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POST-AUGUST MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Allegiance shifts, so do faces at the helm

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh's media industry has seen some major shake-ups, with more than two dozen outlets shuffling leadership positions following the July mass uprising last year.

Editors in at least eight newspapers and heads of news in 11 private television channels have been either dismissed or "forced to resign", while some left their jobs.

Key positions such as executive editor, chief news editor, and news editor in around a dozen houses also saw changes.

These positions have been largely filled by individuals affiliated with BNP and Jamaat-leaning journalist associations, leaders of various other journalist associations, or reporters who covered BNP and Jamaat beats for a considerable period.

Mostly, media owners who had strong ties to the now-deposed Awami League government made those changes in the aftermath of August 5.

The Daily Star has learned this after speaking with over 30 journalists, including some who have lost their jobs. They, however, would not comment on the record for fear of reprisal.

Many of the dismissed senior journalists, accused of having ties to the previous regime or benefiting from its patronage, are facing lawsuits



Thousands of tents have been pitched on the Tongi Ijtima ground on the bank of the Turag as devotees from home and abroad start gathering there to join the first phase of the Biswa Ijtima, one of the largest congregations of Muslims, that begins today. The photo was taken around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Yunus' reform agenda must have full EU support: ICG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The EU should put its full support behind the interim government's reform agenda as its opponents attempt to derail its efforts or push for early elections, said the International Crisis Group in its latest report on Bangladesh.

"In the wake of Hasina's fall from power, Bangladesh has a rare opportunity to reshape its national political system and render it more inclusive and accountable," it said in the report titled "Bangladesh: The Dilemmas of a Democratic Transition", which was published yesterday.

International backing -- rhetorical, technical and

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The interim government neither helped anyone nor intervened in changing the ownership or leadership in any privately owned media houses.

Information Adviser Nahid Islam



over killings during the student-led mass uprising that ousted the Sheikh Hasina government. They are now living in seclusion.

The authorities concerned are also investigating their bank accounts.

Contacted, Information Adviser Nahid Islam yesterday said the interim government neither helped anyone nor intervened in changing the ownership or leadership in any privately owned media houses.

"The government only brought changes in the state-run news organisations following due procedure," he told The Daily Star.

Private news organisations might have changed their leadership on their own, he added.

The media reform commission, which is looking into these issues, and the government will act, if necessary, and if the commission gives any proposal in this regard, he said.

Besides, the government did not receive any allegations from any media, he said adding they will take steps if they receive any allegations

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Dhaka must focus on people-centric foreign ties

Speakers say at Star discussion on geopolitics

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign policy and trade experts have stressed that Bangladesh must address its economic and political governance issues to maintain foreign relations based on mutual respect and benefits.

They pointed out that the July uprising reflected the people's desire for equality and dignity, urging that it is time to correct past mistakes when relations with some countries served the interests of cronies instead of being people-centric.

The observations were made at a panel

discussion titled "Bangladesh at Geopolitical Crossroads," organised by The Daily Star at its Dhaka office yesterday.

Speakers noted that while geopolitical conflicts are rising globally, the interim government, which is working on reforms, must reassess its foreign policy and recognise the ministries responsible for efficiently handling Bangladesh's bilateral relations.

Former Ambassador Farooq Sobhan said, "I think the most important issue at the moment is fixing the economy. That's of fundamental

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IMF pushing for 15pc VAT on 213 goods

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund has set a prior condition for introducing a full 15 percent statutory VAT rate on 213 products before placing the \$645 million loan proposal for the fourth tranche to its executive board.

The loan proposal could be placed in the IMF board meeting in the second week of March.

In keeping with the prior action, the National Board of Revenue this month hiked the value-added tax on nearly 100 goods and services but later excluded some of the goods amid severe criticism.

The IMF has asked for a VAT rate hike on nearly double the number of goods and services that the NBR had initially increased, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star on Monday.

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Students of Titumir College block the Mohakhali-Gulshan road, demanding that the institution be recognised as a university in its own right. The students took to the street in the morning and stayed there late into the night, causing tailbacks in many areas. The college, established in 1968, currently functions under Dhaka University.

BUSINESS

Barishal tops poverty rankings

Bangladesh's poverty map has changed as Barishal now has the highest percentage of people living in poverty among all the eight divisions, according to the national statistical agency.

Earlier, northwestern division Rangpur was the poorest division. Economists think increasing climate vulnerability is redrawing the poverty map.

At the district level, Madaripur has the highest poverty rate, while Noakhali has the lowest rate.

STORY ON B1

People suffer for hours as Titumir students block city road

They demand recognition of college as university

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commuters suffered for hours as students of Government Titumir College kept the capital's Mohakhali-Gulshan road blocked for almost the entire day yesterday demanding that the college be recognised as a university.

The demonstrators blocked both sides of the road around 11:00am, and as of the filing of this report near midnight, they were still there.

Soon after they took to the street, tailbacks spread to Banani, Gulshan, Airport Road, Pragati Sarani, Dhaka Elevated Expressway, and many neighbourhoods.

Office goers, patients, and parents with children remained stranded on the roads for hours. Many abandoned their vehicles and walked to their destinations.

Arijit Chandra Barman, who was walking near Mohakhali, carrying his two-year-old in the afternoon, said "We decided to leave the bus and walk home

to Agargaon. It's heartbreaking to see our child suffer."

Shafiul Alam, a commuter with a broken arm in a cast, also had no choice but to walk home to Mirpur after waiting in vain for over 30 minutes.

"Why do we have to pay the price? What have thousands of us done to deserve this?" he asked.

Driver of a BRTC bus on Mohakhali-Gulshan road said his passengers left on foot, and he had to return their money.

Jonaed Jahedi, assistant commissioner (Mohakhali) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said as the traffic was diverted to other streets, people faced congestion.

After 5:00pm, when most people left offices, the tailbacks kept getting longer, he said.

On Wednesday afternoon, five students of Titumir College began a hunger strike, demanding that the

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এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ড কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নাধীন প্রকল্পের আওতায় Bangladesh Single Window (BSW) System ইতোমধ্যে কার্যকর করা হয়েছে। BSW মূলত একটি অনলাইন প্ল্যাটফর্ম যা ব্যবহার করে একজন আমদানিকারক-রপ্তানিকারক পণ্য খালাসের জন্য প্রযোজ্য সব ধরনের সার্টিফিকেট, লাইসেন্স ও পারমিট (CLP) এর জন্য অনলাইনে আবেদন করে স্বয়ংক্রিয়ভাবে CLP সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন। CLP গ্রহণের পূর্বে Business Identification Number (BIN) ব্যবহার করে BSW সিস্টেমে (Website: bswnbr.gov.bd) নিবন্ধন করতে হবে। এ সিস্টেম ব্যবহারের ফলে আমদানি-রপ্তানি কার্যক্রমে যে সুবিধা সমূহ পাওয়া যাবে সেগুলো হলো:

- একটি কমন প্ল্যাটফর্মে আমদানি-রপ্তানি পণ্যের জন্য প্রযোজ্য সার্টিফিকেট, লাইসেন্স এবং পারমিট সংক্রান্ত সকল কার্যক্রম সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল সংস্থা কর্তৃক যুগপৎভাবে অনলাইনে সম্পন্ন করা হবে;
- সরকারী কাজে ব্যক্তিগত যোগাযোগ (হিউম্যান ইন্টারেকশন) না থাকায় স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহিতা নিশ্চিত হবে;
- পণ্য আমদানি-রপ্তানির ক্ষেত্রে সময় ও ব্যয় হ্রাস পাবে;
- দেশি-বিদেশী ব্যবসায়ীদের মধ্যে আস্থা সৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে বিনিয়োগ ও বাণিজ্যের প্রসার ঘটবে।

০২। প্রাথমিক পর্যায়ে সার্টিফিকেট, লাইসেন্স ও পারমিট ইস্যুকারী ১৯টি সংস্থার মধ্যে নিম্নবর্ণিত ৭টি সংস্থার ক্ষেত্রে গত ০২ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ খ্রি. তারিখে সরাসরি BSW সিস্টেমের মাধ্যমে CLP এর আবেদন দাখিল ও ইস্যু করার কার্যক্রম শুরু করা হয়েছেঃ

১. ঔষধ প্রশাসন অধিদপ্তর (DGDA) ;
২. বিস্ফোরক পরিদপ্তর (DoEX) ;
৩. রপ্তানি উন্নয়ন ব্যুরো (EPB) ;
৪. বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় কর্তৃপক্ষ, রাসায়নিক অস্ত্র কনভেনশন (BNACWC) ;
৫. বাংলাদেশ অর্থনৈতিক অঞ্চল কর্তৃপক্ষ (BEZA) ;
৬. বাংলাদেশ রপ্তানি প্রক্রিয়াকরণ অঞ্চল কর্তৃপক্ষ (BEPZA) : এবং
৭. পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর (DoE)।

০৩। জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের পরিপত্র নং: ১(৩৩) NSW প্রকল্প/মন্ত্রণালয়ের সাথে যোগাযোগ/২০১৮/২৪১৮, তারিখ: ১৪ জানুয়ারি ২০২৫ অনুযায়ী, ৩১ জানুয়ারী ২০২৫ খ্রি. তারিখের পর হতে আমদানি ও রপ্তানি পণ্যচালান শুদ্ধায়নের ক্ষেত্রে উক্ত ০৭টি সংস্থা কর্তৃক ইস্যুকৃত সার্টিফিকেট, লাইসেন্স ও পারমিট BSW সিস্টেমের মাধ্যমে দাখিল বাধ্যতামূলক করা হলো। উল্লিখিত তারিখের পর কোন ধরনের ম্যানুয়াল সার্টিফিকেট, লাইসেন্স ও পারমিট গ্রহণ করা হবে না। আমদানি-রপ্তানি বাণিজ্যে যুক্ত সকল অংশীজনকে Bangladesh Single Window বাস্তবায়নে সহযোগিতা করার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো হলো।

[জুয়েল আহমেদ]
প্রকল্প পরিচালক
ন্যাশনাল সিঙ্গেল উইন্ডো প্রকল্প

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Govt condemns disruption to girls' football matches

Authorities open probe into attack on venue in Joypurhat

STAR REPORT

The interim government yesterday condemned the actions of local hooligans who recently disrupted a girls' football match at Tilakpur High School ground in Joypurhat.

The Chief Adviser's Press Wing in a statement ordered district administrations in Dinajpur and Joypurhat to take the necessary steps to reorganise the football match.

A local sports club had been organising a football tournament at the Tilakpur High School ground for over a month.

The friendly match between the two female teams from Joypurhat and Rangpur was supposed to take place before the final match of the tournament on Wednesday.

However, the match was called

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

(L-R) Prof Selim Raihan, Prof Marufa Akter, Michael Kugelman, Shafqat Munir, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, and Ramisa Rob, speak at a panel discussion on “Bangladesh at Geopolitical Crossroads” at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. Story on page 1.

Allegiance shifts, so do faces at the helm

FROM PAGE 1
regarding violations of relevant laws.
DIVISION AMONG JOURNALISTS
The realignments reflect the shifting allegiances of many media organisations in a country where journalism and politics have long been intertwined.

A significant segment of the journalist community here is starkly divided along political lines, and their biases often show in their reporting.

Also, some news outlets toe the official line out of fear or to gain undue benefits. Professionalism takes a back seat as they get busy disseminating government propaganda and reaping rewards along the way.

Journalist union leaders say the split emerged in 1992, after some pro-Awami League journalists waved black flags at the then prime minister Khaleda Zia at a journalist association event at the Jatiya Press Club.

This incident led to the formation of two factions within both the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) and the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) – one leaning towards the AL and the other towards BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Since then, partisan bias has been a common feature of reportage and editorial policies of many media houses.

Things were particularly grave during the 15-year rule of the Awami League. The media industry, with some notable exceptions, was dominated by business interests closely tied to the Hasina regime.

Many outlets saw their editorial independence erode, ultimately feeding the government's narrative and sometimes helping the government stifle dissent.

Allegations of corruption were rampant against some news leaders who blurred the lines between their professional roles and partisan interests.

Then there were the Digital Security Act and the Cyber Security Act that fostered an environment of fear and self-censorship among journalists.

Several media houses, including Amar Desh, Diganta TV, Channel One, Islamic TV, and Dainik Dinkal were closed down on various pretexts.

After the interim government took office, some advisers and organisers of the July uprising accused a section of the media of promoting the AL's narrative, which they argued enabled the Hasina government to be authoritarian.

They say some newspapers and TV channels blatantly supported the regime as it employed brutal measures to quell the movement, leaving hundreds killed and thousands injured.
'REEKS OF A PURGE'
The scenario has changed.

Now, journalists known to be of BNP and Jamaat stripes have taken on prominent positions, while many senior figures known to have been close to the AL regime have not only been sidelined but are also facing legal actions.

The widespread dismissals and appointments highlight the tendency of some media owners to adapt to changing political winds, according to industry insiders.

Not just senior journalists, many mid- to junior-level newsmen, especially in the television channels in Dhaka, lost their jobs during this period.

“It all reeks of a purge,” a senior editor of a television station who was let go from his job told this newspaper.

While changes in government-run media houses like BSS and BTV are common with power shifts, what happened in privately owned media houses this time is unprecedented, he said.

“Dismissals, forced resignations, and changes within media houses on such a scale have never occurred under any government,” said the journalist with over three and a half

decades of experience.

This paper could not log the exact number of journalists who lost jobs.

However, a survey by the Broadcast Journalists Centre, an organisation of TV and radio journalists, released on December 21 last year, reported that over 150 broadcast journalists lost their jobs in 2024.

“Most of them lost jobs after the August 5 changeover,” one organiser involved with the survey told this newspaper.

The number of journalists who were shown the door would be much higher if the district correspondents of different TV channels and newspapers are taken into consideration.

After the fall of Hasina, at least 29 criminal cases were filed against 121 journalists in Dhaka, Chattogram, Bogura, and Rajshahi till November 17, according to this newspaper's compilation.

However, the actual number is likely higher, as The Daily Star has yet to gather information about cases from many other districts.

Some of these journalists were named in cases filed for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Besides, the information ministry revoked the accreditation cards of 167 journalists between October and November, citing four provisions of the Press Accreditation Policy but without giving any specific reason for each case.

After a fire incident at the Secretariat in December, the government suspended the accreditation cards of all journalists. It later said a new policy was being formulated for issuing the cards afresh.

Currently, journalists have limited access to the Secretariat.

The arbitrary filing of cases and cancellation of accreditation cards drew flak from journalist associations at home and abroad with many slamming it as a threat to press freedom.

Saiful Alam Chowdhury, associate professor of Mass Communication and Journalism at Dhaka University, said, “In the past, there were pro-government journalists and there were some neutral journalists. But in the changed scenario, neutral journalists seem to remain silent in most cases for their survival.”

During the AL rule, the media faced pressure from the state apparatus such as security agencies and even the Prime Minister's Office, as the government used them to spread propaganda, offering political and financial benefits to many, he added.

Speaking about the shake-ups, he said the change in the leadership in a media house influences the nature of its content.

He also said some media outlets are facing threats stemming from “mobocracy”.

CHANGES IN NEWSPAPERS, ONLINE MEDIA

Editors of at least eight newspapers and one online news portal have been replaced since August 5.

Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta has been in jail since September in connection with a murder case linked to the uprising. On January 21, the authorities of the daily pulled the plug on its print edition, citing “reasons beyond the owner's control”.

Besides, two newspapers got new executive editors during this period.

In the latest incident, Saiful Alam, editor of Daily Jugantor, resigned from his post early this month. He was replaced by poet Abdul Hye Sikder.

Saiful now faces murder charges and his bank account is under investigation.

Sikder had worked for the Daily Inqilab, BSS and Amar Desh. He was at the helm of the BNP and Jamaat-leaning faction of the Dhaka Union of Journalists twice. He is also an adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Mostafa Mamun, editor of Desh Rupantor, was replaced by Kamal Uddin Sabuj early this month.

Sabuj is a former president of the Jatiya Press Club. He contested and lost the press club election in December 2022 as president candidate from the BNP and Jamaat-backed panel.

