



LANDMARKS ON BANKNOTES

Canvases of history, heritage



PHOTOS: JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

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Imagine you're flipping through a book on Dhaka's history. As you turn the pages, you come across a chapter on the Tara Mosque. Something about it feels familiar. You're right -- you've seen it before.

You reach into your pocket, pull out a Tk 100 note, and there it is, right on the back. Unknowingly, all this time, while searching for Dhaka's history in books, you didn't realise you had been carrying parts of Dhaka with you all along -- right in your very pockets.

Holding a banknote in your hand makes you think -- something that has travelled across places, and quietly carried the story of the capital. You would be even more surprised to learn that it's not just the Tk 100 note and the Tara Mosque -- many other banknotes from Bangladesh depict Dhaka's magnificent mosques and historical landmarks.

For years, our capital has been a favourite theme on Bangladeshi banknotes.

Syed Bin Salam, a passionate banknote collector and owner of Salam Stamp Centre, believes banknotes are more than just currency.

"Iconic landmarks of cities, like Egypt's pyramids or Cambodia's temples, are often featured on banknotes, carrying the stories of culture, history, and identity," Salam shares.

Highlighting Dhaka on banknotes, Salam adds, "We have several banknotes that depict Dhaka, such as the country's only polymer note -- the Tk 10 note -- which portrays the National Parliament Building and Baitul Mukarram Mosque on the back."

Salam hopes for more polymer notes in the future, with a greater emphasis on other Dhaka landmarks.

"It would be great to see iconic sites like Hatirjheel, Shapla Chhatar, or other archaeological and historical places

featured," he shares.

Speaking of Tk 10 note, let's take a journey back to Dhaka of the past. The three-domed Lalbagh Fort Mosque, also known as the Quilla Mosque also made its way onto the Tk 10 note issued in 1997-98. Even before that, the Tk 100 notes from 1977, 1981, and 1983 2000 showcased the ruins of Lalbagh Fort, built during the Mughal era.

Another Mughal-era landmark, the Sat Gambuj Mosque (Seven Domed Mosque), has also had its time in the spotlight, featured on the Tk 50 note in 1979 and later on the Tk 500 note between 2000 and 2010.

On our list of Dhaka's mosques, last but not least, the national mosque, Baitul Mukarram, has also been featured on different versions of the Tk 10 note since 2000. It's no surprise that Dhaka is known as the "City of Mosques", with stunning mosques around every corner.

Meanwhile, the High Court Building

has also appeared in various designs of Tk 500 notes between 1976 and 2010. And no mention of Dhaka's historic sites would be complete without the iconic Curzon Hall, featured on the very first Tk 1,000 note ever issued in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, some banknotes aren't meant for exchange -- they're commemorative notes, issued to honour significant people, events, or milestones. For example, there's a Tk 100 commemorative note, released to celebrate 100 years of the Bangladesh National Museum, located at Shahbagh.

Banknotes are like windows into a country's culture and history. Dhaka's rich history, architectural beauty, and culture come to life through these designs, reminding us of the importance of preserving these iconic landmarks for generations to come.

USAID to be shut down in cost-cutting drive

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"It's beyond repair," Musk said, adding that President Trump agrees it should be shut down.

Meanwhile, most USAID staffers were told not to report to the agency's headquarters in Washington yesterday and to work remotely, according to a copy of an email to personnel reviewed by Reuters. "Further guidance will be forthcoming," the note said.

On Sunday, Reuters reported the Trump administration removed two top security officials at USAID during the weekend after they tried to stop DOGE representatives from gaining access to restricted parts of the building, three sources said.

Trump later on Sunday told reporters that USAID has "been run by a bunch of radical lunatics," adding: "We're getting them out, and then we'll make a decision."

USAID is the world's largest single donor. In fiscal year 2023, the US disbursed \$72 billion of assistance worldwide on everything from women's health in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/AIDS treatments, energy security and anti-corruption work. It provided 42 percent of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations in 2024.

The website of USAID appeared to still be offline on Saturday and some users could not access it on Sunday. USAID has a staff of more than 10,000 people.

11-yr-old girl goes missing in the capital's Mohammadpur

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Recently, her mother's chemotherapy began at the National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital, and four days ago, she along with Suba moved to her sister-in-law's home near Krishi Market in Mohammadpur.

Suba left the home around 6:00pm on Sunday with her younger cousin. While crossing the road near Prince Bazar in the Krishi Market area, her cousin moved ahead after passing a vehicle and reached home, but Suba did not, Maidul said.

