

BANGLA ACADEMY AWARD 'Those involved in anti-people politics won't get it'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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"Primarily, if we find direct evidence linking anyone to past genocide or anti-public politics, as alleged, we will certainly cancel the award."

Azam assured that the review process would be completed within three working days.

HC benches

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The minimum age to be an apex court judge should be 48, and Article 96 of the constitution needs amendment to set the retirement age of judges at 70, up from the current 67 years.

The reform commission also suggests forming a Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) to ensure discipline and accountability among the SC judges; establishing an SC secretariat for full independence and separation of the judiciary; forming a permanent and independent attorney service for appointing prosecutors without political influence; establishing an independent criminal investigation agency in order to ensure the proper investigation process in the judicial system.

The recommendations include appointing honest, efficient and resourceful retired district judges for two to three years for quick disposal of cases in the districts where a large number of criminal appeals, criminal revisions, civil appeals and civil revisions are pending.

Considering the large number of cases under trial and the increasing population, jobs should be created for judges and support staff so that there is one judge against 800 to 1,000 cases.

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The Judiciary Reform Commission sent a copy of its summary report to Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, who is coordinating all the reform commissions.

The judiciary commission is likely to submit its final report by January 31, its member and senior SC lawyer Tanim Hussain Shawon told The Daily Star.

Around 15,000 people, including commoners, lawyers, judges and others gave their views on reforms to the commission so far, he added.

To establish permanent HC benches at the divisional cities, the constitution's Article 100 should be replaced with appropriate provisions.

Article 100 says, "The permanent seat of the Supreme Court shall be in the capital, but sessions of the High Court Division may be held at such other place or places as the Chief Justice may, with the approval of the President, from time to time appoint".

The proposed permanent HC benches will deal with cases from specified regions.

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

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A survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics at the request of the Electoral Reform Commission last December found 65 percent of the people favour local government elections before the next national polls under the interim government.

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These groups, including ARSA, RSO, and the Arakan Army, forcibly conscripted young men, often subjecting them to torture, trafficking, and coercion to fight for armed factions in Myanmar.

Gender-based violence remains deeply entrenched in the camps due to patriarchal norms and militarised environments, the study said. The problem is further exacerbated by armed groups using sexual violence and forced marriages as tools of control and intimidation.

Syeda Rozana Rashid, a professor of international relations at Dhaka University and treasurer of RMMRU, presented the study's recommendations, which included enhancing livelihood opportunities

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Addressing the workshop as the chief guest, Women and Children's Affairs Adviser Sharmin S Mursid stressed the urgency of tackling gender-based violence through a multi-level approach.

She emphasised that while interventions at the community, national, and international levels are crucial, the focus should not be only on mitigating problems such as child marriage and trafficking but addressing the root causes of the need for international solidarity.

James Goldman, deputy high commissioner and development director at the British High Commission in Dhaka; Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, former professor of international relations at Dhaka University and executive director of RMMRU; Sohela Nazneen, senior research fellow at the University of Sussex, UK; and Md Rafiqul Islam, professor of peace and conflict studies at Dhaka University, spoke at the workshop.

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The continued instability in Myanmar, compounded by the absence of strong governance, has left the Rohingyas in a perpetual state of vulnerability, further underscoring the need for international solidarity.

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Because of this practice, as many as 60,000 seats on the Saudi Arabia route of 11 airlines including Fly Dubai, Jazeera Airways, Gulf Air and Salam Air are blocked, according to Aref.

"The prevailing situation will be resolved to a large extent if these blocked seats are opened up," he said, while urging the civil aviation ministry and the Civil Aviation Authorities of Bangladesh (CAAB) to take immediate measures on the discriminatory practice.

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US-funded projects stare at fund crunch

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humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya in Bangladesh since the outbreak of violence in August 2017, making itself the biggest donor.

Although the current suspension is for three months, there is no indication whether the US will resume all its funding commitments after that.

An official of a USAID funded project on HIV prevention in Bangladesh said the Trump policy has created fears among the staff about their job safety.

"My job is my livelihood. I am a mid-career job holder working in the development sector for long. Now, I am fearful of what happens next. I don't know what to do if the funding is terminated," he told The Daily Star last night.

The NGO executive said that not just livelihoods but development projects in diverse sectors including health, food, agriculture, nutrition and climate change will be affected if US funds are terminated.

Donald Trump has also withdrawn from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement and declared that he would advocate drilling and production of more fossil fuel in the US.

"This means, the global efforts to move away from fossil fuel will be heavily affected," said Humayun Kabir, former ambassador to the US.

According to the UNDP, Bangladesh faces a critical need for \$12.5 billion annually to address the escalating climate crisis, but significant financing gaps in adaptation and mitigation remain, threatening economic growth.

Kabir says if implemented, Trump's policy will lead to lowering of fuel prices globally, which can have positive impacts on the economy, but

Confusion ensues over a man's death

Family claims cops beat him dead; police say he fell ill during raid to arrest another person

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

The death of a man in Shariatpur's Zajira upazila on Saturday night has sparked confusion, with the victim's family and police offering conflicting accounts of the incident.

Family members claimed that Milon Bepari, 55, a resident of Naodoba area, was beaten to death by police during an anti-narcotics drive.

The police denied the allegation and said Milon died after falling ill at the scene of an arrest.

Speaking to this newspaper, Milon's son Al-Amin said some eight to 10 people identifying themselves as members of the Detective Branch of police went to their home around 9:30pm on Saturday night.

"I was at our grocery shop adjacent to our home. I suddenly heard my father's screaming a few yards away. I went out of the shop and saw that they were beating him mercilessly."

"Then I entered our house to call my mother. A few minutes later, I along with my mother went there and saw my father lying on the ground. My father was bleeding from his mouth."

"As we started shouting, the DB men took their four motorcycles and fled the scene quickly. When we took my father to the Zajira Upazila Health Complex, on-duty doctors declared him dead."

Contacted, Shariatpur district DB Inspector Abu Bakar Matubbar said the DB members conducted an anti-narcotics raid on Saturday night in the Kazikandi area and detained a drug dealer Mozammel Majhi, 45, who is accused in multiple criminal cases.

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"I think eventually humanitarian assistance policy will not have much change in Bangladesh," he said.

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PUBALI SWADHIN SANCHAY

✓ Attractive Interest Rate / Profit
[3 Months FDR rate plus 1% p.a.]
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Air pollution in Dhaka 18 times above global limit

Says WB report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The average concentration of PM2.5 particles -- the most harmful air pollutants -- in Dhaka is about 18 times higher than the global health standard, leaving millions of residents struggling for relief.

The World Health Organization recommends a limit of five microgrammes per cubic metre (mcg/m³) of PM2.5, particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres in diameter.

However, in 2023, the average concentration in the greater Dhaka area was found to be 92 mcg/m³.

A World Bank (WB) presentation revealed that two-thirds of these pollutants are generated locally, while the remaining one-third originates from outside Bangladesh.

The findings were shared at a stakeholders' meeting titled "Air Quality in Bangladesh: Challenges and Solutions", held yesterday at the WB's office.

Eun Joo Allison Yi, senior environment specialist at the WB, said air pollution in Bangladesh affects health at all stages of life -- from premature births and low birth weights to chronic illnesses and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



People cover their faces as they travel through a dust-laden road in the capital's Shyampur area yesterday. Due to roadworks and construction, the area remains blanketed with dust. The situation exacerbates during the dry season. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Interim govt must be impartial in holding polls

Says Khasru



ICT finds proof of Rab shooting from helicopter

Issues arrest warrant for then DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government should proceed with the national election in a manner that leaves no room for doubt about its impartiality, said BNP senior leader Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"This interim government should move towards the next election impartially, and no question should arise in anyone's mind about its impartiality. If any question arises, it will be a betrayal of those who shed blood, gave their lives, and made immense sacrifices during the 15 year movement," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



A Rab helicopter flies above Paltan area where protesters fought pitched battles with BGB personnel during the July uprising last year.

ICT Chief Prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam said the investigation has gathered preliminary evidence of Harun's involvement in these crimes. "Harun orchestrated these crimes through Rab. As the DG, he had the authority to prevent or punish the perpetrators but failed to do so," Tajul said.

He said Harun is being held accountable for command responsibility, as he planned, authorised, and failed to prevent the violence.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Putul was Canadian citizen when nominated for WHO post

Finds ACC probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saima Wazed Putul, the daughter of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, was a Canadian citizen at the time when she was nominated by Bangladesh as the World Health Organization (WHO) regional director for South-East Asia, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The anti-graft watchdog disclosed this information in a statement issued yesterday.

The ACC's investigation also revealed her misuse of state resources and irregular activities aimed at securing her position as the regional director.

Following the statement,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

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a Pubali Bank apps



Several hurt as police swoop on madrasa teachers Charge batons, use water canons to foil their march to CA office demanding nationalisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police charged batons and used water cannons to disperse teachers of independent Ebtedayee madrasas -- primary-level educational institutions under the madrasa board -- at Shahbagh yesterday.

The attack took place as they were on their way to the Chief Adviser's Office, demanding the nationalisation of all such registered institutions.

The protesting teachers said several of their colleagues were injured in the police action, and at least five of them received treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Protesting the police action and to realise their six-point demand, the teachers immediately began a sit-in in front of the Fine Arts Faculty of Dhaka University.

The protest was ongoing there as of filing this report around 10:15pm.

Shamsul Alam, convener of the teachers' platform, said they held a meeting with the members of the education ministry. "They listened to our demands, but no decision was reached. We



will not withdraw our sit-in until our demands are met," he added.

Earlier, witnesses said several hundred teachers gathered at Jatiya Press Club, where they had been demonstrating for several days.

After holding a rally there, they started a march towards the Chief Adviser's Office around 12:30pm.

As the agitating teachers, under the banner of "Swatanta Ebtedayee Madrasa Shikkhak Oikyojote," reached Shahbagh and broke a police barricade near Shahbagh Police Station, the police took action, witnesses said.

Khalid Monsur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said, "The teachers were heading towards the Chief Adviser's Office to lay siege with their procession. We stopped them at the Shahbagh intersection and dispersed them."

A police official said the teacher leaders had promised to stop at Shahbagh and nominate a team of representatives to send their memorandum to the office of the chief adviser. However, they did not keep their word and broke the police barricade.

"For this, we applied force to disperse them," SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

End dominance of fossil fuel in energy sector

Demands TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has made no visible progress regarding clean and green energy since it took power five months ago, said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman yesterday.

He said there have been no initiatives to move away from the dominance of fossil fuel usage, which controlled the sector over the last 15 years.

He made the remarks at a human chain titled "Clean Energy: Sustainable Future" organised by Transparency International Bangladesh in front of the national parliament building marking International Clean Energy Day.

The fossil fuel lobby is one of the driving forces of the global governance system, and its consequences have been found during the autocratic government in the last 15 years, said Iftekharuzzaman.

He demanded the cancellation of Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) 2023.

"That [plan] was prepared with conflict of interests. A new opportunity for redemption has now been created in the new Bangladesh. We want a new master plan to be redesigned immediately

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Law Adviser Asif Nazrul speaks at a book launch at Shilpkala Academy yesterday as part of Bangla daily Prothom Alo's eight-day photo exhibition titled "July Uprising". At the event, covers four books on July uprising were unveiled. Among others, Constitution Reform Commission chief Ali Riaz, Jahangirnagar University Professor Al Masud Hasanuzzaman and Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif were present.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

ACC investigating 'irregularities' in EVM procurement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has launched an investigation into alleged irregularities in the procurement of Electronic Voting Machines by the Election Commission.

As part of the probe, a three-member ACC investigation team conducted an operation at the EC office yesterday, following allegations of substandard machines being purchased at inflated prices.

The ACC has requested documents from the EC to aid the inquiry.

Speaking to journalists after the operation, ACC Assistant Director Nur Alam Siddiqui said, "In 2018, the EC procured 150,000 EVMs, of which 1,500 were found to be non-functional. During the inspection, three machines stored at the EC office were examined. One was found defective, while the others were operational."

The EC currently stores 618 EVMs at its headquarters, 86,000 at the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF), and 62,000 across regional offices.

This operation came after the anti-graft body decided to form a five-member team to probe the roles of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, chiefs of police and Rab, returning officers, and others during the December 30, 2018, national polls.

Opposition parties accused authorities of ballot-box stuffing the night before election day, with reports of between 30 and 60 percent of votes being cast in advance.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) later found evidence of ballot stamping at multiple centres during a study conducted in 33 out of 50 surveyed constituencies.

Ex-state minister
Enamur held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police arrested former state minister for disaster management and relief Dr Enamur Rahman in Dhaka's Bashundhara area last night.

The Awami League lawmaker is accused in several cases including murder, filed over the incidents during the July mass uprising, said Taleb Rahman, deputy commissioner (media and public relations) of the DMP.

He, however, didn't disclose in which case Enamur was arrested.

Female JnU student
found dead in dorm

JNU CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a student of Jagan Nath University (JnU) at a hostel in Katherpool, Old Dhaka, early yesterday.

Sabrina Rahman Shammi, 22, was a student of the sociology department.

Md Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Sutrapur Police Station, said, "Notified, we found her body hanging in her dormitory room around 4:30am. She lived alone in that room. The body was sent to Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy."

The OC claimed that they have found a note at the scene of her death.

"We are investigating the incident," he added.

Air pollution in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3
premature deaths. In 2019 alone, air pollution caused 1,59,000 premature deaths in the country.