Before joining Desh Rupantor, he worked at BSS as its senior news



“Changes in leadership are internal affairs of a news organisation. Noab did not receive any complaints of any newspaper being under pressure to make changes.”

AK AZAD, president of Noab

editor. Earlier, he was at UNB.

Poet Hasan Hafiz became the editor of Kaler Kantho a few weeks after the ouster of Hasina. He had worked for Amar Desh, Boishakhi Television, Janakantha, and Dainik Bangla in different capacities.

Before him, Imdadul Haq Milan led the newspaper as its chief editor.

Hafiz was elected senior vice-president of the Jatiya Press Club in the last election from the BNP and Jamaat-backed panel. He took charge as the press club president immediately after the fall of the Hasina government.

Abu Taher, executive editor of Bangladesh Pratidin, was made acting editor of the newspaper in late August last year. He replaced Nayeem Nizam, a long time editor of the newspaper.

Nizam's press accreditation card was revoked and his bank account is being investigated. He also stands accused in a murder case linked to the July-August uprising.

Ilias Uddin Khan, former general secretary of the Jatiya Press Club, has been appointed acting editor of Bhorer Akash, replacing Manoranjan Ghoshal.

Ilias contested the last press club election for the general secretary post from the BNP and Jamaat-backed panel but could not win.

Morsalin Babla, managing editor



of Protidiner Bangladesh, became the acting editor after Mustafiz Shafi left the paper early this month.

Syed Shahnewaz Karim, a senior journalist of Somoyer Alo, took

charge as its acting editor from Kamalash Roy in September last year.

Abul Kalam Azad, a director of Ha-Meem Group, took over as the acting editor of Samakal after the changeover, replacing Alamgir Hossain. Alamgir is facing a case linked to the uprising. His accreditation card was revoked and his bank account is under investigation.

Arun Kumar Dey, executive editor of Jai Jai Din, was replaced by Khurshid Alam, general secretary of BNP and Jamaat-backed faction of the Dhaka Union of Journalists, this month.

Daily Ittefaq too got a new executive editor, managing editor, and joint editor during this period.

Jewel Mazhar, editor of banglanews24.com, an online news portal, was replaced by Lutfor Rahman Himel in November last year.

Sarabangla.net, another online news portal, has seen changes both in its ownership and news leadership.

Once owned by Gazi Group, Sarabangla is now owned by an internet service-providing company.

Golam Dastagir Gazi, who was the textile and jute minister of the Awami League government, is the founder and chairman of Gazi Group. He was arrested in late August last year from the city's Shantinagar area.

At least four newsmen, including Sarabangla's deputy editor Sandipan Basu, were either relieved or “forced to resign”. Its Chief News Editor Rahman Mustafiz did not join work after the change in its ownership.

Golam Samdani Bhuiyan, a special correspondent of the news portal, also the president of Capital Market Journalists Forum, first took charge as chief reporter of the organisation after August changeover. Later, he was made head of news of the portal, sources said.

AK Azad, president of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab), said changes in leadership are internal affairs of a news organisation. Noab did not receive any complaints of any newspaper being under pressure to make changes.

“We will stand by our members if we come to know they are being forced [to bring any changes],” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

CHANGES IN TELEVISION

The first major change in television channels took place in Ekattor Television.

The authorities there dismissed its Head of News Shakil Ahmed and Special Correspondent Farzana Rupa on August 8.

The two were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka in late August, and have since been in jail in a murder case.

Mozammel Babu, managing director of Ekattor Television, was arrested in September. He has been in jail since then in a murder case.

The accreditation cards of all three journalists have been revoked. Their bank accounts are now under investigation.

The channel's special correspondent Shafique Ahmed, who covered the BNP beat for a long time, has taken charge as its chief operating officer and head of news.

“He is now leading the TV station,” said one of the journalists from the channel.

The top leadership of Boishakhi TV was changed too. Its Head of News Ashok Chowdhury and Chief News Editor Saiful Islam were relieved of their duties.

Ziaul Kabir Suman, who worked for the now defunct Diganta Television, was made the head of news, while Tawhidul Islam Shanto, who used to cover the BNP beat, became the CNE, according to two journalists of the station.

Three other news managers including a senior news editor were either relieved or forced to resign, they added.

Changes in leadership at Somoy TV have been much talked about.

Ahmed Jobaer, managing director of Somoy TV, was sacked in August and replaced by Shampa Rahman, one of the directors of the City Group, the owning company of the channel.

Also, five senior journalists were let go in December last year after a group of student protesters led by Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement, allegedly influenced the City Group owners for the termination, according to BBC Bangla and AFP reports.

In his verified Facebook post on December 27, 2024, Hasnat Abdullah denied the allegation.

Zayadul Ahsan Pintu, editor of DBC News, was relieved of his duties through a text message while another editor, Pranab Saha, stepped down. Both of them are facing murder charges and their bank accounts are being investigated. Their accreditation cards too were revoked.

Loton Ekram, associate editor of Samakal, became the editor of the DBC News. He has vast experience in covering the BNP affairs.

Masud Ibnay Ayub Karzon, assignment editor of the channel, was replaced by Aditya Arafat, a former general secretary of Reporters Against Corruption, an organisation of the reporters covering the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Probbash Amin, head of news at ATN News, was “forced to resign” and replaced by its deputy head of news, sources said.

Rahul Raha, executive editor of News 24, was “forced to step down”. He was replaced by Farhadul Islam Farid, country editor of the station, an insider said.

Accreditation cards of Probbash and Rahul were rescinded and their bank accounts are being investigated.

Zi Mamun, chief executive editor of ATN Bangla, was relieved from his job and replaced by Moniur Rahman of the same station, an insider said. Mamun is facing murder charges, and his accreditation card was revoked.

Ashish Saikat, chief news editor of Independent TV, was replaced by Mostafa Akmal, a news editor of the station.

Earlier, Akmal had worked for Channel One, a private station. The channel was founded by businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun, once influential in BNP circle, but it went off air in April 2010.

Ekushey TV's Head of News Rashed Chowdhury was replaced by Harun Ur Rashid, who also works for DW Bangla. Chowdhury's bank account is under investigation.

Abdus Salam retook charge as managing director of the television.

Belal Hossain, head of news at Asian TV, was replaced by Sirajul Islam. Earlier, Sirajul worked for Diganta TV, Islamic TV, and Radio Tehran.

Ilias Hossain, former president of Dhaka Reporters Unity and former joint editor of Kalbela, took over as the head of news at Rtv, replacing Ahsan Ud Doula Maruf.

Mohi Uddin, a special correspondent of Desh TV, became the chief reporter of the station after the August 5 changeover. He was later made the head of news, a post that remained vacant for a while, according to industry insiders.

Mohi Uddin was former general secretary of Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Arif Hasan, managing director of Desh TV, was arrested in November last year and has since been in jail in an attempted murder case filed with the Airport Police Station during the student led movement.

Gausul Azam Bipu, a special correspondent of GTV who had long been a BNP beat reporter, became the planning editor after August 5. He was promoted to head of news of the television recently, replacing Iqbal Karim Nissan.

Nissan was in turn made the editor-in-chief.

GTV is owned by Gazi Group.

Anjan Chowdhury, president of the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO), did not respond to our calls and text messages.

ACC to probe if 4 Gazipur bungalows belong to ‘Rehana, family’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has found four bungalows, including one named Tulip Territories, allegedly owned by the family of Sheikh Rehana in Gazipur.

The commission has launched an investigation to find out if the properties are truly owned by Sheikh Rehana and her family members, according to multiple sources within the ACC.

Rehana's husband, Shafiq Ahmed Siddiq, and her brother-in-law, Tarique Siddiq, are also alleged to be owners of the properties, they said.

This development is a part of the ongoing ACC probe into the assets of Sheikh Rehana, her daughter Tulip Siddiq, and other relatives.

Confiscate S Alam's Tk 368cr properties

Court orders authorities

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the confiscation of 58 acres of immovable properties worth Tk 368 crore belonging to S Alam Group Chairman Mohammed Saiful Alam and his family in connection with allegations of laundering \$1

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Full EU support for Yunus' reform agenda

FROM PAGE 1

financial – will be vital to the success of these reforms, and the EU should do what it can to support this process.

A good start would be expressions of public support for the Yunus administration's reform agenda, including in the form of high-level visits both to Bangladesh and Europe.

“The honeymoon period for Bangladesh's interim government is now well and truly over. The political challenges are likely to increase this year as political parties and other key players negotiate over reforms and jockey for electoral advantage,” said Thomas Kean, ICG's senior consultant on Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The interim government is also under pressure over rising prices – a legacy of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's mismanagement – and it will be some time before the Bangladeshi people really see the benefits of ongoing efforts to get the economy back on track, he said.

“Backing the interim government's reforms will help restore the EU's image in Bangladesh, where it is perceived – not entirely unfairly – as having been overly supportive of the former government and focused mainly on its own economic interests,” the report said.

European diplomats, some of whom publicly aligned with the Awami League regime, should broaden their engagement with the country's array of political forces, including student leaders and Islamist groups, which are now an inescapable part of the Bangladeshi political landscape.

“Aside from sending a clear message that they have moved on from the Hasina years, European capitals would gain greater insight into Bangladeshi politics, while enabling diplomats to encourage these political forces to keep supporting reforms as well as avoid inflammatory actions in the run-up to elections. After three flawed national elections, holding free, fair and peaceful polls will be paramount for restoring the Bangladeshi people's faith in electoral politics. Given the EU's expertise in this area, Brussels should send an observer mission to monitor the election.”

No decision yet

FROM PAGE 12

leaders in February.

Asked about the report, Nahid said, “I have seen the report. The newspaper did not clarify its source. They should have been more responsible in their reporting.”

“I had previously mentioned that we will not join any political party while still being part of the interim government.”

Asked whether the Awami League would be banned, Nahid said the government has yet to reach a decision.

“Since the judicial process is ongoing, we want to see how far the legal proceedings go and what the court rules.”

He further said the matter needs to be discussed with political parties, as it is both a legal and a political decision.

“Personally, and from the perspective of student leaders, we believe that after what the Awami League has done over the past 15 years, including the massacre in July, they should no longer be allowed to do politics under the name and banner of Awami League,” said Nahid.

He, however, said they do not want to begin a cycle of political vengeance.

“We want justice, and reconciliation as well,” said Nahid.

Remove policies hindering women's land rights

Speakers tell ALRD, *Star* roundtable; urge for resumption of agricultural khas land distribution for marginalised women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Distribution of agricultural khas land must be immediately resumed, prioritising marginalised women, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They also urged the removal of discriminatory provisions in existing policies.

Access to agricultural khas (state-owned) land for marginalised women is often shared with husbands or granted only to widowed or abandoned women with "able-bodied" sons, they said, deeming the practice highly discriminatory.

They also said although khas land allocation was halted under the pretext of development, those are not lying idle; they are being used by influential groups.

They were speaking at a roundtable titled "Barriers and Steps to Establish

typically receive Tk 250 to Tk 300 for the same work."

He called for strengthening the National Women Development Policy 2011 by including specific provisions on women's land ownership, use, and control.

He also urged the withdrawal of reservations on Articles 2 and 16(c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to ensure legal protection against gender discrimination.

Sabina Hembrom, a paralegal assistant and president of Landless Women Association in Dinajpur, said although the government provided homes under the Ashrayan Project, it did not significantly improve lives.

"Most tenants in my area live hand to mouth as day labourers. If given access to agricultural khas land, they could farm



Speakers at a roundtable titled "Barriers and Steps to Establish Women's Land Rights," jointly organised by ALRD and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Women's Land Rights," jointly organised by ALRD and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

In his keynote presentation, ALRD Programme Officer Rafiqul Islam discussed how legal, cultural, and policy-based inequalities exclude women from land ownership, hindering their economic empowerment and gender equality.

"Distributing agricultural khas land was a commendable government initiative, but this practice has been informally suspended since 2014 through verbal directives rather than official notifications," he said.

He said restricting land ownership to joint ownership with spouses or able-bodied sons limits women's access and deepens inequality.

"According to the latest survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 58 percent of the agricultural workforce consists of women, while 74 percent of the total female workforce is engaged in agriculture. However, they are rarely acknowledged as farmers, a status that would grant them access to government services, agricultural loans, and markets," he added.

Women in agriculture earn significantly less than men, with some receiving no monetary compensation, said Rafiqul.

"For instance, while male labourers earn Tk 400 to Tk 500 per day, women

and support their families," she said.

Momtaz Begum, general secretary of Karnaphuli Women Mass Cooperative Association in Mymensingh, said although khas land is meant for landless families, it is often taken by influential individuals.

She alleged that agricultural benefits meant for farmers are frequently distributed among the officials' associates.

She also suggested designating market corners for women farmers to help them sell their products more easily and get fair prices.

Afzal Hossain, executive director of RULFAO in Rajshahi, emphasised the need to provide women with access to agricultural tools and technologies.

"Recognising and involving women in agriculture would not only empower them but also create employment opportunities," he said.

He condemned derogatory remarks about women from certain religious groups, calling for an end to such narratives to achieve gender equality.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Fauzia Moslem stressed the need to address negative portrayals of women in public discourse, particularly regarding participation in sports, comments on clothing, and perceptions of special privileges.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Multiple people stand on the roof or hang by the sides of this locomotive as it moves. The actions are quite risky and could lead to an accident at any moment. The photo was taken at the Jurain Rail Crossing yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Form squad to break up extortion rackets

Task force proposes in its report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recurring challenge for Bangladeshis in accessing public services from public transport to passport processing is the widespread "prevalence of extortion," according to a task force report.

One of the task force's major economic recommendations is the creation of an "Anti Goon Squad" to crack down on extortionists who have long held public services, markets, and infrastructure projects hostage.

The unit could either operate within the public sector or be outsourced to private security firms, provided there are safeguards to prevent misuse. The report also calls for monitoring and oversight by youth and citizen groups to ensure the squad remains accountable.

"This deeply entrenched problem extends beyond public services into markets, transportation systems, and construction sites," said the task force formed by the interim government.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

People deserve a fair election

Tarique tells event

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has said his party is expecting a credible national election in Bangladesh through which people can decide who should look after them for the next five years.

Speaking virtually at four workshops, he also said the problems of the country and its people cannot be resolved without a proper electoral system and elected representatives who are accountable to the public.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Justice Nuruddin resigns amid inquiry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Shahed Nuruddin, a judge of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, resigned yesterday while under inquiry by the Supreme Judicial Council.

He submitted his resignation letter to the president through Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, SC Spokesman Muajjem Hussain told The Daily Star.

In response to queries, Muajjem said Nuruddin cited personal difficulties as the reason for his resignation.

Nuruddin is among the 12 HC judges who were barred from judicial proceedings since October 20 last year.

The action followed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Dismissed cops block road for reinstatement



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of dismissed police officers and their family members gathered in protest near the Shikkha Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday, demanding reinstatement to their jobs with all benefits restored.

According to a written statement from the protesters, around 2,200 police officers were "unjustly dismissed" during the previous authoritarian government,

leaving many lower-ranking officers fearing for their jobs.

Some senior officers, in a desperate bid to keep their positions, were "coerced into committing crimes", including genocide, during the July-August uprising, it said.

Former ASI Toudin Mandal, who was among those dismissed, said, "We have a family. We stand together. If authorities investigate our situation, corruption, etc, nothing will be found."

MONEY LAUNDERING 'Casino Brothers' Enamul, Rupon jailed for 7 years

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced "Casino Brothers" -- Enamul Haque Enu



and Rupon Bhuiyan -- to seven years and seven others to four years in jail in a case filed over laundering Tk 17.16 lakh.

Enamul, the former vice-president of the Gendaria unit of Awami League, and Rupon, the joint general secretary of the same AL unit, were fined Tk 34,26,600 each while seven others were fined Tk 17,16,300 each. They will have to serve three months more imprisonment if they fail to pay the fine.

Judge Md Masud Parvez of the Dhaka Special Judges' Court-6 pronounced the judgement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Due to the blockade staged by Titumir College students, many had to abandon their vehicles and walk long distances to reach their destinations. Inset, an ambulance with a patient stuck in traffic jam triggered by the protests.



