanded by a labour union leader at Wednesday's rally, these factories must be revived—both for the sake of workers and our economy.

Curb misinformation with robust measures

The high volume of fake news circulated last year is alarming

The sheer volume of misinformation and fake news that spread in the months following the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5 is truly alarming. While disinformation has long posed a threat to democracy in Bangladesh, its surge in recent months has been particularly notable, exacerbating communal tensions and straining Bangladesh-India ties. Fact-checking organisations reportedly debunked 58 percent more content in 2024 compared to the previous year. Dismislab's annual roundup states that fact-checkers identified and verified over 3,000 unique pieces of false or misleading information that went viral last year, fuelling a wave of chaos in the wake of the political transition.

According to its report, throughout 2024, certain Indian elements and pro-Awami League social media users played a significant role in this. Disinformation related to communal tensions and religious hatred, which had been on the rise since August, escalated further in November and December. False reports regarding attacks on minorities and communal unrest caused panic and division within the country. There was also misinformation about Indian soldiers withdrawing from Bangladesh, as well as fabricated claims by Indian mainstream media alleging that Pakistani troops were patrolling inside Bangladesh.

On November 5, an anti-ISKCON Facebook post led to violent clashes in Chattogram, injuring seven police officers and five army personnel. Later, on November 26, the arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das on sedition charges triggered a wave of misinformation, including fabricated quotes falsely attributed to him. Fake photocards, appearing to be from mainstream media outlets, further spread confusion. Similarly, misinformation surrounding the three student leaders who took on advisory roles in the interim government was widely circulated on social media.

This barrage of falsehoods has not only fuelled internal discord but also strained our relations with India, with tensions persisting at the borders and repeated incidents occurring this month. However, it is reassuring that a meeting between the BGB and BSF has resulted in an agreement to resolve disputes through dialogue and to counter the spread of rumours.

Misinformation and disinformation pose a serious threat to our democratic journey. Social media platforms, in particular, have become breeding grounds for false narratives and deliberate propaganda. It is, therefore, vital that we remain vigilant against fake news designed to harm national unity at this crucial point in our history. The government must establish a robust mechanism to swiftly debunk fake news, especially content that could endanger national security or public order. The mainstream media also bears a major responsibility in this fight. News organisations must strengthen their fact-checking initiatives and adopt modern verification tools to combat misinformation. Only through collaborative measures can we mitigate the damage caused by disinformation.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

First coronavirus lockdown



On this day in 2020, the first coronavirus lockdown came into force in Wuhan, a city in China, where the virus was first detected in 2019.

EDITORIAL

Is deferment of LDC graduation a viable option?



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MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN

As may be recalled, Bangladesh is set to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category on November 24, 2026. However, some stakeholders in the country argue for a deferment of this graduation for an unspecified period. An objective analysis of the issue and an assessment of the veracity of these divergent views hold practical significance in shaping Bangladesh's stance in this context.

Some clarity in this regard is necessary. While specific criteria exist for including a developing country in the LDC group, it is ultimately up to the concerned country to decide whether it wants to be categorised as such. On the contrary, graduation from the group is contingent upon the LDC meeting the graduation thresholds and fulfilling the graduation procedures. In this sense, inclusion in the LDC group is "voluntary," while graduation is somewhat "mandatory."

To reinforce this point, in 2006, Zimbabwe rejected the UN Committee for Development Policy's (CDP) determination to categorise it as an LDC, stating that it "refuses to be downgraded as an LDC." On the other hand, as noted above, there is a defined procedure for an LDC's graduation. An LDC must meet the criteria for

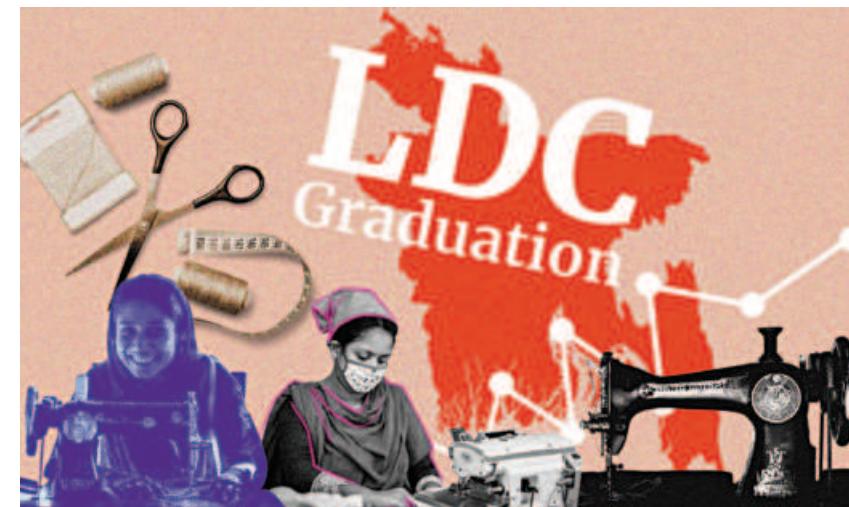
its graduation would take effect on November 24, 2026 (alongside Nepal and Lao PDR).

It is worth noting that the graduation of LDCs has been deferred in the past, even when eligibility for graduation was met. For instance, the graduation of several Pacific Island LDCs (e.g., Small Island Developing States such as Vanuatu and Kiribati) was deferred multiple times due to their vulnerability to environmental challenges. These countries were

to lose the most in the absence of such preferences. WTO estimates (2020) show that of the potential losses from preference erosion (in terms of foregone export earnings) for the 12 LDCs eligible for graduation at the time, 90 percent would be incurred by Bangladesh alone.

While it is conceivable that the government might, at some future point (before the November 2026 deadline), decide to request a deferment of graduation, such a request would need to be strongly justified. The CDP will closely monitor and assess the smooth transition process. Ultimately, the UNGA must be convinced of the validity of the request.

In the end, any request for deferment must also be seen as a "political call" that Bangladesh must weigh carefully. Nepal and Lao PDR are progressing towards graduation



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

It is worth noting that the graduation of LDCs has been deferred in the past, even when eligibility for graduation was met. For instance, the graduation of several Pacific Island LDCs was deferred multiple times due to their vulnerability to environmental challenges.

graduation and sustain the record over two successive triennial reviews conducted by the CDP. The CDP then recommends the LDC in question to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for graduation. Based on these recommendations, and following consultations and deliberations, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) makes the final decision regarding the graduation of the concerned LDC and the effective date of the decision. For Bangladesh, the UNGA decided that

eligible for graduation primarily based on the "income-only" criteria. Similarly, Nepal, which first met the graduation criteria in 2015 (three years before Bangladesh), will graduate simultaneously with Bangladesh, as it was not recommended for graduation in 2018 due to the 2017 earthquake.