The family immediately searched the surrounding area but could not find her. Later, they filed a general diary with Mohammadpur Police Station.

Hafizur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of the station, said they have engaged multiple teams to trace the girl.

Zila parishad's abolition

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25 other cadres have since been demanding similar privileges.

According to the sources, most of the 11 members of the reform commission agree that the car loans are unacceptable. However, they will decide today whether to propose ending it.

The commission may also recommend abolishing supernumerary promotions, which means an officer gets promoted even if there is no vacant post for such an officer.

The reform commission headed by former secretary Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury will hand over the recommendations to the chief adviser on February 5.

The proposal may include forming two separate commissions for recruitment and promotion in the education and health cadres, said three officials with knowledge of the matter.

Since 2007, the judiciary has had the Judicial Service Commission which oversees hiring and promotions of lower court judges.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a commission member said, "This commission formed in the wake of a mass uprising is not acting in favour of any particular group. Our primary focus is to ensure that public interests are protected so that future generations cannot call us biased."

Families search for bodies

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"To our knowledge, there were 22 Bangladeshi nationals on board and some other nationalities," said a spokesperson of the NGO to this newspaper.

There were two bodies on board and the bodies are currently in Malta, the spokesperson added.

The migrants, all coming from impoverished families had each given between Tk 14 lakh to Tk 16 lakh to make the perilous journey across the Central Mediterranean route and land in Europe.

"My nephew Titu Hawlader and an uncle of his, Bashar Akand, were given 'game' on the same day and were on the boat that capsized. We identified Bashar's body from a photo found on social media," said Saim Ahmed.

"Game" is the colloquial term for smuggling migrants from Libya into Europe.

Bashar left behind a one-year-old child and had been working in Libya for a year before he decided to try and make it to Europe. Titu was about 19 years old. They were both from Madaripur's Rajoir.

She added that his family spent Tk 17 lakh to send him to Libya. "The broker had told us that he would be taken aboard a fishing trawler. If we had known that he would be put aboard a rubber boat we would have never sent him," said Afsana.

"Titu came from an extremely poor family. He dropped out of school after class 5. His father has disabilities. He just wanted to provide for his family," said Saim, himself a migrant worker who made it to Italy using the same route.

"He took the risk for the same reason as me. I had applied for a work permit twice and spent up to Tk 3 lakh, but the agent took all my money and never managed the permit for me. I was penniless and needed to make one last

effort to go abroad," he said.

Sadia too identified her brother-in-law Abul Kalam from the photos of the dead.

"We last spoke to him on January 24. He called in the evening and said that he would be given 'game'. He said that his cellphone and passport would be taken away from him by the traffickers," said Sadia. "After seeing the photo, my sister fell sick and had to be hospitalised."

Kalam was a junior officer at an insurance company. He had left for Libya two and half years ago.

"We spent Tk 14 lakh for the journey. Of this, Tk 11 lakh was borrowed. I do not know how to pay this money back now," she said.

A minor, Arafsan Ashik is likely among those who died. His aunt Afsana spoke to this newspaper and said that they confirmed his identity from a photo being circulated.

"He was a first year HSC student. His father is a woodworker and he was the eldest. Ashik's younger brother is only one and half years old," she said. Ashik is from Tekerhat in Madaripur.

She added that his family spent Tk 17 lakh to send him to Libya. "The broker had told us that he would be taken aboard a fishing trawler. If we had known that he would be put aboard a rubber boat we would have never sent him," said Afsana.

Tanshi is still looking for her brother Sujon Farazi who had left the same night as the boat that capsized. The family from Madaripur's Rajoir have heard a rumour that Sujon may have survived and might be one of the two in the hospital, and are holding on to that hope.

'Stay alert as if we're in a war-like situation'

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intervention in crisis situations, said the statement.

"We have to set up a command centre or a command headquarters, which will coordinate among all the police and security agencies," he told the senior officials.

He said the new command structure would "skillfully and intensively" communicate among all agencies, police stations across the country, and all law enforcement authorities.

Yunus ordered the agency chiefs to stay vigilant against any attempt to disrupt the law and order situation.

He alleged that cronies of the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina were spending vast sums of money to incite unrest and spread misinformation. "We must stay vigilant. Everyone must fight against this disinformation menace."

He further directed the agencies to ensure the protection of human rights and take special measures to prevent attacks on religious and ethnic minorities.

"Our global image will be badly damaged if we can't protect our religious minorities. We will also have to be very transparent in this regard."

The chief adviser also ordered police

to launch a crackdown on extortionists in an effort to keep the prices of food and other essentials stable during Ramadan.

At the meeting, Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam said police have formed 10 teams to monitor the murder cases filed over the atrocities and killings during July and August last year, read the statement.

Yunus directed police to fast-track these cases and make sure that no innocent people are harassed because of these cases.

He also asked police to introduce an online system for filing cases, according to the CA's press wing statement.

Under the existing system, a first information report can only be filed in person with a police station. The procedure is cumbersome and leaves opportunities for abuse.

"Police should introduce a dedicated emergency number, like 999, to enable complainants to file an FIR from any part of the country," he said, instructing the IGP to implement the service as soon as possible.

The chief adviser also ordered the establishment of a call centre to assist those struggling to file cases online. "People who face difficulties in filing

cases online should be able to receive help from the call centre.

According to the statement, IGP Baharul said Bangladesh has requested Interpol to issue a red notice on Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India during the mass uprising. "We've made a request. We hope we will get some response soon."

DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali said the incidents of mugging and snatching in the capital have declined after police stepped up security. "Our efforts will continue."

Later in the evening, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam said they were not 100 percent satisfied with law and order, but efforts were underway to improve it.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting on security measures on the occasion of Language Martyr's Day and International Mother Language Day at the Secretariat.

The law and order situation has improved significantly, he said while responding to a reporter's query.

The home adviser said, "There is still room for further improvement. We are not 100 percent satisfied. That is why we are constantly working to improve the law and order situation."

People fume over Titumir protests

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education ministry officials.

The officials sought seven days from the protesters to look into their demands, including the opening of law and journalism departments at the institution.

Earlier in the day, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said the students were making people's lives miserable and the people would eventually remove them from the railway line.

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam urged the students to be patient, saying the government was working on a sustainable solution to the problem.

The blockade of the road linking Mohakhal and Gulshan I also continued for around three hours, causing immense suffering to commuters, including the elderly, patients, women and children.

Around 50 students of Titumir College resumed the road blockade

in front of the institution at 12:20pm. They left the place, marching to the level crossing at 3:30pm, after some 20 others joined them. Their number grew by around 30 in the evening.

Nazrul Islam, a passenger of the Rajshahi bound Silk City train, said he had to wait for the train for over an hour at Kamalapur Railway Station.

"We waited for another hour after reaching Mohakhal. Then the train returned to Tejgaon Railway Station."

He said the passengers contacted the stationmaster for a refund but he could not answer whether they would get any.

"We don't know when we will reach our destination. Students are doing whatever they wish. Where will we go?" asked a frustrated Nazrul, as the situation was becoming more and more uncertain.

As buses and other vehicles used the Mohakhal flyover to bypass the level crossing, many passengers carrying luggage had to walk past the place.

Ahsan Ullah, a Tejkunipara resident,

had two bags while his wife had their 10-year-old son in her arms.

"We need to take a bus from Mohakhal to our hometown in Tangail, but we had to leave the rickshaw before reaching the level crossing," he said.

"Students should place their demands to the government through proper channels. Why are they causing suffering to us?" he asked.

Many patients had to walk home or to the hospitals in the area after their vehicles were stopped near Titumir College during the road blockade. The protesters allowed only ambulances to pass.

A rickshaw puller got engaged in an altercation with the students after they refused to let his empty three-wheeler go. He said his garage was nearby and he needed to rush as his time was over.

Rashida Begum, a patient with her left arm bandaged, was returning home with her husband Rajab Ali after seeing the doctor.

Barishal bully Chittagong

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29 before Towhid Hridoy (unbeaten 82 off 56) and Dawid Malan (34 off 22) took complete control of the match with a 95-run third wicket stand off 52 deliveries, nailing the chase in 17.2 overs.

Earlier in the day, Khulna Tigers knocked out Rangpur Riders to set up a tie with Chittagong in the second qualifier on February 5.

It was all about Khulna's local talent against a star-studded Rangpur, who brought in Andre Russell, Tim David,

and James Vince just in time for the crucial eliminator.

However, Khulna Tigers' local trio -- Nasum Ahmed, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, and Mohammad Naim -- outshone Rangpur's big foreign names in an emphatic nine-wicket victory, sealing their spot in the second qualifier.

Nasum plucked three in Rangpur's catastrophic batting collapse -- removing Vince by