Fakhrul holds meeting with US Chargé d'Affaires

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul

Islam Alamgir met Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson, Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Dhaka, yesterday.

In the hour-long meeting at Jacobson's residence, they discussed the country's latest political situation and the upcoming election.

BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury and Organising Secretary Shama Obaid accompanied Fakhrul at the meeting.

Speaking to reporters afterward, Shama Obaid said, "The new US Chargé d'Affaires is engaging with various political parties, and this meeting was part of those discussions."

She said, "The US envoy tried to understand BNP's perspective on these issues."



Ensure reforms in judiciary, law enforcement

Urge speakers at CGS discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday condemned the recent attack on indigenous students, saying they see no rule of law under the interim government.

The national flag was used in the attack, yet no sedition case was filed. There is no rule of law, they said.

The dialogue, titled "Democratic Reconstructions on Constitutional Bodies," was organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at the Bangladesh Institute of Strategy Studies in the capital.

Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, general secretary of Gono Forum, stressed the need for reforms in the judiciary and police.

"A BNP-leaning attorney general has been appointed, although this is not a BNP government," he said.

"Even in the ICT Tribunal, a member of the AB Party was made the chief prosecutor. These decisions raise questions. Two parties have their share in everything -- Jamaat is receiving more, while BNP is receiving slightly less. Naturally, BNP is somewhat disappointed," he added.

He called for a shift in mindset, noting that political appointments have long been the norm in Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Abu Sayeed Chowdhury's birth anniv

CITY DESK

Today is the 104th birth anniversary of late Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, former president of Bangladesh.

To mark the occasion, a memorial meeting has been arranged at Naghari Hasina Chowdhury High School in Tangail, said a press release.

Chowdhury was born in a respectable Muslim family at Naghari on January 31, 1921. He was the only son of former speaker of erstwhile provincial assembly late Abdul Hamid Chowdhury.

He resigned from the post of VC of Dhaka University on March 15, 1971, protesting murders of two students by Pakistani occupation forces.

He played a significant role in mobilising the world opinion for the cause of Bangladesh. He also played a leading role in anti-autocracy movement in the eighties.

Five killed as truck hits auto-rickshaw

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Five people were killed and another was critically injured as a truck hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Abdur Razzak, 40, Mahammad Nur Jahangir Alam, 60, Amjad Fokir, 60, and Karim Salal, 40, and Ariful Islam, 40.

Eyewitnesses said an auto-rickshaw carrying five passengers was heading towards Madhupur from Jamalpur. When it reached Karogram around 7:00pm, it was hit by a truck.

Confirming the deaths, Chad Miah, officer-in-charge of Sarishabari Police Station, said a police team reached the spot and recovered the bodies.

Form squad to break up extortion

FROM PAGE 3
Education and Planning Adviser Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday handed over the report, titled "Re-strategising the Economy and Mobilising Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Development," to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka.

The 12-member team, formed on September 10, was tasked with reframing development strategies, identifying leakages in the financial system, and restoring discipline in project implementation. The team was led by KAS Murshid, former director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, and its report serves as the backbone of the administration's policy push, laying out recommendations to curb corruption, improve governance, and overhaul the nation's economic framework.

From roadside markets to major construction sites, extortion in Bangladesh has become institutionalised, according to economists and industry groups. Public transport is one of the hardest-hit sectors, where bus operators and truck drivers routinely pay off syndicates tied to local power brokers. Businesses, too, must factor in informal fees to access electricity, licences, or even basic government services.

The problem, however, is not limited to public-facing services. According to the task force, organised gangs have embedded themselves within public service institutions, acting as brokers between service seekers and service providers — with the help of influential insiders. These middlemen, often protected by association leaders and law enforcement officials, have placed themselves in key institutional tasks — from recruitment and promotion to vendor contracts and procurement.

"Serious attempts to

dismantle this onerous system have been scarce — in part because of the close nexus of these middlemen with local political forces and law enforcement."

REFORMING A SYSTEM OF CRONYISM

The rise of extortion and corruption has been linked to the unchecked influence of politically connected business elite, particularly during the 15-year rule of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted in August 2024 following massive student-led protests. Under her government, a select group of individuals consolidated control over banks, real estate, and major infrastructure projects, diverting resources away from the broader economy.

The task force report paints a grim picture of political capture in the banking sector. It called for an immediate end to politically motivated bank licences and bailouts. It further urged the central bank to be allowed to function independently, citing the Bangladesh Bank Amendment Bill 2003 as a necessary framework for ensuring its autonomy.

Bangladesh's future economic growth must be more resilient and inclusive, according to the task force. The economy cannot remain dependent on narrow sectors or a few powerful actors; instead, it must be broad-based, creating opportunities for all segments of society to participate and benefit.

Achieving this requires a renewed focus on agriculture, small and medium enterprises, and rural development, alongside efforts to modernise the industrial sector and integrate into global value chains.

The vision emerging from the report is of a just, prosperous, and accountable Bangladesh — one that values its people and prioritises their well-being above all else. Achieving this vision

will require a fundamental shift in governance, emphasising meritocracy, rule of law, and respect for democratic principles.

"The task ahead is immense, but the people of Bangladesh have shown time and again their resilience and capacity for innovation," the report said. With the right policies, leadership, and public engagement, the country can overcome its current challenges and emerge stronger, more united, and better prepared to face future uncertainties.

Casino Brothers

FROM PAGE 3
The seven other convicts include Enu's three brothers — Shahidul Haque Bhuiyan, Rashidul Haque Bhuiyan and Merajul Haque Bhuiyan; Joy Gopal Sarkar, general secretary of Wanderers Club in Motijheel; and their accomplices Tuhin Munshi, Nabir Hossain Sikder and Saiful Islam.

Enu, Rupon, their three brothers, and Nabir, now in jail, and Joy Gopal, Saiful and Tuhin, now on bail, were produced before the court yesterday.

People

FROM PAGE 3
BNP's Kushtia, Magura, Chuadanga and Meherpur district units organised the programme separately to train the party leaders and workers on the party's 31-point state overhauling proposal.

"We'll be able to resolve people's problems if we give power to those who are truly responsible and accountable. The individuals who will be elected by the people through a proper election process will be accountable to them. So, we're expecting an election that will determine who will take care of the people," Tarique said.

He also said the election should be held in a free, fair and credible manner.

Tarique said they have various plans and programmes, and will implement the state reform proposals as per their commitment to the people.

PRAYER TIMING		JANUARY 31	
Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:35	12:30	4:15	5:46 7:15
JAMAAT 6:10	1:15	4:30	5:50 7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION			

Ensure reforms

FROM PAGE 3
He also stressed the need for a National Minority Commission.

BNP leader Zahir Uddin Swapan questioned whether the interim government could implement democratic reconstruction.

"Without a clear framework and stakeholder consensus, discussions may not yield concrete results," he added.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, chief of the Election Reform Commission, proposed reserving 100 parliamentary seats for women to reduce discrimination.

"A flawed appointment system has weakened constitutional institutions. The Election Commission should be independent but follows executive directives," he said.

To ensure democratic reconstruction, he stressed the need for transparent appointments, legal updates, and accountability for past wrongdoings.

Former NBR chairman Mohammad Abdul Mazid stressed transparency in constitutional appointments.

Retired diplomat M Shafiullah said, "If the people elect the president, the position will be free from political control. No political party currently holds a strong mandate. Credible elections are necessary for Bangladesh's global reputation."

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun said, "The recent protests were about economic issues and employment. Immediate actions are needed to provide relief to the people. Reforms alone cannot

sustain progress without foreign investment and economic stability."

Senior journalist Abu Saeed Khan criticised the Constitution Reform Commission for keeping Islam as the state religion while removing secularism and socialism from the preamble.

CGS Executive Director Zillur Rahman moderated the event, while Munira Khan, chair of CGS, presided over it.

Among them, Justice Md Ataur Rahman Khan and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das have already retired upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 67.

Nuruddin, while he was the judge of Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka, on October 10, 2018 had delivered verdict in the cases filed for grenade attack on an Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka on August 21, 2004.

Remove policies

FROM PAGE 3
"Crimes against women should be treated as seriously as any other crimes," she said.

She called for implementing a uniform family code and removing reservations on CEDAW to advance women's rights.

She also urged recognition for women's contributions to fisheries and requested gender-segregated data on landlessness to address inequalities.

Chief guest Shireen Parveen Huq, head of the Women's Affairs Commission, said the commission is working to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

"We are identifying women's positions in policies and recommending special provisions in line with the constitution and CEDAW guidelines," she said.

ALR Executive Director Shamsul Huda emphasised addressing the rights of indigenous women, female tea workers, and women with disabilities.

He also called for a shift in society's dismissive attitude towards crimes

against women.

Rowshan Jahan Moni, deputy director of ALRD, and Women's Affairs Commission members Ferdousi Sultana and Sumaiya Islam also spoke.

The event was moderated by Tanzim Ferdous, in-charge of NGOs and Foreign Missions at The Daily Star.

School event

FROM PAGE 5
The headteacher speculated that the attack was made as no local political figure was invited to the programme.

"We invited the UNO, education officer and OC of local police station as guests, avoiding political leaders since that might anger someone. Some of the attackers are involved with BNP's politics locally," he claimed.

Contacted, Sheikh Abdur Rouf, member secretary of Sujanagar upazila unit BNP, claimed it was not a political incident.

Md Solaiman Hossain, secondary education officer, said steps will be taken if the school authorities inform the matter officially.

Appeal for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Shuvendu Kumar Deb, 53, known as Apu in Dinajpur's Chhotogurgaola, is suffering from blood cancer and requires a bone marrow transplant.

However, the procedure is expensive, and Apu's family has already exhausted all their savings as well as funds raised through local donations.

As such, Apu, father of a seventh-grader, is now in need of financial support.

He runs a small grocery shop in Barabandar.

After a diagnosis last year, Apu and his wife, Anjana Karmaker, went to India for treatment, where doctors advised for an urgent bone marrow transplant.

The family has sought aid from the well-off.

Aid canbesent to Anjana, A/C-0123209000004809, United Commercial Bank, Maldapotti Branch, Dinajpur; bKash-01854166201.

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বাংলাদেশ জুট মিলস করপোরেশন
আদমতলী কোট, মতিঝিল, ঢাকা

বাংলাদেশ জুট মিলস করপোরেশনের মালিকানাধীন ৩৭নং মিলকুশাব্ ভবনের ৮ম ও ৯ম তলা ফ্লোর স্পেস এবং ৬৪ টি তলায় ৩০টি কার পার্কিং স্থান ভাড়া প্রদানের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ক্রম	প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	বাংলাদেশ জুট মিলস করপোরেশন
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২)	দরপত্র সিউল প্রাপ্তির স্থান	বিজেএমসির হিসাব ও অর্থ বিভাগের কাশ শাখা, ৩৭ তলা, আদমতলী কোট, মতিঝিল, ঢাকা।
৩)	দরপত্র সিউল সাংগ্ৰহের শেষ তারিখ	১৬/০২/২০২৫ (অফিস চলাকালীন সময়) পর্যন্ত (প্রতিটি ৫:০০- টাকায়)
৪)	দরপত্র সিউল ও দরপত্র ঘোষণার তারিখ ও সময়	১৬/০২/২০২৫ সময় দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত দরপত্র ঘোষণা করা যাবে। ঐ দিন দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্রের উপস্থিতিতে দরপত্র ঘোষণা হবে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকে)।
৫)	দরপত্র ঘোষণার স্থান	বিজেএমসির পুরকৌশল বিভাগ, ৪র্থ তলা, আদমতলী কোট, মতিঝিল বা.এ, ঢাকা এবং কঠিম চেম্বার তলা, ৬৪ তলা, ৯৯ মতিঝিল বা.এ, ঢাকা।
৬)	দরপত্র ঘোষণার স্থান	বিজেএমসির পুরকৌশল বিভাগ, ৪র্থ তলা, আদমতলী কোট, মতিঝিল বা.এ, ঢাকা।
৭)	দরপত্র জামানত	যে কোনো সিউল ব্যাংক হতে বাংলাদেশ জুট মিলস করপোরেশন এর অনুমোদিত দরদাতা কর্তৃক উদ্ধৃত দরের ০১ (এক) বৎসরের কার্যকর সমাপতিমাণ টাকার উপর ৩% এর সমাপতিমাণ টাকা আনোইম্যানি (কেবলমুদ্রা) হিসেবে ব্যাংক ট্রান্সফার অর্ডার এর মাধ্যমে জমা করতে হবে।
৮)	বিজেএমসি কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে দরপত্র গ্রহণ এবং বাতিলের সর্বমুখ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	

বিজেএমসি ওয়েবসাইট www.bjmc.gov.bd

স্বাক্ষরিত
যোঃ মামুনুর রশিদ
মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাঃ ও সাঃ সেবা)
বিজেএমসি

GD- 329

e-EoI Notice

An e-EoI is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of "Hiring a Firm for Maintenance and Enhancement of SDG Portal"

SL No.	e-EoI ID No.	Location	EoI Closing & Opening Date and time
1	1070111	Dhaka	16 th February 2025, Time: 16:30

This is an online e-EoI where only e-EoI will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline /hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-EoI, registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk @ eprocure.gov.bd), e-GP call Centre- 16575.

Signed/
Md Mamunur Rashid Bhuiyan
Project Director, Additional Secretary,
(Additional Charge),
Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme

a2i - innovate for all
ICT Tower, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, Bangladesh
88 02 55006931-34 info@a2i.gov.bd
a2i@gov.bd
a2i@gov.bd a2i@bd a2i@bd a2i@bd a2i@bd

INNOVATE FOR ALL
GD- 331

Land for Sale
26 Katha Land Mohakhali Main Road
55 Katha Land West Dhanmondi (No Media)
01969101858
01918401324

প্লট বিক্রি
আফতাবনগর, এম-ব্লক ৩.৫০ কাঠা, একটা, ব্লক-বি একটা, কুতুবা এম ব্লক একটা, এম ব্লক ৪কাঠা, পূর্বচল ৭.৫ কাঠা। যোগাযোগ প্রকৃত ক্রেতাদান, মিডিয়া নো এন্ডাউড। ০১৯২৪৭১৩১৫৭

Banani at House Sale
Banani Resedensial Area House Sale. Land 6.4 Katha with 10 Stored Building, Commercial Use Possible. Pls Contact: 01757786217 01841786217

প্লট কিনতে ইচ্ছুক
আফতাবনগর, বসুন্ধরা ও পূর্বচল উপশহরে ৩.৫০ কাঠা, একটা, ১০কাঠার নিম্নকক প্লট কিনতে ইচ্ছুক। মিডিয়া নো এন্ডাউড। যোগাযোগ প্রকৃত মালিকগণ ০১৭১৮১৩৮৮৮

National University, Bangladesh
Head Office: Board Bazar, Gazipur
Procurement & Store Department
Memo No: PSD40-0/00074/2024/(1)/1/3395 Date: 27/01/2025

e-Tender Notice
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Procurement Nature, Type & Method	Online Tender Notice Publication and Closing Date
1.	1067676	Purchase of Paper for National University, Bangladesh	Goods NCT OTM	28-Jan-2025 16:00 17-Feb-2025 12:00
2	1067677	Purchase of Stationary Goods for National University, Bangladesh	Goods NCT OTM	28-Jan-2025 16:00 17-Feb-2025 15:30
3	1067836	Purchase of Toiletries and others Items for National University, Bangladesh	Goods NCT OTM	28-Jan-2025 16:00 18-Feb-2025 14:00

The interested persons/firms may visit the website www.eprocurement.gov.bd. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the national e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Md. Parvez Sazzad)
Director (in-charge)
Procurement and Store Department
National University, Bangladesh
e-mail: procurement@nu.ac.bd

GD- 322

Ex-AL MP
Mizanur gets
8 years in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced former Awami League lawmaker from Khulna-2 constituency Mizanur Rahman to eight years in jail in a case filed over amassing wealth worth Tk 1.44 crore illegally and concealing wealth statement of Tk 20 lakh to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Judge Mohammad Abu Taher of Dhaka Special Judge's Court-3 handed down the sentence in his presence at the courtroom.