Understandably, the call for Bangladesh's graduation deferment is being led by the export-oriented RMG sector, which accounts for about 85 percent of the country's total exports. The implications of the loss of preferences for this sector and the country are significant. Since tariffs on apparel items in major markets range from 10-15 percent, the adverse impact of preference erosion on RMG competitiveness will undoubtedly be considerable. Deferment of graduation would allow Bangladesh to continue enjoying various "Special and Differential" treatment provisions in the World Trade Organization (WTO), specifically targeted at LDCs.

Indeed, among the LDCs, Bangladesh has benefited the most from preferential treatment due to its relatively higher supply-side capacities compared to most other LDCs. Not surprisingly, the country also stands

without considering deferment, while Bhutan graduated in December 2023 without seeking a deferral. Should Bangladesh choose deferment, it will be the only South Asian country, aside from war-ravaged Afghanistan, to remain an LDC beyond 2026. Is this a position Bangladesh would find acceptable?

In this context, Bangladesh's best course of action would be to prepare for smooth and sustainable graduation from the LDC group. Bangladesh has already developed a "Smooth Graduation Strategy," with concrete recommendations from seven sub-committees, awaiting approval by the National Committee on Graduation. According to the most recent triennial review by the CDP (February 2024), Bangladesh's eligibility for graduation has been reaffirmed, and as noted in the white paper committee report, "there is hardly any plausible reason, as of now, for Bangladesh to request a deferral of the exit date from the group."

However, the white paper also highlights concerns about the coordinated implementation of the strategy, including challenges related to institutional and policy leadership.

When will the revolution reach Bangladesh's hills?



Julia Bleckner
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JULIA BLECKNER

For the first time in over a decade, human rights defenders can meet freely in Dhaka without fear of arrest, surveillance, harassment or worse. After the student-led mass uprising that ousted the repressive Sheikh Hasina government in August, many Bangladeshis can hope for a democratic and rights-respecting future.

However, there is still one place where human rights monitors cannot travel or work freely in Bangladesh: the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The region, which borders India and Myanmar in southeastern Bangladesh, is home to just under a million Indigenous people. Over the last five decades, the policies of the Bangladesh government aimed at controlling the region have displaced many members of the Indigenous population, not

giving them their due rights to their land and identity.

The policies in the region under the interim government have remained nearly identical to those under Sheikh Hasina. The interim government continues to restrict access by requiring foreigners to inform the home ministry prior to any visit. Any international human rights monitors must be accompanied by a guide, vetted by the ministry, making it essentially impossible for activists and human rights victims to speak freely about the human rights abuses they face.

With the population cut off from international monitors and with local activists under heavy government surveillance, abuses in the region are rarely investigated or prosecuted. It is disappointing that even as

Bangladesh plans to usher in a wave of reforms to restore rights and ensure accountability for the indiscriminate use of force, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and unaccounted-for killings, an Indigenous activist told me that those "winds of change have yet to come to the CHT."

Michael Chakma, an Indigenous rights activist, was among those forcibly disappeared by the Sheikh Hasina government. He was unlawfully detained in April 2019, and even as security forces and government officials denied his arrest, he was tortured and interrogated in custody.

He was among the handful of detainees who emerged alive from a secret detention centre in August after the Hasina government folded. But the military remains heavily deployed in the CHT region with credible reports of abuse of civilians.

In the late 1970s, the government instituted a "population transfer programme," offering cash and in-kind incentives to members of the country's majority Bangladeshi community to move to the CHT area. In 1977, the military moved into the region in response to the rise of local armed groups opposed to the "settlers."

In 1997, the government signed a peace accord to end the violence

and officially recognise the distinct ethnicity and relative autonomy of the tribes and Indigenous people of the CHT region. Yet, nearly 30 years later, the accord is yet to be fully implemented. And violence continues to this day.

Civil society activists have called for the full implementation of the 1997 accord, with only 25 of its 72 provisions addressed. One of them was to set up a commission to ensure a "discrimination-free society" establishing rights of the national minorities."

Yet, that discrimination seems entrenched. Throughout Dhaka, the streets are covered in protest art, illustrating the student activists' dedication and their visions for Bangladesh's future. In the CHT region, too, activists painted in solidarity, but theirs was removed. "The revolution is for everyone in Bangladesh, except for those in the CHT," one activist told me.

Activists have called for a Bangladesh 2.0, where rights are respected, security forces serve the public, and authorities—including the military—are held to account. Freedom and justice in the CHT region should serve as a test for whether these aspirations are a reality.

Analysing the constitutional reform recommendations

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APARAJITA DEBNATH and
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Following the student led mass uprising that led to the historical fall of the fascist Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, 2024, the interim government formed the Constitutional Reform Commission in October to draft and adopt a new, inclusive and democratic constitution, ensuring the inviolability of human dignity. After months of deliberation, the committee, headed by Prof Ali Riaz, a political scientist and Bangladesh specialist with international renown, has submitted their report with a number of key reform recommendations. Some of those recommendations are unprecedented, and praiseworthy, whereas some of them need further clarifications or even amending through consultation with the citizenry and other stakeholders.

Let's start with the Preamble, which is the soul of the constitution and is considered its legal and moral basis. Along with the historic Liberation War of 1971, the anti discrimination movement of 2024 is mentioned with equal respect in the new proposed Preamble. This may seem like a good decision, but one may wonder if the wording is not clear enough to distinguish the difference between these two historic events. While 2024 will forever be a glorious chapter in our history that the new generation brought about, it would be foolhardy to try and compare it to 1971, which marks the genesis of the nation. We are not suggesting that the new Preamble does that directly, but we believe that more careful wording could avoid this equivocation and distinguish both events in their own glory.

A major change has been proposed in the fundamental principles of state policy by removing nationalism, socialism and secularism, retaining only democracy from the original principles. The other three have been replaced by equality, human dignity, social justice, and pluralism. By adding pluralism, they encourage the state to promote communal coexistence and mutual respect among different communities as Bangladesh is a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural country. Although removing "secularism" may seem counterproductive, hopefully, the inclusion of "pluralism" will help the people consider every ethnic/religious community as equal and maintain harmony in society.

Discarding secularism makes further sense because Bangladesh has not experienced separation of "church" and "state" the way

Western nations have, and the ideology of secularism may not apply to our context as they would in the nations that ordain secularism as their basic tenet. In our part of the world, religion has always played a key role, and often a political one, to ensure that the machineries of state work properly in favour of the oppressed.

constitution, which describes the offences related to the constitution as sedition, and Article 7B, which says the basic structure of the constitution is not amendable, is needed because this reform proposal does recommend changes to the basic structure. However, to prevent the future regimes from turning into new fascists and use the

this may prove to be too chaotic and expensive to maintain for a small country like Bangladesh. Having 350 seats for 64 districts should be enough for the legislature to function smoothly, if the government has the goodwill to run it properly. Unicameral parliament is typical in small countries with unitary systems of government (e.g.

the judiciary by establishing permanent benches of the High Court in every division of Bangladesh. This is not an entirely new concept for our country. The Eighth Amendment introduced this system in 1988. Although it was widely criticised back then in the *Anwar Hussain vs Bangladesh* case (known as the eighth amendment case) as it was challenged on the ground of *ultra vires*, the basic doctrine was nullified in 1989. Now, if it becomes possible with the new constitutional reform, it will be an effective step towards reducing the backlog of pending cases that is too big a burden for only one capital-centric High Court Division.

Another notable recommendation is to establish an independent Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), led by the chief justice and six other members, to select judges for recruitment to both divisions of the Supreme Court. In the present time, the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court is handled by the president with prior mandatory consultation with the prime minister. This appointment process has a room for bias as it is greatly influenced by the executive. With the JAC, transparency and accountability will be ensured in the appointment of judges, which will make the judiciary truly free and independent, ensuring the separation of power.

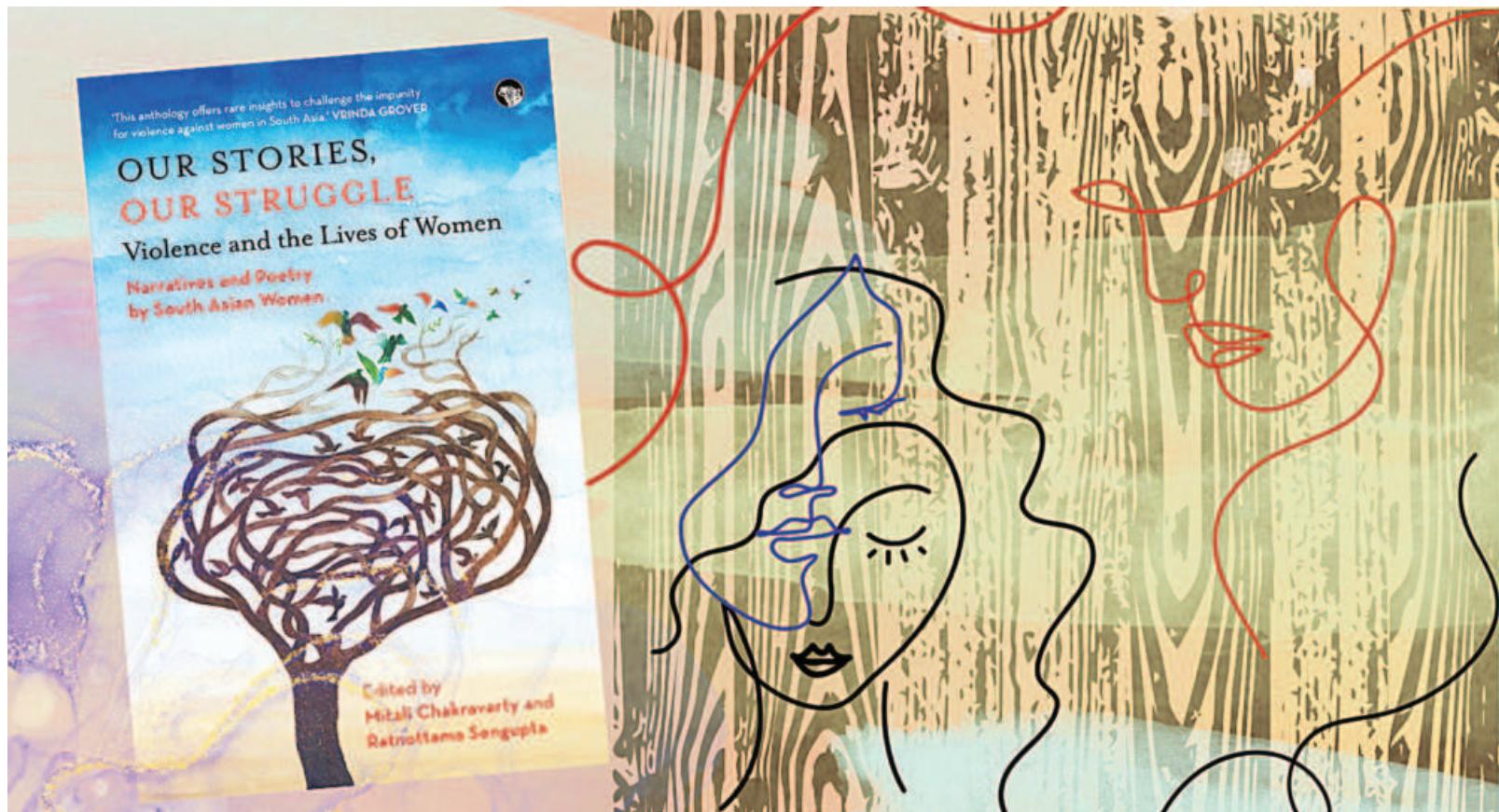
One thing that the committee did not recommend, but would have been a good idea, is including the provision for the posts of vice president and deputy prime minister. This could have been a great addition to the constitution, especially if there were provisions that the opposition would nominate the vice president and also would appoint the deputy prime minister. This would ensure that the opposition has a strong role in state affairs and are not just lame ducks who are only good for walking out of parliament in a fit of rage. It is important to note here that the commission commendably suggested that floor-crossing be allowed in most cases. This will empower the MPs as their votes will actually matter, and real politics will take place in parliament.

Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Hungary, New Zealand, etc), some of which are bigger than Bangladesh. However, the way the Senate has been planned is progressive and innovative. Choosing members through proportional representation, reserving seats for disadvantaged sections of society, and creating an option for the president to choose more members show that this new plan has a way of increasing representation from the citizenry. And due to its structure, more non political people from the citizenry and civil society can be present in the upper house.

Another

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Voices of resistance: Stories of women's struggles and resilience in South Asia



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

Sohana Manzoor's poignant narrative from Bangladesh casts light on the mindset of society which not only dehumanises a teenage victim, raped and burned and killed, but also slaughters her dignity by holding her responsible for the assault on her.

RAKHI DALAL

Our Stories, Our Struggles: Violence and the Lives of Women (Speaking Tiger Books, 2024) is an anthology edited by Mitali Chakravarty and Ratnottama Sengupta. A mix of nonfiction, including 20 personal narratives and analytical essays, 10 fictional stories and six poems, the book focuses upon the plight of women in South Asian countries and delves deep into the pervasive issue of violence, exploring its many faces across borders; it calls to the survivors to rise above victimhood.

Contributors to the collection not only question and bring to focus the issues like rape, acid attacks, dowry deaths, and honour killings, but also celebrate the resilience of women and their defiance in the face of suppression and subsequent challenges. The anthology draws upon real-life events, including the pivotal Nirbhaya case, to examine systemic failures and the cultural shifts needed to empower survivors. As Mitali Chakravarty writes in the preface, there is a necessity of "integrating women in the mainstream

of humanity, historically dominated by men in South Asian social framework".

The contributors, writing from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, bring voices reverberating with concerns alike in implications that necessitate urgent attention. Meenakshi Malhotra's essay on Nirbhaya is a profound study of the societal dynamics, the transformative role of media and public outrage in challenging injustice whereas Kalpana Kannabiran's essay questions a different facet of "pervasive majoritarian misogyny" where public and media outrage seems to be absent when it comes to victims of sexual assault from minority, dalit, or indigenous backgrounds. The perpetrators of crime, unlike in the case of Nirbhaya or Dr Priyanka Reddy, come with a political clout and are guaranteed impunity like in the Hathras case, in the case of women wrestlers protesting at Jantar Mantar or in the case of Bilkis Bano. In such cases, what does the stand of those upholders of "justice" signify? Where can the victims go if the keepers of rule of law and justice

betray them? In the introduction to the anthology, Subhashini Ali echoes this concern by asking to speak and resist in the face of a pushback to women's fight in the last decade by right-wing forces "which enjoy a kind of impunity that is both new and terrifying" whether it be the case of women from minority background or of Manipuri women suffering continuous violence in the wake of recent civil unrest.

Sohana Manzoor's poignant narrative from Bangladesh casts light on the mindset of society which not only dehumanises a teenage victim, raped and burned and killed, but also slaughters her dignity by holding her responsible for the assault on her. The moving narrative by Eli Prue Marma focuses upon the harrowing rapes and murders of indigenous women of Chittagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh where the perpetrators of crime usually escape punishment for the supposed lack of evidence.

The threat of violence against women is glaringly evident both outside and inside the confines of their homes. One of Ratnottama Sengupta's three essays

in the collection is centered upon the threat of acid attacks upon women while the other ones are on the threat of killing by one's family whether in the garb of honour killing or the abolished sati pratha. The Late Sandhya Sinha's narrative translated from Bangla by Sengupta is a heart-wrenching cry for the 18-year-old Roop Kanwar who was sent to the pyre with her dead husband in 1987 while the perpetrators of the ghastly act went unpunished. This narrative is especially significant as the eight perpetrators who were arrested earlier were freed in October 2024.

Each and every piece of writing in this anthology stands out for poignantly portraying the intersections of deep-seated norms for women in a patriarchal society that pose quagmires women are coerced to navigate. Their predicament, when violence in any form is committed against them, is not only that their bodies are violated but it is also their dignity that is crushed. Babita Basnet's article reverberates with concerns about the issue of women trafficking in Nepal whereas Farah Ahmed's narrative gives a peek into the plight of women from minority communities in the prisons of Pakistan.

In patriarchal societies women are expected to compromise their well-being and happiness for the sake of their families even if they endure suffering at their hands. Nishi Pulugurtha's real life narrative points to the despair and helplessness a woman struggles with, going into severe depression yet continuing to live with her oppressive husband because she has no power to come out of it. Another woman from an unprivileged background in neighbouring Pakistan gets university education despite all odds and tries to live a better life but is consistently reminded that women are "charpais". Selma Tufail's narrative focuses upon the subjugation of women in a society where her fate is decided by the all-male "jirga" (similar to Khaap panchayats in India).

However, when a woman decides to defy the forced conventions, we come across brave stories like Ankita Banerjee's first-hand narrative of sexual abuse, which exposes uncomfortable truths and compels families to face them.

The fictive narratives from all five countries reverberate with similar urgency and concerns that are echoed in the essays and real-life narratives. Imagined women from different

backgrounds trying to claim their voices, their agencies, their basic rights and are crushed, trampled upon, killed, raped, or abused for just expecting that. A girl child, a young woman or an older one, her body, mind, and soul bear the brunt of violence because she is an easy target. In Aruna Chakravarty's heart-rending story, an old, lonely and starving woman is burnt as a witch whereas her granddaughter suffers incest. Radhia Rameez's two stories set in Sri Lanka deal with the subject of marital violence where the doors to freedom from brutality remain perpetually closed to women. More stories from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan expose brutalities at different levels. S. Bari's story is remarkable in bringing hope when she showcases a rape survivor outgrowing her victimhood.

The poetry section starts with, Arundhati Subramaniam's poem "Claim", which iterates:

"We are here to restore order,
to put the voices of books, lovers,
teachers, customs, officials
in their place"

Additionally, Sadaq Saaz takes up the plight of the war widows of Bangladesh, the Birangonas, and like an afterword,

Mitali Chakravarty's "Amphan Calls" summons courage:

"Was Amphan—the invisible energy—a Woman?

Did She rage for you and me tearing,
searing with madness

for the unspoken wounds which can
only heal with phoenix eardrops?

Rise, rise up to Amphan's call—with
our souls, let us conquer all."

The blend of personal experiences and broader cultural critiques makes this anthology a powerful resource for understanding gender-based violence in the region. Equally compelling are the stories and verses in the anthology which augment the call for resilience. The volume transcends victimhood narratives, showcasing the courage and agency of women who challenge patriarchal norms. It is not just a documentation of injustices but a clarion call for justice and equality. A call for systematic reforms. A call to reclaim agency.

Rakhi Dalal is an educator. Her writing has appeared in Kitaab, Scroll, and Borderless Journal, among others. Her essay on Partition, invited by Bound India, made it to the list of winning pieces.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

A novel's wry exploration of nostalgia, growth, and the baggage we carry

Review of 'Good Material' (Fig Tree, 2023) by Dolly Alderton

RAJIB RAHMAN

In *Good Material*, Dolly Alderton uses her sharp humor and keen observations to explore the challenges of adulthood. The novel looks at the impact of family issues, the burden of unspent time, and the quest for self-identity. Moving away from her popular memoir *Everything I Know About Love* (Harper, 2020), Alderton's second novel skillfully mixes humor with sadness, providing a deep reflection on how our past—through relationships, loss, and physical items—shapes who we are today.

At the heart of the book is Andy Dawson, a 35-year-old stand-up comedian grappling with the emotional wreckage from a breakup and the drop of his career. Feeling caught in a cycle of frustration, he starts his journey by facing the consequences of his past. He clings to memories of love and family but feels "lost in the present", unsure of how to move forward. His character development highlights themes of masculinity and vulnerability at the same time, challenging traditional ideas about male identity as he navigates his emotions. The title, "Good Material", has a double meaning: it refers to both the actual materials in Andy's life—his memories and emotional baggage—and the metaphorical idea of "good material", representing the emotional remnants that continue to affect him.

Alderton explores how physical items from our past—like personal belongings and family heirlooms—reflect our memories, capturing modern life's absurdities while adding tenderness that deepens the emotional experience. A key character in Andy's journey is his ex-girlfriend, Jen Hammersmith. Even though their relationship has ended, Jen's presence is felt throughout Andy's story, symbolising lost love and serving as a complex character herself. The shifts in perspective toward Jen later in the novel provide valuable insights into her reasons for breaking up with Andy, adding depth to their relationship and showing how people from our past can shape our identities. Supporting characters, like Andy's parents, also play vital parts in helping him understand himself better, revealing family dynamics that lead to his emotional struggles.

The narrative is enriched by flashbacks that reveal key moments in Andy's life, especially his father's influence, shaping his emotional journey; when his father passes away, it prompts him to return home, where he faces unresolved feelings from his past. This return serves both literal and symbolic purposes, representing Andy's desire to reconnect with his roots. Alderton uses first-person present tense throughout the narrative, which helps readers connect with Andy's internal struggles. This style immerses us in his experiences, making his journey feel immediate and relatable.

Alderton explores how physical items from our past—like personal belongings and family heirlooms—reflect our memories,

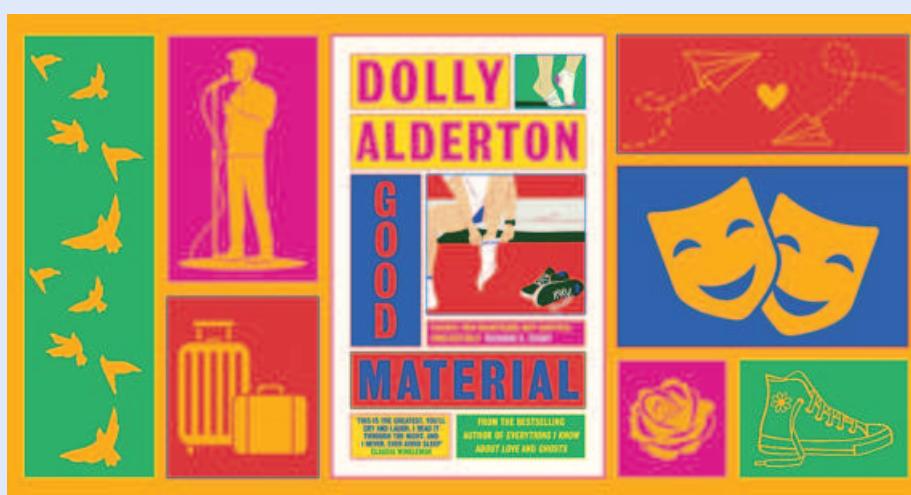


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

The tension between nostalgia and letting go runs throughout the book. As a comedian constantly seeking new material for his acts, Andy's journey mirrors his internal struggle to sort through emotional remnants. What makes *Good Material* stand out is Alderton's thoughtful approach to nostalgia; Andy's relationship with his past isn't just about longing but involves a complex mix of yearning, regret, and acceptance. The novel examines how memories can deceive us while also providing comfort and sadness. Andy's journey back home represents not a return to innocence but an acceptance that

pressures of adulthood. By placing Andy's story within this broader context, she emphasises how these themes are relevant today.

Ultimately, *Good Material* is about facing the emotional baggage from our past—deciding what parts of ourselves are worth holding onto and which must be let go. Andy's journey reconciles contradictions: love and resentment for his family, nostalgia he can't escape, and recognition that some emotional wounds must be left behind if he wants to move forward. While themes of grief, family, and nostalgia may remind readers of other literary works, Alderton's unique voice ensures that this novel stands out. She doesn't provide easy answers but instead offers a story that feels familiar yet universally relatable—a raw exploration of how we come to terms with who we are as we confront our histories.

For those who have enjoyed Alderton's previous work, *Good Material* further establishes her as one of today's most insightful writers about modern life. With her blend of humor and emotional depth, she skillfully navigates the complexities of existence, showing that facing our past is an inevitable part of everyone's journey.

Rajib Rahman is a writer, reviewer, short story crafter, and design wizard. A health nut, he's all about the magic of storytelling and spreading kindness.

Tigresses' historic win in St Kitts

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 184 all out in 48.5 overs (Fargana 18, Joty 68, Mostary 23, Shorna 21, Aaliyah 3-24, Karishma 4-33)

West Indies: 124 all out in 35 overs (Matthews 16, Campbell 28; Marufa 2-35, Nahida 3-31, Rabeya 2-19, Fahima 2-17)

Result: Bangladesh won by 60 runs.

Player of the Match: Nahida Alter



"I'm not thinking about the [World Cup qualification] equation as yet. What was most important was to bounce back a day after such a big defeat. Of course, the two points [championship cycle] are priceless but the win was very important for the series and in terms of gaining momentum. And if we can win the next match, it will be a big milestone for us because we have never won an away series before."

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty

both currently on 21 points but on sixth and seventh positions respectively due to run-rate in the Women's Championship cycle-- are vying for the sixth spot.

Bangladesh could ensure direct entry with a win in the last match of the series on Friday, which will also be their last game of the current Women's Championship cycle. If not through direct entry, there will be opportunity for two more teams to go through via a qualification campaign.



Sinner silences home crowd to reach semis: Defending champion Jannik Sinner dismissed Australian eighth seed Alex de Minaur 6-3 6-2 6-1 at a packed Rod Laver Arena to reach the Australian Open semifinals yesterday. Italian Sinner, who showed no signs of the illness that made him struggle in his last match, will take on American 21st seed Ben Shelton. "I feel like today I was feeling everything," Sinner said post-match.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Slot unsure of top spot 'advantage'

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool boss Arne Slot is not convinced that finishing top of the Champions League's inaugural league phase standings will prove to be an advantage after securing progress to the last 16 on Tuesday.

The Reds beat Lille 2-1 at Anfield to maintain a perfect record of seven wins from seven games in the competition's new format, although they were far from their flowing best against 10 man Lille.

Liverpool are guaranteed to finish in the top two, with Barcelona the only side that could pip them to first place.

That means the Premier League leaders will face a side that finishes between 15th and 18th in the last 16.

However, Slot does not believe the table tells a true story given that each club faces a different draw of eight opponents in the league phase.

"We're happy that we are top eight. That's the only thing that tells me something, because this league table doesn't tell you anything," said the Dutchman.

"So normally in tennis, if you're number 1, you know if you play against the number 24, he's probably not as good as the number 16. But here, because we play different teams, maybe the number 24 is better than the number 16, but the number 16 had an easier draw."

"We also want to be on top of the league, but I'm not so sure. We have to wait and see if it's an advantage, let's put it that way."



SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

For years, the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPL) has been a lifeline for many cricketers, providing not just a platform for competition but also a crucial source of income. However, recent tensions between Dhaka-based cricket clubs and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) over proposed constitutional amendments have thrown the future of the league -- and the livelihoods of many players like Rafsan Al Mahmud and Shamim Sharif -- into uncertainty.

Prominent club organiser Rafiqul Islam Babu, one of the key protesters of Nazmul Abedeen Fahim-led committee's proposals on constitution amendments, believes the changes could destroy Bangladesh cricket. However, he is

sufferers," he added.

Meanwhile, all-rounder Sharif, who has been playing for Azad Sporting Club for the last three years and has been featuring in the first division league for a decade, also echoed similar sentiment. "We are now passing uncertain times," Sharif said.

For the last seven years, Rafsan has been featuring in the DPL, representing teams like Khelaghara SKS, Partex Sporting Club, and City Club. Last year, he was part of the City Club squad, which got relegated to the Dhaka First Division Cricket League, and this year, he has been preparing for the second-tier tournament -- previously scheduled to get underway on January 20 -- to bring his side back into the top tier.

However, just a few days before the start of the first division league, the 29 year-old and other players came to know that the fate of the first division league and the following DPL hang in the balance.

"The clubs had already started their practice, and it is expensive to run a camp. They need to give conveniences, food, and other practice costs. After telling this to the president [on January 18], he promised to solve the matter as soon as possible," he added.

Meanwhile, BCB director Fahim -- currently in Malaysia for the ongoing U-19 Women's T20 World Cup -- insisted

that there have been some "positive" changes in the proposed amendments after the protest, but he does not approve of the numbers mentioned in several reports as well as the memorandum submitted to the board president by the Dhaka club officials.

According to reports, the proposed changes include dissolving the CCDM (Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis), reducing Category-2 councillor positions from 76 to 30, and cutting the number of directors



"Most of the players wait for Dhaka leagues for their livelihood. If it doesn't take place, we, the players, will be the only sufferers."

City Club cricketer Rafsan Al Mahmud

hopeful of getting a solution to this problem on January 25 following a BCB board meeting.

"The clubs had already started their practice, and it is expensive to run a camp. They need to give conveniences, food, and other practice costs. After telling this to the president [on January 18], he promised to solve the matter as soon as possible," he added.

Meanwhile, BCB director Fahim -- currently in Malaysia for the ongoing U-19 Women's T20 World Cup -- insisted

representing Dhaka-based clubs from 12 to four. "When we will submit it [proposed amendments] to the board, we can discuss it then," Fahim told The Daily Star.

Although both Dhaka clubs and the constitution amendment committee are backing themselves on their stances, the reality is that their conflict and the corresponding uncertainties are causing a big headache for those cricketers dependent on the domestic circuit for their career.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Tanzid does it 'naturally'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chatogram

Q Dhaka Capitals opener Tanzid Tamim now holds the record for most sixes in a single edition of the Bangladesh Premier League by a Bangladeshi.

Q Tamim has now hit a total of 29 sixes in 10 matches this BPL -- a feat that also takes him to second spot in terms of most sixes in a single edition of the tournament after Chris Gayle.

Dhaka Capitals opener Tanzid Tamim laced his match winning 54 ball 90 not out against Chittagong Kings in Chattogram yesterday with just four boundaries and a total of seven maximums -- becoming the Bangladeshi batter with the most sixes in a single edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) with 29 in 10 matches so far.

There was an effortlessness to his six-hitting prowess and the batter also acknowledged it in the post-match presser.

"There's no secret to it [six hitting]. I play like this naturally," he said. "During practice, I work on my strengths and try to improve on the mistakes I make in games. So, there's no mystery -- I just play my natural game."

"I was trying to give myself some time. The ball was coming a bit late. But I thought if I gave myself time, I'd be able to score runs. So I followed that plan, took my time, played good deliveries, and punished the bad ones."

The explosive knock also saw him to the top of the scoring charts with 420 runs.

Tanzid matched Tawhid Hridoy's haul of 24 sixes, the previous highest for a Bangladeshi batter in a single BPL, with a six off a Shoriful Islam delivery in the fourth over. He would pull the left-arm pacer with ease to go past Hridoy on the very next delivery.

Only 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle has more sixes in a single BPL. In 2017, the explosive Caribbean batter hit 47 sixes in 11 innings for Rangpur Riders.

Breaking or matching Gayle's record, however, is not on Tanzid's mind. His team are still desperately fighting to keep their head above water, having picked up their third win in 10 matches.

"I've never thought about it like that [breaking the record for most sixes]. We still have two more matches ahead, and the plan is to finish those matches well. That's what we're all focusing on. If it happens [breaking the record], it'll happen. But I'll try to stick to my usual game plan," he said.

'It was a very crazy game'

Barcelona manager Hansi Flick pointed to his side's mentality as key to their 5-4 comeback win at Benfica on Tuesday that secured their spot in the Champions League last 16. Coming off a disappointing LaLiga draw at Getafe, Barca were 3-1 down at halftime after Benfica's Vangelis Pavlidis netted a hat-trick, with the Greek pouncing on some sloppy defending from the visitors. Although his men improved after the break, they were 4-2 down towards the end of the match before goals from

Robert Lewandowski, Eric Garcia and Raphinha secured their comeback. "It was a very crazy game. The most positive thing was the mentality we had. We came back and that's wonderful. That's football and that's why we love it. I don't think I've ever experienced a comeback like this. It is unbelievable," said Flick.

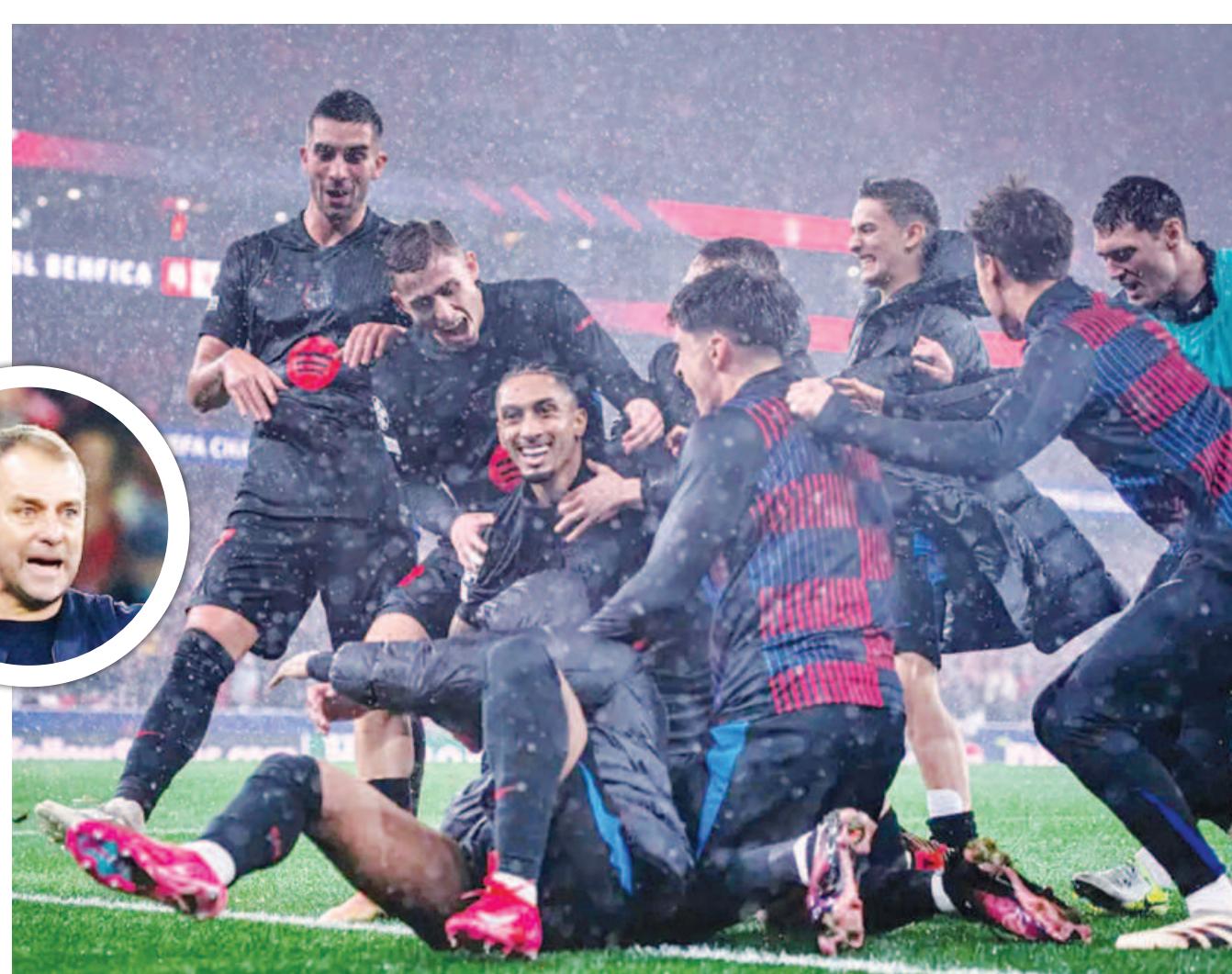


PHOTO: BARCELONA

THE NATION'S
LARGEST ROD
MANUFACTURER
★★★★★

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

BSRM
building a safer nation

HIGHEST
SELLING
CEMENT
20
YEARS
for more than

SHAH
CEMENT

JOB IN MALAYSIA 18,000 workers in depths of despair

Despite having visas, they have not been able to join work for failure to enter Malaysia within deadline

MD ABBAS

Frustration is mounting among the over 18,000 Bangladeshis who missed a deadline to fly to Malaysia for work around eight months ago.

They secured visas and clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) after paying hefty sums of money to recruitment agencies.

However, a ticket shortage triggered by huge demand ahead of the May 31 deadline last year led to the situation surrounding the workers.

Even after having tickets, some others failed to travel to Malaysia at that time since the Malaysian government blacklisted the companies that hired them.

The aspiring Bangladeshi migrant workers launched protests multiple times, with the latest held yesterday, as their dream of working in Malaysia and sending money to their families became more and more distant.

An uncertainty over when the breadwinners will be

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Workers desperate to go to Malaysia march towards the expatriates' welfare ministry. Some of the protesters say they spent up to Tk 6 lakh to be able to work in Malaysia but the recruitment agents failed to arrange their flights before deadline. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Bangla Motor yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

If govt fails to be neutral, it cannot hold election

Says Fakhrul in interview with BBC Bangla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the interim government fails to be neutral, it cannot hold the election, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamir said yesterday. Then a neutral government would be needed, he said.

He added that questions of neutrality might arise as "what we are now seeing is that students are considering forming a political party."



"If representatives of these students are part of this government, neutrality cannot be maintained. If they think they can hold elections keeping their representatives in the government, political parties will not accept it," Fakhrul said in an interview with BBC Bangla.

He said the BNP wants the election as early as possible. "Based on our past experiences with caretaker governments, we believe this is not an impossible task. If the government wants to hold an election in June, July, or August, it will be able to do so."

He, however, did not mention any specific time frame for the polls.

Asked what their course of action will

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Trump targets US diversity scheme

Threatens private sector probes, touts \$500b AI project

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump escalated his campaign against diversity programmes on Tuesday by pressuring the private sector to join the initiative, ordering aviation officials to review diversity hires and telling government DEI employees they would be placed on paid leave.

The measures come one day after Trump on his first day in office issued a series of executive orders to end diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes, which attempt to promote opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people and other traditionally underrepresented groups.

Civil rights advocates have argued such programmes are necessary to address longstanding inequities and structural racism.

Trump's administration fired Coast Guard chief Linda Fagan -- the first woman to lead a US military service -- with an official blaming her "leadership deficiencies" and an "excessive focus" on diversity programmes.

The president withdrew Secret Service protection for former US national security advisor John Bolton, the target of an alleged Iranian assassination plot, with whom he fell out. "He was a very dumb person," said Trump.

He also vowed to hit the European Union with tariffs and said his administration was discussing a 10 percent punitive duty on Chinese imports because fentanyl is being sent from China to the US via Mexico and Canada. However, China yesterday vowed to defend its "national interests" against tariff threats from Trump.

In a new executive order issued on Tuesday, Trump revoked executive orders dating as far back as 1965 on environmental actions, equal employment opportunities and encouragement to federal contractors to achieve workforce balancing on race, gender and religion, reports Reuters.

The Trump executive order seeks to dissuade private companies that



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

BNP, Khelafat Majlis agree on calls for polls within this year

UNB, Dhaka

BNP and Khelafat Majlis have agreed on seven issues, including holding the national election by 2025 and strengthening national unity to prevent the re-emergence of the fallen fascists.

"We have agreed on seven points, including the quick withdrawal of all false cases against the leaders and workers of the political parties that were part of the movement. In light of this, we will work especially to achieve unity among the Islamic parties and to form national unity with all," Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Ahmed Abdul Kader said yesterday after a meeting with BNP.

The nine-member delegation, led by Khelafat Majlis Ameer Maulana Abdul Basit Azad, held an hour-long meeting with BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamir and Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

Abdul Kader said they focused on maintaining the national unity achieved through the July-August mass uprising.

However, he noted that some political parties' statements and activities go against the spirit of national unity. "Our stance is in favour of unity, not division. It is important to unite now for the sake of the nation. That is why we held talks with BNP... we agreed with them on some issues."

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Israel presses on with raid in West Bank

Shooting, explosions reported in Jenin; 20 Palestinians detained

AGENCIES

A Palestinian official reported shooting and explosions in the flashpoint West Bank town of Jenin yesterday as Israeli forces pressed on with a raid that the military described as a "counterterrorism" operation.

"The situation is very difficult," Kamal Abu al-Rub, the governor of Jenin, told AFP.

"The occupation army has bulldozed all the roads leading to the Jenin camp, and leading to the Jenin Governmental Hospital... There is shooting and explosions," he added.

On Tuesday, Israeli forces launched an operation in Jenin which Palestinian officials said killed 10 people, just days after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect in the Gaza Strip.

According to Abu al-Rub, Israeli forces detained around 20 people from villages near Jenin. The Israeli military said it had launched a "counterterrorism operation" in the area, and had "hit over 10 terrorists".

"Additionally, aerial strikes on terror infrastructure sites were conducted and numerous explosives planted on the routes by the terrorists were dismantled," it said in a statement yesterday. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz vowed to continue the assault.

"It is a decisive operation aimed at eliminating terrorists in the camp," Katz said in a statement yesterday, adding that the military would not allow a "terror front" to be established there.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

- All roads leading to Jenin camp bulldozed
- Israeli defence minister vows to continue assault
- 900 aid trucks enter Gaza under truce

2 stabbed, 'Tk 1cr snatched' in Gulshan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A forex dealer and his cousin have been stabbed and the attackers allegedly made off with Tk 1 crore in the city's Gulshan.

A case was filed last night over the attack on Abdul Kader Sikdar, 30, owner of City Monetary Exchange in Gulshan-2 and his cousin Amir Hamza, 25, in front of Gulshan-2 DCC Market around 9:00pm on Tuesday.

Kader's brother Mintu Sikdar told The Daily Star the attackers intercepted the victims when Kader was returning home to Gulshan-1 on a motorcycle with Amir.

He said that the attackers used rods and sharp weapons, injuring the victims severely.

Inspector Md Faruk, in charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital Police Outpost, said that two individuals injured by sharp weapons were brought in from the Gulshan area at night. After receiving first aid, they were taken to another hospital by their relatives. The family said the victims were admitted to United Hospital in Gulshan.

Dulal Molla, a relative of Kader, filed the case with Gulshan Police Station, according to Sub-Inspector Ujjol Chakrabarty.

The case's investigation officer,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Bangladesh players celebrate their 18-run victory against Scotland in their last Group D fixture of the ICC Women's U-19 World Cup at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval in Bangi, Selangor yesterday. A second win in three matches helped the Sumaiya Akter-led side finish in second position behind Australia and confirm a place in the Super 6 stage of the tournament.

C'NAWABGANJ BORDER Only farmers allowed within 150 yards

Agree BGB, BSF at flag meeting after tension flared

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday agreed on restricting access to all except farmers within 150 yards of the border.

The decision was made during a sector commander-level courtesy meeting between the BGB and BSF held at the Sonamasjid BOP conference room in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj, according to a press release from the 59 BGB Battalion.

Both sides reached a consensus on three additional issues to ensure peaceful coexistence, said Lt Col Golam Kibria, commanding officer of the 59 BGB Battalion.

The issues include resolving any border-related problems through discussion, taking measures to prevent border-related propaganda or rumours, and discouraging people living near the border from engaging in illegal trespassing and drug peddling, the BGB

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6