It also contributes to illnesses such as heart disease, respiratory infections, lung cancer, stroke, and type 2 diabetes.

The health impacts of air pollution take a heavy toll on the economy, causing 2.5 billion days of illness and economic losses amounting to Tk 1,291-1,409 billion in 2019, she said.

Sources of pollution include households, power plants, brick kilns, open waste burning, road dust, and vehicle emissions, making air pollution one of the most significant environmental risks.

Household emissions from burning solid fuels account for 28 percent of total pollution, posing the greatest threat to rural women.

Other sources include power plants (24pc), brick kilns (12pc), open burning of municipal waste (11pc), road dust (8pc), road

transport (4pc), and various other sources (13pc).

Bangladesh's air quality monitoring network currently includes 31 stations, with 16 continuous ambient monitoring stations providing hourly measurements of key pollutants such as PM2.5, PM10, ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides.

Despite these capabilities, controlling air pollution remains a significant challenge as polluters are not compelled to adopt cleaner practices or comply with emissions limits, speakers said.

The government plans to address this issue through a new initiative supported by the WB. The upcoming five-year "Bangladesh Clean Air Project", set to launch in July, aims to reduce annual average PM2.5 levels by 15 mcg/m³ nationwide and by 30 mcg/m³ in Dhaka.

The project will focus on improving air quality governance, reducing emissions, and raising community awareness.

End dominance

FROM PAGE 3
and effective decisions to be made regarding how this will impact the policy framework. We need to have our own plan which would promote the transition towards renewable energy, in which prosperity in our country is already proved with scientific data and research," he added.

TIB distributed a leaflet

which incorporated 12 demands, which included forming an independent monitoring body to regulate the policy monopolies, preventing conflicts of interests, and building the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) as an autonomous institution to lead the transition to renewable energy, among others.

TIB distributed a leaflet

ICT finds proof of Rab

FROM PAGE 3
The prosecution also revealed that the investigation is continuing, with efforts to identify other individuals involved in these crimes against humanity.

When asked whether Harun is currently in the country, Tajul said authorities are unsure of his whereabouts and that it is the responsibility of law enforcement to locate and arrest him.

As of now, arrest warrants have been issued for 96 individuals, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her cabinet members, police personnel, and former Major General Ziaul Ahsan.

Harun took over as Rab DG on June 5 last year but was relieved of his position after August 5 and subsequently retired.

Rab's official statements on July 25 and July 30 denied any involvement in firing shots from helicopters during the protests, claiming that only teargas canisters and sound grenades were used.

"No shots were fired from our helicopters. Certain quarters are deliberately attempting to make the use of helicopters controversial," one statement read.

However, these claims were contradicted by the death of Sumaiya Akter, 20, a mother of a two-month-old daughter, who was fatally shot while standing on her balcony in Siddhiganj, Narayanganj, on July 20.

Sumaiya had reportedly been watching a Rab helicopter fly overhead amid clashes between protesters and law

enforcement. Her mother, Asma Begum, alleged that the fatal shot came from the helicopter.

In response to the allegations regarding Rab's use of firearms, teargas shells, and stun grenades during the uprising, current Rab DG AKM Shahidur Rahman said during a meeting in December last year that the truth would emerge through investigations and appropriate measures would be taken based on the findings.

Meanwhile, the prosecution sought permission from the tribunal to interrogate SI Abdul Malek and Constable Mukul regarding their alleged involvement in the burning of six protesters' bodies in Ashulia, Savar, during the uprising. The tribunal granted permission and scheduled the interrogations for January 28 and January 30, respectively.

Both Malek and Mukul were produced before the tribunal.

Speaking to reporters, a female teacher said, "Why did police attack us? How can police charge batons on teachers when we are demonstrating for a logical demand?"

"People as old as their fathers have come here to protest, but they were attacked, assaulted, and humiliated. What kind of act is that? We will not leave until the announcement of fulfilling our demands comes from government high-ups," said Rafiqul Islam, another teacher.

The teachers have been staging demonstrations for many years, and most recently, they started a sit-in in front of Jatiya Press Club for the past several days to press home their six-point demand, including the nationalisation of the madrasas, similar to primary schools.

China

FROM PAGE 5
20 years to 30 years for both the Preferential Buyer's Credit loan and the Government Concessional Loan.

He said China has "agreed in principle" to extend the loan repayment period and assured to look into the request of the interest rate reduction.

Replying to a query regarding media reports on the chief adviser's visit to China, the foreign adviser said there was no discussion regarding this.

Interim govt

FROM PAGE 3
He made the remarks at a discussion organised by National People's Party (NPP) at Jatiya Press Club.

Khasru, a BNP standing committee member, said they all supported the current government as there was a need for a neutral administration until an election is held following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime.

"We didn't take part in this government. BNP and other political parties have all decided together that no political party should play a role in this government, as its character is neutral," he said.

He said the interim government must restore people's ownership of the country, their voting rights and bring back democratic order through a neutral election.

He urged the interim government to take effective measures to protect the environment and the livelihoods of those dependent on it. Contacted,

Once vital canal now a source

FROM PAGE 5
Residents of villages such as Satparia, Khatiarpur, Piam, and Sakusai have been significantly affected by the canal's decline.

The canal's water, once clean and widely used for domestic purposes, has become pitch-black and emits a strong stench, said Jahangir Alam, a resident of Satparia village.

Motaher Hussain, another villager, said livestock and poultry frequently fall ill or die after coming into contact with the polluted water. He cited a recent incident where 200 ducks belonging to a farmer in the village died after exposure to the contaminated canal water.

Fotazzal Sohel, general secretary of the Habiganj unit of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, stressed the need for urgent and collective action to stop the industrial pollution.

He urged the interim government to take effective measures to protect the environment and the livelihoods of those dependent on it. Contacted,

Ferdous Anwar, director of the DoF's Sylhet Divisional Office, said the Department of Environment has initiated an investigation into the pollution.

He also said their preliminary probe showed excessive levels of industrial pollution.

"Legal action would be taken against the responsible institutions under existing laws," he said, adding that the names of the industries involved could not be disclosed at this stage for the sake of investigation.

Rare Asiatic

FROM PAGE 5
in Sylhet, said, "There were once four species of bears in the subcontinent, three of which were found in Bangladesh. Now, only two species remain, both critically endangered. Habitat destruction, hunting, smuggling, and food shortages have brought them to the brink of extinction."

"At one time, these bears thrived in the mixed evergreen hill forests of Sylhet and Chattogram. Now, only a few remain in the deep forests, struggling to survive. Publicising their presence could pose serious risks to their safety, as it may attract hunters."

Mohammad Robin Mia, upazila nirbahi officer of Chunarughat, said, "We must ensure these bears are neither hunted nor smuggled. Additionally, we need to create a sustainable food supply for their survival and engage local communities in conservation efforts."

The Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act of 2012 protects endangered species in Bangladesh, making hunting, killing, or harming them a punishable offence, he added.

Together for a brighter

FROM PAGE 5
At yesterday's event, Dr Amena Begum, country director of SpaandanB USA, and Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan Tuhi, programme manager of SpaandanB, were also present.

Advisory board members of SpaandanB Professor Mastura Khanam, Shaheen Anam, M. Sagir Hossain Khan, Ashiqur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, and Dr Rakib Khan also spoke.

A cultural performance by the school students, including songs and dances, was also held at the event.

The school was

launched in 2011 under "SpaandanB USA", which was established in 1998 through the initiative of a group of Bangladeshis living in the US.

Hasina, and other family members, alleging fraud and forgery to obtain a plot in Purbachal.

Later, the ACC sent a letter to the WHO via the ministries of foreign affairs and health and family welfare to remove Putul from her post.

The teachers have been staging demonstrations for many years, and most recently, they started a sit-in in front of Jatiya Press Club for the past several days to press home their six-point demand, including the nationalisation of the madrasas, similar to primary schools.

He urged the interim government to take effective measures to protect the environment and the livelihoods of those dependent on it. Contacted,

Putul was Canadian

FROM PAGE 3
ACC Director General Akhtar Hossen told the reporters that the ACC investigation team is assessing the possibility of whether Putul can be brought back to the country.

Earlier, the ACC filed a case against Putul,

Hasina, and other family members, alleging fraud and forgery to obtain a plot in Purbachal.

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Man beaten to death over theft suspicion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man was beaten to death by a mob on suspicion of theft in Bhandaria upazila of Pirojpur early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 3:00am, said locals.

Md Selim Shah, 50, son of Doulat Shah from Pasharibuniya village in the upazila, was caught red-handed after entering the house of one Shohidul Islam Malakar alias Firoz, said Palas Chandra Mitra, a member of ward-8 in Dhawna Union Parishad.

Selim and an accomplice reportedly dug a hole through the earthen floor to break into the tin-shed house, the UP member added.

While the mob caught and severely beat Selim, his accomplice managed to escape. In the morning, Selim's body was found on a road in front of Firoz's house.

Bhandaria Police Station Inspector Mohammad Zia Uddin said they recovered the body and sent it to Pirojpur District Hospital morgue for an autopsy. The filing of a case in connection with the incident was underway, he added.

Rare Asiatic black bear spotted in Satchari park

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A rare Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), also known as the "moon bear," has been spotted in the dense forest of Satchari National Park in Chunarrughat upazila, Habiganj.

The sighting has prompted authorities to issue warnings to visitors about safety and to restrict free movement within the park.

The discovery was made by Haris Deb Barma, a 30-year-old amateur photographer and member of the Tripura community.

"I couldn't believe such a rare species lived in this forest when I first saw it," he said. "I immediately took a photo, and after consulting with zoologists, I confirmed it was indeed an Asiatic black bear."

The species is classified as "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.

Beat Officer Mamanur Rashid said, "This is an endangered



PHOTO: HARIS DEB BARMA

species of Asiatic black bear. They are globally vulnerable. They are rarely seen and very aggressive in nature. We estimate there are 10-12 such bears, both large and small, in the park. We are taking additional steps to preserve them and are cautioning tourists about potential risks."

These bears, known for the distinctive "V" or half-moon-

shaped white patch on their chests, belong to the carnivorous family but mainly feed on insects, fruits, and honey. Except for mothers with cubs, they are solitary animals, often seen climbing trees and roaming the forest day and night in search of food.

Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, former divisional forest officer

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

KULaura BORDER Man killed 'by Indian national over land dispute'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A man was hacked to death, allegedly by an Indian national, following a dispute over land at the Kulaura border in Moulvibazar yesterday.

The incident occurred at Awlachhara in Dashteki of Karmadha union, said police.

The deceased was identified as Ahad Ali, said Kulaura Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Golam Afsar.

Ahad had been involved in a land dispute with an Indian national, said Shaheen Ahmed, a local Union Parishad member.

However, he could not provide further details.

Ahad Ali was rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries, said OC Golam Afsar.

The body was sent for autopsy, and the filing of a case was underway.

Together for a brighter tomorrow SpaandanB holds first fundraising event

CITY DESK

With the vision "Together for Brighter Tomorrow," SpaandanB, a non-governmental organisation, yesterday organised a fundraising event for the first time in Bangladesh to support the "SpaandanB School".

Operating across four centres in Dhaka's Mirpur and Mohammadpur, the school provides quality education, nutrition, school supplies, uniforms, shoes, school bags, educational materials, and basic healthcare services to underprivileged children.



Students of SpaandanB School perform at the fundraising event.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Two doctors regularly visit the centres to provide medical consultations, said a press release.

The school has brought 1,400 underprivileged children under its umbrella, providing them with quality education and all associated benefits by January this year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

China can be alternative to India for medical treatment Says foreign adviser

UNB, Dhaka



China's Kunming can be an alternative to India for medical treatment, as medical expenses and travel costs there are comparatively low, said Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday.

The adviser, who paid a bilateral visit to China recently, said this while talking to reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The adviser, during his meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing last Tuesday, requested China to reduce interest rates from 2.3 percent to 1 percent, waive commitment fee, and extend the loan repayment period from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



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 Associate Professor in the Department of Geology, University of Dhaka. Scale of Pay: Tk. 50,000-71,200/- (National pay scale 2015).

Qualifications: Candidates must have high academic qualifications along with a Ph.D. in Geology from a reputed university. They must have at least 07 (seven) years of teaching experience at a university or at least 14 (fourteen) years research experience as a research/scientific officer or an equivalent position in reputed research organizations. Candidates shall require at least 07 (seven) research publications in the indexed/quality journal with DOI (Digital Object Identifier). Articles published in predatory journals will not be accepted. Relevant notes and conditions apply. (For details, see the Dhaka University Website).

Application Guideline: Eleven 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. 1000/- (One thousand) only, payable to the Registrar, University of Dhaka, should reach him on or before 27/02/2025. Candidates already in service must apply through the proper channel.

GD-275

RAJKHAL IN HABIGANJ

Once vital canal now a source of contamination

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar



The Rajkhal canal, once a vital source of irrigation and fish for the residents of Madhabpur upazila in Habiganj, is now on the brink of destruction due to unchecked industrial pollution.

The canal, which previously provided water for croplands across five haors in the region, has suffered severe contamination since three industrial facilities began discharging untreated waste into its waters.

These facilities, located along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in the Haritala area, have turned the canal's once pristine water dark and foul-smelling, disrupting

agricultural activities and degradation have been suppressed, as influential politicians sided with the industries to silence dissent.