Mizanur was sentenced to five years for acquiring illegal wealth while three years for concealing wealth statement to the ACC.

The judge also ordered to confiscate Tk 1,44,50,989 earned through illegal means in favour of the state.

Ex-minister
Nuruzzaman
held in
Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Rangpur Metropolitan Police yesterday arrested former social welfare minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed.

He was arrested from his relative's house in Rangpur's Post Office lane area around 8:30pm, said RMP Commissioner Md Majid Ali.

Ahmed faces multiple charges, including assault, murder, and attempt to murder during the Anti-discrimination Student Movement, he said.

Police said Nuruzzaman, along with his son and 128 others, has been named in a case filed over the death of Mahamudul Hasan Munna in Rangpur.

Munna's father filed the case with Rangpur Metropolitan Magistrate Court on August 29 last year.



Rabeya, a day labourer, unloads coal from a cargo ship using jute baskets. She has been working in this profession for 18 years and is able to unload 150-180 baskets of coal a day. The workers earn Tk 4 per basket. The photo was taken at the Rupsha Koyla Ghat in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

VILLAGE COURTS IN PATUAKHALI, BARGUNA

Over 3,000 cases
settled in 2024

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Ketab Ali Howlader, 72, a day-labourer from Sreerampur union in Patuakhali's Dumki upazila, found himself in a legal battle when his niece Helena Begum who forcibly occupied seven decimals of his land and built three tin-shed houses on it.

Despite intervention from local influentials, when Helena refused to vacate the land, Ketab Ali in July 2024, ordering Helena to return the occupied land and remove the illegal structures. Subsequently, Helena Begum complied with the ruling.

"Had I taken this case to a higher court, it would have cost me a lot more and taken at least 10 years to resolve. Now we are living peacefully without any conflict," said Ketab.

Meanwhile, Setara Begum, 60, and her husband Mokbul Hossain, 70, of Dalbhangra village

under Barguna Sadar upazila, had entrusted Tk 25,000 to their neighbour Monir Hossain, hoping for it to be returned with benefits. However, Monir refused to return the money, thereby leading to a financial dispute.

After filing a case with Dhaluya Union Village Court in July last year, Setara won the dispute within seven days as the court ordered Monir to return the full amount.



Cases like these highlight how marginalised and impoverished individuals benefit from village courts, which have been resolving minor disputes efficiently and affordably.

The Village Court Activation Project in Bangladesh is being implemented under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural

Development and Co-operatives to provide easy legal assistance to marginalised communities.

According to Rakibul Islam, district manager of the project, a total 77 village courts in Patuakhali settled 2,141 cases and collected Tk 33 lakh in fines between February and December in 2024.

In Barguna, a total 42 village courts resolved 1,025 cases and collected Tk 1.62 crore in fines during this time, he informed.

The number of resolved cases was 1,200 and 500 in Patuakhali and Barguna in 2023, respectively.

"Village courts sit on designated days of the week, where complainants and defendants present their cases, similar to formal courts. The union parishad chairman oversees the proceedings, with parishad members representing both parties," Rakibul explained.

Abu Hasnat Mohammad Arefin, deputy commissioner of Patuakhali, said, "Under the project, marginalised communities are now being able to resolve minor disputes conveniently and affordably, avoiding the long and costly legal procedures of formal courts."

2 killed, one
hurt in clash
at Meghna
sand quarry

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Munshiganj

Two people were shot dead and one was injured in a clash at a sand quarry on the Meghna river, in the bordering area between Munshiganj and Chandpur yesterday.

The deceased are Russell, 30, and Rifat, 29. The injured is Ayub Ali, 35. The incident took place around 7:30pm.

Munshiganj Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Billah Hossain said, "Initially, we learned that a gunfight took place between two groups."

The injured, Ayub Ali, said, "Six of us went to extract sand from the Meghna. Suddenly, around 15-16 people came in several speedboats and fired on us. As a result, two people were killed, and I was shot in the leg."

Munshiganj SP Mohammad Shamsul Alam Sarkar said, "The incident took place on the river, and the river police will be able to provide further details."

River Police SP Syed Mushfiqur Rahman said the clash broke out between locals and illegal sand lifters. "We are looking into the matter."

Dhaka concerned
over dwindling
funds for Rohingya

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin yesterday expressed concern over the challenges Bangladesh has been facing since hosting the Rohingyas and the declining funds from international donors.

He hoped that the upcoming high-level conference on the situation of Rohingyas and other minorities in Myanmar will draw global attention and garner support for assisting this distressed community.

The issues were discussed when UNHCR Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Hai Kyung Jun met him at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She briefed the foreign secretary about the ongoing humanitarian support the UNHCR is providing.

The foreign secretary reiterated Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain's call for a sustainable solution for the Rohingya crisis made at the six-nation consultation held in Bangkok recently.

School event
stopped after
attack in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The annual sports final and award giving programme of Modhupur Hazi Aujel Ali High School in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila was stopped after a mob attacked and vandalised the venue yesterday morning.

"We were preparing to begin the day-long event when some 8-10 people, most of them young, entered the school premises and damaged the decorations and also removed the banners," said Md Abdul Mozid, headmaster of the school.

"Teachers and the students became worried after the sudden attack, so we postponed programme after informing higher authorities," he also said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Common Services Department-1
Bangladesh Bank
Head Office
Dhaka
Web: <https://www.bb.org.bd>

Invitation for Tender

1	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Bank		
2	Procuring entity district	Dhaka		
3	Invitation for	The Procurement of Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Next generation Antivirus for End user devices (6000), Next generation Antivirus for Server (600), Local sandbox with Anti Advanced Persistent Threat (Anti APT), Next generation Email gateway for Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka		
4	Invitation Ref No.	CSD-1(EQ)69(3)/Anti Virus/2025-69		
5	Date	30/01/2025		
KEY INFORMATION				
6	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
		Date		
7	Tender publication date	30/01/2025		
		Date	Time	
8	Tender closing date and time	20/02/2025	03:00pm	
9	Tender opening date and time	20/02/2025	03:15pm	
10	Name & address of the office(s)	Address		
11	- Receiving tender document	e-Tender at BB website (https://etender.bb.org.bd) and only Hard Copy of Original Tender Security at CSD-1.		
12	- Opening tender document	Common Services Department-1, 6th Floor, Annex-2 Building, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.		
13	Pre-tender meeting	A Pretender meeting will be held on the date mentioned below:		
		Date:	Place: Conference Room, CSD-1, 6th Floor, Annex Building-2, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.	Time: 11:30am
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
14	Brief eligibility of tenderer	Tenderers having 5 years overall business experience and minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least Two (2) contract(s) of similar nature successfully completed within the last Three (3) years.		
15	Brief description of goods or works	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Next generation Antivirus for End user devices (6000), Next generation Antivirus for Server (600), Local sandbox with Anti Advanced Persistent Threat (Anti APT), Next generation Email gateway for Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka		
16	Brief description of related services	N/A		
17	Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)
	1	Antivirus	CSD-1	10,00,000/-
				04 (Four) weeks
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
18	Name of official inviting tender	Swapan Kumar Goswami		
19	Designation of official inviting tender	Director (CSD-1)		
20	Address of official inviting tender	Common Services Department-1, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka		
21	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 9530148	Fax: 9564117	E-mail: swapan.goswami@bb.org.bd
22	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings			

সূত্র নং: ডিসিপি/৪৮/২০২৫-২৮৫
তারিখ: ৩০/০১/২০২৫

Swapan Kumar Goswami
Director (CSD-1)
Phone: 9530148
E-mail: swapan.goswami@bb.org.bd

যারিৎকি ও আর্থিক সেবা প্রদেয় গ্রাহকগণের শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৯৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

GD-330

Man killed
by nephew

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

A man has been killed allegedly by his nephew following land dispute in Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila, police said.

The deceased -- Saidur Rahman, 60 -- was from Joyhar village.

Locals said Saidur had a longstanding dispute with his brother Shahidul Islam over land.

On Wednesday, Shahidul's nephew Zainal, 30, struck Saidur with a sharp weapon during an altercation between the two families.

Saidur died at Shaheed Zia Medical College Hospital, Bogura, said Kawsar Ali, officer-in-charge of Panchbibi Police Station.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Golapganj Govt. Technical School and College , Golapganj , Sylhet

Memo No : 57.03.9138.502.07.001.22.1087
Date : 29/01/2025

e-Tender Notice(OTM)

This is notifying to all concern that the following tenders are invited in the national e-GP portal .

Sl no	Tender ID	Procurement Title	Online Notice publication Date & Time	Last selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
1	1069457	Procurement and Supply of Furniture.	02 February 2025 10:00 AM	16 Feb 2025 17:00 PM	17 Feb 2025 14:30 PM
2	1069510	Procurement and Supply of Others Stationary			
3	1069511	Procurement and Supply of Raw Materials and spare parts.			
4	1069512	Procurement and Supply of Office Equipment.			
5	1069513	Procurement and Supply of Learning Materials.			
6	1069514	Procurement and Supply of Computer Equipment.			

This is an online Tender Where only e-tender will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline / hard copies will be accepted . To submit e-tender , registration in the national e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is must required Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

29.1.2025
(Sajal Kumar Pal)
Principal
Golapganj Govt. Technical School and College
Email : golapganjtscc@gmail.com

GD-324



Farooki suggests merging culture and tourism ministries

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, adviser to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, has called for merging the culture and tourism ministries to streamline operations. Speaking at the National Film Conference 2025 at Dhaka University on Wednesday, Farooki emphasised the need for a unified cultural industry under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The event, organised by the Bangladesh Film Students' Association, saw participation from over 500 stakeholders, including filmmakers, students, and industry professionals. Attendees demanded the creation of a dedicated ministry for film affairs. The adviser suggested that consolidating ministries would resolve administrative challenges and enhance coordination, referencing South Korea's unified cultural framework as an example to follow.

A knife was thrown inches away from my body: MITHILA

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Rafiath Rashid Mithila and FS Nayeem starrer *Jole Jvole Tara* is all set to be released next month. Directed by Arun Chowdhuri, the government-funded film will showcase Mithila in a completely unique character.

In the film, Mithila plays Tara, a travelling entertainer who performs circus acts along the riverbank. Describing her character, she said, "It's a completely unique role and a one-of-a-kind story—something audiences have never seen before."

Sharing her experience on set, she revealed, "We filmed along the banks of the Kaliganga River, and several of my scenes were shot on a boat, right in the water."

Discussing the film's narrative, she

added, "Tara works in a circus, and the story revolves around a strong female protagonist. It's a beautifully crafted film meant for viewers of all backgrounds, and I believe everyone will enjoy it."

When asked about the challenges of portraying Tara, Mithila admitted, "The role was quite demanding, especially the boat scenes. We shot for several days under the scorching sun, which was physically exhausting. But I decided to enact it as it challenged me as an artiste."

"In the circus, there's a particular set where a knife is thrown just inches away from my body. I had to actually do that. Portraying such a character was a thrilling and unique experience," she added.



Historic Madhumita Hall to close down in favour of multiplex



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Madhumita Cinema Hall, one of Dhaka's historic film theatres located in Motijheel, has maintained a strong tradition over the years, celebrating its golden jubilee in 2022.

Yesterday, Iftekhar Uddin Noushad, the owner, confirmed that the cinema will close down following this year's Eid screenings. He also shared with The Daily Star that a new multiplex will be built in its place.

The owner additionally expressed disappointment over the hall's decline, noting his investment in upgrades, "I invested a crore to upgrade the hall, but only Shakib Khan's films run successfully. Where have the skilled directors and other heroes gone? The state of the industry is disheartening."

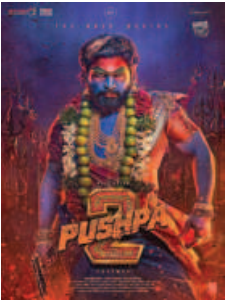
"However, a multiplex will be built in its place and I'll focus on that project moving forward," he added.

Shakib Khan starrer *Borbaad* will be released this Eid-ul-Fitr as the final screening at the hall, which first opened on December 1, 1967.

'Pushpa 2' releases on Netflix with exclusive footage

Following a record-breaking theatrical run, *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, and Fahadh Faasil, is now available on Netflix in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada.

Its Netflix release includes an additional 23 minutes of unseen footage. The sequel continues the story of Pushpa Raj's rise as the leader of a red sandalwood smuggling network. Rashmika reprises her role as Srivalli, Pushpa's loyal wife, while Fahadh returns as the relentless cop Bhanwar Singh. The film sets the stage for the next instalment, *Pushpa 3: The Rampage*.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?



A Journey Through July

A collaboration between July Massacre Archive and Pipra showcases women's resilience during the July Uprising and its global impact. The exhibition features three segments: *She Leads*, honouring women's courage; *Where July Meets the World*, exploring global revolutions; and *International July Archive*, presenting international media coverage of these pivotal events.

DATE: SATURDAY-MONDAY | FEBRUARY 1-3
TIME: 3PM-8PM
VENUE: DRIK GALLERY, PANTHAPATH

NEWS

EC for change in provision

FROM PAGE 12
are also considering the number of voters.

"People migrate to cities. If constituencies are determined solely based on population, the number of seats in urban areas will increase, while in other areas, it will decrease. The commission believes this will not ensure proper representation," he said.

Additionally, there is a printing error in a sub-clause of the existing law. The EC will send a proposal to the authorities to correct it, he added.

So far, the EC has received 248 applications seeking redrawing of boundaries for 41 parliamentary constituencies.

Abul Fazal stated that the EC is waiting to see the decisions regarding the boundary determination as the Electoral Reform Commission has made several recommendations in this regard.

"We are in a changing situation. This reform is a national demand. We are not outside it," he responded to a query if the recommendations of the reform commission were delaying the

EC's work.

Talking about the chief election commissioner's comment that implementing several recommendations of the reform commission would undermine the EC's independence, Abul Fazal said the EC would convey its observations to the government through the relevant ministry.

In yesterday's meeting, the EC decided that the matter of possible changes in the voter list, policies for international and domestic observers, and guidelines for journalists covering elections will be further reviewed. These have been sent to the relevant committee for scrutiny.

It also discussed further simplifying the process of providing national identity cards to expatriate Bangladeshis. The EC is considering three alternatives to ensure the voting rights of expatriate voters: postal ballots, proxy voting, and online voting.

Proxy voting means if someone is unable to vote in person, the voter can ask someone to vote on his or her behalf.

Quotas in edn

FROM PAGE 12
regarding quotas. It was decided that the ministries of health, law, education, and Liberation War affairs would take necessary actions.

The relevant ministries and departments have been entrusted with the responsibility of taking decisions regarding the application of the quota system in medical admissions, entry into government jobs, and secondary and higher secondary admissions.

The public administration ministry has been directed to present a summary with opinions or recommendations on the quota system in government recruitment, considering the current context.

Similarly, the Secondary and Higher Education Division has been instructed to submit a summary with opinions or recommendations on the quota system in educational institution admissions.

In the ongoing 2024-25 academic year, admission test results for government and private medical and dental colleges were published based on a 5 percent quota for the children of freedom fighters, martyred freedom fighters, and Biranganas. However, following criticism, the results of 193 candidates were later suspended.

At least eight BPL matches

FROM PAGE 12
In these matches, there were instances of bowlers conceding three consecutive wickets, big no balls, suspicious playing XI selection, and slow batting in the middle overs while chasing big totals.

The documents also suggest that the matters the ACU is taking into consideration include match manipulation, affected betting markets, and, most importantly, the names of players involved.

However, the fact that the payment, accommodation, and other allowances of the seven designated ACU integrity officers for each of the seven franchises are taken care of by the respective sides raises concerns regarding their work process.

"It was brought to the attention of both [BCB] CEO [Nizamuddin Chowdhury] and [BCB] president [Faruque Ahmed] that when the ACU officials are with the team, how could they work properly if their expenses are taken care of by those franchises. They will definitely be biased," a BCB official, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star.

"When I told them about the matter, the president and CEO agreed on the point. But later nothing changed, I don't know. But this is obviously an absurd matter," he concluded.

With integrity officers being directly involved with the franchises, the ACU's dependence on anonymous tips and media reports for such sensitive matters also hints that a lot of issues could be deliberately kept under the rug.

Other questionable incidents could be observed in this BPL. The Daily Star identified at least two cricketers outside of the official team list — one each from the Rajshahi and Chittagong franchises — who were seen in the players' dugout.

BCB's head of ACU, Major (Retd) Raiyan Azad, confirmed to The Daily Star that no PMOA [Players Match Officials Area] had been issued for any of them, insisting that he would look into it after he was provided with evidence of them being present at the dugout with the team on several occasions.

The PMOA comprises dressing rooms, viewing areas (dugouts), nets, dining areas, medical rooms, and operational rooms used by players, support staff, and match officials.

Being at the dugout without PMOA not only violates the security protocols but also raises doubts regarding suspicious activities by the franchises, including attempts of spot-fixing and match-fixing.

"If they stay at the dugout all the time during the match, it's a matter of concern for me. He may have taken the pass by some unfair means," said Raiyan, admitting that they are working on a few alleged suspicious matches in this year's competition.

"This is very common in international and franchise tournaments. When a tournament takes place, we get tips from many corners. The Intelligence hub of the ICC, our ACU network, and the media also have their network. So it's a regular process," said Raiyan, who also lamented not having enough permanent officials at the ACU.

"In the Dubai IIT20, there is an ICC ACU official for every match. Here I have been covering all 46 matches. The integrity officers aren't working here permanently. They come here, work for a certain time, and then leave," he added.

Since its inception in 2012, BPL has often been entangled in controversies, with instances of spot-fixing and match-fixing coming to light. In 2014, former Bangladesh skipper Mohammad Ashraful also admitted his involvement in match and spot-fixing in BPL in 2013 and was subsequently banned for eight years (three years suspended) by the BPL anti-corruption tribunal.

UGC considers 'July 36 univ'

FROM PAGE 12
During the meeting, "July 36 University" was proposed as a possible name.

Prof Faiz said, "We are still working on the modalities and structure of the university. For example, we have a national university that oversees colleges, as well as Dhaka University that also manages colleges."

"We are also considering a new model for this university and we will decide on that soon," he added.

Asked about when the new university would be established and start academic activities, the chairman said, "We are still working on it. We will decide with the best interest of the students in mind."

On the name of the university, he said, "Students played a major role in the July uprising. In graffiti across the country, it is referred to as 'July 36'. We believe this name would be a fitting way to remember, recognise, and honour the sacrifices and contributions of the students."

Prof Faiz also mentioned that several other names were suggested. "Now, it's up to the students to decide."

The seven colleges that are supposed to be under this new university are Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Begum Badrunnesa Government College, Government Bangla College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Government Titumir College, and Government

Shaheed Suhrawardy College.

Around 2 lakh regular and irregular students are currently enrolled in graduate and postgraduate programmes at these colleges.

However, students of Titumir College have been demonstrating for an independent university of their own. Yesterday, they blocked a city street to press home this demand.

Habibullah Rony, one of the organisers of the demonstrations, told this newspaper, "We don't have anything to say about the name of this new university. All we want is not to be included in it. We want a separate university."

On January 27, the Dhaka University authorities decided to sever ties with their seven affiliated colleges following demands by the students of the colleges.

According to the officials, no new students from the seven colleges would be admitted under the DU for the 2024-25 session. However, existing students would continue their studies under DU's administration.

The decision followed a 24-hour ultimatum issued by the college students, demanding the academic and administrative ties with the DU be severed. They issued the ultimatum after clashes broke out between DU students and students of the seven colleges late Sunday and early Monday.

Sluggish probe, failure

FROM PAGE 12
prosecution's reply on the matter did not satisfy the tribunal.

The tribunal then instructed the prosecution to ask the home adviser to take action in this regard, if necessary.

The prosecution was scheduled to submit the probe report of a case filed against six police officials, including Tanzil Ahmed, former assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, over the killing of a person on August 5 last year. But they prayed for a two-month extension of the deadline.

ICT judge, Justice Shoful Alam Mahmood, asked how many people were accused in the case, to which Prosecutor BMS Sultan Mahmud replied there were six. Upon further query from the tribunal, the prosecutor explained that two of them had been arrested and although arrest warrants had been issued, the four others had yet to be arrested.

ICT chair, Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder then asked, "What is the progress of your investigation? Is the investigation agency working properly?"

In reply, Sultan said, "My lord, due to the wide range of massacres, it is taking some time."

At this time, another prosecutor, Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim, stepped in to explain that the arrest warrants were not being executed promptly. "This is the problem."

Sultan added, "My lord, we have even heard from a victim's family that the police officer who had shot and killed their dear one had been on duty right up to the time that the warrant was issued. And yet he has not been arrested."

The ICT chair said, "Then how can you begin the trial? How will the trial be done?"

The tribunal then set April 6 for submission of the investigation report.

Justice Mortuza said, "Ask the home adviser to take action. If needed file an application, and we will direct all authorities concerned to take action."

The prosecution then filed another application for three more warrants.

Justice Shoful said, "How many people have you been able to arrest so far?"

When the prosecutor replied that 35 people had been arrested, Justice Shoful said, "We have issued 105 warrants so far, 2,000 people were killed, and you were able to arrest just 35. Why are the orders not being executed properly?"

Economy

FROM PAGE 12
When the FT pointed out that one of the arguments India makes is that Bangladesh is very fragile under Yunus and Islamists are taking over the country, the chief adviser said he did not see any such signs.

Asked about the "enormous problems" the government is facing, Yunus said, "Deal with them. You don't run away with the problem because you have tremendous support internally, globally. What else do you need?"

Speaking about the future of Bangladesh's economy, he pointed to the vast young population bubbling with ideas and technology in their hands. "They're international young people, although born and raised in Bangladesh."

He said Bangladesh showed the world what it can do when the garment industry was "thrown at us". It can do the same thing if it is given the chance to make machinery or vehicles.

The country has designated enough space for that, and if power is a problem, it can be solved with hydroelectricity in Nepal, he said. "All you'd have to do is to persuade India to let it come over India."

Confiscate

FROM PAGE 2
billion to Singapore and several other countries.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is conducting an inquiry into corruption allegations against S Alam and his family members.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka passed the order after the ACC Deputy Director Md Abu Sayeed, head of the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam moved the applications on behalf of the anti-graft body.

In the application, the ACC official said it's necessary to get a confiscation order for the 58 acres of land located in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Chattogram, so that the ownership cannot be transferred.

On January 16, the same court ordered the freezing of over 321 million shares in 24 companies owned by S Alam and his family members. The value of these shares stands at Tk 350 crore.

On January 14, the same court also ordered the confiscation of immovable properties worth Tk 200 crore and the freezing of 87 bank accounts owned by S Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen and 16 of his family members.

Earlier on October 7 last year, the court issued a travel ban on S Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen and 11 members of his family.



Lebanese Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Monday that the group would not accept any justifications to extend the period for Israeli troops' withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

"Humanitarian aid doesn't equal UNRWA, and UNRWA doesn't equal humanitarian aid. UNRWA equals an organisation infested with Hamas terror activity," Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein wrote

The Palestinian prisoners, who include 30 minors and some members of Palestinian groups convicted for their involvement in deadly attacks in Israel, were set to be taken to the West Bank or Gaza later in the day.



**আজই
শেষ দিৱ**

**ভাড়ার টাকায়
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FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Spare female athletes from regressive dictates

Joypurhat-Dinajpur incidents raise fresh alarm about intolerance

We are deeply alarmed by the recent disruptions of women's football matches in Joypurhat and Dinajpur by fundamentalist groups. These incidents are stark reminders that hard-earned progress in women's empowerment remains fragile, as such groups continue to impose their will on society even after the historic July uprising that promised greater inclusivity for all. Calling these acts unlawful would be an understatement. They violate the very spirit of our constitution that—through Articles 19, 27 and 28—guarantees equality of opportunity, equality before the law, and protection against discrimination on the basis of religion, sex, etc. But why do such incidents keep occurring with impunity?

The Joypurhat incident centred around a football field that was due to host a friendly match between two female teams from the district and nearby Rangpur. Things escalated when a mob of madrasa students and local extremists reportedly stormed the ground and tore down its fences on the grounds that women playing football is “anti-Islamic.” The attack was also live-streamed on social media. The previous day, another incident in Dinajpur saw a women's football match descend into clashes, leaving at least 20 people injured. These incidents send a chilling message: that women must conform to regressive dictates and expectations, or suffer consequences.

They also represent a broader pattern of gender-based restriction, discrimination, violence, harassment, and stigmatisation that frequently affect women and young girls in their journey as individuals and as citizens of this country. From opposition to women's leadership in politics to attacks on cultural events featuring female performers, we have often seen reactionary forces—emboldened by the authorities' capitulation to their demands and the lack of legal consequences—unduly target them. The Joypurhat-Dinajpur incidents were particularly painful to see as women's role in sports, especially football, has been a source of national pride in recent years. The challenges for women, however, are not limited to the physical space. They face misogynistic abuse on online platforms, too. According to the Police Cyber Support Center for Women, 9,117 cases of cyber harassment were reported in 2024 alone.

Following the recent incidents, the interim government has sent out a firm message, vowing to hold the perpetrators accountable. But words are not enough unless backed by decisive action. As the rights organisations have demanded, it is crucial that local administrations and law enforcement agencies ensure the safety of female athletes and take steps to prosecute those responsible for committing or inciting the violence. They must be tough against the radical forces curtailing our progress as a nation. It is equally important that social and religious leaders speak out in favour of women's rights, countering the narratives of those who seek to repress them. Furthermore, sporting and other relevant bodies must work together to ensure that female athletes receive full institutional backing.

Public offices demand absolute integrity

ACC must penalise govt employees with dual citizenship

It is concerning that a number of high-ranking government officials reportedly hold dual citizenship in violation of the Government Service Act, 2018. A recent probe by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) found that several government employees even laundered money abroad by taking advantage of their foreign nationality. So, the ACC issued letters on January 12 to senior secretaries and secretaries of all ministries, seeking details of such government employees. The search covers employees at all levels of public offices, including semi-government, autonomous, and semi-autonomous bodies, judges, court employees, commissioned officers of the armed forces, and even elected representatives.

The issue of dual citizenship came to the limelight after the fall of the Awami League government when several former ministers and parliamentarians were found to hold citizenship from countries such as the US, UK, and even Papua New Guinea. Article 66 of the constitution clearly states that individuals who acquire foreign citizenship or pledge allegiance to another country cannot serve as MPs or ministers. Yet this precondition was flouted. Even crucial ministries such as finance were led by individuals with foreign citizenship. The judiciary was not exempt either, with a Supreme Court judge, AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik, known to have had dual citizenship. The ACC, in its letter, also pointed out that some public officials with dual citizenship are currently residing in foreign countries to conceal their misdeeds and evade prosecution.

While not every government employee holding foreign nationality is engaged in corruption, the very act of acquiring another country's citizenship while in public service is unlawful. It raises serious ethical and legal questions about their commitment to Bangladesh and their respect for laws. A government job, particularly one that involves policymaking or law enforcement, demands absolute allegiance to the state.

Therefore, the ACC's move to identify and penalise such officials is a step in the right direction. However, as the chairman of the National Board of Revenue has pointed out, it could have conducted the investigation more discreetly to prevent rule-breakers from being alerted in advance. Many officials may not voluntarily disclose their foreign citizenship fearing dismissal under Section 40(1) of the service act. Nonetheless, ACC's action may encourage some to come forward and renounce their foreign citizenship as a corrective measure. Those who fail to do so must be held accountable through collaboration with relevant agencies. Likewise, the Election Commission must ensure that individuals holding foreign citizenship are barred from contesting elections.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Luna 9 launched

On this day in 1966, the Soviets launched Luna 9, the first spacecraft to make a soft landing on the Moon.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Reforms vs election: A distracting debate

We need and can have both by the year-end



THE THIRD VIEW

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

MAHFUZ ANAM

Recently, a debate in our political arena has been clouding our thinking. “No election before reforms” vs “No reforms if it delays the election” has our political players' attention engaged, distracting them from urgent actions. Exchanges between the respective proponents are now getting shriller and acrimonious. The truth is, we need both and can have both within the time frame of December 2025 or January 2026. People are firm and clear about not missing this unique opportunity to institute vital reforms, but they are also conscious about the complexity of the current situation and would prefer a more stable political and legal scenario.

Those who place the election above reforms undervalue the vital need for the latter. They tend to forget that the introduction of BAKSAL, two military interventions, the binary nature of our politics since the restoration of democracy in 1991, and the authoritarian rule for more than 15 years not only prevented reforms in areas like the judiciary, administration, police, etc, but reversed the process of making governance a public service and not a weapon in the ruler's hand. All our vital institutions need fundamental reforms—and urgently so. Let there be no doubt about it.

Contrarily, those who place reforms above the election do not truly understand the significance of a free and fair election and the absolute necessity of holding it as soon as possible as voters have been cheated of their right in the last three. It is also vital to put the country back on the track of having an elected government and parliament. The national election will restore people's right to choose who should and who should not rule them. It is a citizen's inalienable right to select which party and/or individual will be given the power to lead the country, govern it, spend our tax money, and introduce new policies and plans. Only a free and fair election can ensure it. How can we forget that, from the mountain of misgovernance by Sheikh Hasina, what triggered public anger the most was her fraudulent elections. Now, due to the students' popularity and Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus's wide acceptance, people have decided to wait to exercise their right to elect. But that wait is time-bound.

What elections also do is bring about the accountability of those who are placed in power and positions of decision-making. “Accountability” is perhaps the most ignored and undervalued word in our country's governance. Our government officials, who get all their perks and facilities

and, most importantly, salary from our tax money, face no accountability. Our police, intelligence agencies and security apparatus have all the power to oppress the public, but the public has no right to ask if they are even remotely performing their tasks honestly and in line with the law. In every profession and sector, there are honourable exceptions whom we praise for being honest in spite of the system. But the overall system is rotten to the core.

Free and fair elections are the only effective mechanism to make our political leaders accountable. It can be said that it did not work effectively in the past. With the proposed reforms instituted, it will be different in the future.

The interim government deserves kudos for setting up reform commissions in the most vital areas

if it loses its neutrality, we must have a new one to conduct the election—took us all by surprise. The reasons he cited need to be examined, but we think the conclusion he made was a bit premature.

Mirza Fakrul's comments took a dramatic turn when Adviser Nahid Islam speculated as to whether or not BNP was making an indirect call for bringing back an army-backed government to hold the election, modelled after 1/11.

This comment, we think, took the discussion towards a confrontational direction. Instead of a greater understanding, attributing motives to the BNP, which was neither fair nor justified, has now led to a distance between the students and the BNP, which is, as Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul observed, “undesirable.” If anybody, it was the BNP that suffered the most during 1/11. Given its experience, BNP would be the last political party to want the return of an army-backed caretaker government.

Vital and urgently necessary reform proposals are now in place. We urge all to begin serious discussions on them. Let's start with the one that has a built-in consensus: police reform. We want the police to be permanently changed from being an extension of the ruling

appointments, work accountability, financial transparency of the judges and separate administration, supervision, etc will make the proposals most relevant. If there is a place where anti-discrimination needs implementation, it is here.

Public administration reforms are also an urgent need for us. Our administration never served the

We are aware that some sections will gain with an early election and others will not. It cannot be counted out that arguments of both the sides could also be based on these perceived benefits. But we have to put public interest above everything else. We cannot lose this opportunity and the momentum to reshape our future on the basis of democracy, equality, tolerance, and general prosperity.

Those who place reforms above the election do not truly understand the significance of a free and fair election and the absolute necessity of holding it as soon as possible as voters have been cheated of their right in the last three. It is also vital to put the country back on the track of having an elected government and parliament. The national election will restore people's right to choose who should and who should not rule them. It is a citizen's inalienable right to select which party and/or individual will be given the power to lead the country, govern it, spend our tax money, and introduce new policies and plans. Only a free and fair election can ensure it.

well in time. Four of them have already delivered their recommendations, while two others are expected soon. Some important committees have also shared their findings. What awaits us is the dialogue with political parties that the chief adviser has already planned. Recommendations on vital issues like the constitution, Election Commission, police and Anti-Corruption Commission are already in the public domain. All of them now await widespread discussion, which we think should start immediately.