Farmers alleged that their protests against this environmental

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Case filed over KU student murder, one held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A case has been filed against 20-25 unidentified individuals in connection with the murder of Khulna University student Arnob Kumar Sarkar.

The victim's father, Nitish Kumar Sarkar, filed the case with Sonadanga Model Police Station on Saturday night, said Shafiqul Islam, officer in-charge of the police station.

Police have already arrested one suspect, Golam Rabbani, following an investigation based on mobile call records. "The suspect initially claimed to be a friend of Arnob. We are continuing our drives to arrest other accused," the OC added.

Earlier, police detained three individuals for questioning. Arnob Kumar Sarker, an MBA student at Khulna University, was gunned down near his home in Khulna city on Friday night.



MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES DIRECTOR OF WORKS AND CHIEF ENGINEER (AIR) INVITATION FOR TENDER

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence		
2.	Agency	Military Engineer Services		
3.	Procuring Entity Name	DW & CE (Air), Dhaka Cantt		
4.	Tender Name	Abnormal Repair Works of Bangladesh Air Force for the financial year 2024-2025 (As per SI No.14)		
5.	Invitation for Tender No.	05 of 2024-2025/E-6 Dated: 23 January 2025		
6.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)		
7.	Source of Funds	Govt. of Bangladesh (GOB)		
8.	Tender publication date	26 January 2025		
9.	Tender last Selling date	09 February 2025 (During Office hours)		
10.	Last date of Tender submission	10 February 2025 upto 1200 hours		
11.	Tender opening date and time	10 February 2025 at 1230 hours		
12.	Name & Address of the Tenders selling, receiving and opening Tender documents	DW & CE (Air), Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka-1206.		
13.	Eligibility of Tenderer	<p>a. MES Enlisted Contractors 'Class' as below.</p> <p>b. Contractors enlisted in other Govt departments may also participate in tenders of the work on receipt of security clearance from DGFI.</p>		
14.	Description of works	Location	Class	Price of Tender Document (Non refundable)
				Amount of Tender Security (Taka) in the shape of Pay Order in favour of DW&CE (Air)
a)	Repair/Maintenance of Bldg No. 21, 22 and Guard post, Washroom & Connecting Road of attached area for 203 MU Rajendrapur at BAF Base Kurmitola.	BAF Base Kurmitola.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,06,000/-
b)	Repair/Maintenance of Store of Catering flight and Office Bldg. (Bldg No.244, 177 & 114) including ancillary works at BAF Base Kurmitola.	BAF Base Kurmitola.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,94,000/-
c)	Repair/Maintenance of Road from Bldg No. PT-18 to Main Gate at Officer's Mess area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 53,000/-
d)	Repair/Maintenance of existing drain for remove water logging at Saudi Colony area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,13,000/-
e)	Repair/Maintenance/Alteration/Improvement of Bldg No. PT-42 (B-3 Bungalow) at Nirlala area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 78,000/-
f)	Repair/Maintenance/Alteration/Improvement of Bldg No. PT-44 (B-3 Bungalow) at Nirlala area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,89,000/-
g)	Repair/Maintenance of Tarmac/Taxiway for East side of Bell Hangar 1, 2, 3 at Technical area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 78,000/-
h)	Repair/Maintenance of Tarmac/Taxiway for West side of Crash Bay at Technical area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 74,000/-
i)	Repair/Maintenance of Drain adjacent to VVIP Air Movement at Technical area at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,09,000/-
j)	Maintenance/Renewal/Alteration/Improvement of Bldg No. TY-03 & TY-01 including ancillary works at C & M Unit under Abnormal repair at BAF Lalmonirhat.	BAF C&M Unit Lalmonirhat	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 95,000/-
k)	Repair/Maintenance of Missile Store & Missile Workshop including Road of 301 SAM Unit at BAF Base Zuhurul Haque, Chattogram.	BAF Base Zuhurul Haque, Chattogram.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 83,000/-
l)	Repair/Maintenance of Boundary wall including ancillary works adjacent to Hangar-1 at BAF Base Cox's Bazar.	BAF Base Cox's Bazar.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 51,000/-
m)	Repair/Maintenance of Bldg. No. 18 including ancillary works at BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud (Paharkanchapur)	BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud Paharkanchapur, Tangail.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,15,000/-
n)	Repair/Reconstruction of Retaining wall including ancillary works adjacent to Radar tower area at BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud (Paharkanchapur)	BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud Paharkanchapur, Tangail.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 75,000/-
o)	Repair/Maintenance of Sewage disposal system for BAF Officer's and Airmen Residential area at BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud (Paharkanchapur).	BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud Paharkanchapur, Tangail.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 39,000/-
p)	Repair/Maintenance of Officer's Mess (Bldg No. 38), BOQ (Bldg No. 51 & 7), Arms store of ordnance convoy, Arms spare room, Armt Sqn (Bldg No.88), 4FU Mess (Bldg No.67) including ancillary works at BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud (Paharkanchapur).	BAF Base Bir Uttam Sultan Mahmud Paharkanchapur, Tangail.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 1,16,000/-
q)	Repair/Maintenance of Bldg No. 31 of ADOC (Air Defence Operation Center) under abnormal repair at Air HQ Unit Dhaka.	Air HQ (U) Dhaka Cantonment.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,29,000/-
r)	Repair/Maintenance/Alteration of floor of 1 st floor for Bldg. No. PT-156 under abnormal repair at Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka.	Air HQ (U) Dhaka Cantonment.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,53,000/-
s)	Repair/Maintenance of Bldg No. PT-265 (Modified 'E' Type Qtr) including ancillary works with internal/external services at BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	BAF Base Bashar, Tejgaon.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,27,000/-
t)	Repair/Maintenance/Alteration of Bldg No. P-85 & P-271 (BOQ- 1 & 2) & P-114 (Officer's Mess) including ancillary works at BAF Base Zuhurul Haque, Chattogram.	BAF Base Zuhurul Haque, Chattogram.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 95,000/-
u)	Repair/Maintenance/Alteration of Bldg No. (TY-01, 03, 04,			

Thakurgaon special 'Ityadi' episode to air this Friday

The much-discussed episode of the popular magazine show *Ityadi* is set to hit screens this weekend, following its shoot earlier this month at the historic Rajbari of Ranishankail, Thakurgaon. Contrary to rumours suggesting the shoot was cancelled due to a vandalism incident on January 9, production house Fagun Audio Vision confirmed that the show went on without major issues. The special Thakurgaon-based episode is now set to air on BTV on January 31 (Friday). This episode features an exclusive, apolitical interview with politician Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, a native of Thakurgaon. For the musical performance, Robi Chowdhury and Liza will voice a song composed by Kishore Das and written by Liton Adhikary Rintu.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Animal Farm'

Prachyanat School's 47th batch presents a timely adaptation of George Orwell's classic *Animal Farm*, a powerful political allegory about freedom, equality, and rebellion, adapted and directed by Jaganmoy Paul. Join in to experience the gripping portrayal of farm animals banding together to rise against their tyrannical owner, Mr Jones, this week.

DATE: THURSDAY |
JANUARY 30

TIME: 6:30PM ONWARDS

VENUE: BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA ACADEMY



Duronto TV introduces three new cartoon series for Season 30



After completing 29 successful seasons, Duronto TV is ready for its 30th season, which began yesterday.

This new season will feature three new and exciting cartoon series — the drama-based preschool cartoon about six siblings *Cleo and Cuquin*; the thrilling adventures of Milo, Yuka, and friends in the series *Polinópolis*; and the animated comedy *PINY Institute of New York* about an aspiring fashion designer, who earns a scholarship to the prestigious PINY Institute.

Duronto Shastho Duronto Mon fans can also look forward to new episodes. Besides, Duronto TV will continue airing its regular programmes, cartoons, and movies.

Other highlights of the channel's 30th season include the shows *Dustu Misty, Bornomalar Ghor, Khatta Mitha, Ronger Khelay Surer Bhelay*, and many more.

ARIJIT SINGH to receive the Padma Shri honour

India's leading musician, Arijit Singh, will be honoured with the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award, for his contributions to music.

The Ministry of Home Affairs announced the recipients of the 2025 Padma Awards, which include seven Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri awardees.

Singh, known for hits like *Tum Hi Ho, Jhoomo Jo Pathaan, and Kesariya*, has become a beloved figure in Indian music.

Other notable awardees include late folk singer Sharda Sinha (Padma Vibhushan), filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, and actor Ajith Kumar (Padma Bhushan). President Droupadi Murmu will present the awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan in March-April 2025.



Selena Gomez, Natalie Portman eyed for Britney Spears' biopic

Jon M Chu, known for directing *Crazy Rich Asians* and *Wicked*, is set to bring Britney Spears' memoir, *The Woman in Me*, to the big screen. First announced in August 2024, the film has generated immense excitement among fans worldwide.

According to a Life & Style report, either Selena Gomez or Natalie Portman is highly likely to portray the pop icon in the biopic.

An insider revealed that Britney Spears has great admiration for Natalie Portman, and considers her an incredible actress.

"Britney also adores Selena Gomez both personally and professionally, believing her talent and experience as a former child star would offer a unique perspective on the role," added the insider.

Rosé earns fifth Guinness World Record with 'APT'

Blackpink's Rosé has made history by becoming the first K-pop artiste to top Apple Music's Top 100 Global Chart, with her title track *APT* from her solo album *Rosé*, marking her fifth Guinness World Record.

The record was confirmed on October 24, further cementing her global influence. *APT*, a collaboration with Bruno Mars, also achieved the highest ranking by a K-pop act on Billboard's Pop Airplay chart.

Additionally, Rosé became the first K-pop soloist to secure a top-ten hit on the UK charts.

Her achievements include Song of the Year at the Asia Artist Awards and a nomination for Best Music Video at the iHeartRadio Music Awards.



NEWS

Ex-army chief KM Safiullah

FROM PAGE 12

complications, including diabetes, hypertension, thyroid issues, fatty liver, and dementia.

A namaz-e-janaza of the war hero was held after Zohr prayers in Narayanganj's Rupganj.

He was buried at the Military Cemetery in Banani with state honour following another namaz-e-janaza at Dhaka Cantonment's Army Central Mosque at 4:00pm.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus expressed deep shock and sorrow at the demise of Safiullah.

"We remember with gratitude his contribution," Prof Yunus said in a condolence message. "People from all walks of life in Bangladesh will remember his heroic life forever with gratitude."

The chief adviser prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and

expressed deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

The army prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and extended sympathy to the grieving family.

In 1971, Safiullah was the second-in-command of the Second East Bengal Regiment stationed in Joydebpur.

Under his leadership, the Bangali soldiers of the regiment rebelled. At the beginning of the Liberation War, he served as the commander of Sector 3.

Later, when three regular army brigades (known as forces) were formed, Safiullah took command of the S' Force.

He was awarded the Bir Uttam title for his gallantry during the Liberation War.

Born on September 2, 1934, in Rupganj, Safiullah served as the army chief from April 7, 1972 to August 24,

1975.

He was in command as army chief during the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on August 15, 1975. After the assassination, he pledged allegiance to the government formed by Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed.

He later served as an ambassador to various countries, including Malaysia, Canada, Sweden, and England.

He returned to the country in 1991 and voluntarily retired from service the following year.

Safiullah joined the Awami League in 1995. He contested the parliamentary elections from the Narayanganj-1 constituency in 1996 and was elected MP.

In 2007, he joined the Sector Commanders Forum and went on to head the organisation.

Rift between July uprising leaders, BNP

FROM PAGE 12

in his post.

The law adviser said that AL leaders and activists, fuelled by these rumours, have attempted sabotage and added that one or two anxious individuals even called him to know what was going on.

The law adviser said he believes the BNP is not interested in conspiracy or any event like the "one-eleven" political changeover.

He said student leaders are not going to form a political party or join one while remaining in the interim

government.

The "July Proclamation" will be a political document, and student leaders are sincere in incorporating opinions of the forces of the uprising in its formulation.

He also said the BNP and student leaders have no reservations about reaching a greater election-centric consensus, albeit the nature of the consensus is subject to discussion.

"So, there is no reason for disagreement. Instead, everyone has to understand there is no alternative to unity," the law adviser said.

In his post, Prof Nazrul termed AL a party of "those who committed genocide" and said it possesses lakhs of crores of looted money, many blind followers and opportunist groups, a strong publicity network, as well as being "backed by foreign power".

If they are to be prevented, then everyone has to be united, keeping in mind the sacrifices made by martyrs of the July uprising, he said.

"There will be differences among us, but it should not reach the level that could encourage Bangladesh's enemy," he added.

1 killed, 10 hurt

FROM PAGE 12
had been out of the area for the last few months.

The clashes erupted around 6:00am yesterday when Ashraful's followers were trying to enter the area and Zakir's supporters tried to stop them.

The clashes continued for around five hours, leaving at least 11 persons injured. Of them, critically injured Alamgir was taken to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said OC Adil.

Contacted, the hospital's Resident Medical Officer Mahmudul Kabir Bashir said Alamgir was brought dead to the hospital around 11:00am.

The other injured people were being treated in hospitals in Raipura and Narsingdi, said police.

Contacted, Zahir claimed that none of his followers was involved in the violence.

Ashraful could not be contacted over the phone despite repeated attempts.

Clashes between the two groups

erupted again at around 4:00pm and the clash continued for around half an hour, OC Adil told The Daily Star.

It could not be known immediately whether any more people were injured in the second round of violence.

Raipura Upazila Nirbahi Officer Masud Rana said in the evening, "The area where the clashes took place is very remote. The situation is still out of control. So far, we can confirm one death and two others critically injured."

Clashes between the two groups

Home adviser acknowledges crime streak

FROM PAGE 12

murder, from across the country.

Responding to another query, he said around 700 inmates, who escaped from prisons after August 5, are still at large. While most of the escapees have been recaptured, we are still trying to apprehend the remaining fugitives.

He said some top criminals on bail are believed to have re-engaged in criminal activities. "If those on

bail are found involved in criminal activities, they will be apprehended and brought to justice."

The home adviser made these remarks while inaugurating a new hotline number (09612021690) for the relatives of inmates, which aims to improve transparency and assist the relatives.

"This emergency service will be operational round-the-clock in the prison..." he said.

Clinical Sinner

FROM PAGE 12

also thrust him alongside Andre Agassi, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the only men to successfully defend their Melbourne Park titles this century.

But it proved more misery for Germany's Zverev, who remains one of the world's best players never to taste Grand Slam glory, falling short once again in his third big final.

"We worked a lot to be again in this

position. It's an amazing feeling to share this moment with all of you," Sinner said, referring to his coaching team.

He also had words of consolation for Zverev.

"A tough day for you. You're an amazing player. Keep believing in yourself because I think we, all the players, and the coaches, whoever is involved in the sport, know how strong you are, not only as a player, but also as a person."

S Korea's Yoon

FROM PAGE 12

comment. The indictment was also reported by South Korean media.

Anti-corruption investigators last week recommended charging the jailed Yoon, who was impeached by parliament and suspended from his duties on December 14.

A former top prosecutor himself, Yoon has been in solitary confinement

since becoming the first sitting president to be arrested on January 15 after days of defiant, armed standoff between his security detail and arresting officials.

Over the weekend a court twice refused prosecutors' request to extend his detention while they conducted further investigation, but with the charges they have again requested that he be kept in custody, media reports said.

Shafiqul terms ex-home boss 'butcher of Bangladesh'

FROM PAGE 12

"You can realise the quality of those who are giving him a platform," said the press secretary.

CA's deputy press secretaries Apurba Jahangir and Abul Kalam Azad Majumder were also present at the briefing where the press secretary

carried by The Indian Express is full of lies and misinformation, said the CA's press wing.

Kamal, a close associate of ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who is reportedly hiding in India, is one of the masterminds of the July-August killings.

The Indian Express carried his lies without verifying the information, the press wing said.

Gold, dollars

FROM PAGE 12

On the same day, the ACC lodged three cases against SK Sur, his wife Suparna Sur Chowdhury, and his daughter Nandita Sur Chowdhury for non-compliance with notices to submit their wealth statements.

SK Sur is also under the ACC scrutiny for his alleged links to Prashanta Kumar Halder (PK Halder), the former managing director of NRB Global Bank. PK Halder, who faces multiple financial crime charges in Bangladesh, was arrested in India on May 14, 2022, for money laundering. He was freed on bail recently.

Earlier, the ACC and the National Board of Revenue froze the bank accounts of SK Sur, his wife, and daughter over tax evasion allegations.

Israeli forces kill 15 in south Lebanon

83 hurt; thousands of Lebanese attempt to return to their homes, defying Israeli orders

REUTERS, Beirut

Israeli forces killed 15 people in south Lebanon yesterday as a deadline for their withdrawal passed and thousands of people tried to return to their homes in defiance of Israeli military orders, Lebanese authorities said.

Israel said on Friday it would keep troops in the south beyond the yesterday's deadline set out in a US-brokered ceasefire that halted last year's war with Hezbollah, saying Lebanon had not yet fully enforced terms requiring south Lebanon to be free of Hezbollah arms and the Lebanese army to be deployed.

Lebanon's US-backed military, which reported one of its soldiers among those killed by Israeli forces yesterday, has accused Israel of procrastinating in its withdrawal.

The Hezbollah-Israel conflict was fought in parallel with the Gaza war, and peaked in a major Israeli offensive that uprooted more than a million people in Lebanon and left the Iran-backed group badly weakened.



Lebanon's health ministry said 15 people were killed and another 83 wounded in numerous locations in the south, as a result of what it described as Israeli attacks on citizens while they were trying to enter their still-occupied towns.

The Israeli military said that its troops "operating in southern Lebanon fired warning shots to remove threats in a number of areas where suspects were identified approaching the troops".

Hezbollah's al-Manar television, broadcasting from several locations in the south, showed footage of residents moving towards villages, some holding the group's flag and images of Hezbollah fighters killed in the war.

An Israeli military spokesperson, addressing the people of south Lebanon in a post on X, accused Hezbollah of trying to "heat up the situation" and said the Israeli army would "in the near future" inform them of places to which they can return.



Taima, the mother of two-year-old Laila Al-Khatib who was killed during an Israeli raid, embraces the body of her daughter during her funeral near Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

PHONE CALL WITH DANISH PM Trump again demands to buy Greenland: report

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump had a fiery phone call with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen over his demands to buy Greenland, according to senior European officials.

Speaking to the Financial Times, officials said that Trump, then still president-elect, spoke with Frederiksen for 45 minutes last week, during which he was described to be aggressive and confrontational about Frederiksen's refusal to sell Greenland to the US.

The Financial Times reports that according to five current and former senior European officials who were briefed on the call, the conversation "was horrendous". One person said: "He was very firm. It was a cold shower. Before, it was hard to take it seriously.

But I do think it is serious and potentially very dangerous."

Another person who was briefed on the call told the outlet: "The intent was very clear. They want it. The Danes are now in crisis mode." Someone else said: "The Danes are utterly freaked out by this."

Trump has previously said that the US needs to control Greenland and has refused to rule out using US military force to take over the territory, reports The Guardian online.

Meanwhile, the top EU military official, Robert Briege, said it would make sense to station troops from EU countries in Greenland, according to an interview with Germany's Welt Sonntag published on Saturday, as Trump has expressed interest in acquiring the Danish territory.

Ukraine downs 50 Russian drones

Attacks oil refinery

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian air defences downed 50 of 72 drones launched by Russia overnight and attacked one of Russia's largest oil refineries, Ukraine's military said yesterday.

Kyiv's general staff said yesterday its forces attacked Russia's Ryazan oil refinery again last night. Military authorities did not immediately report casualties or damages.

Meanwhile, Russian defence ministry said that its air defence destroyed 15 Ukrainian drones over Russia and two sea drones in the Black Sea.

70 killed in attack on Sudan hospital: WHO

REUTERS

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) called on Saturday for an end to attacks on healthcare workers and facilities in Sudan after a drone attack on a hospital in Sudan's North Darfur region killed more than 70 people and wounded dozens.

"As the only functional hospital in El Fasher, the Saudi Teaching Maternal Hospital provides services which include gyn-obstetrics, internal medicine, surgery and pediatrics, along with a nutrition stabilization centre," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted on X after the Friday strike.

"We continue to call for a cessation of all attacks on health care in Sudan, and to allow full access for the swift restoration of the facilities that have been damaged," Tedros said.

The war between Sudan's army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which broke out in April 2023 due to disputes over the integration of the two forces, has killed tens of thousands, driven millions from their homes and plunged half of the population into hunger.

REPUBLIC DAY PARADE

India shows military might, diversity

AFP, New Delhi

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto looked on as guest of honour at India's annual military and cultural parade in New Delhi held to mark the country's 76th Republic Day yesterday.

Republic Day marks the adoption of India's post-independence constitution in 1950 with the parade being held at a revamped colonial-era boulevard that also hosts important government buildings.

"May this occasion strengthen our efforts towards preserving the ideals of our Constitution and working towards a stronger and prosperous India," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday on social media platform X.

The annual show is a colourful and tightly choreographed spectacle featuring missile systems, fighter jet fly pasts, motorbike stunts and floats representing different Indian states.

ইউনিভার্সিটি ল্যাবরেটরি স্কুল এন্ড কলেজ

আই.ই.আর, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা

ফোনঃ ৯৬১৯২০-৭৩/৮৬৬০, ৮৬৬১, ৮৬৬২

Website: ulab.edu.bd, Email: ulabsc@gmail.com

কলেজ বোর্ড-১২১

স্কুল বোর্ড-১১৯০

EIIN-108362

টেক্নো বিজ্ঞপ্তি (উন্নত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি)

তারিখঃ ১২ মার্চ ১৪৩১ বঙ্গাব্দ

২৬ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

তারিখঃ ১২ মার্চ ১৪৩১ বঙ্গাব্দ

২৬ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

মোঃ আমিল উদ্দীন
অধিক (জেরেক)
ইউনিভার্সিটি ল্যাবরেটরি স্কুল এন্ড কলেজ
আই.ই.আর, ঢাকা

GD-273

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Fire Service & Civil Defence

Kazi Alauddin Road, Dhaka

Date: 22/01/2025

e-Tender Notice No. FSCD Development/W/2024-2025

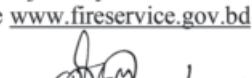
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement Repairing of Civil works as mentioned in the following table:

SL. No.	Tender ID No.	Description	e-Tender publishing date & time	Last selling date & time of e-Tender document	Closing & opening date & time of e-Tender document
01.	1065585	Repairing of civil works at Ramu Fire Station, Cox's Bazar & Repairing of civil works at DAD Office, Khagrachari.	27.01.2025 at 12.00am	10.02.2025 at 17.00am	11.02.2025 at 12.00am
02.	1065588	Repairing of civil works at Ramgati Fire Station, Laxmipur & Repairing of civil works at Muradnagar Fire Station, Cumilla.			
03.	1065589	Repairing of civil works at Kachua Fire Station, Chandpur & Repairing of civil works at Haimchor Fire Station, Chandpur.			
04.	1065591	Repairing of civil works at Akhaura Fire Station, B-Baria & Repairing of civil works at Kosba Fire Station, B-Baria.			
05.	1065592	Repairing of civil works at Charghat Fire Station, Rajshahi & Repairing of civil works at Durgapur Fire Station, Rajshahi.	28.01.2025 at 12.00am	11.02.2025 at 17.00am	12.02.2025 at 12.00am
06.	1065593	Repairing of civil works at Natore Fire Station & Repairing of civil works at Doyarampur Fire Station, Natore.			
07.	1065594	Repairing of civil works at Nachol Fire Station, Chapainawabgonj & Repairing of civil works at Chatmohor Fire Station, Pabna.			
08.	1065595	Repairing of civil works at Kashinathpur Fire Station, Pabna & Repairing of civil works at Sariakandi Fire Station, Bogura.			
09.	1065596	Repairing of civil works at Joypurhat Fire Station.	29.01.2025 at 12.00am	12.02.2025 at 17.00am	13.02.2025 at 12.00am
10.	1065597	Repairing of civil works at Fenchugonj Fire Station, Sylhet & Repairing of civil works at Kulaura Fire Station, Moulovibazar.			
11.	1065598	Repairing of civil works at Jagannathpur Fire Station, Sunamgonj & Repairing of civil works at Sunamgonj Fire Station.			
12.	1065599	Repairing of civil works at Officers Barrack & Firefighter Barrack Fire Service Headquarters Dhaka.			
13.	1065600	Repairing of civil works at Tongi Fire Station, Gazipur & Repairing of civil works at Polashi Barrak Fire Station, Dhaka.			

This is an online tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP System Portal. No offline/hard copies will be acceptable. To submit e-Tender please register in the National e-GP Portal System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details please contact help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The fees or downloading the e-Tendering documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 10.02.2025, 11.02.2025, 12.02.2025 at 17.00pm.

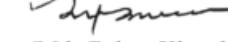
Note:

- (1) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without showing any cause.
- (2) The notice will also be published in FSCD website www.fireservice.gov.bd.


27/01/2025

Lt. Col. Md Rezul Karim PSC
Director (Planning, Development & Training)
Department of Fire Service & Civil Defence, Dhaka

This Notice of corrigendum will be treated as a part of the tender documents. All other terms and conditions of tender will remain unchanged.



(Md. Golam Khorshed)

Deputy Secretary

Additional Director, Commercial (Substitute)

GD-269

Spare students from admission test chaos

Withdrawal of multiple universities from cluster system raises concerns

We are concerned by the renewed prospect of hassles for students seeking tertiary education following the withdrawal of a number of public universities from the cluster admission test system. The reported withdrawal of at least 10 universities—including all three under the engineering cluster and seven others under the general, science and technology (GST) cluster—means that admission seekers will have to sit for those exams separately, forcing them back into an expensive and stressful process. This will require them to again prepare for different types of exams, travel long distances across the country, and incur significant expenses for applications and accommodations. After a year marked by frequent academic disruptions, they didn't deserve this added uncertainty so close to their big moment.

The cluster system was meant to address these difficulties by consolidating entrance exams, allowing students to apply to multiple universities with a single test. Currently, there are 55 public universities in the country. Considering the sufferings involved with independent tests, the cluster system was introduced in 2019 for agricultural universities—who have adhered to it consistently—and for universities under the GST and engineering clusters in 2020. However, major general and engineering universities have been resisting the attempt to consolidate their admission process. Following the recent withdrawals, there is now no university left under the engineering cluster, while only 17 remain under the GST cluster.

This is despite multiple meetings held between the University Grants Commission (UGC) and university vice-chancellors, as well as letters from the education ministry urging that exams be held under the cluster system. Universities opting out have cited poor planning, delayed result publication, and inefficient admission procedures as reasons. Some believe that the cluster system does not adequately reflect their academic standards. While these concerns are not entirely unfounded, abandoning the system without pursuing reform in it is a disservice to students. A well-designed cluster admission system is certainly achievable, as evidenced by the long-established unified medical admission test.

We, therefore, urge the education ministry to take more decisive action to convince the dissenting universities that they cannot arbitrarily abandon a system designed to benefit students. We understand that the revenue generated from independent tests is significant, and some universities may be reluctant to relinquish this financial advantage. If this is a factor in their decisions, it is imperative for the regulatory authorities to ensure that students' needs are prioritised. If the universities are concerned about maintaining academic standards, they should work to refine and improve the cluster framework, rather than discarding it entirely.

Take action to restore investor confidence

Govt, political parties must work together to boost FDI

The declining trend of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh in recent years is quite concerning, especially amid high inflation, rising unemployment, and increasing financial liabilities. According to central bank data, Bangladesh received 71 percent less FDI during the first quarter of FY2025 compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year. Moreover, 55 percent of the FDI consisted of intercompany loans and reinvestments, not new investments that can create jobs and drive business activity.

Experts cited political instability, economic uncertainty, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inconsistent policies, high inflation, currency volatility, and inter-agency misalignment as key reasons behind the decline in FDI. Even low labour costs have failed to attract foreign investors, as a combination of these factors—along with rising corruption and nepotism in more than 15 years of Awami League's rule—ultimately pushed up the cost of doing business in Bangladesh. The situation turned worse last year amid month-long protests and the Awami League's violently oppressive actions to suppress the uprising, which halted production, disrupted the supply chain, and negatively impacted foreign trade. The deterioration of law and order after August 5 further compounded the issue.

It took months for the situation to stabilise, but even now, occasional protests by various groups continue to disrupt businesses. With a non-political government in power, and tasked with initiating reforms and conducting fair elections, new and long-term projects are also not currently on the table. These factors have not helped local and foreign investors regain their confidence, and as a result, they remain in a "wait and see" mode, which is hindering economic recovery.

Currently, FDI constitutes only 0.5 percent of our GDP. To stimulate economic activities and drive growth, this share must increase. Simply having foreign investor-friendly policies on paper is not enough. The government should take concrete steps to review existing policies, identify inconsistencies, and make necessary adjustments. A focus should be placed on developing robust promotional campaigns for domestic industries and initiating bilateral discussions that encourage investment. However, the most urgent issue to be addressed is the volatile law and order situation. Foreign investors seek not only low labour costs, but also a safe environment for doing business and a stable political regime for long-term investments. The interim government, together with political parties and other stakeholders, must recognise this and take decisive action to restore stability and attract FDI.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

End of Vietnam War



On this day in 1973, the Paris Peace Accords ending the Vietnam War was signed, providing for an exchange of prisoners and for the unilateral withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam.

EDITORIAL

Will the home adviser go big or go home?

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ZARIF FAIAZ and
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As soon as the sun sets and evening descends down upon the city, the residents of Shekhertek Road No. 6 in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area ramp up measures to secure their homes. The streets become almost deserted as pedestrians rush to get away from open roads. An eerie feeling of impending danger lurks in the air. For the residents of Shekhertek Road No. 6, this has become the norm after a series of incidents of mugging, snatching and robbery—at least one in broad daylight—in the surrounding areas have left them scarred.

This is not the picture of that one particular road alone; it reflects the current atmosphere of fear in Dhaka. Post-August 5, muggers, robbers, and criminals run rampant in the city as

only one dies, but the rest remain," the police officer was heard saying to the then Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

After the previous regime's fall, three days passed without any law enforcement on the streets. People took it upon themselves to stay up all night and guard their neighbourhoods against robbers and thieves. There

country, particularly in Dhaka city. A report by this daily highlights that in September 2024, as many as 148 murder cases were filed in the city, rising from 119 in August. Thirty-three cases of mugging were reported—at least one in broad daylight—rising from 14 in August.

The situation did not improve drastically in the following



This collage shows screengrabs from CCTV footage showing robbery and mugging in Mohammadpur, Dhaka in recent times.

A report by this daily highlights that in September 2024, as many as 148 murder cases were filed in the city, rising from 119 in August. Thirty-three cases of mugging were reported—at least one in broad daylight—rising from 14 in August.

the law and order situation has fallen to an all-time low. With this appalling state, public trust in law enforcement agencies have also degraded. What is baffling, though, is that the guardian entity of our law enforcement agencies is not willing to take any of it.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has long been a subject of great criticism in the political reality of Bangladesh. From Lutfozzaman Babar's "We are looking for *shotros*" to Sahara Khatun's "We can't provide protection in people's bedrooms," the home ministers' false promises and lack of accountability have been a part of this country's political history. The ministry's legacy took its darkest turn during the July uprising last year, when a video footage of a police officer went viral. "Sir, we kill one,

were also community efforts to guard minority religious places and public property against vandalism. The metropolitan area breathed a sigh of relief when the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus took office with the promise of sweeping reforms. Even then, for a good few weeks, police stations were empty as police themselves suffered significant damage following the regime's fall since protesters retaliated against indiscriminate killings.

We hoped that, despite everything,

a new political reality would emerge with these winds of change. We hoped that we were truly about to get a new Bangladesh—the much heralded Bangladesh 2.0. A rebranded Bangladesh where law enforcement agencies will not be our enemies, but our friends and guardian angels. We even saw students greeting police officers with flowers when they resumed their duties on the streets. Five and a half months on, we are beginning to realise that this hope of a new political fantasy might just turn out to be a fantasy.

Since Lt Gen (retd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury took office as the home affairs adviser, succeeding Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain who held the office for only a few days, he has effectively failed to curb the skyrocketing crime rates across the

months of October, November or December; despite joint operations by law enforcement agencies, the atmosphere of fear and danger and the general feeling of unsafety in the roads still reign in the city. From mob violence to petty crimes, only the privileged class can truly claim that they or their friends and family have not become victims of crime in recent times. Social media is flooded with racing complaints by women that they are scared to go out after dark, mainly due to the increase in the number of harassers on the streets.

Attacks on minorities and the destruction of shrines are other examples of ineffectiveness of our law enforcement agencies and their custodian, the home ministry. There are countless footage of people attacking these shrines; why are law enforcement agencies unable to identify the perpetrators and take action? What happened to the Students of Sovereignty members who attacked Indigenous students with cricket stumps on January 15? We know two were arrested and were paraded in front of the media, but the others remain at large. There's the allegation that several key perpetrators of the July massacre—the ministers, police officers—were able to flee the country. How can the law enforcement infrastructure of the

country let them slip through?

We must ask: why are the law enforcement agencies simply not working? On the one hand, criminals are clearly not afraid of repercussions; and on the other, citizens have no confidence in the custodians of their security. Why is the home ministry failing to control its forces?

The interim government can argue that the crime rates have not shockingly gone up compared to last year, and that the law enforcement agencies, still reeling from the blow of the uprising where they faced the brunt, are struggling to find their foothold back. It can argue that the intelligence network is broken and the red tape of the old bureaucracy is holding them back. It can argue a lot and that all may be true, but what's also true is that we expected better—perhaps a rather unrealistic high expectation. But the interim government failed to even reach the minimum bar when it came to restoring law and order across the country. At least, we expected a sincere acknowledgement of the ground situation and a solid game plan from our home affairs adviser. Instead of doing any of that, he has given vague statements whenever questioned. Repeatedly, the adviser has remarked that "law and order has improved," but people hardly feel so.

Clearly, there remains more to be done. What we want is a clear acknowledgement of shortcomings, and a strongman approach in handling a critical institution like the home ministry. The job is to restore public faith in these institutions, and we haven't seen enough steps yet from the government.

In a new Bangladesh after the mayhem of July-August 2024, reinforcing law and order should have been one of the first priorities of the interim government to restore public faith in our broken institutions. With each passing day, people's confidence will keep deteriorating unless they see actionable outputs. The first step will be to restore law and order, and we are all looking at the home adviser.

The July uprising ushered in a new hope of a new Bangladesh where we expect accountability from our government bodies—accountability that was missing for 15 and a half years. We will continue to ask for accountability because the price we have paid for it is too high. If the home affairs adviser and his office cannot embody this culture of transparency and accountability even in five and a half months, maybe it's time to rethink this appointment.

Utilising AI in Bangladesh's RMG sector



RMG NOTES

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MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers immense potential to transform Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector, enabling enhanced productivity, improved quality, and sustainable practices, while simultaneously addressing inefficiencies, streamlining processes, and increasing competitiveness. AI-powered systems can revolutionise the production process by enabling real-time monitoring and optimising factory operations. Machines equipped with AI can predict potential failures in equipment, cutting costly downtime and ensuring uninterrupted production. Additionally, AI-driven robotics can assist in repetitive tasks such as fabric-cutting, stitching, and packaging, reducing the time and cost associated with human labour. Human errors will also be minimised, leading to the overall improvement of product quality.

Besides, AI technologies, such as image recognition systems, can inspect RMG products with precision, detecting flaws in stitching, colour or patterns. By ensuring that only high-quality products reach international buyers, these systems can help safeguard Bangladesh's reputation as a reliable supplier. This technological edge can play a pivotal role in retaining the existing customer base and

attracting new ones in an increasingly quality-conscious market.

AI-powered analytics can also provide real-time insights into supply chain dynamics, allowing manufacturers to predict disruptions and make data-driven decisions. For instance, if a delay in raw material shipments is anticipated, AI tools can recommend alternative suppliers, ensuring that production schedules remain intact. By forecasting demand more accurately, manufacturers can also avoid overproduction and manage inventory efficiently, reducing waste and aligning with just-in-time manufacturing principles.

Furthermore, AI can contribute to sustainable practices by optimising resource usage, such as calculating fabric layouts to minimise waste or monitoring energy and water consumption in factories. These measures will reduce environmental impact and also appeal to global buyers, who are increasingly seeking eco-friendly products.

In addition to streamlining operations, AI has the potential to transform customer engagement. By analysing consumer behaviour, AI tools can identify trends and preferences, enabling manufacturers to design products tailored to market demands. AI-powered online platforms can enhance the shopping

experience, offering personalised recommendations and improving customer satisfaction. These innovations can help Bangladeshi manufacturers establish stronger connections with international buyers and boost sales.

Worker safety and productivity are other areas where AI could bring about meaningful change. AI-driven sensors can monitor factory conditions, detecting hazards such as gas leaks or structural vulnerabilities and ensuring swift action to prevent accidents. Wearable AI devices can track worker health and performance, providing data to improve workplace safety and efficiency, as well as protecting workers and creating a more productive and motivated workforce.

Using AI technologies, manufacturers can make Bangladeshi garment products more competitive in global markets and attract foreign investment, as international brands increasingly prioritise partnerships with technologically advanced suppliers.

However, the road to AI integration is not without challenges. One of the most significant concerns is the potential for job displacement, particularly among low-skilled workers who form the backbone of the industry. Automation of repetitive tasks could lead to reduced demand for manual labour, raising fears about unemployment in a sector that provides livelihoods to millions. Addressing this issue requires a proactive approach, including the implementation of reskilling programmes to prepare workers for technology-driven roles. By equipping the workforce with new skills, the industry can create opportunities for employment in areas such as data analysis,

programming, and machine maintenance.

Another challenge is the high cost of adopting AI technologies, which includes expenses for equipment, software, and training. For smaller manufacturers, these upfront investments may seem prohibitive. Government support in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, and low-interest loans could play a crucial role in making AI adoption more accessible.

Policymakers must also establish a regulatory framework to encourage research and development in AI applications tailored to the needs of the RMG sector. However, while using AI technologies, manufacturers must ensure that robust safeguards are in place to protect sensitive information, both within their operations and in customer interactions. Building trust in the technology is essential for its widespread adoption.

Resistance to change is another hurdle that must be overcome. Many stakeholders in the RMG sector may be unfamiliar with AI or sceptical of its benefits. Demonstrating the tangible advantages of AI through pilot projects and success stories can help build confidence and encourage broader adoption.

The path forward requires a collaborative effort between the government, industry stakeholders, and technology providers. Policymakers must create an enabling environment through supportive policies and incentives, while manufacturers need to invest in upskilling their workforce and exploring partnerships with technology firms. A phased approach to AI integration, starting with pilot projects and gradual scale-up, can help mitigate risks and ensure a smooth transition.

How urban informal credit markets work in Bangladesh



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MD MAIN UDDIN

Informal credit is a non-institutional and unregulated way of extending credit to loan seekers, where money is lent by private individuals. Informal credit market plays a significant role in channelling funds mainly to poor borrowers both in rural and urban areas. A large number of people depend on informal credit markets since the formal credit system has some issues that may deter a section of people, especially the poor, from taking loans from it.

There are some compelling reasons for which informal credit markets prevail in an economy. In rural areas, formal financial institutions cannot reach all potential borrowers because of their faulty loan production technology. Rural borrowers have demand for small loans and providing them with service with costly bank branches

In Bangladesh, most of the microfinance institutions (MFIs) work in rural areas, targeting the poor and providing small loans without collateral. Hence, loan seekers have easy access to financial services. Formal financial institutions cannot serve the urban poor as there is a mismatch between demand and supply. In addition, the number of MFIs in urban areas is very low, although there is a high demand for small and collateral-free loans in urban areas too. Consequently, a large number of the urban poor depend mainly on informal credit markets to reduce their liquidity constraint.