However, when a national dialogue should be starting in earnest, the “reforms vs election” controversy has reemerged, and this time, unfortunately, in a tone that we should and need to avoid. The BNP's latest decision to launch a movement may lead to counter-movements, which may bring many factions to the streets. When things seem to be falling into place, such actions seem unnecessary.

The recent remark by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir about the interim government—that

party's oppressive mechanism to an institution that upholds law and order for the benefit of the people. As a public institution, the police must represent justice, not oppression. Many of the reform suggestions are timely, useful, and urgently needed. The reform process can easily start with the police and can be seen as an example for the other reforms to follow.

As for the judiciary (what we have been able to learn from media reports; the formal presentation of its report is yet to come) the idea of decentralising the High Court benches is a most timely one. The dictum “Justice delayed is justice denied” is a painful reality for most citizens who live outside Dhaka. Travel, stay, food and the high cost of lawyers put the higher judiciary literally out of reach for most people. Even when they make the effort, the procedural maze and the avoidable but casually imposed delays make our ordinary citizens puppets in the hands of the law, which is well exemplified by the 5.77 lakh cases pending at the court. Reported suggestions about

people but the ruling party of the day, and of course themselves. There are honest officials, but they are a small minority. Most are corrupt, inefficient and totally without accountability and monitoring. Reforms here would be most resisted, and hence must be pursued with determination.

Election reforms are of immediate concern and must be implemented fastest, compared to others.

The above examples—only a small part of the whole process—show how important the reform proposals are and how seriously and diligently we must pursue them.

As we pointed out earlier, we have almost a year in hand. If we use this time with efficiency, dedication, and seriousness, and refrain from getting embroiled in unnecessary issues, we can have both reforms and the election within the desired time frame, about which there is a widespread agreement.

We are aware that some sections will gain with an early election and others will not. It cannot be counted out that arguments of both the sides could also be based on these perceived benefits. But we have to put public interest above everything else. We cannot lose this opportunity and the momentum to reshape our future on the basis of democracy, equality, tolerance, and general prosperity.

We strongly urge all concerned not to further dig into this debate and concentrate fully on achieving both the reforms and the election, which will serve our national interest most effectively. We should set aside our differences and assist the interim government to move forward with speed and clarity to implement this duel agenda.

Beyond martyrdom and momentum

The matrix of the 1969 mass movement



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AZFAR HUSSAIN

January 24 marked the Mass Uprising Day in Bangladesh, a commemoration of the 1969 movement that—energised by the radical and revolutionary spirit of the global 60s—brought down the decade-long dictatorship of Pakistani military ruler Ayub Khan. This day remembers the movement's martyrs, most notably the teenage activist Matiur Rahman Mallik. In his pocket was found a heartbreaking letter to his mother: "Mother, I am going to the procession; if I don't return, I'm afraid that I have become a martyr." And I witnessed new Matiurs rise in the July uprising itself—forever inscribed in people's collective memory is Abu Sayeed, shot dead by the police on July 16, 2024. Indeed, the significance of the 1969 mass uprising ranges far beyond the orchestrated violence of Ayub Khan's military-bureaucratic regime and his eventual downfall.

Indeed, can an image—a visual image—capture an entire history of a mass movement written in blood? Can the political and the historical converge and constellate within the micro-space of a radiantly singular poetic image? One might turn to German Marxist cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's notion of the "dialectical image"—an image as "dialectics at a standstill"—wherein "what has been" fuses with "the now" in a flash to form a constellation. I think one can locate such an image in Shamsur Rahman's iconic poem "Asader Shirt" ("Asad's Shirt"). It offers a vivid visual image of Asad's blood-soaked shirt, a haunting emblem that ignites indignation and incites outrage. Asad's brutal killing on January 20, 1969 was instrumental in morphing an entire student movement into a mass uprising. The poem portrays Asad's shirt as persistently fluttering across the sun-scorched landscapes of parched hearts, gatherings of awakened people, and crossroads of united consciousness. It even transformed into the flag of the people's souls. Every mass uprising births a symbol—or a constellation of symbols—configured from shared rage and discontent, bound by a singular purpose, and mobilised by the many voices and hands of a unified people.

In fact, in the history of Bangladesh's formation and its Liberation War against the neocolonial, military-bureaucratic regime of Pakistan, the mass uprising of 1969 is a significant milestone. Similarly, the mass uprising of 2024—unprecedented and the largest in the country's history—is now reckoned as a milestone, shaped by its own conjunctural specificities. While these two movements are distinct—one opposing a foreign military tyrant and neocolonial domination, the other challenging a native tyrant and the historically determinate form of fascism within the country—they are not entirely disconnected. I concur



A student procession on the Dhaka University campus during the 1969 mass uprising.

with Italian philosopher and social theorist Alberto Toscano's crucial contention in his book *Late Fascism* (2023) that fascism is mutable and that "fascism, like other political phenomena, varies according to its socioeconomic context." But I do not posit a pure disjuncture between 1969 and 2024, just as by no means do I draw a sharp disjuncture between 1971 and 2024. I submit that they are all profoundly connected. I will return to this issue later; for now, let me trace some of the crucial thematic and politico-ideological trajectories of the 1969 mass uprising, an event rendered intelligible by what I call its "dialectical temporality," marked by converging connections in motion—ones that move back and forth in historical time.

Every mass uprising is a process, not a one-off product. The 1969 mass uprising was the culmination of a protracted process of resistance, rooted in the structural inequalities and class contradictions generated by what I would call a neocolonial mode of production, organically linked, of course, to the uneven development of capitalism itself. East Pakistan, systematically

exploited as a colonial periphery, generated significant wealth through agriculture and trade, yet endured staggering disparities compared to West Pakistan. The working class and peasantry endured the harshest burdens of this neocolonial exploitation, grappling with acute poverty, food shortages, and relentless price hikes. Furthermore, the One-Unit policy and the Agartala Conspiracy Case of 1968—targeting the prominent

regime in 1969. Here, I must underscore a point often overlooked in standard and partisan narratives: in 1968, Maoist revolutionary Siraj Sikder was the first to have theorised East Pakistan as "a colony of West Pakistan," calling for armed struggle to establish an independent and socialist East Bengal. I submit that the political, theoretical, and conceptual history of the 1969 mass uprising remains unjustly incomplete without recognising the contributions of left revolutionary figures like Maulana Bhashani and Siraj Sikder. Again, I underline this point simply because fascist Awami League narratives have routinely overlooked their roles, just as they have marginalised the centrality of peasants and working-class people—without whom this mass uprising holds no real meaning.

But why is January 24 commemorated as Mass Uprising Day in Bangladesh? As I mentioned earlier, on January 20, the tragic death of leftist student leader Amanullah Mohammad Asaduzzaman (now known as just Asad) ignited tremendous public outrage, while his blood-soaked body/shirt turned out to be a powerful symbol of resistance—even a "material force" in the Marxist sense—producing a paradigmatic conjunction of grief and fury across the region. Just three days later, on January 24, the police killing of young Matiur Rahman Mallik, along with students like Mokbul, Rustam and Alamgir, galvanised mass indignation and anger on a scale hitherto unknown. Of course, this was the culmination of a movement sparked earlier by Maulana Bhashani, who had called for strikes beginning on December 6, 1968 and resulting in deaths and intensifying resistance. On December 29, Bhashani called for a nationwide strike and marketplace closures, reviving public momentum. Students soon introduced the 11-Point Programme demanding full autonomy for East Pakistan, with the movement gaining traction by January 17, 1969. On January 24, as many as 500,000 people gathered at Paltan Maidan, determined yet restrained, choosing to march to Iqbal Hall after Matiur's funeral prayers, instead of attacking the Governor's House. This united front of students, workers, and political parties pushed the struggle beyond the state's control.

But it is also true that ruling class narratives characteristically leave out those martyrs who were already neglected. Erasures and exclusions are obviously matters of class politics. For instance, Hasanuzzaman and Janu Mia—workers killed in then Chittagong on January 24, 1969—and even Anwara Begum—a martyr for whom a near-forgotten park in Farmgate, Dhaka is named—continue to remain marginalised in mainstream historiography. Anwara was shot by police while breastfeeding her four-month-old daughter Nargis at her Nakhpalpara home on January 25, 1969. The 1969 Mass Uprising witnessed the sacrifices of many other peasants and workers, whose exhaustive list couldn't be compiled by any government so far. And I find it significant to invoke at least a few names. Among them was Abu, a bicycle mechanic, who was killed in December 1968. Musa Mia, a labourer from Faujdarhat, and

farmers Mia Chan, Hasan Ali and Cherag Ali from Hatir Diya also sacrificed their lives. In January 1969, workers like Sorol Khan, Anwar Ali and Julhas Sikder were killed in Dhaka, Shimulia and Siddhirganj, respectively. February saw further sacrifices, including worker Abdul Ali in Dhaka, press worker Ishaq in Nazirabazar, and workers Lokman, Mujibur Rahman, Halizur Rahman, and Abdur Rahman across various regions. Other martyrs included tailor Atahar Khan, carpenter Abul Hashem, and hotel worker Shamsu, who died alongside many others. These names represent the labouring masses whose sacrifices fuelled the struggle against the military-bureaucratic regime of Ayub Khan.

But the uprising—although revolutionary in aspirations—lacked a solidly unifying revolutionary party or platform as such to steer it towards lasting change. The leadership of figures like Maulana Bhashani and the pivotal role of students notwithstanding, the fragmented left and other status-quo-oriented political forces undermined or even destroyed its radical potential. Thus, Ayub Khan's dictatorship was replaced by another military regime under Gen Yahya Khan, which soon ratted on the people's will, later culminating in genocide in East Pakistan. Yet, the mass uprising achieved significant milestones. It compelled the Pakistan government to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and all accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case, marking a major victory for the movement. It also brought the Six-Point Demand to the fore, cementing them as a call for East Pakistan's autonomy. And the uprising facilitated the emergence of class consciousness and advanced class struggles in both rural and urban areas. Furthermore, it considerably heightened the aspiration for an independent state among the people of East Pakistan, carving out the path for Bangalee nationalism to play a pioneering role in the Liberation War of 1971.

East Pakistan and Bangladesh have hitherto experienced five pivotal uprisings, beginning with the 1952 Language Movement, which prompted East Bengal's political awakening and led to the 1954 fall of the Muslim League. The 1969 mass uprising ousted Ayub Khan, though military rule persisted under Yahya Khan. In 1971, relentless mass movements paralysed the government, paving the way for the Liberation War. The 1990s saw another uprising against Ershad's regime, and the most recent, the quota reform movement, began as student protests against job quotas and campus oppression, evolving into a broader, even an unprecedented, mass movement known as the July uprising.

But no uprising, movement or even revolution is ever a total success or a total failure. The great African writer and activist—my good comrade—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o rightly distinguishes between "independence" and "liberation." We gained independence, but true liberation still remains a radically unresolved question in our history. That's why 1969 and 2024 are interconnected—the unfinished struggle for equality, social justice, and human dignity continued. But we have miles to go, to say the least.

Public health must prioritise disease prevention



Debra Efroymsen
is senior adviser to HealthBridge, a Canadian public health NGO.

DEBRA EFROYMSON

There is a common confusion around the subject of health. Too many people confound it with healthcare, with discussions focused on a shortage of hospitals, doctors, nurses, and medical supplies. But health is not just healthcare. There is no question of the importance of being able to treat disease, and there is plenty of room for improvement here. But while expending money and effort on treatment, it would be unwise to neglect the issue of preventing illness and injury. Such efforts prevent unnecessary misery and pain, as well as additional spending on healthcare.

Rather than simply treat disease, we should, to the extent possible, prevent it by identifying and addressing the root causes of ill health. In the case of contagious disease, one problem is inadequate housing; helping ensure that people have decent housing is not only a humane but also a public health (and cost-cutting) measure. As for injuries, various measures are needed. Dangling electric wires cause electrocution; this should not be impossible to remedy.

As for the many injured on our roads, reducing speeds, limiting the use of cars, improving public transport, and creating safer conditions for walking and cycling would all contribute to healthier outcomes.

The biggest source of disease is now non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes. How are we to address those? The medical approach includes vital steps such as early screening and medical treatment, but can we also reduce the incidence of NCDs and help people live longer, healthier lives? Certainly.

One of the main causes of NCDs as well as communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, is tobacco use. Back in 2005, thanks in part to intense pressure from civil society, the Bangladesh government passed a comprehensive tobacco control law, which has been amended and strengthened since then. Taxes still need to be further increased, but gone are the ubiquitous cigarette billboards and newspaper ads; most places are now smoke-free (although

the recent surge of smoking zones in cafes and restaurants is a concern), and strong warnings are now on cigarette packets. All of these have contributed to control the tobacco epidemic, though much more needs to be done.

The tobacco industry has fought tooth and nail against tobacco control laws and enforcement, but a strong and united civil society effort was able to work closely with the government to counter their lobbying and opposition. That collaboration should serve as an example in other areas.

To further reduce NCD risk factors, we need to make it easier for people to eat a healthy diet, get enough physical activity, and avoid pollution. A medical approach, in addition to looking for warning signs and treating disease, includes counselling individual patients. This approach is important but cumbersome, expensive, and of limited utility especially when it comes to pollution. The burden on health providers and hospitals would decrease if we implemented broader efforts aimed at keeping people healthy.

Looking for cues from tobacco control and beyond, those efforts could include banning or greatly limiting advertisements for unhealthy food and ensuring that people have access to affordable healthy food, preferably locally grown, through subsidies and support of farmers' markets; making it easier and more attractive to use active transport

(walking and cycling) while curbing car use; and taking strict measures to reduce the extremely unhealthy and dangerous levels of air pollution in our cities. One crucial pollution control measure is to have car-free days when air pollution rises above a certain level, as is done in many European cities.

The alternative would be to allow industry to act freely to produce, promote, and sell unhealthy products, and to heavily influence our government, at the expense of our physical environment and the health of our people.

Doctors have an essential role to play in creating a healthier society, but they also have a strong focus on individuals and treatment. Those trained in public health, whose broad perspective encompasses entire populations and who address root causes and not just effects, are more important than ever if we are to salvage our troubled healthcare system by reducing the need for treatment and hospitalisation. It is time that we prioritised public health and ensure adequate funding for it.

While we're at it, we could learn from countries like Thailand about the possibility of establishing a Health Promotion Foundation, whose purpose would be to help ensure that public health takes precedence over industry profits, leading us to a stronger and healthier Bangladeshi population.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Coffee additive
- 6 Banquet
- 11 Reddish dye
- 12 Unoccupied
- 13 Use, as advice
- 14 Car count
- 15 Eye part
- 17 Summer sign
- 18 Leave quickly
- 19 Signing, for short
- 22 Pub staple
- 23 Small drum
- 24 Like some online videos
- 25 Draw closer to
- 27 Hotel feature
- 30 Central American

capital

- 31 Clumsy one
- 32 Tick off
- 33 Soviet tyrant
- 35 Border
- 38 Key
- 39 Wild
- 40 Flower girl, often
- 41 Blunt
- 42 Like some communities

DOWN

- 1 Rhythmic dance
- 2 React with horror
- 3 Main dish
- 4 Erelong
- 5 Like ogres, in folklore
- 6 Nourished

7 Moody music

- 8 Twin of Artemis
- 9 Flow
- 10 Holyfield rival
- 16 Ready for romance
- 20 Issuing from a source
- 21 Cardinal cap letters
- 24 Through
- 25 Top story
- 26 Turkey's capital
- 27 Pavlova's field
- 28 For each
- 29 Leased
- 30 Ticks off
- 34 Nepal setting
- 36 Ruin
- 37 Moose's kin



SATURDAY'S ANSWERS

A	L	P	H	A		C	A	P	E	R
G	O	R	E	Y		A	L	A	M	O
E	X	I	L	E		W	A	R	M	S
		M	E	S	H		S	T	A	Y
T	H	A	N		A	N	K	A		
I	O	N		C	L	E	A	N	U	P
N	A	D	E	R		A	N	D	R	E
E	X	P	L	O	I	T		P	I	E
		R	A	P	T		M	A	S	K
S	T	O	P		S	P	A	R		
C	O	P	S	E		U	N	C	A	P
A	R	E	E	L		N	I	E	C	E
N	E	R	D	S		Y	A	L	T	A

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BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Unquiet legacies in Salil Tripathi’s ‘The Colonel Who Would Not Repent’

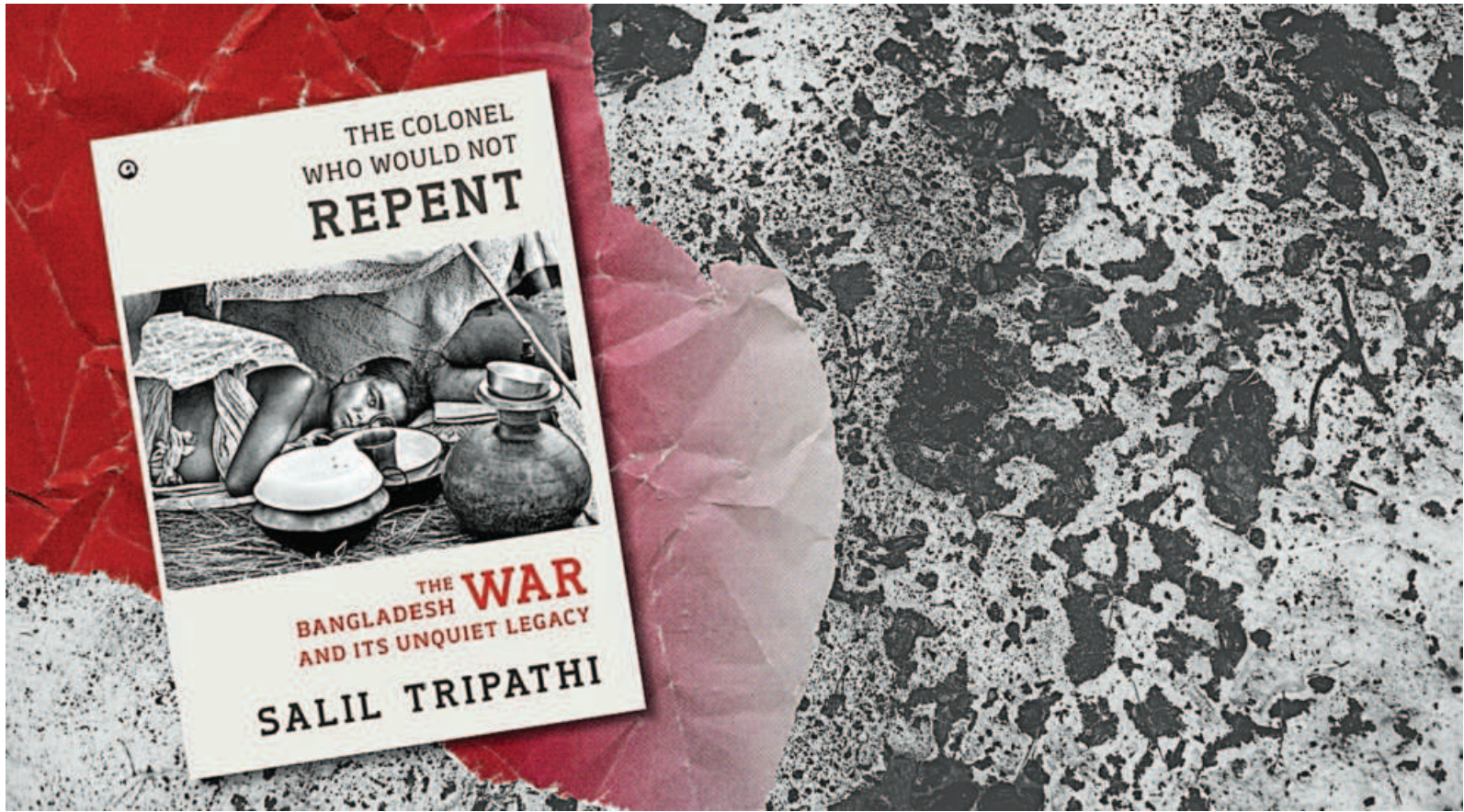


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

I could almost hear the groans of the members of my group when I suggested another book on 1971. They were too polite to ask the questions that I knew was in their minds: Why another book about 1971? Don’t we know all about 1971?

Every December, my reading group chooses a book related to 1971. In 2015, for example, we read A. Qayyum Khan’s *Bittersweet Victory: A Freedom Fighter’s Tale* (2013) and a few years earlier we read Siddik Salik’s *Witness to Surrender* (Oxford University Press, 1977). On December 17, 2016, we chose Salil Tripathi’s *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent: The Bangladesh War and Its Unquiet Legacy* (Aleph Book Company, 2014). I had met Salil Tripathi when he was in Dhaka researching the book. The book was subsequently launched in Bangladesh at the Hay Festival—as it was still called in 2014. Somehow I missed the launch and did not get the book till much later. I mistakenly assumed—from the title—that it focused on Colonel Farook Rahman, one of the assassins of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was only after getting the book that I realised that, though the book begins with the hanging of

Sheikh Mujib’s killers, Farook Rahman is not the protagonist—or even the antagonist—of the book. He is one of the many legacies of the 1971 war. And the war itself is part of the story of this land from its early beginnings in the 1905 Partition of Bengal to the present—and beyond. I could almost hear the groans of the members of my group when I suggested another book on 1971. They were too polite to ask the questions that I knew were in their minds: Why another book about 1971? Don’t we know all about 1971? Haven’t most of us in this group—as we are almost all of a certain age—lived through 1971? And haven’t we read enough historical accounts and fictional accounts about the war? What more is there to read? Or to discuss? And yet, there is more. As Salil Tripathi’s book puts it, the war might be over but its legacies remain. Of course Tripathi tells the story of 1971 secondhand—as he has read about it in books and newspaper accounts and heard about it in the many interviews

strewn throughout the book. It is true that, perhaps because Tripathi is not a meticulous historian but a journalist, the book suffers from numerous errors. Thus, he mentions the destruction of the Dacca Radio Station in March 1971. The name of Abdur Rab Serniabat is repeatedly misspelled. Readers who would want a definite answer to the question of numbers—How many were killed? How many were raped?—are given accounts of numbers given by others rather than any definite answer. In “Between ‘Correct’ and ‘Inclusive’ History”, an article published in the *Dhaka Tribune* in December 2016, Afsan Chowdhury asks whether we want “correct history” or “inclusive history”. “Correct history”, of course, is ironic because it is not inclusive and therefore not correct either. “Correct history” is what is politically correct at a given time because of the powers that be. Tripathi attempts to provide an “inclusive history” of 1971—which also attempts to be truly correct. It is this that gives *The Colonel Who Would Not*

Repent its importance. Above all, as an outsider, Tripathi can look impartially at historical events and personalities. Perhaps he cannot answer all the questions, but at least he can provide us with the questions. Thus, one of the questions Tripathi asks—which does not fit the accepted narrative—is: “How prepared was Bangladesh for the armed struggle?” He notes that Tajuddin Ahmed and Kamal Hossain were two of the last persons who met Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the night of March 25. After the crackdown, Tajuddin Ahmed left for India but Kamal Hossain, after moving from “house to house”, gave himself up on April 2. In his interview with Tripathi, Kamal Hossain describes the event. As he was being taken to the airport, he was questioned about what he and Tajuddin Ahmed had been planning to do. He told Tripathi that “They had made no plans”. The absence of preparations for an independent Bangladesh is voiced indirectly through Asif Munier, whose father, Munier Chowdhury, was picked up on December 14 and killed. Asif Munier noted his mother’s anger against Mujib. “Asif recalled: ‘She said the Liberation War was a national movement. But why could he not have prepared the country better? Why did we have to wait for the blow on 25 March?’”. Tripathi does not raise the issue of who declared independence. However, he quotes Editor Mahfuz Anam’s reaction to hearing “the faint voice of Major Ziaur Rahman who declared, in the name of Bangabandhu Mujib, that Bangladesh was now a free country.” According to Anam, “That declaration was a source of moral support for us and showed great moral courage. It told us something was happening; that some effort was being made. We didn’t know where the declaration came from, but it was important that the declaration was made”. Tripathi does raise the issue of the numbers killed in 1971 but does not provide any conclusive figures. Were they 26,000 as the Hamoodur Rahman Commission noted, 3 million as Bangladesh—following Sheikh Mujib’s statement to David Frost—believes, 57,000 as mentioned by David Bergman, between 50,000 and 100,000 as claimed by Sarmila Bose? Tripathi explains the confusion between lakhs and millions and quotes

Peter Kann at length who concludes, on the basis of calculating how many soldiers would have been involved in the killing, that “The three million figure makes no sense”. Tripathi stresses that it is not numbers that matter so much as holding people accountable, as in knowing what happened. Again, he quotes Irene Khan at length on the prosecutions: “Those crimes have remained uninvestigated; it is extremely important that there is a commission of inquiry, if Bangladesh is to put a closure to this chapter of its history. Even if you will have only a limited number of prosecutions, you need a full record of what happened”. Salil Tripathi’s book attempts to look at historical events as objectively as possible, quoting written sources as well as oral ones. He also attempts to look at the legacy of events subsequent to 1971. He believes that there has been no closure either of the killing of Mujib or Zia. He notes how Mujib’s house on Dhanmondi Road 32 as well as the Circuit House of Chittagong where Zia was killed still have the blood that was shed there in August 1975 and May 1981 respectively. Is it time to wash the blood away? Tripathi recognises that healing wounds is not a simple matter, but Bangladesh must move beyond “simplistic notions of victims and perpetrators.” He suggests that “the resolution is through negotiation, and not through violence. It means respecting the dignity of the other. The identities of ‘perpetrators’ and ‘victims’ are fluid, just as one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter. When these identities are fluid, we must remember that not all Bengalis were victims, nor all Biharis perpetrators or collaborators, and not all Punjabis killers. Instead of living in the past, it is time to leave the past”. Tripathi’s comments are well worth remembering. Despite its editorial slips and a few factual errors, *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent* is a book well worth reading. In very readable English, it narrates the history of Bangladesh from the seeds sown in 1905, through 1971 and its “unquiet legacy”, to suggestions of future pitfalls to avoid.

Niaz Zaman is a retired academic, writer, translator and a founding member of The Reading Circle.

THE SHELF

If you like these books, read these

NUR-E JANNAT ALIF

Sometimes, unearthing your next favourite book is only a simple measure of connecting the dots between what you have loved previously and what you might enjoy next. Whether it is similar vibes, shared themes or a fresh perspective you are in the quest for, we have got you covered. Here are five book pairings to guide your upcoming reading adventure. If you like *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman, read *The Collected Regrets of Clover* by Mikki Bramer Fans of quirky, emotionally complex protagonists would adore this pairing. In *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* (HarperCollins GB, 2018), we follow Eleanor, a socially awkward and deeply isolated woman whose structured existence is—unfortunately, but fortunately—disrupted by serendipitous friendships that ultimately help her confront the trauma of her past. Similarly, in Mikki Bramer’s *The Collected Regrets of Clover* (Penguin, 2023), Clover Brooks, a death doula, guides others through their final moments while carefully negating emotional attachments in her own life. When a terminally ill woman tasks her with uncovering her greatest regret, Clover embarks on a transformative journey to reconnect with the living and

rediscover her potential for happiness. Both books offer a heart-warming and profound sense of human connections and healing. If you like *Normal People* by Sally Rooney, read *Talking at Night* by Claire Daverley Quiet explorations of love, class and the inevitable chaos of ‘right person, wrong time’ are the meandering themes of Sally Rooney’s *Normal People* (Crown, 2019). If you relished its nuanced portrayal of relationships, then *Talking at Night* (Pamela Dorman Books, 2023) by Claire Daverley would be a perfect follow-up. The story centres around Will and Rosie, two people who share an undeniable connection but are pulled apart by life’s complexities and their own, misguided, decisions. Spanning decades, this novel explores intimacy, regret and moments that define us, our consequences. Daverley’s poignant writing captures the intensity, frailty of love, making it a fitting comparison to Rooney’s masterpiece. And if Will-Rosie are not Marianne Connell in a nutshell, who is anyway? If you like *Pather Pachali* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, read *Ma Baba Bhai Bon* by Sunil Gangopadhyay Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay’s *Pather Pachali* (UPL, 2012) is the cornerstone of Bangla literature



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

that chronicles the lives of Apu and his family in rural Bengal. Its vivid descriptions of nature, intricate family dynamics, and deeply humane portrayal and resilience have made it a timeless classic. In a similar vein, Sunil Gangopadhyay’s *Ma Baba Bhai Bon* (Dey’s Publishing, 2001) is an evocative exploration of family dynamics in contemporary Bengal. This novel examines generational conflicts, shifting societal norms, and the emotional bonds that hold families together. If you appreciated

Pather Pachali’s detailed look at human relationships and socio-economic struggles, with a side of picturesque imagery, *Ma Baba Bhai Bon* is just for you. If you like *The Overstory* by Richard Powers, read *How High We Go in the Dark* by Sequoia Nagamatsu *The Overstory* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019) by Richard Powers captures the integrated alliance between humans and the natural world. Through the lives

of a diverse cast, this book explores themes of activism, ecological destruction and resilience. Sequoia Nagamatsu’s *How High We Go in the Dark* (William Morrow, 2022) offers a similarly intricate tapestry of interconnected stories but expands its scope to include science fiction. The novel begins with a thawing Siberian permafrost that releases an ancient virus, leading to a series of narratives spanning centuries. It is a haunting, beautiful exploration of human resilience,

environmental catastrophe, and the enduring ties that connect us across space and time. If you like *The Rabbit Hutch* by Tess Gunty, read *The Bee Sting* by Paul Murray A dark yet compassionate exploration of the lives of residents in a downtrodden Indiana apartment complex, Tess Gunty’s *The Rabbit Hutch* (Knopf, 2022) is deeply empathetic and multifaceted. There is a permeating sense of loneliness, community and longing carved in the story, making your heart sting in the process of reading. Paul Murray’s *The Bee Sting* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023) offers an aptly layered and emotionally resonant narrative. This Booker Prize-shortlisted novel follows the Barnes family, whose lives unravel in the wake of financial collapse. Combining biting humour and heart-wrenching tragedy, Murray crafts a textured odyssey of family, societal expectations and belonging. If you loved the vivid characterisation and wistful storytelling of *The Bee Sting*, then *The Rabbit Hutch* is a must-read! Nur-E Jannat Alif is a gender studies major and part-time writer who dreams of authoring a book someday. Find her at @literatureinsolitude on Instagram or send her your book/movie/television recommendations at nurejannatalif@gmail.com.

Women booters warn of walkout if Butler stays

SPORTS REPORTER

A group of senior women footballers has threatened to resign from the national team if Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) goes on to keep recently renewed Peter Butler as head coach.

"We won't train under Peter Butler in the camp until the BFF president takes necessary steps to solve the problem," read a three-page statement distributed among the media personnel before the likes of captain Sabina Khatun, Sanjida Akhter, and others spoke to the media at the BFF House yesterday.

The written statement mentioned the rift between them and Butler during last year's title defence of the SAFF Women's Championship in Nepal. There, the English coach "questioned the players' personal lives, misbehaved with them, and divided the team".

"As BFF did not renew our contracts after October,



it doesn't have any rights lawfully to take action against us. Despite that, if BFF considers punishing us and insists on keeping Peter Butler for the women's football team, we will together resign," the letter concluded.

Of the 30-member squad, 18 players boycotted the ongoing camp after refusing to train under Butler on Tuesday, even though they have been training under assistant coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu since January 15. They also skipped the gym session on Wednesday.

Responding to a query through a text message, BFF boss Tabitha Awal informed The Daily Star, "Yes, I have received a letter from the girls yesterday [Wednesday], and we are progressing towards a mutual solution very shortly."