There have been many studies on informal credit markets in rural Bangladesh. But the current understanding about urban informal credit markets is controlled

between July and October 2023 from 400 respondents who took informal loans. The respondents ranged from tea stall owners and rickshaw pullers, to hawkers, domestic helps, and others, considering that they come from the poor section of society. Of the respondents, 80 percent were male and 20 percent female. Meanwhile, 88 percent were married

and almost 11 percent from friends.

The average size of the loan was Tk 25,580, with the range between Tk 2,000 and Tk 400,000. The most popular amount was found to be Tk 20,000. Nearly 54 percent loans had the value between Tk 5,001 and Tk 20,000, and 94 percent between Tk 2,000 and Tk 50,000. These findings suggest that informal lenders mainly

business, followed by 21 percent for treatment, 10 percent for purchasing goods like TV, refrigerator, etc, nine percent for weddings—ceremonies and dowry payment—and eight percent each for purchasing rickshaws/vans and repaying another loan. About 56 percent loans were taken for unproductive purposes. The result is quite normal

percent), accidental cost (29 percent), and lack of financial discipline (three percent). Borrowers failed to repay the loans mainly because of sluggish pace in business. Some borrowers (20 percent) diverted loans to non-productive uses such as consumption, medical treatment, household expenditure, which also led to loan default.

The most dominating consequence of loan default was harassment—verbal abuse, physical assault, threat in public, and others—by lenders (71 percent), followed by absconding (14 percent) and loss of collateral (11 percent). Sometimes, a lender sealed the house of a borrower to compel them to repay the loan.

About 51 percent of respondents borrowed from the informal credit market because they found it easy. Meanwhile, quick funding attracted 19 percent of borrowers, no collateral requirement induced 14 percent of borrowers. Less paperwork and the unavailability of formal credit encouraged seven percent and six percent, respectively.

As the study has shown, there are many practical reasons for which borrowers take loans from informal lenders. They don't need to make any periodic savings; rules and regulations are not rigid; there is also flexibility in loan size and the repayment of instalments; and at times, borrowers don't need to even mention their loans' purposes. This makes borrowing trouble-free. Moreover, informal loans are sometimes a matter of verbal agreement; borrowers don't need to produce paper documents and fill out an application form, and loan disbursement is done very quickly, often without collateral.

However, in the absence of regulations, informal credit markets are highly exploitative too. Therefore, banks, which are the main suppliers of formal finance in Bangladesh, must be proactive in reducing the scope of informal finance, because the sizeable presence of informal finance in an economy does indicate a big failure of the formal credit system.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Most of the microfinance institutions (MFIs) work in rural areas, targeting the poor and providing small loans without collateral. Hence, loan seekers have easy access to financial services. Formal financial institutions cannot serve the urban poor as there is a mismatch between demand and supply. In addition, the number of MFIs in urban areas is very low, although there is a high demand for small and collateral-free loans in urban areas too.

is not profitable. Thus, many rural borrowers depend on the informal credit market. Similarly, a section of urban people also depends on informal credit markets because formal financial institutions fail to provide customised financial services to the poor through their complex service delivery system.

by a limited number of empirical studies. Until we know the state of urban informal credit markets, a major aspect of this sector will remain unexplored.

In 2023, I conducted a study on the situation of the urban informal credit market in Dhaka city. I used personal interviews to collect data

and the rest unmarried, divorced or abandoned. Rickshaw pullers (32 percent) were the largest group of borrowers, followed by hawkers (25 percent), tea stall owners (21 percent), and domestic helps (20 percent).

The study found that all respondents took loans from different sources in the previous 12 months. Among them, 24 percent took loans from moneylenders, 13 percent from local income groups, seven percent from *dadon* loan (a cash loan for crop production or product manufacturing, which is to be repaid in the form of produce, the price of which is predetermined, generally lower than the normal market price), and only five percent from goldsmiths. Twenty percent borrowers took loans from relatives, nearly 17 percent from neighbours,

provide small loans, but there is also demand for large loans from these lenders.

The study also found that the average interest rate was 24 percent, with the range between zero and 250 percent. Of the total loans, 75 percent had the interest rate less than or equal to 30 percent. Put it differently, 25 percent paid an interest of more than 30 percent. The prevalence of low interest rates is because 45 percent of borrowers took loans from their affluent relatives, well-off neighbours and generous friends at zero or minimum interest rates.

Informal loans were taken for both productive (income generating) and unproductive (consumption) purposes. The highest demand for loan, about 36 percent, was for doing

because formal credit markets do not extend loans for such purposes.

Sixty-nine percent of the loans were granted without collateral. Those who were extended loans with collateral placed different types of collateral: third-party guarantee (48 percent), gold/silver (24 percent), mortgage/immovable asset (19 percent), and rickshaws/vans (nine percent). The informal credit market also requires collateral when the loan size is larger, and the borrower is new and perceived to be risky and has no third-party guarantee.

The trend of defaulted loans was found in the informal credit market as well. About 30 percent of the borrowers defaulted on loans. The main reason for that was high household expense (38 percent), followed by loss in business (30

To tackle food inflation, we need long-term policies

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NARAYAN DAS and
MD RAKIBUL MOBIN

Since the onset of the Covid pandemic, inflation has remained one of the biggest challenges in Bangladesh's economy. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), general inflation in December 2024 stood at 10.9 percent, a 0.5 percentage point decrease from 11.4 percent in the previous month. Food inflation in December 2024 was 12.9 percent, declining slightly by 0.9 percentage points from the previous month's rate. Tackling inflation, specifically food inflation, remains a major challenge for the interim government. Since inflation is a monetary phenomenon, i.e. determined by the supply, value, and circulation of money, the central bank is trying to take appropriate policy measures to control inflation. To this end, the Bangladesh Bank increased the repo rate (the interest rate at which the central bank lends to commercial banks) in October 2024 by 50 basis points to 10 percent, the fifth hike last year and 11th since May 2022.

Essentially, inflation occurs when aggregate demand exceeds aggregate supply, driving up prices. Excess demand is created mainly in two ways: firstly, when the demand increases with economic growth, known as demand-pull inflation. It is considered less severe than cost-push inflation, which happens when the aggregate supply decreases due to a higher cost of production.

In the past five years, the world has faced two different economic shocks, both affecting aggregate supply adversely, i.e. cost-push inflation: the Covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. The latter raised the cost of production in Bangladesh by increasing the price of fuel, decreasing

aggregate supply, and hence creating cost push inflation. The pandemic also disrupted supply chains. This disruption, combined with the appreciation of the US dollar, worsened inflation by increasing the cost of imported raw materials. The official exchange rate of the US dollar was approximately Tk 85 in 2021, but as of



The Bangladesh Bank's current strategy to combat inflation by reducing demand may not help after all.

FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

January 26, 2025, it has surged to Tk 122, marking a 41 percent increase. Moreover,

the agricultural wage rate has been rising steadily, which contributes to food inflation. BBS data shows that between July 2023 and June 2024, the agricultural wage rate increased by 8.2 percent.

On the other hand, the country's economic growth has created excess demand at a steady rate. As a result, the

items may occur due to both the demand-pull and cost-push phenomena.

Controlling cost-push inflation is inconceivably difficult. Some measures to prevent this type of inflation include freezing wages and putting a ceiling on the prices of basic commodities. However, these strategies are close to impossible to implement and not feasible for controlling inflation in the long run.

The central bank is currently trying to battle inflation by reducing demand, i.e. raising interest rates. But this strategy may not help in controlling essential commodity prices. Even when the contractionary monetary policy (higher rate reduces money supply) works, it

does so through a decrease in demand by tightening credit through increased interest rates, which affects the nutrition of the population negatively—potentially a damaging strategy in a country with a high prevalence of undernutrition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the stunting rate among under-five children in Bangladesh was 26.4 percent in 2022, significantly higher than the global average of 22.3 percent. Consequently, such a strategy may, in fact, increase inflation in the future by hurting human capital development and thus reducing long-run supply. Besides, higher interest rates may hurt investment and, consequently, supply, which can further worsen cost-push inflation in the long run.

Therefore, the demand-reducing measures are not long-term desirable policies. The government should focus on increasing supply in the long run to deal with inflationary pressure on essential commodities by increasing imports and domestic production. Proper incentives should be provided in these areas to increase the supply of essential food commodities. Raw material prices in

poultry, livestock, and fishing should be controlled to ensure higher production, if necessary, through subsidy. Landless farmers can be provided with low interest loans to increase investment. The price of fuel could be subsidised as fuel is a substantial component of production costs. As short-run measures, safety net coverage should be increased so that all vulnerable households can afford basic necessities in the face of high inflation. These policies have, of course, implications for the national budget, but ensuring food security should be the top most priority of the government. The tax-GDP ratio must be improved to finance these policies; currently, Bangladesh's tax-GDP ratio is one of the lowest not just in South Asia, but also in the world.

It is often argued that the market syndicates of essential commodities drive the prices up. If this is the case, then one would expect a large gap between production or import costs and retail prices. The government should scrutinise the market to verify the existence of syndicates and take measures accordingly.

The interim government has already taken some useful steps, such as withdrawing tariffs partially or fully on some essential commodities. In October 2024, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) launched a programme to sell oil, lentils, and rice from trucks in Dhaka and Chattogram, which was suspended recently. This programme should be resumed until inflation is under control to provide support to the underprivileged population. This will not only enable the vulnerable groups to buy food items at affordable prices, but also decrease market prices. The amount of public procurement of rice should be increased. The interim government should also procure other essential commodities like potatoes and onions, ensuring fair prices for farmers and eventually increasing the production of these products.

The inflation of the necessary food items may occur due to both the demand-pull and cost push phenomena. Controlling cost-push inflation is inconceivably difficult. Some measures to prevent this type of inflation include freezing wages and putting a ceiling on the prices of basic commodities. However, these strategies are close to impossible to implement and not feasible for controlling inflation in the long run.

H. H. Risley and Bengal, 1873-1911

Anthropology, Colonialism and the Bhadralok

In late 1903, Risley announced the proposals for the 'reconstitution' of Bengal and Assam. The Partition of Bengal, which was completed in 1905 after Risley drew up the final plan, was the most controversial of all Curzon's policies, and it especially infuriated bhadralok members of the Congress, who saw it as an assault on Bengali society and culture, as well as a stratagem to weaken the organisation by separating its leaders and supporters in east Bengal from those in the west.



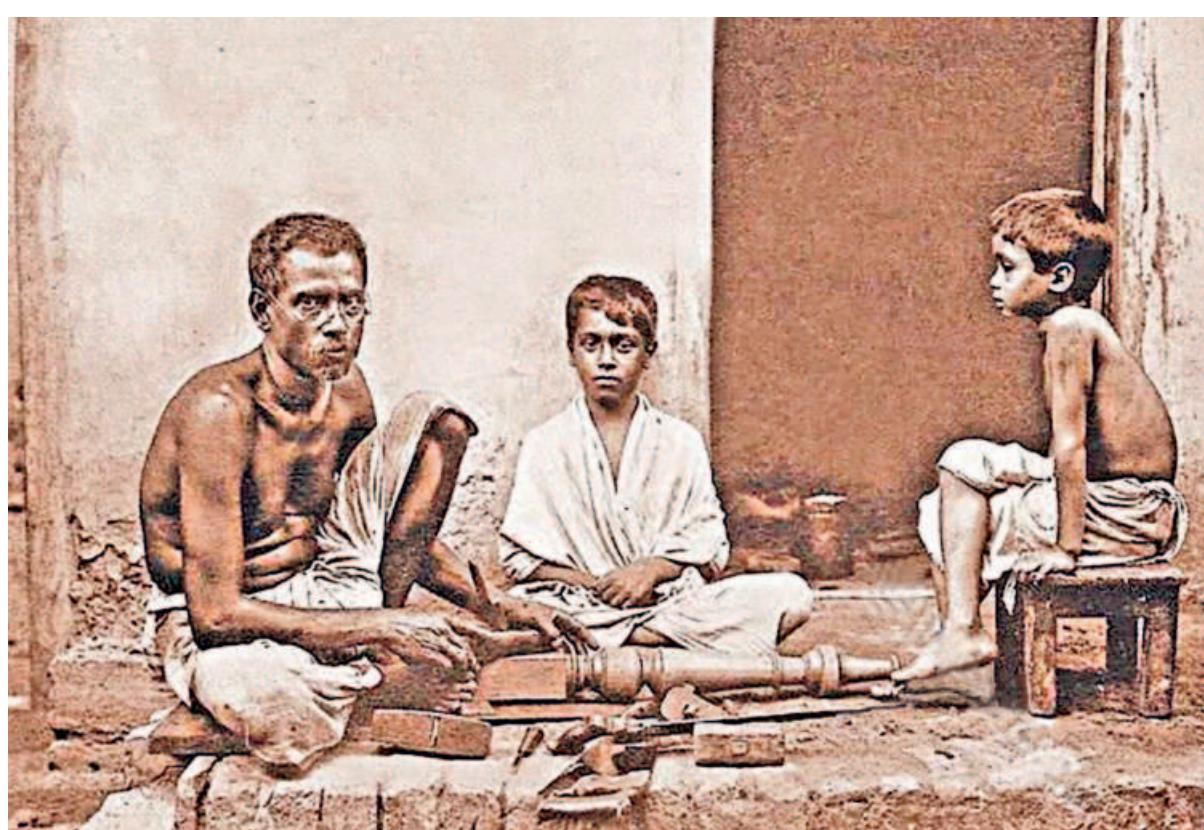
Sir Herbert Hope Risley (1851-1911)

Sir Herbert Hope Risley (1851-1911) – who signed himself 'H. H. Risley' – was a member of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) who became British India's pre-eminent anthropologist. How anthropologists and sociologists understand a society is always influenced by the people they come to know best, as well as their own preconceptions, and this was as true of colonial anthropologists as it is of their post-colonial contemporaries. For Risley, who started his ICS career in Bengal in 1873, the most important group of people was the *bhadralok*, the English-educated, urban, professional middle class, whose members were almost all Hindus from the high-status Brahman, Baidya and Kayastha castes. In Bengal, most Indian subordinate government officials and clerks, as well as other professionals, such as teachers and lawyers, belonged to the *bhadralok*; so, too, did the leaders and supporters of the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885. Risley's relationship with the *bhadralok* and his attitude towards it, were very ambivalent, but he still had a particular affinity with its members that initially owed much to his early life in England.

Risley was born in Buckinghamshire, the son of a Church of England village parson. He was educated at Winchester College, the oldest elite public school, followed by New College, Oxford. His uncle, grandfather and great-grandfather were Anglican priests like his father, and all four had been students at Winchester and New College. They all owed their priestly livings and college places to family connections or other forms of patronage.

But in the 1850s, both colleges underwent reform and Herbert Risley was awarded scholarships at them because he was successful in their new entrance examinations. In 1855, too, an open competitive examination for the ICS was introduced to replace the old nomination system. Risley therefore belonged to the first generation of Englishmen whose education and professional employment depended not on patronage but meritocratic success. Nonetheless, old ideas about divinely ordained, hierarchical society still persisted in rural southern England. The landed gentry, allied with the clergy, virtually ruled the countryside and the mass of agricultural labourers subsisted in extreme poverty. Risley, who was always aware of his own elevated class status, probably found inequality and traditional hierarchy in India quite familiar.

Rather like Risley, many members of the *bhadralok* came from an ancient landholding and priestly gentry that traditionally respected education and learning. By the late nineteenth century, they also lived in a modern world in which



A group of sutars (carpenters) from Bengal, identified as Mongolo-Dravidian type. Featured in Sir H.H. Risley's book *The People of India* (1908).

an individual's education and employment were increasingly allocated by competitive examinations and bureaucratic rules. Hence there was a kind of class affinity between Risley and the *bhadralok*, and his inconsistent disposition towards it was a critical factor in how he understood India, both as an anthropologist and a civil servant.

The Anthropology of Caste

Bengal, the largest province in British India in the late nineteenth century, included present-day Bangladesh, and West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and parts of Odisha in India. Risley started as a junior district officer in rural Midnapore district in 1873-75. In 1876, he was transferred to the Bengal government's secretariat in Calcutta for three years. In his next posting in 1880-84, he was a district officer in Manbhum district in Chota Nagpur, which had a large population of Adivasi Santals and Bhumijs. This was his last period as a district officer, except for six months in Darjeeling district in 1889. Unlike most ICS officers, who spent longer in the districts, almost all Risley's career after 1889 was in the Bengal or Indian secretariats. Because the great majority of the secretariats' Indian staff belonged to the Bengali Hindu high castes of the *bhadralok*, Risley came to know them best. He was also fairly well acquainted with some tribal communities, but not with the mass of ordinary, middle- and low-caste villagers in lower Bengal, or with the province's large Muslim population.

Risley conducted an ethnographic inquiry into the province's castes and tribes in 1885-88. District officers and their staff, who made up Risley's roster of 188 'correspondents', sent him most of his ethnographic information, especially on caste and marriage, and 'social precedence' or 'caste ranking'. Among the correspondents, there were 129 named Indians, 26 Europeans and 33 men listed only by their positions. Of the named Indians, 102 were definitely or probably Brahmins,

Baidyas or Kayasthas, 18 were other Hindus and nine were Muslims. Hence the majority of correspondents belonged to the *bhadralok*. Risley also collected anthropometric data to investigate the racial composition of the Bengali population and to try to show that caste status was correlated with racial admixture.

Risley's findings were published in *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* in 1891. Its two ethnographic volumes contained a glossary with entries on individual tribes and castes, and their subdivisions, preceded by an introduction on 'caste in relation to marriage'. He had hoped to produce 'tables of precedence of castes', but could not do so because there were countless variations and disagreements in his correspondents' voluminous evidence. The glossary had a male gender bias and curiously little material on Muslims. It also described the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas as the three 'highest and most intelligent' castes, a patent expression of the glossary's elitist bias, which combined Risley's English class prejudice against the uneducated lower orders with the *bhadralok*'s Brahmanical outlook. Thus he and his correspondents all conceptualised castes as discrete, reified groups that could be clearly ranked with Brahmins at the top. Nonetheless, despite its defects and biases, the work contained a great deal of valuable ethnographic evidence and it brought Risley recognition as British India's leading anthropologist.

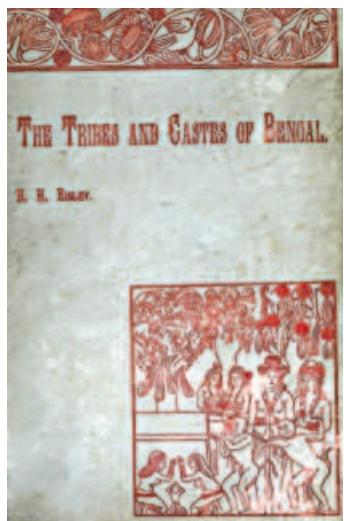
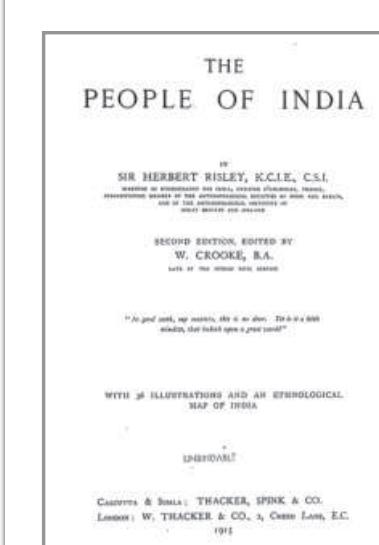
In 1898, Risley was promoted to the government of India and one year later was seconded as the 1901 census commissioner. He wanted ethnographic inquiry to be central in the census and also decided that castes should be classified by 'social precedence', rather than occupation as in 1891, so that he instructed provincial

superintendents to collect comparative data on caste ranking. But because he moved to the Home department in 1902, Risley could not finish the census report, although he did write the chapter on caste, tribe and race, which he edited for his 1908 book, *The People of India*.

Risley had argued in 1891 that the caste system originated in the racial inequality between the more 'advanced', fair-skinned Aryans and more 'primitive', darker non-Aryans, primarily Dravidians, and also that social precedence was correlated with race because the highest castes had predominantly Aryan ancestry and the lowest predominantly Dravidian. A decade later, however, he doubted whether the 'Aryan race' ever really existed and modified his theory to contend – more like a modern social scientist – that caste originated in the *fiction* that skin colour differences indicated distinctions of race and social status. On the other hand,

Congressmen, however, insisted that the government was really seeking to oust its supporters from Calcutta's university, much as it previously did in the municipality. Soon afterwards, in late 1903, Risley announced the proposals for the 'reconstitution' of Bengal and Assam. The Partition of Bengal, which was completed in 1905 after Risley drew up the final plan, was the most controversial of all Curzon's policies, and it especially infuriated *bhadralok* members of the Congress, who saw it as an assault on Bengali society and culture, as well as a stratagem to weaken the organisation by separating its leaders and supporters in east Bengal from those in the west. Risley admired Curzon and shared his hostility to Indian nationalism and the Congress, but unlike the viceroy he had considerable sympathy for the *bhadralok*'s position in society and never poured contempt on 'babus' and the class as a whole.

In the end, the Partition of Bengal was a political failure. The swadeshi movement against it developed into wider hostility to British rule after partition was implemented, although many Muslims in east Bengal favoured the new arrangement. But the Partition also created separate Hindu- and Muslim-majority provinces, which tended to worsen relations between the two groups and indirectly engendered the communal violence that blighted Bengal for decades. When Minto replaced Curzon as the viceroy in 1905, Risley stayed on as Home secretary and introduced further repressive measures to quash anti-British protests and 'sedition'. But John Morley, the secretary of state, insisted on reform as well. In negotiating the Morley-Minto legislative councils reform enacted in 1909, Minto and Risley acknowledged, unlike the diehard Curzon, that some concessions to 'moderate' Congressmen were politically necessary. Thus the proposals for the new councils were intended to satisfy the 'educated classes', such as the *bhadralok*, as well as 'loyalist' landlords and Muslim opponents of the Congress, who were



Two major works by Sir HH Risley

despite copious census evidence that caste ranking varied regionally and was always disputable, Risley never acknowledged that it could not be specified in 'tables of precedence'. Criticism of this and other flaws in his work, especially his wrong-headed racial theory, has generally overshadowed Risley's significant contributions to the anthropological understanding of caste.

Combating Indian Nationalism

Between 1891 and 1898, Risley was the secretary of the Bengal government's Financial and Municipal departments. One important issue he handled was a contentious bill to reorganise Calcutta's municipal administration by reducing the powers of its elected commissioners, including the *bhadralok* Congress politicians among them, who allegedly blocked any effective decision making. These powers were diminished further when Curzon intervened to make the bill more radical after he became the viceroy in 1899. In 1902, Curzon selected Risley as the imperial government's Home secretary. In this powerful position, Risley played a vital role in formulating policy on numerous major issues, including higher education reform, which was especially urgent in Calcutta University, whose senate was reportedly controlled by 'politised lawyers' and absentee members with no academic qualifications.

granted separate 'class electorates'. Risley expeditiously justified them for Muslims by asserting that they formed 'an absolutely separate community', even though ethnographic data, as he knew, showed they did not. In general, though, partly because he knew too little about them, Risley tended to be less sympathetic to Muslim interests than Minto or many British officials.

When the new viceroy's council first convened in 1910, Risley introduced a revised Press Act to further deter newspapers from inciting 'sedition'. It was his last official action before retiring from the ICS and returning to London, where he worked in the India Office before his death in 1911. In his council speech, he vigorously defended British rule and insisted on the need for 'cordial and intimate' relationships between the government and the 'educated community'. And he also justified the new law with illustrations likely to strike a chord in the council members from the *bhadralok*, the group of people who shaped his understanding of Indian society and politics throughout his long career.

Chris Fuller is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *Anthropologist and Imperialist: H. H. Risley and British India, 1873-1911*, published by Social Science Press in New Delhi in 2023.

Bengal (1905 - 1911)	
Area (Km ²)	366,692
Population (mn)	54
Muslims(mn)	9
Muslims %	16.67



Champion Sinner 'LIKE PRIME NOVAK'

Alexander Zverev said that Jannik Sinner is as good as Novak Djokovic at his peak and on "a different universe" after the German was well beaten in Sunday's Australian Open final. Top-ranked Italian Sinner retained his Melbourne crown with a ruthless 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 victory over the second-seeded Zverev. "He's very, very similar to Novak when he was at his best. They barely miss, they make you think like you have to overhit all the time to have a chance in a rally against them. It's very, very difficult to win a point from the back of the court against them, against Novak and him," Zverev said, drawing favourable comparisons between Sinner and 24-time major champion Djokovic.

Jannik Sinner became just the eighth player in the Open era (since 1968) to win the first three Grand Slam men's singles finals he has contested.

Sinner is the first Italian male or female player to win three singles Grand Slam titles in tennis history, surpassing Nicola Pietrangeli (two).

Sinner is also the fourth player in the last 35 years not to face a single break point in a Grand Slam final. Only Pete

Sampras (Wimbledon 1995), Federer (Wimbledon 2003) and Rafael Nadal (US Open 2017) have managed that since 1990.

The Italian also became the first player to claim 10 consecutive straight-set wins over ATP top-10 opponents since they were first published in 1973.

Sinner has equalled Bjorn Borg and Jimmy Connors for the most wins in their first 50 matches as world No 1 in the ATP Rankings (47).



BPL hits new nadir

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

BCB to take legal action against Durbar Rajshahi

We have to take legal action by any means now. This money has to be paid. Otherwise, the reputation of the BPL will be gone. The violation of the contractual obligation in matters such as cheque dishonour and other issues will be addressed through cases. There will be criminal cases as per the merit of these breaches. The board has given them enough chances. But they have crossed all the limits.

Iftekhar Rahman Mithu,
BCB's media committee chairman

The controversy-ridden ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) reached a new low yesterday after Durbar Rajshahi failed to field any foreign players – an unforeseen occurrence in the tournament history – for their match against Rangpur Riders in Mirpur.

The Rajshahi team arrived at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday at around 05:00 pm, about 90 minutes before the start of the match, without any of their foreign players.

Their absence casted serious doubts on whether the match would go ahead as according to the tournament bylaws, a franchise must include a minimum of two overseas players in its playing XI.

During the toss, Rajshahi skipper Taskin Ahmed revealed that they are fielding a team of only local players due to the non-availability of their foreign recruits.

Later, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) through a press release confirmed that the BPL Technical Committee upon a request from Rajshahi has granted a special permission to the franchise to field 11 local players against Rangpur.

After a review of the request [from Durbar Rajshahi] and in accordance with the provisions outlined in Clause 1.2.8 of the Match Playing Conditions of BPL 2024-25, the Technical Committee has granted approval for Durbar Rajshahi to field a team consisting of only Bangladeshi players for this match," the press release said.

The provisions outlined in clause 1.2.8 gives the Technical Committee the authority to take the final decision if a team is unable to field at least two foreign players for any 'valid reason'.

In that case, the integrity of the technical



committee can be put into question as the reason Rajshahi could not comply with the rule is because their foreign players, in protest of their non-payment, chose not to come to the field.

The Daily Star reached out to one of Rajshahi's foreign cricketers, who was part of the boycott, and he said that till yesterday the foreign players have received only 25 percent of their payment and one of them is yet to receive a single penny.

Earlier in the morning, it was also reported that the same franchise had to change their team hotel in Dhaka due to payment related issues and rumours began floating around that the entire team might boycott the match because of the non-payment issue.

Just a few hours before the match, Rajshahi batter Anamul Haque Bijoy posted a photo with fellow local players of the franchise,

all holding envelopes, suggesting they have agreed to play the contest.

However, the overseas cricketers were absent in that picture and later refused to travel to the ground as well.

Meanwhile, the hotel management later issued a press release where they stated that the shift was made to one of their other properties at the special request of the team owner Md. Shafiq Rahman.

Yesterday's episode is another addition to the non-payment debacle of the ongoing BPL that has tainted the image of the tournament and Rajshahi, one of the two new franchises in this edition, has repeatedly found itself at the centre of the issue. However, whether Rajshahi reappears in the next editions or disappears from BPL like many others, it has already preserved a place in BPL history, even though in an ignominious manner.

Can MSC keep lead intact?

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan leading the standings, Bashundhara Kings' struggles, local forwards coming through, betting allegations, and poor grounds have been the highlights after the conclusion of the first phase of the Bangladesh Premier League this weekend.

A revitalised Mohammedan top the table after the first phase for only the second time since the inaugural season of the BPL in 2007. They strung up an eight-match winning streak this season on their way to the top but it was snapped by newly-promoted Fakirerpool Young



Men's Club in their last match.

With 24 points from nine matches, three-time league runners-up Mohammedan, however, maintain a four-point advantage over second-placed Abahani and can hope for a maiden title charge, considering the other factors that have coincided with their resurgence led by coach Alfa Ahmed.

Kings, winners of five consecutive seasons since 2018, have fallen from grace and are looking to strengthen their side with foreign recruits. They are seven points off the top.

In the last five seasons, Kings led the table after the end of the first phase, boasting leads of five points (2023-24 season), nine (2022-23 season), three (2022 seasons), eight (2021 seasons) and four (2020-21 seasons), respectively.

Six-time champions Abahani played the entirety of the first phase without foreign players and are expected to make multiple overseas signings in the mid-term transfer window to challenge the Black and Whites.

Encouraging performances by local players has also been a highlight so far in the tournament, with local forwards often outshining foreign talents. Al Amin (7 goals), Rakib Hossain (5 goals), Nabib Newaz Jibon (5 goals) and Piash Ahmed Nova (4 goals), have all entered the top 10 goal-scoring list, usually dominated by foreigners.

However, the poor grounds in Cumilla, Gazipur and Munshiganj failed to present good contests for the spectators, who regularly turned up to the stadiums outside the capital this time around, and the title contenders also suffered blows due to the poor conditions of the ground.

"Kings could not perform due to a lack of quality foreign players, while Mohammedan SC, despite losing a few players to Abahani, have kept it together because a lot of their players have been together for a few years.

"The league has seen mostly one-sided contests so far because the lower-table teams are focused on surviving and don't have urgency to do more."

Haaland praises 'SPECIAL' MARMOUSH

AFP, Manchester

Erling Haaland believes his new strike partner Omar Marmoush will be a "fantastic" signing for Manchester City after an impressive debut in the English champions' 3-1 win over Chelsea on Saturday.

Haaland was the difference maker as City leapfrogged the Blues into fourth in the Premier League despite a nightmare start for another new signing Abdulkadir Khusanov.

The Uzbek's error gifted Chelsea the lead inside three minutes through Noni Madueke.

Marmoush had a goal ruled out for offside before Josko Gvardiol levelled for the home side before half-time.

The tactic of hitting Haaland's physical presence with long balls from goalkeeper Ederson then turned the game decisively in the favour of Pep Guardiola's men.

Haaland shrugged off Trevoh Chalobah to chip in his 24th goal of the season before teeing up Phil Foden for City's third.

Marmoush scored 20 goals in 26 appearances for Eintracht Frankfurt this season before making the move to Manchester for a £59 million (\$72.6 million) fee this week.

"I think in the first half you could see he



has something special. That is obviously the reason Manchester City bought him," said Haaland.

"It's about giving him confidence. He's going to be a fantastic player for us.

"He had an amazing first half of the season for Eintracht Frankfurt. Hopefully he's going to have the same second half of the season for us."

City face a huge week ahead as they must beat Club Brugge at home on Wednesday to avoid an early exit from

the Champions League before travelling to second-placed Arsenal in the Premier League next weekend.

Haaland is hoping they can kick on after a fourth win in five league games.

"When we had the start like we did it is difficult but we played really well and we kept on going and kept on going," added Haaland.

"We kept pushing and second half was the same. In the end it is what we need to do."

'A PLAYER OF GREAT QUALITY'

Kylian Mbappe continued his rich vein of form with his first hat-trick for Real Madrid on Saturday, helping Los Blancos to a 3-0 win over Valladolid and a four-point lead at the top of LaLiga. The treble saw Mbappe, criticised for his underwhelming form earlier in the season, go second in the league's top scorers' list with 15 goals, just one behind of Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski. Real top the LaLiga standings with 49 points, four ahead second-placed Atletico Madrid who dropped two points at home earlier on Saturday in a 1-1 draw against Villarreal. They are followed by Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao, level on 39 points, both with a game in hand. "Mbappe is bringing a lot to the team, he's been getting into a rhythm for a couple of months. Obviously, that's a plus for our team, he's a player of great quality," Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti told a press conference yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

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Clinical Sinner retains Aus Open crown

AFP, Melbourne

A clinical Jannik Sinner swept past Alexander Zverev to retain his Australian Open title on Sunday and cement his status as the world's dominant player in men's tennis.

The 23-year-old Italian came through a tense final between the two highest-ranked players 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena, raising his arms in the air and looking to the sky in celebration.

In doing so he became the first Italian, man or woman, to win three Grand Slams, surpassing Nicola Pietrangeli.

The emphatic victory

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Palestinians wait to be allowed to return to their homes in northern Gaza, in an area in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, yesterday, after being displaced to the south by Israel's order during the offensive.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump floats plan to 'clean out' Gaza

Wants Egypt, Jordan to take Palestinians from the territory

AFP, Palestinian Territories

US President Donald Trump floated a plan to "just clean out" Gaza, and said he wants Egypt and Jordan to take Palestinians from the territory, as a fragile truce between Israel and Hamas aimed at permanently ending the war entered its second week yesterday.

A senior Hamas official told AFP that the Palestinian group would oppose Trump's idea to relocate Gaza civilians to Egypt and Jordan.

"I'd like Egypt to take

people. And I'd like Jordan to take people," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One, adding that he expected to talk to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

"You're talking about

probably a million and half

people, and we just clean

out that whole thing,"

Trump said of Gaza, whose

population is about 2.4 million, adding that

"something has to happen".

"I'd rather get involved with some of the

Arab nations and build housing at a different

location where they can maybe live in peace

for a change," Trump said, adding that moving

Gaza's inhabitants could be "temporarily or

could be long term".

Trump's new administration has promised

"unwavering support" for Israel, without yet

laying out details of its Middle East policy.

He confirmed Saturday he had ordered the Pentagon to release a shipment of 2,000-lb bombs for Israel which was blocked by his predecessor Joe Biden.

While Israel and Hamas completed their second hostage-prisoner swap under the ceasefire deal on Saturday, a last-minute dispute blocked the expected return of hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians to the Gaza Strip's devastated north.

Israel announced it would block Palestinians' passage to the north until a civilian woman hostage who the prime minister's office said "was supposed to be released" on Saturday walks free.

A Hamas source told AFP that the woman, Arbel Yehud, will be "released as part of the third swap set

for next Saturday".

After a 42-day initial phase, the deal's second phase is to see negotiations for a permanent end to the war, but analysts have warned it risks collapsing because of the deal's multi-phase nature and deep distrust between Israel and Hamas.

During the first phase, 33 hostages should be freed in staggered releases in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

➤ Hamas vows to oppose Trump's bid to relocate Gaza civilians

➤ Israel keeps crossing closed, accuses Hamas of breaching deal

Rift between July uprising leaders, BNP not expected

Says law adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said yesterday that "distance or misunderstanding" between student leaders or the forces of the July uprising and the BNP is not expected.

He made the remarks in a post on his verified Facebook page yesterday.

The law adviser's remarks came after BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir recently told BBC Bangla that a neutral government would be required for the upcoming general elections if leaders of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement form a new political party while remaining part of the interim government.

In his post, the law adviser hinted at an apparent distance between the students and BNP and said such distance has encouraged and caused leaders and activists of the Awami League to become reckless, which was evident over the past few days.

In the past two days, social media has been rife with rumours of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, advisers, and student leaders going into hiding, he said



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Home adviser acknowledges crime streak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday acknowledged that incidents of mugging and extortion were continuing in various parts of the country, including Dhaka.

"While perpetrators are being arrested, many return to criminal activities after their release. Efforts are on to curb these offences as much as possible," he said while speaking to reporters after inspecting the Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

The adviser said, "There is no shortage of police personnel, but perhaps their motivation for work has declined. We are taking every steps to reinvigorate them."

His remarks came amid a surge of reports on various crimes, including mugging, extortion, and

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1 killed, 10 hurt in AL factional clashes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narasingdi

A 19-year-old man was killed and at least 10 others were injured in clashes between two factions of the Awami League in Narasingdi's Raipura upazila over the dominance of an area.

The deceased was identified as Alamgir Hossain, a resident of Bashgari village under the same upazila, said Md Adil Mahmud, officer-in-charge (OC) of Raipura Police Station.

OC Adil initially said two people had been killed in the clashes but later revised it to one death. He explained that since the location is remote, locals first reported two fatalities. However, the police team found one body at the scene.

Locals and police said there was a long-standing dispute between Bashgari Union Parishad's former chairman Ashraful Haque Sarkar and the incumbent Chairman Zakir Hasan Ratul.

Both of them are affiliated with the Awami League but none holds any post in the party, said OC Adil.

Quoting locals, police said followers of Ashraful

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Shafiqul terms ex-home boss 'butcher of Bangladesh'

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam has sharply criticised the media outlets that are giving platforms to people like former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, terming Kamal the "butcher of Bangladesh".

"Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal is the butcher of Bangladesh," he said yesterday, referring to the killings of children, students, workers, and rickshaw-pullers.

Responding to a question at a media briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in the evening, Shafiqul said no one in the world gives a platform to a "butcher" and interviews a "butcher".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Ex-army chief KM Saifiullah passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major General (retd) KM Saifiullah, the first chief of independent Bangladesh's army and a prominent sector commander of the 1971 Liberation War, passed away yesterday. He was 90.

The valiant freedom fighter breathed his last at about 8:45am while undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in the capital.

He was admitted to the hospital on January 2 with multiple complications, Lt Col Sami-Ud-Daula Chowdhury, director of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate, told this newspaper.

Saifiullah had been ill for a long time. He suffered from multiple health

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Gold, dollars found in SK Sur's BB locker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday found assets, including 1.05kg gold, in a locker at Bangladesh Bank, belonging to former deputy governor SK Sur Chowdhury.

The assets also include \$1,69,300, and €55,000, and fixed deposit receipt worth Tk 70 lakh, said ACC Director Kazi Saemuzzaman after searching Sur's locker at the BB.

He said BB officials are permitted to maintain personal lockers at the central bank for keeping their valuables. The recovered assets will remain in BB's custody until these are presented before a court.

The ACC carried out the operation following a court order after SK Sur failed to submit details of his assets despite repeated notices.

Saemuzzaman added that the commission is investigating whether these assets were declared in Sur's tax filings.

On January 19, the ACC raided Sur's residence in Dhamondi and seized Tk 16.25 lakh, along with savings certificates and insurance documents worth Tk 4.45 crore. During the operation, information about three flats owned by Sur was also obtained.

The former deputy governor was arrested on January 14 in a case filed on December 23, 2024, for failing to provide a wealth statement to the ACC.

A Dhaka court sent him to jail that day.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Fortune Barishal's Pakistani all-rounder Faheem Ashraf celebrates one of his five wickets that guided his side to an eight-wicket victory over Sylhet Strikers in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The win helped defending champions Barishal seal a spot in the playoffs.

MARTIAL LAW DECREE S Korea's Yoon indicted for insurrection

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's prosecutors yesterday indicted impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol on charges of leading an insurrection with his short-lived imposition of martial law on December 3, the main opposition party said.

The charges are unprecedented for a South Korean president, and if convicted, Yoon could face years in prison for his shock martial law decree, which sought to ban political and parliamentary activity and control the media.

His move set off a wave of political upheaval in Asia's fourth-largest economy and a top US ally, with the prime minister also impeached and suspended from power and a number of top military officials indicted for their roles in the alleged insurrection.

The prosecutors' office did not immediately respond to requests for

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