CITY STAY AFLOAT but Champions League kings await

Champions League knockout phase

- Knockout phase play-offs: February 11-12 & February 18-19
- Round of 16: March 4-5 & March 11-12
- Quarterfinals: April 8-9 & April 15-16
- Semifinals: April 29-30 and & May 6-7
- Final: May 31



I don't know if they are happy to play against us, it is what it is. One [Real Madrid] is the king of the competition, the other [Bayern Munich] is the second or third king.

Manchester City coach PEP GUARDIOLA

PHOTO: REUTERS

Manchester City got out of the frying pan as they came from behind against Club Brugge to reach the Champions League knockout phase, where they were safely joined by PSG on Wednesday in the final round of league-phase matches.

On a dramatic night in which only two of the closing 18 games were dead rubbers, City got the win they needed to avoid an

embarrassing exit with a nervy 3-1 victory over Club Brugge but now could end up in fire as they will face either Real Madrid or Bayern Munich.

City fell behind at the stroke of halftime at the Etihad but Mateo Kovacic equalised shortly after the break before Joel Ordonez's own goal put City in front. Savinho's late strike added some gloss to the scoreline as Pep Guardiola narrowly avoided the earliest exit from the competition in his career.

Meanwhile, holders Real Madrid made sure they would be seeded for Friday's playoff draw by beating Stade Brest 3-0 away from home. It was a third straight win for Real after they started with three defeats in their first five outings, and that poor start is what led to them coming 11th in the standings.

PSV Eindhoven, Real Madrid and Sporting CP.

Playoff scenario ahead of Friday's draw:

- Confirmed in round of 16: Arsenal, Aston Villa, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Inter, Leverkusen, Lille, Liverpool
- Confirmed in knockout phase play-offs: Atalanta, Borussia Dortmund, Bayern Munich, Benfica, Brest, Celtic, Club Brugge, Feyenoord, Juventus, Man City, Milan, Monaco, Paris,

➤ Celtic or Man City will face Real or Bayern in the playoffs. The winners will meet either Atletico Madrid or Leverkusen in the Round of 16.

➤ AS Monaco or Brest will face PSG or Benfica in the

playoffs. The winners will meet either Liverpool or Barcelona.

➤ Sporting or Club Brugge will face Atalanta or Dortmund in the playoffs. The winners will meet either Lille or Aston Villa.

➤ Feyenoord or Juventus will face AC Milan or PSV in the playoffs. The winners will meet either Arsenal or Inter Milan.



We don't like to play against City, but if we have to, we'll do it like on other occasions. City have more chances to win the Champions League.

Real Madrid coach CARLO ANCELOTTI



PHOTO: REUTERS



Khulna Tigers opener Mohammad Naim celebrates his maiden century in the Bangladesh Premier League during his team's 46-run win against Rangpur Riders at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Naim's 62-ball 111 also allowed Khulna to remain in contention for a playoff spot in the tournament's 11th edition.

PHOTO: STAR

BPL NON-PAYMENT ISSUE

NSC forms fact-finding committee

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Sports Council (NSC) formed a three-member fact-finding committee to investigate the non-payment of players in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League T20 (BPL), an NSC release confirmed yesterday.

The NSC director will work as the convenor of the committee, the personal secretary of the NSC chairman its member, with the deputy director acting as the member secretary. They have been asked to submit their findings within the next seven working days.

"The NSC has taken into notice several reports in the media about the payment of players in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League. If players are not paid in due time then it could tarnish the reputation of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, Bangladesh Premier League and the country," the NSC release said.

The ongoing 11th edition of the BPL has been plagued by the non-payment of players. Most of the violations in that regard have been made by Durbar Rajshahi as their players boycotted a practice session in Chattogram, and all their foreign recruits refused to play a match in Dhaka after not being paid. Chittagong Kings have also withheld payments of national opener Parvez Hossain Emon.

THE GRIM SPECTRE OF BETTING

Fixing epidemic returns to haunt Bangladesh football

ANISUR RAHMAN

Match-fixing and compromised results were once regular phenomena in Bangladesh's top-flight football, often used as a means to secure league titles or avoid relegation. However, the rise of live betting, spot-fixing, and online gambling has transformed these illicit practices into a systemic crisis, infecting not only the premier division but also lower-tier leagues.

The cancerous betting issue had been primarily associated with cricket, but it infested the country's domestic football circuit in the post-Covid era, with the 2020-21 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) season marking a turning point. Arambagh KS became the first club to be found guilty of match manipulation, live betting, and fixing.

Former Arambagh KS general secretary Ezaz Mohammad Jahangir described the evolution of match-fixing: "It used to be limited to teams vying for the title or trying to avoid relegation. Now, live betting and spot-fixing are destroying the game, involving club officials, players, and even referees."

What began as an isolated case quickly spread, tainting the second-tier Bangladesh Championship League and the 2nd Division Football League in the 2021-22 season.



ILLUSTRATION: ANWAR SOHEL

Although the 2023-24 season remained largely free from controversy, the 2024-25 campaign has already seen three top-flight clubs – Chittagong Abahani, Fakirerpool Young Men's Club, and Dhaka Wanderers – facing allegations of betting and match-fixing, reigniting concerns.

Since the issue surfaced in 2021, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has punished 37 players, including three foreign recruits, from five clubs – Arambagh KS, Uttar Baridhara Club, Karwan Bazar Prograti Sangha, and BG Press and Recreation Club – for varying terms ranging from three

months to five years, with the former three clubs being slapped with a demotion of one to two tiers.

Moreover, from those aforementioned clubs, as many as 17 club officials – including club presidents, general secretaries, managers, assistant managers, coaches, physios, fitness trainers, and players' agents – were also handed bans between August 2021 and November 2022, ranging from six months to lifetime suspensions.

Yet, these measures have failed to curb the growing influence of gambling syndicates. A club official, requesting anonymity, revealed how

gambling syndicates manipulate clubs: "Travelling from club to club, they lure greedy officials with financial relief, convincing them that betting can solve their monetary problems."

Meanwhile, the BFF is about to inflict punishments on Azampur FC Uttara after launching an investigation against them on allegations of betting and fixing in late 2023.

New scandals rock the boat

This season, neither Chittagong Abahani's president nor its football committee chairman agreed to field a team, leaving former and current players to step in. This unusual transition has raised suspicions among club officials and former players, particularly as the port-city club now faces allegations of fixing and betting.

What drives individuals to engage in such a disgraceful act of match-fixing? Fortis FC head coach Masud Parvez Kaiser opined, "If an official truly loves football, he cannot be involved in betting and selling matches. They are doing it solely for financial gain because players cannot engage in such activities without the involvement of club officials."

Apparently, the roots of the crisis run deep. Club officials, coaches, and players have blamed financial instability, corruption, a lack of

oversight and transparency, the BFF's lack of proactiveness and, of course, betting circles for the rise of this particular epidemic.

A source within the BFF, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "When clubs fall into the trap of gamblers, the gamblers appoint their own officials in team management. They even buy one or two positions to ensure their own players are fielded, making match-fixing inevitable."

FIFA's warnings and BFF's passive role

Despite FIFA's repeated warnings about the risks of betting and match-fixing in financially struggling leagues in the post-Covid era, the BFF has largely remained reactive. Investigations into allegations have only taken place when FIFA has provided direct evidence. Even the recommendations of the BFF's own Fixed-Match Identification Committee (FIC) have often been ignored.

FIC chairman Humayun Khalid stresses the need for the BFF to educate club officials and players about the dangers of betting and fixing.

"They should also ensure players receive their salaries on time to reduce financial desperation," he told The Daily Star. He informed that the BFF had never provided feedback on the punishments or fines imposed by its

disciplinary committee.

BFF general secretary Emran Hossain acknowledged the crisis but pointed to organisational constraints. "We couldn't arrange awareness programmes this season due to the BFF elections, but we are investigating the allegations seriously. If anyone is found guilty, we will take strict action."

Beyond bans: A call for criminal prosecution

While suspensions and fines have been the primary punishments so far, former Arambagh general secretary Jahangir argues that such measures are ineffective.

"If an official earns one crore from betting, a lifetime ban means nothing. Instead, these cases should be dealt with under the country's existing [criminal] laws – only then will people fear the consequences," he suggested.

Historically, clubs embroiled in fixing scandals have been those struggling financially, often assisted by lesser-known organisers. However, football in Bangladesh now stands at a crossroads.

Without urgent intervention – stricter financial oversight, proactive governance, and legal repercussions – the country's footballing future may be dictated not by skill on the pitch, but by the highest bidder in the shadows.



At least eight BPL matches under scanner

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) has already been marred with a plethora of controversies, the latest of which include the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) identifying eight matches for suspicion of spot-fixing and match-fixing based on anonymous tips and media reports.

The Daily Star also saw a few documents in which the ACU is seen monitoring 10 different players and four franchises.

Out of the 10 cricketers, six have represented the Bangladesh national team, two are uncapped Bangladeshi players, and two are foreign cricketers. Among the franchises, Durbar Rajshahi and Dhaka Capitals have the most integrity flags, with each having 12, while Sylhet Strikers and Chittagong Kings have six and two respectively.

Meanwhile, according to documents seen by The Daily Star, the matches in question are: Fortune Barishal vs Rajshahi (January 6), Rangpur Riders vs Dhaka (January 7), Dhaka vs Sylhet (January 10), Rajshahi vs Dhaka (January 12), Chittagong vs Sylhet (January 13), Barishal vs Khulna Tigers (January 22), Chittagong vs Sylhet (January 22) and Rajshahi vs Rangpur (January 23).



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'Economy my top priority'

Yunus tells FT in podcast

STAR REPORT

Getting the wheel of the economy rolling again is the top priority of Prof Muhammad Yunus, head of the interim government that took charge nearly six months ago.

The chief adviser discussed his sudden rise to the top of the government after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime, the student-led uprising that toppled her, and the potential of Bangladesh following the political changeover, besides his strategy, in an interview with the Financial Times in Davos on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum last week.

In the interview published as a podcast yesterday, the Nobel Peace Prize winner was asked what was his top priority now.

"Top priority, number one: get the economy moving again. Because the whole economy is devastated," he said.

"The entire country was kind of a subject of a highway robbery by the people who are running it. They stole everything. Banks are empty because they took the money and taking over the bank is easy on gunpoint," he said, referring to the activities of the previous regime.

In the changed political scenario, one of the possibilities is the students themselves will form a party, according to him.

Yunus said many believe the students have no chance of getting even one seat in parliament because no one knows them, but that is not what the chief adviser thinks.

"I said the whole nation knows them. Let them take a chance, whatever they want to do. So they will do it," he said.

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PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR

A feather star clings to a coral in the Bay of Bengal at Saint Martin's Island. Also known as crinoids, these fascinating marine creatures are found in oceans worldwide, primarily in tropical and subtropical regions. They inhabit various environments, from shallow coral reefs to deep-sea habitats. With their distinctive, feathery appearance and branched arms, feather stars capture food particles from the water. Despite lacking hearts, eyes, and brains, they can "walk" along the seafloor using their flexible arms, and are capable of regenerating lost limbs. Sensory organs located along their arms help them detect environmental changes, allowing them to avoid danger or locate food. Their bodies display pentameral symmetry, meaning they are structured in fives or multiples of five. Feather stars play a crucial role in maintaining aquatic ecosystem health. As filter feeders, they help keep water clear and of high quality. However, these unique creatures face threats from habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change.

'No decision yet on us joining political party'

Says Nahid about the July uprising leaders in govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Information Adviser Nahid Islam said yesterday that there has been no decision about student representatives resigning from the interim government to join a political party.

"No such decision [to resign] has been made yet. If and when it happens, we will announce it ourselves. If we decide to join a political party or quit the government, we will announce it officially."

Nahid, also the posts and telecommunications adviser, made the remarks while speaking to journalists at the ministry.

"No such decision has been made from my end or Asif's [Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan] end. We're carrying out our roles within the government."

A Bangla daily newspaper reported yesterday that advisers Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud were set to resign from the cabinet and join a political party likely to be floated by the July uprising

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Trump admin to cancel US visas of student protesters

Unveils plan to detain 30,000 migrants

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday to "combat antisemitism" and pledged to deport non-citizen college students and others who took part in pro-Palestinian protests.

A fact sheet on the order promises "immediate action" by the Justice Department to prosecute "terroristic threats, arson, vandalism and violence against American Jews" and marshal all federal resources to combat what it called "the explosion of antisemitism on our campuses and streets" since the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Palestinian group Hamas.

"To all the resident aliens who joined in the pro-jihadist protests, we put you on notice: come 2025, we will find you, and we will deport you," Trump said in the fact sheet.

"I will also quickly cancel the student visas of all Hamas sympathizers on college campuses, which have been infested with radicalism like never before," the president said, echoing a 2024 campaign promise. Rights groups and legal scholars said the new measure would violate constitutional free speech rights and would likely draw legal challenges.

Meanwhile, Trump said on Wednesday he will order the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security to prepare a migrant detention facility at Guantanamo Bay for as many as 30,000 migrants. The US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, already houses a migrant facility - separate from the high-security US prison for foreign terrorism suspects - that has been used on occasion for decades, including to hold Haitians and Cubans picked up at sea.



EC for change in provision for delimitation of constituencies

Says Election Commissioner Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is taking into account the number of voters, along with the population and the area, while redrawing constituencies.

According to the law on delimitation of constituencies, boundaries of Jatiya Sangsad constituencies should be redrawn based on the distribution of population as given in the latest census report, keeping in mind administrative units and administrative convenience.

"The existing law is causing problems in two aspects ... The EC will prepare a proposal to amend it," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah told reporters after a meeting of election commissioners at the EC office.

He said that primarily constituencies are redrawn based on population, geographical area, but they

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Shab-e-Barat on Feb 14

UNB, Dhaka

Holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed on the night of February 14 as the Shaban moon was not sighted in the country yesterday.

The month of Shaban will begin on February 1.

The decision was made at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office in the evening.

Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain presided over the meeting.

UGC considers 'July 36 univ' for seven govt colleges

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The University Grants Commission is considering a new public university named "July 36 University" for the seven government colleges that were under Dhaka University.

UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz, along with two other commission members, met Education Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday to discuss potential names for the university.

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JULY UPRISING KILLINGS

Sluggish probe, failure to arrest irk the ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over the slow progress of investigation in cases filed for the killings in the July uprising.

The tribunal was also dissatisfied at the prosecution team and investigators for their failure to arrest those accused of crimes against humanity.

Furthermore, the

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Quotas in edn institutions, govt jobs to be reviewed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to review the quota system for entry into government jobs and admission to educational institutions.

The decision was made during a meeting of the advisory council at the Chief Advisor's Office yesterday.

During the meeting, presided over by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, the advisory council made three key decisions

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'Muggers' hack young man's hand off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suspected muggers chopped off the hand of a young man reportedly after robbing his mobile phone in the capital's Adabor yesterday in broad daylight.

The incident occurred in the Balur Maath area at around 2:45pm.

The victim, Sumon Sheikh, 26, a resident of Darussalam Ansar Camp area, is a mason by profession.

He is undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical

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All 67 dead as US jet, chopper collide mid-air

Trump blames diversity hirings for crash

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump confirmed the deaths of all those aboard an airliner and a military helicopter which collided mid-air over Washington's Potomac river yesterday.

Trump launched an extraordinary political attack blaming diversity hires for the collision and mentioned pilot error on the helicopter in the nighttime crash.

As Trump spoke in the White House, police divers searched for more bodies in the water.

Wreckage of the Bombardier jet operated by an American Airlines subsidiary protruded from the river surface, surrounded by emergency vessels and diving teams. It had been carrying 64 people.

The army Blackhawk helicopter, which had three soldiers aboard, was also in the river.

"We are now at a point where we are switching from a rescue operation to a recovery operation," Washington Fire Chief John Donnelly said. Twenty eight bodies had already been found.

The collision -- the first major crash in the United States since 2009 when 49 people were killed near Buffalo, New York -- occurred late evening on Wednesday as the airliner came into land at Reagan National Airport after a routine flight from Wichita, Kansas.



Emergency personnel work at the site of the crash after a Black Hawk helicopter and an American Eagle flight 5342, which was approaching Reagan Washington National Airport, collided and crashed in the Potomac River outside Washington DC, US, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS