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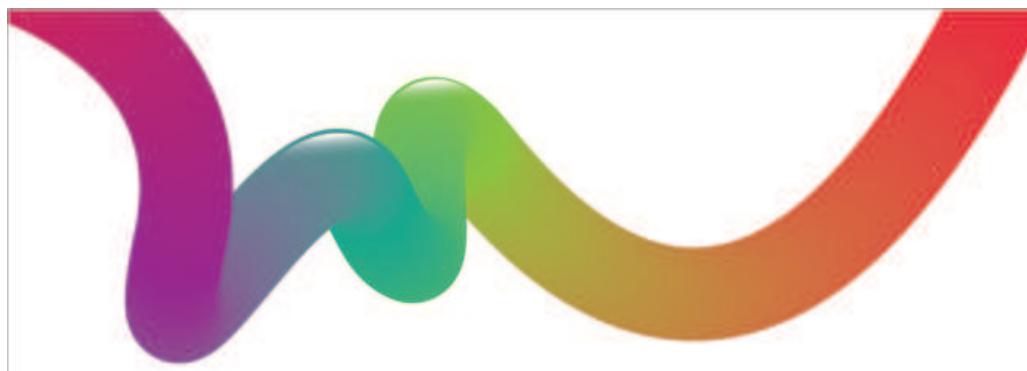
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INJURED UPRISE VICTIMS Compensation caught up in red tape

Family members continue to crowd
July Smrity Foundation office for funds

MASHFIQ MIZAN

Crippled and blinded, many July uprising protesters continue to suffer. The one-time assistance – Tk 5 lakh for martyrs' families and Tk 1 lakh for the wounded – that was promised to them soon after the incumbent took over remains entangled in an utterly bureaucratic procedure.

The series of approvals, seals and documents begins with obtaining a seal from a BCS doctor or hospital director on the application form. This form has to be accompanied by hospital tickets or discharge certificates bearing the seal of an MBBS doctor, ensuring the documents prove treatment was provided during the uprising period. Payment requires a bKash number linked with the patient's national identity card. In case that is unavailable, parents' bKash number will suffice, but needs to be verified by a doctor. The application must also have photographs of injuries or wounded areas.

Once all these documents are ready, they have to be entered into the Management Information System (MIS) of a government hospital, upazila health complex or the Directorate General of Health Services. Thereafter, the civil surgeon and the deputy commissioner's (DC) office will need to verify the patient's permanent address. These documents then have to be submitted to the July Shaheed Smrity Foundation in person or via post, email or WhatsApp.

Families often make multiple trips across cities, burning through their savings. For those living outside Dhaka, the hurdles are even greater. Many reported having to visit the foundation seven to eight times, rejected each time for missing documents or unavailability of officials.

Often, the documents remain unattended in the civil surgeon or DC office, adding to their sufferings.

Besides, the hotline number of the foundation remains unreachable most of the time.

FOUNDATION OFFICE

This correspondent first visited the July foundation on a Saturday, January 25 only to find out that the office remains closed on weekends. So did 11 victims or family members who came for aid or information. They left empty-handed.

The next day at 3:00pm, there were dozens of people, including the injured and families of martyrs, waiting for aid.

In one corner was Aradhan Begum. She was sitting in a chair and crying. Aradhan's son Omar Faruk was shot in Paltan on July 28. It was her fourth visit.

Omar has already undergone one surgery and another is due in a few days. Aradhan's husband had passed away in 1997, leaving Omar as the sole bread winner.

This correspondent reviewed the verification status of Omar's documents, along with those of 11 others. All of them remain stuck at the civil surgeon's office in Noakhali.

Aradhan explains her quandary. Having come to Dhaka over 20 years

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

“We've already incurred huge debts for my son's treatment. Still, we haven't received any money. If needed, I'll beg on the streets of Dhaka for my Omar.”

Aradhan Begum, mother of injured victim Omar Faruk

Over two years after its construction, the bridge on Ati canal in Dhaka's Keraniganj remains useless due to the lack of approach roads. Locals use a nearby bamboo bridge to cross the canal. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BFIU finds NI Mazumder's money laundering links

The Nassa Group chief took Tk 16,000cr out of financial system; one-third of the amount withdrawn thru shell firms

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Nazrul Islam Mazumder, chairman of Nassa Group and a close associate of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has been accused of trade-based money laundering amounting to Tk 16,000 crore by the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit.

Of the sum, Tk 4,717 crore was taken out from Exim Bank, where Mazumder was the chairman from 2007 to August 29 last year, through 18 shell companies, according to the BFIU, the government agency responsible for investigating money laundering, suspicious transactions and cash transaction reports.

The remaining Tk 11,283 crore was taken from 20 other banks and a non-bank financial institution.

The alleged money laundering activities and irregularities were conducted through import and export transactions involving Exim Bank, National Bank and state-owned Janata Bank using companies linked to Mazumder.

The BFIU report highlights trade irregularities linked to Madina Dates & Nuts, a company owned by Mojammil Hussain,

BFIU says Mazumder took Tk 4,717cr from EXIM, Tk 11,283cr from other banks, NBFI

Allegations of money laundering, irregularities via EXIM, NBL, Janata

E&Y conducting forensic audit into EXIM

Nassa Group denies any wrongdoing

Mazumder's son-in-law.

The company, registered in July 2020, opened 253 import letters of credit (LCs) amounting to \$46.3 million from September 2020 to November 2024. Of the LCs, 23, worth \$5.63 million, were cancelled.

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Battery-run rickshaws ply Mirpur Road, ignoring a sign that says such vehicles are not allowed there. The photo was taken near Dhaka City College around 12 noon yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Consensus commission's first meeting in mid-Feb
6 commissions may submit full reports on February 8

BSS, Dhaka

The National Consensus Commission headed by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will start discussions with the political parties and stakeholders of the 24 uprising in mid-February.

The date of the first meeting would be fixed in consultation with the political parties and stakeholders of the uprising. Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said yesterday after Prof Yunus held a meeting with the chiefs of six reform commissions.

The six commissions are expected to submit their full reports on February 8
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Rohingyas hit by US fund cuts Health services, waste management at Cox's Bazar refugee camps hindered

PORIMOL PALMA

Trump administration's executive order to suspend US-funded projects and funding globally has started hitting the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, which is sheltering more than a million Rohingya and taking the brunt in its fullest form for decades.

Though the emergency food delivery by the World Food Programme, supported by the US, continues in the Rohingya camps in Ukhia and Teknaf, the health sector, waste management and site management are already being impacted.

At least five hospitals run with US funding have suspended operations in the Rohingya camps, Mizanur Rahman, the Refugee, Relief and Repatriation commissioner, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, waste management and landfill activities, managed by a large Bangladeshi non-governmental organisation, have also been suspended a day after the USAID letter was issued on January 24.

The USAID memo asked the implementing partners to stop work right away, saying that "no further assistance shall be disbursed in a manner that is not fully aligned with the foreign policy of the President of the United States".

The US also withdrew from the World Health

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Size of Dhaka, Ctg divisions should be reduced

Admin Reform Commission to submit report today

BAHARAM KHAN

The Public Administrative Reform Commission is set to propose declaring Cumilla and Faridpur as divisions and reducing the sizes of Dhaka and Chattogram divisions.

The commission also recommends adding Dhaka division's Tangail and Kishoreganj districts to Mymensingh Division.

The country currently has eight operational divisions: Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal, Rangpur, Sylhet, and Mymensingh.

The commission will hand the recommendations to Chief Advisor Professor Muhammad Yunus today. The commission held its final meeting at the secretariat yesterday.

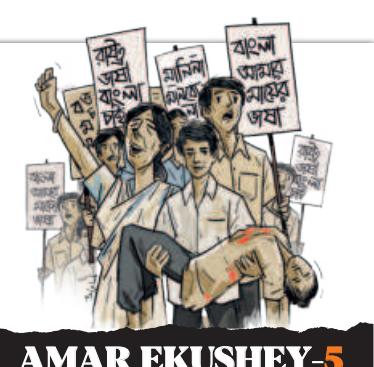
The government formed the reform commission led by former secretary Abdul Muid Chowdhury in October last year.

The proposed Cumilla division will include Cumilla, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Lakshmpur, Feni, and Noakhali – all currently in the Chattogram Division.

If implemented, Chattogram Division will be left with Chattogram, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Rangamati, and Cox's Bazar.

The proposed Faridpur Division would consist of Faridpur, Rajbari, Madaripur, Sharaiptupur, and Gopalganj, all of which are currently in Dhaka Division.

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AMAR EKUSHEY 5

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the 1952 Language Movement. Drawing on research based on various published books, this 21-part series tells the story of the historic struggle for our mother tongue.

Language Movement in Tangail

AHMAD ISTIAK

The upsurge of the Language Movement reached Tangail in 1948, with the people and students launching a protest on February 23 over the Pakistan government's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

BEGUM PARA

Yunus seeks Canada's help to recover stolen money

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser M u h a m m a d Yunus yesterday requested Canada's assistance in recovering funds that were smuggled out of Bangladesh and invested in the North American country, specifically in the upscale Bangladeshi neighbourhood "Begum Para" of Toronto.

"They stole money from our people and bought assets in Begum Para. We need your help to recover the assets. It is the money of our people," Yunus told Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ajit Singh during a meeting at the State Guest House Jamuna.

The chief adviser said hundreds of billions of dollars were stolen from Bangladesh by oligarchs, cronies, and politicians connected to Sheikh Hasina's dictatorship, and part of it was laundered to Canada, including in buying assets in Toronto's infamous



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Size of Dhaka, Ctg divisions should be reduced

FROM PAGE 1

If Tangail and Kishoreganj are added to Mymensingh Division, Dhaka Division will be left Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Manikganj, and Narsingdi.

The commission recommends that Dhaka lose seven of its districts and Chattogram lose six districts.

The Awami League government, the process to form Cumilla and Faridpur divisions made progress but the administration backtracked on it before the 2024 election.

The reform commission is reportedly set to submit over 100 proposals that may include expansion of the mobile court's jurisdiction and abolition of the posts of senior secretaries.

The deputy commissioners should be of the rank of joint secretaries, not deputy secretaries; VAT, tax, and customs should be handled by three independent entities under the National Board of Revenue; political leaders should be appointed personal secretaries to ministers; vehicles should be given to principals of government colleges.

Consensus commission

FROM PAGE 1

8, after which their recommendations will be sent to the political parties for their consideration, according to Asif Nazrul.

He said the first meeting would be presided over by Prof Yunus at the Foreign Service Academy. The government hopes to continue the talks in Ramadan if possible, he added.

BFIU finds NI Mazumder's money laundering links

FROM PAGE 1

One example cited by the BFIU involves an import of 32,000 kg of oranges from South African firm Zest Fruit for \$7.50 per kg (Tk 775).

However, the international market price at the time was Tk 100 Tk 200 per kg, while the local prices ranged between Tk 250 and Tk 400 per kg, indicating over-invoicing and potential money laundering, the report said.

Similarly, another company, Flamingo Enterprise, received a trade licence in April 2023. Official records show it was owned by Md Mosharraf Hossain, but its business address matched Nassa Group's headquarters.

Between July 2023 and November 2024, the company opened 59 import LCs worth \$68.4 million.

A review of the transactions found that 13 import LCs, valued at \$3.50 million, were issued in favour of Abdur Rashid General Trading, a Dubai-based company owned by Bangladeshi citizen Mohammad Abdur Rashid.

One questionable transaction involved the import of 650,000 kg of dates for \$0.70 per kg (Tk 77), significantly below the international market rate of Tk 200 per kg.

This raises concerns of under-invoicing, potentially aimed at shifting funds abroad, the BFIU report said.

The BFIU found irregularities in export trade linked to Firoza Garments, a company owned by Mazumder.

Between 2012 and 2022, the company received export LC orders worth \$1.2 billion. While export bills amounting



Trucks carrying aid move in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Israel said it was sending a team to negotiate the next phase of a fragile ceasefire with Hamas, signalling possible progress ahead of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with US President Donald Trump.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Compensation caught up in red tape

FROM PAGE 1

ago, she has no connections in Noakhali. "But they're telling me to go there and deal with government officials."

She says she is not well educated. "My son is all I had. It's very hard for me to handle this alone. How will I go to Noakhali now? We've already incurred huge debts for my son's treatment. Still, we haven't received any money. If needed, I'll beg on the streets of Dhaka for my Omar."

She arrived at the office at 12:00pm and left in tears at 5:00pm, without any progress.

Mohammad Belal, who was shot in Mohammadpur, had his leg amputated. But now he needs another procedure to take care of the infection that developed after the first surgery.

Belal's father was anxiously pacing about, speaking to officials to understand why his son's compensation was still held up.

Initially, he was told the civil surgeon had not verified the files. But when student activists raised the issue on Facebook and it went viral, they found out the files had been verified at the district after all. Apparently, the final approval was pending at the foundation.

Belal's father expressed his urgency for the verification to be expedited, as his son desperately needed the funds. The foundation, however, said they required a few more days.

The 60 year old man had arrived at 10:00am and was still waiting for good news when this correspondent left at 5:45pm.

Another individual, shot with pellets, came from Bahaddarhaat in Chattogram. He had applied to the civil surgeon months ago but was recently informed that he could not receive funds as he had not provided photographs of his injuries.

"I don't have a mobile phone. I didn't have any pictures. Many pellets are still inside my body, and my medical documents confirm this. What's the need for pictures?"

He continued, "I came to the foundation on Saturday without knowing it would be closed." The young man had spent the night under the open sky at Kamalapur Railway Station. "I desperately need money for treatment," he managed to say breaking down into tears.

Many others echoed similar frustrations.

A staff member of the foundation, wishing anonymity, explained that the verification process is stringent to prevent fraud. He said delays primarily occur at the civil surgeon or DC office.

He also said the foundation has only 35 employees, which is insufficient to manage such an operation.

STACKED AGAINST VICTIMS

Apart from the 20 people interviewed on the July foundation premises, this correspondent talked to about 50 victims between January 7 and January 25.

A few have already managed to secure the assistance, but said it came "at the cost of their dignity and time."

Many are still waiting, their applications stuck in the proverbial red tape.

For example, on January 22, journalist Torik Hasan Bappy shared a story on Facebook about Afan Sabik. A student of Jagannath University, Afan was wounded in the head and was still awaiting a donation.

The very next day, after the post went viral and caught the attention of the July foundation, they informed him that the spelling of his father's name was incorrect on one of the documents. As a result, he would have to restart the entire process from scratch.

The mistake was made by officials responsible for enlisting names of the injured at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. But now Sabik has to suffer. "First I went to DMCH to enlist my name. The officials gave me the runaround," said Sabik, explaining that he had practically gone round the entire hospital. "It is hard for me to describe."

"Then they sent me to Jashore to get a signature of the civil surgeon. The civil surgeon sat on my file for days. Then on one morning, a student coordinator of Jashore and the civil surgeon finally paid attention [due to the FB post]," Sabik added. "And now, I have to repeat the entire process because they made an error!"

Then there is the case of martyr Abdur Rahman.

His son, Faisal, had to make at least eight trips from Narayanganj to the foundation in Dhaka's Shahbagh to secure a cheque.

On his eighth visit, Faisal was told that

a cheque had indeed been issued. But it was to Abdur Rahman's 110-year old mother, who lives in Chapainawabganj. What is more, the foundation insisted that the frail, bedridden woman come to Dhaka to collect the cheque!

"How can my grandmother, who can't even move, travel to Dhaka?" Faisal wondered.

After the incident sparked outrage on social media, a "solution" was proposed: the cheque would be reissued to Abdur Rahman's wife. However, the money could only be cashed in Chapainawabganj, in the presence of the 110-year old grandmother, under the supervision of the upazila nirbahi officer, who would ensure the funds were equitably distributed.

On January 23, Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of the Jatiya Nagarik Committee, resigned as the foundation's general secretary.

The executive committee led by CEO Mir Mahbubur Rahman Snigdho is now overseeing the July foundation's operations. Several attempts to reach him for comments failed.

Md Jahid Hossain, public relations officer of the foundation, said that the paperwork was very simple for the martyrs and the foundation includes three nominees -- father, mother, and wife. "However, it gets complicated selecting one nominee when everyone makes a claim."

As for the injured, the documents are first sent to the districts authorities. "Once they confirm, we begin our verification process," Jahid says there are typical types of complications.

"Mismatch between the NID and the bkash number. Then, we have to obtain their bank details or another bkash account."

He admits there are delays. "But we must perform due diligence to ensure that no fake claimants get money. If someone faking injuries gets listed, it would be an insult to the real heroes."

He says besides the 35 employees at the foundation, there are 150 volunteers in the field who assist with the verification process.

Until January 26, 673 martyr families and 2,396 injured protesters have received financial assistance, he said.

The government has put the official death toll at 826 with some 11,000 wounded as of January.

On his eighth visit, Faisal was told that

bank accounts while the central bank reconstituted a new five-member board for Exim Bank with Mazumder and his wife.

The Bangladesh Bank also commissioned a forensic audit of Exim Bank by global accountancy firm Ernst & Young to assess the lender's asset quality.

As part of the probe, Exim Bank Managing Director Mohammad Feroz Hossain was placed on a three-month leave.

Md Akhter Hossain, the acting MD, told The Daily Star that he was unaware of the BFIU findings as he joined the bank only recently.

Ranjan Chowdhury, vice chairman of Nassa Group, denied all allegations of money laundering and financial misconduct. He stated that the claims were baseless and lacked factual or legal merit.

He emphasised that Nassa Group had always complied with BFIU regulations and provided requested information when required.

"There are no irregularities, no wrongdoing and certainly no shell companies as alleged," Chowdhury said.

Mazumder, who was arrested in October last year in connection with a murder case during the July uprising, remains in jail.

The BFIU report has been submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Criminal Investigation Department for further action.

The funds were funnelled to other

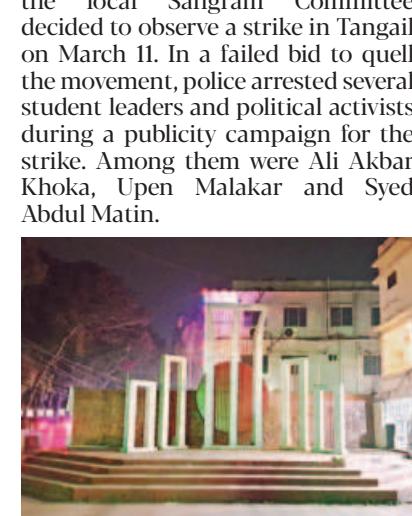
Language Movement in Tangail

FROM PAGE 1

stance against the demand for Bangla as a state language.

Muslim League leader Shamsul Haque went to Tangail from Dhaka in the first week of March to organise the movement. Following his meeting with local leaders on March 8, a Sangram Committee was formed with Nurul Huda as the convener.

As part of the central programme, the local Sangram Committee decided to observe a strike in Tangail on March 11. In a failed bid to quell the movement, police arrested several student leaders and political activists during a publicity campaign for the strike. Among them were Ali Akbar Khoka, Upen Malakar and Syed Abdul Matin.



According to the book *Bhasha Andolon Teknaf Theke Tetulia* by Ahmed Rafiq, a spontaneous strike was observed in Tangail on March 11. On that day, students marched around the city, demanding Bangla as a state language. Slogans chanted by the protesters included: "Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai" (We want Bangla as a state language) and "Amader Dabi Mante Hobo/Dabi Na Manle Godi Chhar" (Accept our demand/Otherwise leave the chair). At one stage, the police baton charged the protesters and arrested Upen Malakar, Shamsur Rahman Khan and some others.

The students of Tangail also played a crucial role in the Language Movement of 1952. They took to the streets when the government on January 27, 1952, declared that Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. A Sarbodoloy Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad

was formed with Nurul Huda as the convener.

On the same day, the students of Kumudini College in Mirzapur also organised a rally presided over by Kohinoor Yusuf Shahi, a third-year student of the college. They adopted a resolution for Bangla as a state language and against writing Bangla in Arabic script.

When the news of the killing of protesters by police in Dhaka reached Tangail in the evening, students and the public took to the streets. The next day, on February 22, a protest rally was held at the then Police Parade Maidan (now Municipal Park). The protesters held a prayer session for the Language Movement martyrs.

The movement also spread to the rural parts of Tangail.

Rohingyas hit by US fund cuts

FROM PAGE 1

Organisation (WHO) and the Paris Climate Pact.

The Trump administration is reviewing all the US funds and projects for 90 days before any final decision.

Already, the development professionals in Bangladesh working on nearly 100 projects for which \$450 million was disbursed last year are facing troubles.

They have either been asked not to go to the office or work from home, but actually have no work.

However, there was a sense that the Rohingya camps would not be hampered due to the executive order of the US, which determined in 2022 that the atrocities against the Rohingya were genocide and committed support for accountability of the Myanmar junta.

Officials concerned have raised serious concerns over the fact that the US is the largest donor for the Rohingya humanitarian response and that the foreign aid for the Rohingya has been declining over the last years amid other conflicts in other parts of the world.

He emphasised that Nassa Group had always complied with BFIU regulations and provided requested information when required.

"There are no irregularities, no wrongdoing and certainly no shell companies as alleged," Chowdhury said.

Mazumder, who was arrested in October last year in connection with a murder case during the July uprising, remains in jail.

The BFIU report has been submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Criminal Investigation Department for further action.

The funds were funnelled to other

NGOs operating in the Cox's Bazar camp.

"If the funding from the US is cut or

reduced, it will have huge impacts on us. We appeal to the US government to continue the funding for the sake of humanity."

EC collects info on 4.97m prospective voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has collected information on around 4.97 million people during the door-to-door campaign to update the voter list.

Some 1.52 million names will be dropped from the updated list as they have passed away, EC Senior Secretary Akhter Ahmed told reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital yesterday.

He, however, said this was not the final list, and the number might change.

Akhter Ahmed said the EC had initially targeted to register 6.1 million new voters this year.

Voter registration will continue until April 17, and anyone eligible to become voter, who were left out during the door-to-door campaign, can register by visiting the registration centres by this time, said the EC official, adding that anyone eligible for voting can register online till the year end.

Asked about why enumerators did not visit every house, Akhter said, "We will try to find out why we could not go to all the houses. There could have been some limitations."

"The data collectors have visited many homes and left their phone numbers as voters weren't present at the time. But we

DHAKA

Dhaka should no longer be capital

Suggests a task force report, says it's crucial for the city's survival

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, has long been a vibrant cultural and economic hub. As one of the world's largest megacities, it never sleeps, embracing millions from diverse backgrounds.

However, in doing so, it has gradually lost its charm and liveability over time due to urban sprawl, and is now facing challenges that threaten its ability to function as a modern, sustainable capital.

A task force report recently suggested relocating the capital, arguing that the issue is no longer about feasibility but survival — socially, economically, and environmentally.

The report, titled "Re-strategising the Economy and Mobilising Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Development," warns that without immediate action, Dhaka's function as a sustainable capital will continue to erode, posing a serious threat to national stability and growth.

Among its many issues, Dhaka has a poorly designed road network that covers only seven percent of the city, with no clear hierarchy between primary, secondary, and tertiary roads, said the report.

The report highlights outdated traffic management systems, the absence of modern solutions like one-way flows and tidal traffic management, and the lack of efficient mass transit infrastructure, like terminals or multimodal hubs.

The current chaotic and dysfunctional situation is worsened by the addition of new railway tracks and

multiple flyovers, which have caused irreversible damage, limiting future transit improvements, it added.

The report argues that these structural weaknesses prevent Dhaka from functioning as a smart, investment-friendly capital. Despite these challenges, there is no strategic plan to decentralise or relocate the capital, even though countries like India, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, and South Korea have successfully done so.

Historically, capital relocations have been driven by overcrowding, congestion, environmental concerns like groundwater depletion, and the need for better national accessibility.

Most importantly, such moves aim

ISSUES PLAGUING DHAKA

- ⌚ Severe liveability challenges
- ⌚ Poorly designed road network
- ⌚ Outdated, inefficient traffic systems
- ⌚ Worsening congestion
- ⌚ No strategic plan for decentralisation
- ⌚ Unauthorised urban development

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ⌚ Unified city governance under an elected mayor
- ⌚ Merging city corporations to eliminate inefficiencies
- ⌚ Single mass transit authority for coordination
- ⌚ Integrated urban planning for sustainable growth

to create modern, smart cities that are resilient, sustainable, less demanding, and investment-friendly, the report said.

While shifting Dhaka is a long-term goal, the report urges immediate governance and service delivery reforms in line with global best practices.

The report mentioned that Dhaka lacks reliable access to essential services such as hospitals, offices, and schools, further exacerbated by chronic drainage issues and groundwater depletion.

The Central Business District is eccentrically located in the south, forcing high travel demand from residential areas in the north.

Alarmingly, 85 percent of urban development is unauthorised, failing to meet firefighting standards, while restricted zones around airports and cantonments have stifled urban expansion, the report added.

Meanwhile, unplanned development is rapidly destroying wetlands, causing severe environmental damage, it said. The report said Dhaka is officially the slowest city in the world. The city's traffic operating speed has seen a dramatic decline over the years, dropping from 25 kmph in 1997 to 6.7 kmph in 2015 and worsening further since then.

Dhaka is also among the least livable cities globally, with the highest air pollution level, poor water quality, and a vulnerable drainage system. It also ranks low in economic competitiveness, it added.

The report highlights the lack of space for footpaths, bikeways, or public transport facilities. The railway system is tangled with road infrastructure, and

bridges have constricted waterways, limiting their potential, it said.

Uncontrolled urban sprawl along rivers further reduces the feasibility of planned expansion. Additionally, immovable restricted zones spanning 11.5km from Tejgaon to Dhaka airport severely constrain mobility and growth.

To address these challenges, the task force recommends unified city governance under an elected mayor, merging Dhaka's two city corporations.

Agencies such as WASA, DPDC, DESCO, RAJUK, and DMP should operate under the single authority to eliminate overlapping responsibilities and inefficiencies, it suggested.

The current bifurcation of Dhaka, which intended to promote decentralisation, has led to resource disparities, coordination gaps, and administrative inefficiencies, necessitating reintegration under a unitary administration, argued the report.

Similarly, the report suggests creating a Single Mass Transit Regulatory Authority under the Mayor's Office to coordinate among BRTC, BRTA, DTCA, DMTCL, and DBRTCL.

"A unified city government under an elected mayor, consolidating all infrastructure development and service providers, is essential for integrated urban planning, efficient resource allocation, and sustainable growth," the report said.

The recommendations are outlined in the chapter "Infrastructure and Connectivity: A Pathway to Economic Prosperity," prepared by Buet Professor Md Shamsul Hoque.



Enam Ahmed Chaudhury's janaza Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The namaz-e-janaza of former Privatization Commission chairman Enam Ahmed Chaudhury will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque on February 7, after the Juma prayers, confirmed his family.

The retired secretary passed away on Monday afternoon at the age of 88.

He is survived by his wife, a son who is a businessman in Dhaka, and a daughter who is an environmentalist in New York.

Chaudhury will be laid to rest at the New Azimpur Graveyard in the capital, his son, Nadeem A Chaudhury, told The Daily Star.

"My father had been suffering for a while... and suddenly fell ill. He was taken to a nearby hospital around 4:30pm on Monday, where doctors declared him dead," said Nadeem.

Born in 1937 in Golapganj, Sylhet, Enam Ahmed Chaudhury had a distinguished career in public service, holding key positions in civil administration, diplomatic missions, and international organisations.

He was active in student politics and played a role in the Language Movement, for which he was expelled from Dhaka College in 1952.

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MOTIJHEEL TO KAMALAPUR MRT-6 extension unlikely this year

Say authorities; considering expanding metro services on Fridays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The extension of the country's first metro rail line, from Motijheel to Kamalapur, is unlikely to open this year, officials said.

Although 46 percent of the 1.16km extended line has been completed, authorities have yet to hire a contractor for track installation and signalling

information during a discussion with members of Reporters for Rail and Road (RRR), a platform for journalists covering transportation infrastructure, at DMTCL's headquarters in Uttara's Diabari yesterday.

The country's first metro rail — Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line 6 — has been operating from Uttara to Motijheel since November 2023.



work, raising doubts about meeting the December 2025 deadline.

Meanwhile, the metro rail authority is working to increase train frequency and expand service hours on Fridays as ridership steadily grows.

On Monday, metro rail recorded its highest ever daily ridership, transporting 3.82 lakh passengers, surpassing the previous record of 3.81 lakh on January 23 this year, they said.

Metro rail officials shared this

MRT Line 6 was initially designed as an elevated line from Uttara to Motijheel. Later, a skywalk was planned to connect the line with Kamalapur Railway Station.

In 2019, DMTCL extended the plan to take the 20.10km line directly to Kamalapur following a directive from the then-prime minister.

Construction of the extended section was 46.07 percent complete

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JUDICIAL COMMISSION Reforms to be recommended in 28 areas CA to get report today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Judiciary Reform Commission has prepared its final report recommending reforms in 28 areas in the judiciary.

The commission is set to hand over the 380-page report to the chief adviser today.

According to commission sources, the recommended reforms include: appointment and discipline of Supreme Court judges; appointment and conditions of service of subordinate court judges; SC secretariat; decentralisation of courts; presidential pardon; independent criminal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Ensure safety, security of girls' MJF condemns rape, murder of 13-year-old

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation yesterday expressed grave concerns over the growing threat to girls' safety, following the gang rape and murder of a 13-year-old in Dhaka.

It criticised the lack of concrete action and accountability in addressing violence against children, stating that empty promises have done little to prevent such incidents.

MJF also urged the interim government to adopt a zero tolerance policy to ensure swift justice for perpetrators of child rape, and form a task force to effectively monitor and combat sexual violence against children.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Saad followers can hold Ijtema Feb 14-16 on two conditions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Tabligh Jamaat faction aligned with Maulana Saad Kandhalvi has been allowed to arrange Ijtema at the Tongi ground on February 14-16.

However, a home ministry notification yesterday imposed two conditions upon the faction — they will not be allowed to arrange Ijtema or participate in any Tabligh activities at the Tongi ground from next year.

Contacted, Abu Sayem, media coordinator of the Saad faction, said, "We have come to know through a notification today [yesterday] that we will not be able to hold Ijtema at this place in Tongi from next year. We received this information at the last minute. For now, we do not want to say anything about it. We will finish this year's Ijtema

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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Reforms to be recommended

FROM PAGE 3
investigation service; constitutional amendment related to the judiciary; organisational structure of subordinate courts; financial independence of the judiciary; use of information technology in judicial proceedings; reducing harassment of litigants; prevention of corruption in the judiciary; legal aid programme; alternative dispute resolution and reduction of case backlog.

Earlier, the commission sent two summary reports to Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, who is coordinating all the reform commissions, with the recommendations for decentralisation and expansion of the judiciary by establishing permanent High Court benches at every divisional city and civil and criminal courts at upazilas.

Barrister Tanim Hussain Shawon, a member of the Judiciary Reform Commission, said the commission has held

29 meetings among themselves and 37 meetings with the stakeholders for preparing the report.

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

The eight-member Judiciary Reform Commission was formed on October 3 last year with former Appellate Division judge Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman as its chief.

Dr AR Mallick's death anniv observed

CITY DESK



The 28th death anniversary of Dr AR Mallick, an eminent educationist and the first technocrat finance minister of the country, was observed yesterday, said a press release.

To mark the occasion, various programmes were held.

Dr Mallick was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, in the early 1960s and the founding vice chancellor of Chittagong University.

He served as the president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia in 1971, the first education secretary, the first high commissioner to India, and was also elected chairman of the Asian Development Bank.

Dr AR Mallick Lecture Halls were inaugurated at Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, and Rajshahi University.

Dr Mallick began his academic and professional career in the Department of History in 1941.

He was the first emeritus professor at Jahangirnagar University.

His publications include 'British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal' and 'Amar Jibon Kotha O Bangladesher Mukti Sangram'. Bangla Academy has published 'Dr AR Mallick Sharak Grontho' comprising articles by renowned personalities from home and abroad, along with 50 commemorative photographs and texts of his speeches.

Enam Ahmed

FROM PAGE 3

He joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1960 and served as deputy commissioner of Khulna and Jashore before 1971. After independence, he held key positions, including the posts of joint secretary to the industries and commerce ministry and director general of the Export Promotion Bureau.

Between 1975 and 1981, he was the economic minister at Bangladesh High Commission in London. Later, he worked as a UN official in Bangkok and served as secretary of the Economic Relations Division and shipping ministry.

He was also elected president of the International Maritime Organization.

Chaudhury was a vice president of the Islamic Development Bank from 1993 to 1998. From 2001 to 2006, he served as chairman of the Privatization Commission under the BNP-led government, holding the rank of a state minister.

Saad followers

FROM PAGE 3

first, then we will sit with the government and ask why we will not be able to hold Ijtema from next year."

The home ministry notification also said Saad followers must vacate the ground after Maghrib prayers on February 18. The ground will be handed over to the followers of the Shura-e-Nizam (Maulana Zubair), on February 20.

Meanwhile, the notification said followers of Zubair, who are now holding the second session of the first phase of six-day Ijtema, will have to hand over the Ijtema ground to the administration following the Maghrib prayers tomorrow.

The first session began on January 31 and ended on February 2 with the Akheri Munajat. The Akheri Munajat for the second session will take place today.

Ensure safety

FROM PAGE 3

"Girls are increasingly vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence. Incidents of this nature are reported regularly, yet perpetrators often go unpunished," said MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

"Out of fear of retaliation, many girls suffer in silence, as they lack a safe space to voice their distress," she added.

Quoting news reports in the media, MJF mentioned that an eighth-grade student was abducted on January 16, subsequently gang raped and murdered, with her body discovered in the Hatirjheel area on February 2.

Following the incident, two suspects were apprehended in connection with the crime, it added.

Shaheen Anam also highlighted the need for measures to protect young girls and expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of effective coordination to ensure their safety.

The majority of rape victims are aged between 7 and 14, including street children, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and child domestic workers, the MJF statement added.

MJF urgently called upon authorities to prioritise this critical issue and implement necessary measures, including the strict enforcement of laws, widespread awareness campaigns for parents and teachers about child protection, community mobilisation against violence, and effective collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and community members.

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 5
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-52 7-15
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-56 7-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

MRT-6 extension unlikely this year

FROM PAGE 3

SERVICE EXPANSION PLAN

Rouf said rising passenger numbers have prompted plans to expand services.

Currently, metro trains operate from 3:00pm on Fridays, and efforts are underway to introduce morning services.

They are also conducting surveys to assess the feasibility of increasing trip frequency, he said.

On average, 3.5 lakh people use the metro daily. This Monday, 3,82,088 passengers were transported, the highest in a single day, surpassing the previous record of 3,81,055 on January 23, he said.

Rouf also said in the 2023-24 fiscal year, metro ticket sales generated Tk 243.09 crore.

DMTCL top officials and RRR leaders attended the meeting. Earlier, RRR members visited the metro workshop and other facilities.

Notice

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO.02 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF: An application for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the respondent No. 2, Union Bank PLC under Section 81(2) and 85(3) read with section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.

IN THE MATTER OF:
Qazi Mozibar Rahman

Petitioner
.....VERSUS.....
Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms
& others

Respondents

Notice is hereby given that an application for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the respondent No. 2, Union Bank PLC under Section 81(2) and 85(3) read with section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 has been moved before the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel upon hearing admitted the application on 06.01.2025 and directed the petitioner publish notice within 3 (three) weeks from date and to file an affidavit in compliance on or before 09 February, 2025 regarding publication of such notice.

Any person interested in the matter may appear in the hearing either personally or through appointed Advocate. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the under signed on payment of prescribed fees.

Mirza Sultan-Alraza
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Chamber: Unit: 25 (D-1 & C-2), City Centre, 90/1, Motijheel C/A, 1000.

Comilla Palli Bidyut Samity-3

Gouripur,Daudkandi,Comilla,

Office of the General Manager
Headquarter: Gouripur,Daudkandi,Comilla,
E- Mail: comillaps3@gmail.com
Web Address: pbs3.comilla.gov.bd

"Invitation For Tender"

01. Procuring Entity Name	:	Comilla Palli Bidyut Samity-3
02. Procuring Entity District	:	Comilla
03. Invitation Tender for	:	O&M Materials
04. Invitation Tender Reference No.	:	Memo No-27.12.1936.572.01.038.25.3048, Date-29/01/2025
05. Procurement Method	:	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
06. Budget and Sources of Funds	:	PBS's Own Fund
07. Tender Package No	:	LPBS.Comilla-3.G.24-25.72-01 LPBS.Comilla-3.G.24-25.72-02
08. Tender Publication Date	:	05/02/2025
09. Tender Last Selling Date & Time	:	Date- 04/03/2025 (During Office Time)
10. Tender Receiving & Closing Date & Time	:	Date-05/03/2025, Time-12:00 (Noon)-(BST.)
11. Tender Opening Date & Time	:	Date-05/03/2025, Time-12:30 (Noon)-(BST.)
12. Name & Address of the Offices- (a) Selling Tender Document	:	(1) Director, PBS Monitoring & Management Operation (EastZone) Directorate, Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, Head Office Building, Nikunja-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229. (2) General Manager, Comilla palli Bidyut Samity-3, Headquarter, Gouripur,Daudkandi,Comilla
(b) Receiving Tender Document	:	Brigadier General Sabih Uddin Ahmed Auditorium, Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, Head Office Building, Nikunja-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229.
(c) Opening Tender Document	:	Brigadier General Sabih Uddin Ahmed Auditorium, Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, Head Office Building, Nikunja-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229. (Intending Tenderer or their authorized representative may choose to attend at the time of opening the tenders)
13. Eligibility of Tenderer	:	Bangladeshi Manufacturer/Supplier
14. Price of Tender Document (Each)	:	TK. =3000.00 (Three Thousand) Only
15. Brief Description of Goods	:	Supply of-Conductor & Guy Accessories; (Details Shows in the following Table-15.1)
*Table-15.1		
Tender Package No.	For the Material of-	Tender Security Amount (TK.)
LPBS.Comilla-3.G.24-25.72-01	Conductor & Guy Accessories (BREB Item N0: E-15)	=9,00,000.00
LPBS.Comilla-3.G.24-25.72-02	Conductor & Guy Accessories (BREB Item N0: E-17 ,18)	=16,50,000.00
16. Regarding Tender Document	:	The Tender Document may be purchased by the interested Tenderers on the submission of a written application to the addresses as mentioned in serial no. 12(a) and upon payment of a non-refundable fee TK.=3000-(Three Thousand). The method of payment will be by Pay order in favour of General Manager, Comilla palli Bidyut Samity-3. No Tender Document will be sent by Courier or mail. One Tender Document cannot be used for submission of tender proposals by more than one Tenderer. One tenderer, however, may submit tenders against any number of packages included in the tender document by purchasing only one copy of the tender document.
17. Mode of Payment	:	Payment will be made by "Comilla palli Bidyut Samity-3, Gouripur, Daudkandi,Comilla" directly to the supplier in Bangladeshi Currency (Taka).
18. Delivery Period	:	Delivery period shall begin from the date of signing of contract or on 28 th day from the issuing date of Notification of Award (NOA) which is earlier.
19. Special Instruction	:	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without showing any reasons.

Muhammad Nurul Hossain
General Manager
Comilla Palli Bidyut Samity-3

GPH ISPAT'S HISTORIC MAHARAJ DARBAR 2024



GPH ispat, is the pioneer in steel production in Bangladesh with the most modern facilities, including Asia's first Quantum Electric Arc Furnace. They successfully completed their two-day event, 'Family Night' and 'GPH Maharaj Darbar 2024,' in a grand and festive manner, as part of their annual celebration.

On the first day of the event, the 'Family Night' was organized with channel partners and their families in a joyful atmosphere.

The second day featured the grand 'Maharaj Darbar 2024'. The event began with the reception of the Maharajas, who arrived from different parts of the country in royal attire, welcomed by the esteemed board of directors of GPH ispat and the entire GPH family. The top 10 channel partners were awarded with the title of 'Maharaj,' and the next 10 were honored with the title of 'Mahabir.' For the first time, 18 channel partners were given the title 'Bir Protap' at the divisional level. Additionally, channel partners' children were awarded the 'GPA-5 Honor' and their mothers received the 'Kriti Ma' recognition.



1ST

MAHABUBUR RAHMAN
M/S MAHABUB BROTHERS,
COX'S BAZAR, CHITTAGONG

Maharaj Mahabubur Rahman has had a relationship with the GPH family since 2009. His unwavering trust and successful implementation of a proper business plan earned him the prestigious Maharaj title.



2ND

MD. SIRAZUR RAHMAN
M/S AL AMIN TRADERS,
BAYEZID BOSTAMI, CHITTAGONG

Maharaj Md. Sirazur Rahman started his business with cement and hardware but later achieved unmatched success through GPH ispat, earning the Maharaj crown.



3RD

MD. ZAKIR HOSSAIN
RAHMAN PROPERTIES & TRADING CORPORATION,
DHAKA CANTONMENT, DHAKA

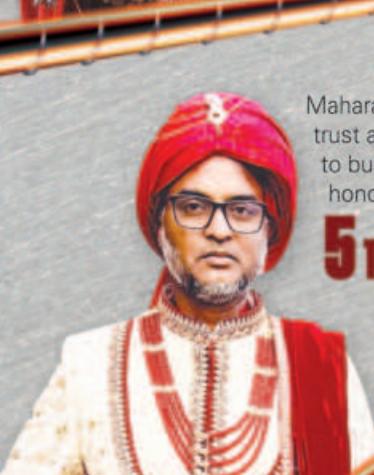
Maharaj Md. Zakir Hossain is an exclusive dealer of GPH. To expand his business, he has always followed the vision of GPH ispat.



4TH

MD. ZAKARUL HOQUE
M/S HOQUE TRADERS, ASHULIA, SAVAR, DHAKA

Maharaj Md. Zakarul Hoque believes that with determination and clear goals, success is only a matter of time, a belief he has proven true.



5TH

MD. ASHRAF ALI
M/S K A STEEL HOUSE, BHATARA, DHAKA

Maharaj Md. Ashraf Ali believes that customer trust and maintaining quality standards are key to business, a belief that earned him the honorable Maharaj title.



6TH

RAQUIB AHMED CHOWDHURY
A.B. STEEL HOUSE, UNIT 2, RAJAKHALI, CHITTAGONG

Maharaj Raquib Ahmed Chowdhury never compromises in meeting customer demands. His dedication earned him the title of Maharaj.



7TH

SHAMVU DAS
SOURAV ENTERPRISE, KERANIGANJ, DHAKA

Maharaj Shamvu Das started his journey with GPH ispat in 2021. From the beginning, his efforts were focused on achieving customer satisfaction, leading him to successfully earn the Maharaj crown.



10TH

MD. MIANUR RAHMAN MILON
DHAKA TRADE LINK, SAVAR, DHAKA

Maharaj Md. Mianur Rahman Milon's business reached new heights after the introduction of GPH Quantum Technology's rebar in the market. His consistent success in business earned him the Maharaj title.



8TH

**MD. AZIZUL HAQUE
(FAISAL)**

M/S FAISAL & BROTHERS,
ISAKHAN NAVY GATE,
CEMENT CROSSING,
CHITTAGONG

Maharaj Md. Azizul Haque (Faisal) has never been discouraged due to his strong ethics and tireless hard work. His efforts, along with the support of others and his family's encouragement, earned him the Maharaj title.



9TH



10TH



MOMENTS FROM THE FAMILY NIGHT



With the enthusiastic participation of channel partners and their families, the Family Night was successfully celebrated with a grand and vibrant event.

Everyone, amidst their busy and active lives, finds joy and laughter with their families, just like our channel partners.

The festive event was filled with day-long activities, including game shows, magic shows, and cultural programs.

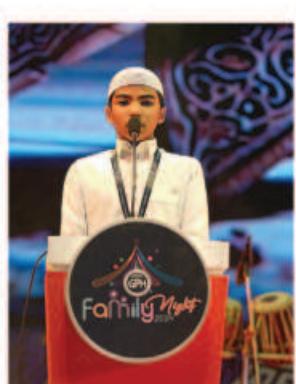


MOMENTS FROM THE MAHARAJ DARBAR



The grand gathering of the Maharajas—"Maharaj Darbar." In their royal attire, the Maharajas take their seats on the majestic throne.

Additionally, esteemed royal guests from across the country, including 'Mahabir' and 'Bir Protap', immerse themselves in the grand festivities of the GPH ispat empire.



THE 10 MAHABIRS OF MAHARAJ DARBAR 2024



MD. RASHEDUL
ISLAM
M/S FAHIM ENTERPRISE



MD. MUJTABA
HASEMI
M/S AL-MANAR STEEL



DHARMENDRA
GHOSH DOLLAR
IMPERIAL SANITARY
HOUSE



MD. SHAFIQ ULLAH
F S ENTERPRISE



MD. AMINUR
RAHMAN IMROJ
M/S UNITED TRADERS



HAJI ABDUL
SATTAR BHUYAN
M/S SATATA ENTERPRISE



ABUL HOSSAIN
MOLLA
M/S SALMA TRADERS



HAJI MD. RAFIQU
ALAM
M/S RAFIQ & BROTHERS



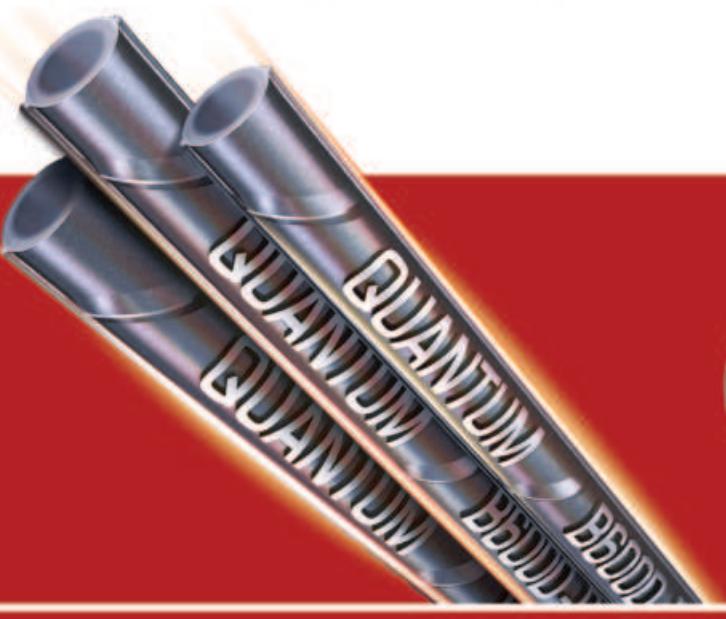
AL-HAJJ MD.
MOSHAROF
HOSHAIN
M/S MOSHAROF
HOSHAIN



MOHAMMAD
RASSEL UDDIN
M/S SAKLAIN
ENTERPRISE



World's Best
GPH Quantum
Steel



GPH ispat

Why are many migrants dying at sea?

Prevent exploitation by traffickers, create opportunities at home

We are quite disturbed by the tragic deaths of at least 23 Bangladeshi migrants whose bodies washed ashore in northern Libya. Reports indicate that a boat carrying 56 migrants bound for Italy departed from Libya's coast on January 25. On January 28, local authorities recovered seven bodies, and over the next three days, the toll rose to 23. Two critically injured survivors were also rescued and hospitalised. However, some victims remain unidentified, while officials fear the death toll may rise as there is no information about the remaining passengers.

According to the families of some identified victims, the boat passengers were being smuggled from Libya to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. All came from impoverished backgrounds, each paying between Tk 14 lakh and Tk 16 lakh for the perilous journey across the Central Mediterranean route, with a Bangladeshi broker from Cumilla allegedly organising the operation. One of the deceased, Bashir Akand, left behind a one-year-old child; he had been working in Libya for a year before attempting the journey to Europe. Another victim, 19-year-old Titu, took this life-threatening risk after being defrauded by an agent when applying for a work permit, which brings us to the crux of the matter.

While these migrants attempted to enter Europe illegally, each had their own reasons for taking such a desperate gamble. Some had borrowed large sums in search of better opportunities. Others had tried to migrate legally but were defrauded by unscrupulous agents, making them even more desperate. Ultimately, their desperation to leave Bangladesh highlights the severe lack of stable jobs and economic prospects in their home country.

Since 2017, Bangladeshi migrants have consistently ranked among the top nationalities crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe—a route often taken by those fleeing conflict or war and considered one of the most dangerous in the world. This underscores the grim reality driving such migrations. Another major reason so many Bangladeshi fall victim to human traffickers is the failure of so-called "legal" recruitment channels, which often deceive and exploit prospective migrants. With no other options, these individuals are forced to pursue risky, illegal routes in the hope of a better future.

The only way to prevent such tragedies is by creating better opportunities within the country. The government must address this issue as the employment situation appears to be worsening. At the same time, legal migration must be made more affordable, accessible, and efficient. Finally, the authorities must crack down on human smugglers and their agents who exploit innocent people trying to secure a better future for their families.

Save elephants, save biodiversity

Govt must restore forest lands, ensure safe elephant corridors

The deaths of several Asian elephants in the Chattogram region in recent times raise questions about our commitment to wildlife conservation. According to media reports, more than 30 elephants have been found dead in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas and Chattogram's Anwara, Karnaphuli, and Banskhali upazilas over the past decade. Last year, seven elephant deaths were recorded in Ukhia and Teknaf alone.

Many of these elephants were electrocuted or shot dead, while others succumbed to hunger, malnutrition, and disease due to food shortages. Expanding human settlements, economic zones, and infrastructure built on elephant habitats and migratory routes are disrupting their natural movement, which typically spans 70-80 kilometres daily in search of food and water. In Ukhia and Teknaf, the Rohingya refugee camps as well as the barbed-wire fence built by Myanmar government along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have blocked five of the eight existing elephant corridors in Cox's Bazar, making at least 15 water bodies inaccessible to the area's 205 elephants.

Similarly, in Anwara and Karnaphuli, establishing the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) and the China Economic Zone by clearing forests—and without undertaking proper environmental feasibility studies, one may add—has further disrupted the life and habitat of the elephant population. Environmental conservation guidelines were also ignored during the construction of the Dohazari Cox's Bazar railway line, creating additional barriers for these animals. Alarmingly, many of the elephant deaths have occurred in reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries. What is the purpose of declaring an area a "wildlife sanctuary" if we cannot ensure the safety of the wildlife within it?

There is reason to expect stronger action from the current interim government which claims itself to be pro-environment. In October, the environment adviser helped establish a committee in the KEPZ area to ensure the protection of wild elephants. However, more action is needed across all regions where human-elephant conflicts have been intensifying. The consequences of habitat degradation and destruction extend to humans as well, with 136 people estimated to have been killed by elephants in the last six years.

The government, therefore, must take urgent, visible measures to prevent deforestation, restore forest lands, implement reforestation initiatives, and ensure that the natural routes for elephant movement are never violated under any circumstances. Anti-nature infrastructure development projects undertaken by the Awami League government should also be critically reviewed. We must find a way to coexist with other species without endangering their survival.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Punic Wars ended

On this day in 146 BCE, the Third Punic War, the last of three between Rome and Carthage, came to an end, culminating in the final destruction of Carthage, the enslavement of its people, and Roman hegemony over the Mediterranean.

EDITORIAL

AWAMI LEAGUE PROTESTS

A comeback or a cry for relevance?



THE STREET VIEW

Mohammad Al-Masum Molla
is a journalist at The Daily Star.

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The Awami League, once the most dominant political force in Bangladesh, now finds itself in an unfamiliar and precarious situation. Its leadership has fractured following its disgraced fall from power on August 5, 2024 in the face of the student-led mass uprising. The party is now attempting to find its footing again through a month-long protest programme. This raises a critical question: is the Awami League truly interested in working its way to democracy, or is it merely struggling to survive?

Awami League's current predicament is largely of its own making. The party, which once led the country's liberation struggle and positioned itself as a beacon of democracy, gradually turned into an authoritarian entity. Over the past decade, allegations of election manipulation, political repression and corruption eroded its credibility. The parliamentary elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024 were all marred by accusations of vote-rigging. Only a few months after the 2024 election, a mass uprising—which grew from a protest by students against the reinstatement of the quota system in government service—forced Sheikh Hasina's government out of power. This ouster was not just a shift in governance, it was a clear rejection by the people of the party's undemocratic practices and governance failures.

However, the party appears to have learnt little from its downfall. Its leaflet recently distributed to justify its protest movement offers little evidence of introspection or reform. The rhetoric remains unchanged, reflecting an outdated political mindset that fails to address the new realities in Bangladesh. There is a conspicuous absence of acknowledgement of the public grievances that led to its downfall, including the deaths of protesters during the July-August uprising. Instead of expressing condolences or seeking justice for those who lost their lives, the party remains focused on reclaiming power without addressing



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

its past transgressions.

The hypocrisy in Awami League's protests is evident. The very tactics it now condemns—mass arrests, suppression of dissent, and human rights abuses—were once cornerstones of its own governance strategy. When it was in power, Awami League showed little tolerance for opposition protests, often employing law enforcement agencies to suppress them. Now, finding itself on the receiving end of a similar treatment, it suddenly seeks to champion democratic rights. This selective outrage raises suspicions about the party's true intentions.

Meanwhile, the interim government led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has taken a firm stance, refusing to allow Awami League to hold demonstrations unless it takes responsibility for the human rights violations committed under its rule. The government insists that the party must first seek public forgiveness

alleged human rights violations under the interim government. Even if some of these issues were valid, the party's selective outrage diminishes its credibility. It must recognise that its own governance was rife with economic mismanagement, suppression of free speech, and political violence.

The party's continued denial of public sentiment only worsens its predicament. Rather than acknowledging the people's movement as a legitimate expression of frustration, it continues to frame it as a conspiracy. This deep-seated tendency to dismiss opposition as foreign or domestic sabotage was one of the key reasons it became so isolated from the people of the country. The fact that the Awami League has not shifted from this stance suggests either a deliberate refusal to change or a complete failure to grasp the current reality. If this trend persists,

it once alienated. Without these fundamental changes, its current movement risks being seen as nothing more than a desperate attempt to gain some relevance.

The responsibility of addressing Awami League's misdeeds does not solely rest on the interim government. The political opposition must also rise to the occasion by mobilising public support through democratic means, rather than relying on government crackdowns to sideline Awami League. True political change in Bangladesh will come not through suppression, but through the people's mandate.

Ultimately, Awami League's protests reflect a party grappling with its own political survival rather than a genuine struggle for democracy. Unless it undergoes a sincere transformation, it will remain trapped in a cycle of political irrelevance, unable to reclaim the trust of the Bangladeshi people.

DUCSU election will usher in student unity



Monira Sharmin
is former general secretary, Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall Union, DUCSU 2019. She is currently working as the joint convenor and office secretary of Jatiya Nogorik Committee. She can be reached at monirasharmin15@gmail.com.

MONIRA SHARMIN

The night of July 16, 2024 will always be etched in the collective memory of thousands of people. That night, Dhaka University's residential female halls chased away Sheikh Hasina's goons of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). When the student people movement won and the Awami League government fell on August 5, 2024, the adrenaline rush and resolve of the night of July 16 reverberated. Discussions about the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) election gained new significance in the wake of these historic circumstances. DUCSU has served as a forum for student representation and political participation for many years, but its absence has led to a void. Many student organisations endorse the call for DUCSU election, but this demand is not without disagreements. The last DUCSU election took place in 2019, shrouded by accusations of vote-rigging, anomalies, and dominance by BCL. While the elected student leaders, including then Vice-President (VP) Nurul Haque Nur, experienced administrative and political hardships in carrying out their duties, several student organisations, notably the leftist organisations and Jatiyatabdali Chhatra Dal, rejected the results. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, initially hailed for its progressive stance and role in mobilising students during the

uprising, has seen its image tainted in the aftermath. Their credibility as a force in student politics has been called into question due to accusations of opportunism, internal strife, and dubious partnerships. Among the other student political organisations, Islami Chhatra Shibir is facing renewed criticism regarding its stance on the 1971 Liberation War, a long-standing controversy that has hindered its legitimacy in mainstream student politics. There is controversy surrounding Chhatra Dal, BNP's student wing, as well, especially in the aftermath of the mass uprising. The general students, many of whom are disenchanted with the condition of student politics at Dhaka University, is becoming increasingly frustrated as a result of such conflicts. While student organisations prepare to assert their influence, they have yet to overcome internal controversies and external scrutiny, further complicating the landscape.

The tensions intensify as the call for DUCSU election gains momentum. The university administration's hesitation to take strong action has further fuelled the flames. Some organisations support an autonomous and fully representative DUCSU, while others appear more concerned in concentrating power and widening already existing divisions on campus. The values of representation, diversity, and true student leadership ought

to be crucial for DUCSU's agenda. Though noble in goal, ideological purity frequently shapes this vision and can occasionally alienate those with different viewpoints. On campus, student organisations are still sharply split along organisational, political, and ideological lines, which makes it challenging to bring them together for substantial transformation. Historically, this split has made it easier for the authorities to stifle student demands and postpone important reforms by weakening collective bargaining strength.

The Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall Union's victory over BCL in 2019 showed that students react favourably to reputable, non-partisan leadership that is based on actions that care for their rights. This implies that student governance should represent the whole student body. It is also crucial to assemble a group of student leaders who are credible across ideological divides, make sure that the selection of candidates is transparent, and uphold a common goal that goes beyond immediate electoral triumph. A proportional representation system in which DUCSU seats are distributed according to each student organisation's vote share is also another option. This model can promote collaboration across ideological differences and stop any single group from controlling all the power. Another alternative is the establishment of issue-based committees. This strategy enables targeted and outcome-oriented action without requiring total consensus on every issue.

In the United States, student union elections are generally conducted annually and candidates often address campus-specific issues like tuition fees, diversity, and student services. Depending on their sociopolitical surroundings and the design of their educational institutions, student unions use various election models all over the world. Proportional representation is used in student unions in many European nations, including the UK. To guarantee representation for all important groups, seats are allocated according to the percentage of votes each party or panel receives. The positive aspect of this is that it promotes cooperation and fairly represents a variety of groups. The intricacy of the vote-counting procedure and the possible challenge of establishing a majority are the drawbacks of this process. In order to maintain inclusivity, certain South African universities permit various groups to alternate in positions of leadership. In DUCSU, a rotating leadership model could be explored, where key positions are shared among different organisations on a time-bound basis. Such an arrangement could foster mutual respect and understanding while ensuring that no single group dominates the decision-making process.

Student organisations need to place the common good before their past grievances in order to realise this vision. Mutual respect, open dialogue, and an allegiance to common values are necessary in this regard. Leaders need to focus on creating a collaborative culture rather than reverting to the divisive strategies of the past. Equally important is the role of the university administration in facilitating a fair and transparent electoral process. Ensuring a level playing field is essential in rebuilding trust. As the battle lines are drawn, the stakes grow higher. The coming months could prove pivotal in shaping the future of student governance at Dhaka University.

TAPPING INTO CHINA'S INDUSTRIAL RELOCATION

A golden opportunity for Bangladesh?



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MD SAKIB HOSSAIN

Over the last four decades, China has established itself as the leading hub for manufacturing on a global scale. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the implementation of economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping facilitated the entry of foreign direct investment (FDI) in China's economy, prompting numerous companies to shift their manufacturing operations to the country. Nonetheless, the persistent difficulties faced by the world's second largest economy, including geopolitical tensions with the United States, environmental regulations and overcapacity in manufacturing have led China to relocate various industries to friendly nations in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia. It's pertinent to analyse China's industrial relocation and how Bangladesh can benefit from it.

Why are Chinese industries relocating?
First, China is undergoing a significant transformation, influenced by a variety of economic, geopolitical, environmental and policy issues. This transition is driving Chinese companies, especially in low-end manufacturing, to explore alternative regions that provide improved market access with greater outputs. China has been experiencing an upsurge in production wages and production costs in recent times, which has led to a decline in the cost competitiveness, once considered to be the strength of Chinese economy. Furthermore, stringent environmental regulations have led to a shift in compliance expenses that's influencing rendering domestic industry to other regions. Last year, Chinese Premier Li Qiang outlined the yearly economic growth target of five percent during his inaugural working report at the National People's Congress. He emphasised the need for a significant advancement through the acceleration of industry modernisation and the "development of new quality productive forces." The approach that Li Qiang spoke of entails a systematic transition towards high-

end, smart and clean manufacturing sectors, with a strategic relocation of several domestic industries to emerging economies in their geographical proximity. In the context of emerging economies, Bangladesh presents itself as a suitable region for attracting these shifting industries.

Additionally, the ongoing tensions in US-China trade and broader decoupling trends are prompting Chinese firms to adopt a "China Plus One" strategy aimed at diversifying their production bases to mitigate geopolitical risks. Southeast and South Asia have emerged as significant relocation centres in response to rising tariffs and intensified trade barriers between China and Western countries. Chinese firms recognise that the developing nations in South and Southeast Asia possess adaptable tariff regulations when engaging with the US and Western markets. In the same scenario, Chinese FDI in Mexico reached a 13-year high in 2023, with capital expenditure surging to \$5.6 billion, up significantly from \$267 million in 2018. This "near-shoring" move was intended to exploit benefits of exporting goods to the US produced in Mexico under the USMCA agreement.

Moreover, in the context of China's recent five-year plans, it is evident that the country is strategically shifting its focus from its previous role as the "world's factory," which was characterised by the production of low-cost, low-tech goods supported by competitive labour costs and supply chain efficiencies. China's new industrial policy of "Made in China 2025" aims to enhance the manufacturing capabilities of Chinese industries, transitioning from labour-intensive operations to a more technology-driven, sophisticated industrial hub. The focus on high-tech productive forces, including electric vehicles (EVs), artificial intelligence (AI), and cutting-edge semiconductors, is expediting the relocation as well.

Bangladesh as a potential destination

Bangladesh has always been a viable

destination for Chinese firms as it offers some significant benefits that Chinese companies enjoy at home. Till date, Bangladesh can offer the most competitive wages compared to other viable destinations in the region. The average monthly wage of an industrial worker still remains below \$150 that makes it lucrative for manufacturing industries. Additionally, the young labour force in Bangladesh presents a significant long-term

(BEZA) has established a structured timeline aimed at operationalising five economic zones within the next two years, out of a total of 100 proposed zones all over Bangladesh. These zones are vital for attracting FDI from Chinese firms aiming to relocate their operations. It is noteworthy that China holds the second position after Bangladesh; 108 companies have invested in EPZs. According to data from the Bangladesh Bank, FDI inflows

number of economic units of the industrial sector was 9.2 million, which increased to 10.4 million in 2024. The growth rate has increased by 15.38 percent in a decade. The slow rate of pace in Bangladesh's economy does not end here; the number of unemployed people in the country has increased to 2.66 million, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for the period of July-September 2024. Bangladesh must feel the urge to attract Chinese industries to invest and increase FDI to overcome this stagnation. The head of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) International Department, Liu Jianchau, said to Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain during his recent visit that China is thinking of relocating its industries and they are considering Bangladesh as an option. They also think that exporting the manufactured goods to other countries from Bangladesh and the matter of incentives in exports will be beneficial to China.

Challenges ahead

However, the existing infrastructure presents significant challenges with shortage of energy and port delays contributing to increased expenses and diminished investor trust. The government has initiated large scale EEZs; however, the pace of project implementation is not satisfactory. It is an undeniable fact that Bangladesh has administrative inefficiency and bureaucratic complexities in attracting foreign investment, which introduces an additional layer of complexity. Policy reforms are needed now to attract Chinese investment despite advantages. Tax concessions, tax holiday, and ease of doing business should be prioritised to attract relocating industries. Bangladesh has a shortage of skilled labour force to propel newly relocated industries. It will continue to be a significant area of concern if no comprehensive action plan from the government is taken.

Foreign investors endure significant challenges in Bangladesh due to intricate, often bureaucratic, approval procedures from various government agencies that must be fixed to harness relocating Chinese industries. Regional competitors like Vietnam and Indonesia have already streamlined their investment frameworks to facilitate the relocation of Chinese industries. Should Bangladesh not implement necessary reforms to its regulatory framework and expedite investment processes, it may face significant challenges in maintaining its competitive edge in international trade.



PHOTO: CA OFFICE
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi tells Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus that China wants to invest in the production of solar panels in Bangladesh, on September 25, 2024.

benefit for industrial production. The country boasts a demographic dividend where more than 65 percent of its population is under 35 years old. Moreover, the geographical location of Bangladesh in the crossroad of the Indo-Pacific region makes it a suitable transportation and logistical hub for international shipping of produced goods. As of present circumstances, Bangladesh can offer duty-free access to European markets as well with zero tariffs on EBA (Everything but Arms) scheme and curtailed tariffs on goods exported to the US, Japan, Australia and other countries. Bangladesh also offers dedicated Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for attracting FDI, especially in the coastal region.

Chinese industries relocating matter for Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority

reached \$1.46 billion in FY2023-24, with \$424 million of this total attributed to investments in the export processing zones. Ashraful Kabir, who serves as a member for investment promotion at BEZA, highlighted that in addition to RMG products and accessories, 48 percent of the products manufactured in the EPZs have now diversified into other categories. He noted that decreasing dependency on RMG production allows the EPZs to enhance Bangladesh's economic stability by promoting product diversification and expanding export opportunities. Chinese firms invested \$283 million in FY2023-24, and China is the third largest FDI source for Bangladesh that stands with \$1.56 billion in total as of June 2024.

It is worth noting that the growth in the manufacturing sector has been sluggish compared to the service sector. In 2013, the

What to expect from Netanyahu's visit with Trump



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YOUSEF SY RAMADAN

Since Donald Trump returned to the White House for a second term, global, regional and domestic changes have been accelerating at an unprecedented pace. Trump's inaugural speech and his deluge of executive orders exemplify a nationalist rhetoric, which includes barring student visas of those who participated in "pro-Palestinian" protests that shook the country last year. He heralded "a golden age," in his inaugural address, and his policies have put Washington—and the rest of the world—on notice that Trump is determined to turn his campaign promises into reality. His promises come with a liking of openly self-serving agendas. Nowhere is this more evident than in his administration's approach towards the Middle East, which is defined by a complete bias for Israeli expansionism at the expense of Palestinians. The policy not only disregards Palestinian rights but also strengthens Israeli hegemony, offering illusions through hardline figures such as Massad Boulous and Steve Witkoff. Under Trump's first administration, the US showed no interest in supporting the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, further exacerbating Palestinian suffering and pushing towards the dissolution of the cause. This time, evidently, will be no different. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit and upcoming discussions with Trump raises questions, and mostly concerns, about what lies ahead. The ceasefire is currently in a fragile state, held in the Gaza Strip with the next stage of negotiations expected to enter the second phase that includes a more permanent end to the conflict.

Netanyahu, the first foreign leader to meet Trump at the White House, will undoubtedly try to preserve a dynamic where there would be absolutely no threats to his position as the Prime Minister of Israel, and he would ensure there are no checks and balances for his government—given those members are "loyal" to him. It is the same dynamic that resulted in the Abraham Accords. In this context, it is important to remember that Netanyahu's decision in Israel has not been in the interest of the Israeli public, majority of whom do not approve of him. He dragged the war on for political gains, and got rid of anyone who objected to his decisions, in order to serve his personal interests, starting with

authority to throw around citizens and people across borders.

False promises and intermediary characters

Massad Boulous, a billionaire of Lebanese origin and the father-in-law of Tiffany Trump, played a role in crafting deceptive assurances to the Palestinians, suggesting there was a real opportunity for political relief under the Trump administration. These promises follow a long-standing US pattern of selling illusions

linchpin of US influence in the region, and as such, Trump's policies, including his support for Israeli settlements, the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, and the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's unified capital confirm that Washington sees the continuation of Israeli hegemony as a long-term strategic goal.

In the same vein, the Trump administration brokered a truce between Hezbollah and Israel that pushed the deadline for the complete

West Bank "settlements." The US ambassador to the UN has echoed similar sentiments, reflecting the depth of the indoctrinated anti-Palestinian beliefs in US decision-making.

Trump's policies and his supporters

Trump's support for Israel cannot be separated from his electoral base, which largely consists of Zionists and Evangelical Christians. These groups see support for Israel as religious and ideological duty. For them, the "Greater Land of Israel" is part of their faith. The usage of religion to occupy land, unfairly, played a major role in pushing the Trump administration to adopt policies that serve the entire Israeli occupation project at the expense of Palestinian human rights.

Since assuming office, Trump has lifted sanctions on Israeli settlers, removed bans on bomb shipments to Israel, and endorsed proposals advocating for the forced transfer of Palestinians under the guise of "evacuating areas."

If we look at Trump's policies realistically, it is clear that his administration is interested in pushing for Israeli hegemony,

Trump's transactionalism

Trump approaches international issues, including the Palestinian cause, through the lens of transactionalism. Rather than addressing the political roots of conflicts or seeking justice, he perceives the region as an opportunity for economic profit. His statements referring to Gaza as a "fantastic place" exemplify his reductionist perspective, trivialising the unimaginable suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza for the past year and a half. Similar to Netanyahu, Trump has also reduced the Palestinians' struggle to a mere commercial project and their land to a profit-making machine. These policies, coated in political hypocrisy, only deepen the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Given this stark reality, it is imperative that we Palestinians, and Palestinian supporters around the world, unite according to a clear strategic vision and work to realign internal political and diplomatic priorities to confront the growing challenges. As the ceasefire in Gaza hangs in the air, the Israeli military, for its part, has shifted its focus over the past two weeks to the West Bank, carrying out airstrikes and blowing up 23 buildings in Jenin on Sunday. If Trump and Netanyahu work to foster the problematic US-Israeli equation that has underlined the conflict with Palestine, the Middle East will only plunge into further unrest. The only hope lies in Trump's economic interests with the Arab states and gulf nations overriding his penchant for far-right nationalists like Netanyahu. The coming days will reveal the future of Gaza in the short-term at least, but that itself is the issue: the future of the besieged strip lies in the hands of two men who, above all, care mostly about themselves.



Palestinians transport aid supplies on an animal-drawn cart, amid a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, in Gaza City on February 3, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

the opposition duo Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot, then Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and finally the chief of staff who was replaced by Netanyahu's most loyal commander.

He closed the gaps that disturbed him and confused his absolute rule under the pretext of achieving absolute victory. When speaking to Trump, Netanyahu's logic that "I am Israel" will inarguably dominate. His expansionist aims will be presented, days after Trump has offered—and been rejected—to relocate Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt and Jordan.

Netanyahu's equation with Trump in his first term doubled Israel's dependency on US financial, armed and political wars, and will remain a constant threat to the Middle East, a region whose map both leaders want to change, and the region where they presume

to Palestinians, offering grand economic or political solutions without any substantive commitments.

Similarly, Steve Witkoff, US billionaire real estate investor and Trump's Middle East envoy, sought to position himself as a mediator, even reportedly visiting Gaza. However, these gestures will only remain as mere theatrics that fall in line with the administration's broader policies that actively reinforce Israeli occupation, settlement expansion, and annexation projects.

Israeli hegemony as a pillar of US strategy
The US-Israel alliance is deeply rooted in strategic interests, making the idea of an independent Palestinian state fundamentally at odds with Washington's long-term vision of "peace" in the Middle East. Israel serves as the

withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from Lebanon, further extending Israel's military presence in the country. Trump has completely sidelined Jordan from his strategic calculations, seeking to impose an economic blockade to pressure Amman into aligning with his regional agenda, most notably, by forcing Jordan to absorb Palestinians from Gaza. That is a revival of a proposal that Jordan rejected during Trump's first term, which is now being pushed again through economic coercion, including threats to cut aid.

At the same time, US officials such as Ambassador Mike Huckabee and the UN ambassador to the UN have openly championed Israel's "biblical right" to the West Bank. Huckabee, a hardline Anglican, refuses to call the Israeli communities in the

Campaign for Delhi polls ends, voting today

AGENCIES

People in the Indian capital, New Delhi, will head to polling booths today to elect a new government after weeks of aggressive campaigning by the principal players Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP and Congress who are hoping to rewrite the capital's electoral history.

Around 1.56 crore people are eligible to vote and are spread across 70 Assembly constituencies where 699 candidates are seeking the mandate. Voting will take place across 13,766 polling stations, amid a strict vigil kept by personnel of Delhi Police and other forces, including the paramilitary.

The counting of votes will be held on February 8.

AAP is seeking a third term, BJP hoping to return to power after a gap of 27 years

after a gap of 27 years. Congress, which has not won a single seat since 2015, hopes to win a couple of seats and increase its vote share, which had been captured by AAP riding on an anti-corruption movement, reports Deccan Herald online.

Officials said 220 companies of paramilitary forces, 35,626 Delhi Police personnel, and 19,000 home guards have been deployed for voting. Around 3,000 polling booths have been identified as sensitive and enhanced security arrangements, including drone surveillance, have been made.

Meanwhile, Election Commission of India (ECI) yesterday alleged that there were "deliberate pressure tactics to malign" the polls body in the Delhi elections after AAP accused it of indulging in "hooliganism" by not taking any action against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri and kin for "violating" the MCC, reports TNN online.

Earlier yesterday, Delhi CM Atishi had criticised the polls body for not taking any action against Ramesh Bidhuri's family members for "violating" MCC.

During the high octane campaign, the parties had taken on each other. AAP had alleged that all its social security schemes will be stopped if BJP comes to power, a claim which it has denied.

19-year-old girl dies

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restaurant in the town, he added.

"When she returned home in the afternoon, she told us that she was harassed and assaulted by a man named Hridoy Raifan in public," Samir told this correspondent.

Hridoy, aged around 30, is the son of Mohsin Howladar, the president of Bauphal Upazila Jatiya Party.

"She then went to her room. When we knocked on her door at dinnertime, there was no response. After a while, we broke into the room and found her hanging from the ceiling," said Samir.

"We took her to upazila health complex where doctors pronounced her dead."

Subrata Roy, medical officer at Bauphal Upazila Health Complex, said some marks on her body indicated that she had died by suicide.

Contacted, Hridoy said, "I saw the

HC rejects Chinmoy's bail

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Kumar Bhattacharjee, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, additional attorney generals Md Arshadur Rouf and Aneek R Haque opposed the bail petition during the hearing, saying that the government issued an order for filing the sedition case against Chinmoy as there is a specific allegation against him for disrespecting the national flag.

Advocate Apurba Kumar submitted the bail petition on behalf of Chinmoy to the HC on January 12.

Then the lawyer told this correspondent that the sedition case against Chinmoy is unacceptable as there is no government order for filing the case.

A government order is mandatory for filing a sedition case under Section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure against a person, and only a government officer can file such a case under the government order.

But there is no government order for filing a sedition case against Chinmoy, he said, adding that a non-government officer has filed the case in violation of the relevant section of the CrPC.

Section 196 of the CrPC says, "No court shall take cognisance of any offence punishable under Chapter VI or

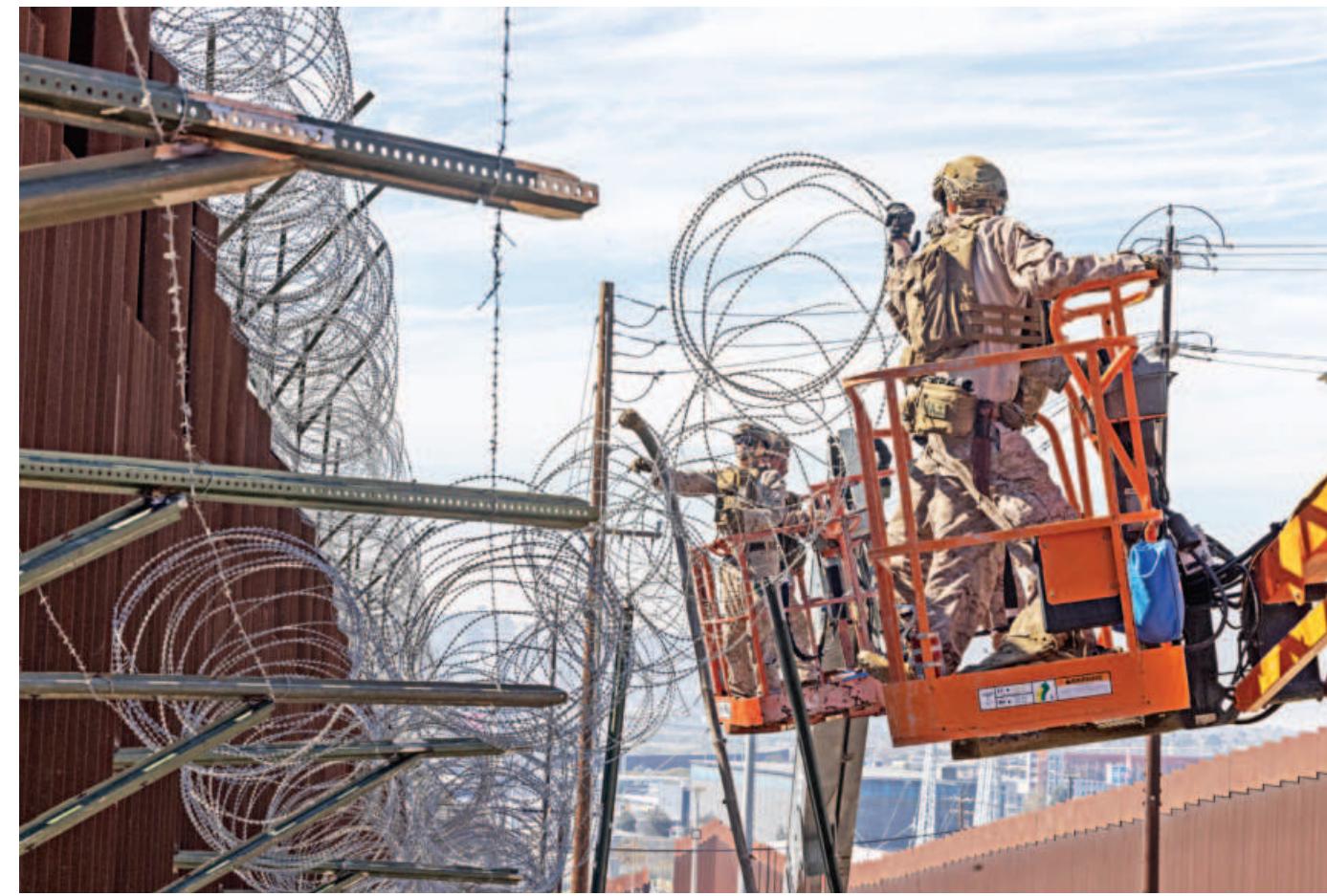


PHOTO: AFP

This picture provided by the US Defence Department shows US Marines from the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, deploying concertina wire along the southern border wall at the US-Mexico border in San Ysidro, California, on Monday.

RUSSIAN DRONE STRIKES ON UKRAINE GRID

IAEA chief warns of nuke risk from attacks

Russian missile kills five in the Ukrainian town of Izium

REUTERS, Kyiv

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi arrived in Kyiv yesterday and inspected an electricity distribution substation, warning that attacks on Ukraine's power grid could pose a risk of nuclear accident by disrupting supply.

"I'm at Kyivska electrical substation – an important part of Ukraine's power grid essential for nuclear safety," Grossi wrote on X. "A nuclear accident can result from a direct attack on a plant, but also from power supply disruption."

Grossi posted pictures of him visiting the substation alongside Energy Minister German Galushchenko, and being shown what appeared to be defences against Russian strikes.

Moscow has regularly bombed Ukraine's energy infrastructure, including substations, throughout its

three-year invasion, although it has avoided direct strikes on Ukraine's nuclear plants.

Meanwhile, a Russian missile fired yesterday on the eastern Ukrainian city of Izum killed four people and wounded 20,

Moscow has regularly bombarded Ukraine's energy infrastructure throughout its three-year invasion.

the governor of the broader Kharkiv region said on social media.

Izum, which had a population of around 45,000 people before the Russian invasion launched in February 2022, was occupied for several months at the beginning of the war before being retaken by Ukraine.

But Russian forces are

making gains in the region and undoing the advances Kyiv's army made in their 2022 counteroffensive, while stepping up bombardments here.

"According to initial reports, the occupiers used a ballistic missile. Four people were killed," Oleg Synegubov wrote on Telegram, adding that five people had been hospitalised.

Meanwhile, Ukraine received a surge in queries last month from Russian families seeking information on missing relatives serving in Moscow's army, Kyiv said yesterday.

Ukraine last year established a hotline for Russians to learn details of missing relatives and friends as part of efforts to streamline prison exchanges.

The hotline called "I want to find" is run by the Coordination Centre for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which said it had received 8,548 requests last month.

Taliban raid women's radio station

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's Taliban authorities raided well-known women's radio station Radio Begum yesterday, arresting two employees, the broadcaster said, calling for the speedy release of its staff.

The Taliban information ministry said the broadcaster had been suspended for "multiple violations", in the latest search by the government of local media outlets in Afghanistan.

"Officers from the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) assisted by representatives of the Ministry of Information and Culture raided today Begum's compound in Kabul," a statement from Radio Begum said.

'Around 10' dead in Sweden school shooting

AFP, Örebro

Around 10 people were killed in a shooting at an education centre in central Sweden yesterday, including the suspected assailant, police officials said.

The shooting was the deadliest school attack in the country's history.

"Around 10 people have been killed today," Örebro police chief Roberto Eid Forest told reporters, adding that police could "not be more specific about the number due to the large number of wounded".

He provided no details about the number of wounded.

"This is a terrible event. This is exceptional, a nightmare," Forest said.

Police did not disclose any information about the identity or ages of the dead, nor whether they were students or teachers at the Campus Risbergska secondary school for young adults.

Several media reported the suspected gunman turned his gun on himself but police would not confirm those reports.

"The suspected assailant is not known to police. He has no connection to any gang," Forest said, referring to the surge in deadly shootings and bombings linked to gang violence that have plagued Sweden in recent years.

"We don't expect any other attacks," Forest said.

Myanmar junta bans possible conscripts from foreign travel

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's embattled junta has banned anyone eligible for military conscription from leaving the country without permission, as it seeks to shore up its forces fighting rebel groups opposed to its rule.

The junta has lost control of swathes of the country to ethnic minority armed groups and other opposition forces in the civil war triggered by its coup d'état four years ago.

A long dormant conscription law was enforced last year as the army reeled from a string of battlefield defeats to ethnic armed groups and civilian "People's Defence Forces" seeking to oust it from power.

A bylaw passed late last month that has only just come to light imposes new restrictions on those eligible to be called up – men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27.

"The person who receives the order shall not be allowed to leave for foreign countries without obtaining the permission of the Central Body," section 51 of the bylaw says.

The bylaw applies to those who have been called up and also those waiting for the outcome of appeals for exemption, reduction, or postponement of military service.

Beximco lays off

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Workers, already facing uncertainty over their salaries, grew increasingly anxious, prompting the company to take this drastic measure, Chowdhury added.

The latest development comes a week after the interim government announced that it would sell shares of Beximco Group's two running and profitable companies – Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Shinepukur Ceramics – to pay the salaries of the conglomerate's laid-off employees.

The conglomerate, which landed in hot water following the ouster of the Awami League-led government on August 5 last year, has more than Tk 40,000 crore in loans, including Tk 28,544 crore taken by its 32 textile and apparel subsidiaries.

Of those 32 factories, 16 exist only on paper. But the factories were used as collateral to take loans, said Labour and Employment Adviser M Sakhawat Hossain at a press briefing on January 28.

A large amount of the loans have been classified.

Beximco Group had previously laid off nearly 32,000 workers across 15 of its apparel units due to a persistent shortage of orders in its export-oriented garment and textile factories in Gazipur.

Advocate Apurba Kumar also said, "The allegation against Chinmoy is completely false, as he never disrespected the national flag."

On October 31 last year, Firoz Khan, former general secretary of Chattogram's Mohora ward BNP, filed the case with Kotwali Police Station, accusing Chinmoy and 18 others of disrespecting the national flag during a rally of the Hindu community on October 25 in the port city's New Market area.

On November 26, a Chattogram court sent Chinmoy to jail, rejecting his bail prayer after he was arrested in the capital the previous day.

On January 2 this year, Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Saiful Islam denied bail to Chinmoy in the sedition case.

He said BB officials are permitted to maintain personal lockers at the central bank for keeping their valuables.

Yunus seeks Canada's help

FROM PAGE 12

"Begum Para" neighbourhood.

He sought help to identify, freeze and recover the assets during his meeting with the Canadian High Commissioner.

The Canadian High Commissioner appreciated the efforts of the Prof Yunus-led interim government to bring the stolen money back.

He assured Canada's support for the asset recovery efforts, noting that Canada has a "mechanism" to freeze siphoned-off money for recovery from persons identified by the interim government to the government of Canada.

The Canadian High Commissioner also offered the country's support to the interim government's reform initiatives

in its transition to democracy. "We support the great thing you are doing. We appreciate the progress that has been made. We are keen to know what we can do," Ajit Singh said.

He said Canada was keen to expand trade with Bangladesh and invest more in the country. A Canadian minister would visit Bangladesh soon to discuss issues of mutual interest, he added.

In response, Prof Yunus said, "Bangladesh is ready for business. We want to expand trade with your country, and we want Canadian companies to relocate their factories to Bangladesh."

The chief adviser said many Bangladeshi people now live and study in Canada, and Ottawa should make a move to set up its visa office in Dhaka.

GP staffers

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principal amount but used legal maneuvers to evade penalties, the protesters claimed.

In response, Grameenphone stated: "Some former employees of GP have been gathering in front of GP House over the last few days, raising various demands related to employment and benefits. To our knowledge, most of them separated from Grameenphone a long time ago and have already received their lawful entitlements. Additionally, the demands raised by these individuals are currently the subject of various cases before the Hon'ble courts.

Grameenphone has high regard for the judicial process. Therefore, any legal proceedings will eventually be resolved through the court system. Grameenphone remains committed to providing uninterrupted communication services to its customers across Bangladesh.

While Grameenphone respects the right to peaceful assembly, these individuals have been blocking the entry and exit points of GP premises illegally, hindering the free movement of our employees and customers. Grameenphone respects the law of the land and considers the safety and security of its employees and customers as its highest priority. Law enforcement agencies have deployed personnel around GP premises to protect individuals and property."

Former BSEC chairman

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decision last week to cancel the passports of nine individuals, including Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam.

In early September last year, the ACC launched a formal inquiry into allegations of corruption against Shibli, accusing Shibli and eight former and present BSEC officials of amassing approximately Tk 1,000 crore worth of wealth through the abuse of power.

300 lockers

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Deposit Receipt (FDR) in the sealed box.

It was also discovered that other Bangladesh Bank officials have sealed safe deposit boxes in the vault, raising suspicions that these may contain undisclosed assets as well.

The ACC is currently investigating multiple allegations, including money laundering, against various central bank officials.

Earlier in the day, the ACC requested BB Governor Ahsan H Mansur to temporarily freeze all the lockers inside the security vaults belonging to the central bank officials, Saemuzzaman said.

The party advocates increasing the budget allocation for healthcare to a minimum 5 percent of GDP, up from the current 2.3 percent, to improve the

better health education to meet global standards, partnerships with friendly countries to facilitate the technology and knowledge exchange.

The BNP also addressed the need for private health sector reforms, proposing the establishment of reasonable service prices through stakeholder discussions. Private hospitals and diagnostic centres will be required to follow international standards, such as ISO certification, to ensure quality.

The party advocates increasing the budget allocation for healthcare to a minimum 5 percent of GDP, up from the current 2.3 percent, to improve the

Tigers' CT camp starts a day after BPL final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team will start their preparation camp ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy from February 8, a day after the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) cricket operations officials confirmed.

"The camp will start from the 8th and all 15 players [of the Champions Trophy squad] have been called up for the camp. A few other bowlers would assist during the camp. Two of our coaching staff are already in Dhaka and one more will return soon," BCB's cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees informed.

The camp will begin with fitness drills as part of players' physical performance assessment at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka.

The tournament is slated to begin from February 19 in Karachi while the Tigers will begin their campaign on February 20 in Dubai against India.

Bangladesh have been placed in Group A alongside India, Pakistan and New Zealand.



Opener Mohammad Naim was one of the few cricketers who participated in Khulna Tigers' individual practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, preparing for their Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) Qualifier 2 against Chittagong Kings at the same venue today. Naim, who has been enjoying a purple patch in the tournament as he tops the run-getters' chart with 492 runs in 13 innings at an average of 44.72, will look to achieve a personal milestone while helping his side to the all-important final. Naim needs to score 25 runs more to leapfrog Najmul Hossain Shanto, whose 516 runs in 15 innings for Sylhet Strikers in 2022-23 remains the highest by a Bangladeshi batter in a single BPL season. Rilee Rossouw holds the record for most runs by a cricketer in a single edition of BPL, scoring 558 runs for Rangpur Riders during the 2018-19 edition.

PHOTO: KHULNA TIGERS

SHORT CORNER

Mbappe out for Real Madrid cup game

Carlo Ancelotti said Kylian Mbappe would miss Real Madrid's Copa del Rey quarterfinal against Leganes on Wednesday with a bruised calf.

Mbappe was hacked down by Espanyol's Carlos Romero during their 1-0 La Liga defeat on Saturday with the defender avoiding a red card and going on to score the winning goal against the league leaders. "He has a bruised calf, he trained normally but tomorrow he will not be available for the game," Ancelotti said on Tuesday.



'I am the most complete player ever'

Al Nassr's Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo has never been shy of making grand statements about his greatness and has declared himself the best ever to play the game of football many times. In a recent interview on Spanish TV

Channel La Sexta, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner once again placed himself above all the past greats and gave himself the title of the 'most complete player ever'.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

'No one remembers No. 2'

Chittagong Kings pacer Khaled Ahmed has remained almost stoic in the face of personal tragedy and emerged as his team's highest wicket-taker in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) with 19 wickets. The 32-year-old pacer will be leading his team's charge in today's second qualifier against Khulna Tigers. But before that, in an interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi on Tuesday, he talked about the BPL, his experience with Chittagong and much more. Here are the excerpts:



DS: How would you describe your journey in this year's BPL so far?

Khaled Ahmed: The journey started from NCL [first-class tournament]. Since I wasn't picked for the West Indies tour, I aimed to do well in domestic games. The target was to become champions [with Sylhet Division] which we accomplished. I also thank the BCB for organising the NCL T20. I practiced bowling some deliveries there which I later used in the BPL. If I hadn't tested them out in domestic cricket first, I wouldn't have bowled them in BPL. The tournament has also gone well so far but I would like to take the team to the final and then maybe I will feel satisfied.

DS: What was your target in this BPL?

KA: My target was to be economical. Everyone wants to be the best because no one remembers number two. Taskin [Ahmed] became the highest wicket-taker [25 wickets] and everyone remembers him. Throughout the tournament he sent down some of the best deliveries I have seen him bowl. If catches weren't dropped, he would have gotten more. Same way, I also tried to focus on being number one. Maybe I won't catch up to him in terms of wickets but he got seven wickets in a game, so you never know.

DS: How's your experience been with Shaun Tait?

KA: I grew up watching Tait and Shaobir Akhter. I even told Tait that he was my favourite since childhood. He texted me when I was in India [with the Bangladesh

team] and told me that he has picked me [from the draft] and watched me play.

He motivates me. I knew I was doing well but I asked him how to be the best. I have worked on yorkers and am more confident now. More importantly I understand what to bowl to particular batters. He talked about keeping things simple. He for instance would say that if bouncers are working, stick to it. If you look to try too many things, your focus waivers.

DS: You suffered a personal tragedy during the BPL. How did you cope with it?

KA: When I picked up the phone after the match in Chittagong, I learned that my mother's pulse was weakening and then she left us. I came to the team hotel and informed the team and everyone including the owner came by. They told me to go home. There was no flight or transport available at that late hour. They provided transportation for me to go to Sylhet.

If I had stayed at home, I would still be reeling. So, my friends and brothers suggested that I should head back to the team. I spoke with the management and said I wanted to return. My mother is always watching me, wherever she is now. I always pray and think of her wherever I go.

DS: Has the payment issues this BPL affected you?

KA: Actually, I don't like speaking about this. While playing in a tournament, my focus is on cricket and that's where I like to keep my focus. Obviously, the team management is doing their best to pay everyone in due time.

Sunny reported for suspect action

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong King's left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny has been flagged by the umpires for suspect bowling action in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), after teammate Aliss Al Islam faced the same fate.

Sunny's action was questioned by on-field umpires Masudur Rahman Mukul and Ravendra Wimalasiri in Chittagong's final league phase match against Fortune Barishal on Saturday.

"He will have to go for an assessment inside seven days," BPL technical committee's chairman Raqibul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Raqibul also informed that there is no restriction in Sunny bowling in the tournament, meaning he could feature for Chittagong King's qualifier match against the Khulna Tigers today.

Sunny, who has played 16 ODIs and 10 T20Is for Bangladesh, had received a ban for faulty bowling action during the 2016 ICC T20 World Cup before he overturned the ban three months later.



Sumaya claims receiving 'death and rape threats'

SPORTS REPORTER

"Over the past few days, I have received countless death and rape threats—words that have shattered me in ways I never imagined," Bangladesh women's team footballer Matsushima Sumaya wrote on Facebook yesterday, detailing the abuse she is receiving for her involvement in the ongoing players' protest against head coach Peter Butler.

"I don't know how long it will take for me to heal from this trauma, but I do know that no one should have to go through this just for following their dreams," she added.

Sumaya is one of the 18 national team players who have boycotted the ongoing training camp, demanding the removal of Butler. Last Wednesday, the protesting players submitted a three page letter to the media, outlining their grievances against Butler.

In response, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) formed a special committee to investigate the matter. The players told the committee that Sumaya penned the letter but a member of the committee told The Daily Star on Monday that they feel some external forces had influenced its creation.

BHF ready to face controversy for hockey's progress

SPORTS REPORTER

Ahead of the national hockey team's preparation camp for April's AHF Cup, the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) has taken its first step by appointing a three member coaching panel on Monday. However, the decision to exclude veteran player Rasel Mahmud Jimmy from the upcoming fitness test has sparked debate within the country's hockey fraternity.

Citing concerns over his age, the BHF sidelined 38-year-old Jimmy from the fitness test (Cooper test) on February 20, while around 60 players were selected. The preparation camp is set to begin on March 1 at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, with the AHF Cup scheduled in Jakarta from April 17-25.

In an effort to bring professionalism to the team, the BHF's newly formed ad-hoc committee interviewed eight of the 11 shortlisted candidates before selecting the coaching panel. New contracts aim to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the coaches and the federation.

Asked about the exclusion of Jimmy, the committee's general secretary Lt Col (rtd) Riazul Hasan said, "We have been given the responsibility by emphasising development. If we talk about development, it consists of both the present and future."

"Besides, the international calendar is going to be busy in the coming days, so we have to think about the younger players."

"It doesn't mean we don't prefer senior players. We also have many senior players in the list, but Jimmy is no doubt much more senior than them. If you look at other countries like India and Pakistan, the average age of their players is between 30 and 33, because much older players can't cope physically at the international level."

The ad-hoc committee is prepared to shoulder the controversy for the sake of hockey's development.

"What we have tried to do is development. Perhaps, in striving for development, there will always be some sacrifices that have to be made at times. At times, you have to get into some controversies," Hasan said.

"As long as we are here, we will do what we think is best for the development of hockey. If controversy arises from it, we will shoulder it because we don't have any individual interests here," added the former hockey player.

Asked about the possibility of Jimmy retiring officially at the AHF Cup, setting a precedent, Hasan admitted, "Personally, I haven't thought about it this way," adding that their primary focus had been securing funds for the preparation camp. However, joint secretary Kazi Abu Jafar Tapan said the committee may consider the option and discuss it further.

City splash big in winter transfer window

Manchester City easily topped the spending charts in the winter transfer window, which closed on February 3, with the signing of Spanish midfielder Nico Gonzalez on Deadline Day to complete a busy month for the ailing Premier League champions. While City splashed the cash, Premier League leaders Liverpool made no signings and second-placed Arsenal also failed to bolster their forward line despite injuries to Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka. Elsewhere, many other significant big names switched teams, including Neymar, who returned to his childhood club Santos from Saudi Pro League's Al Hilal.

BIG SPENDERS (TOP TEN)

Manchester City (England): **217m**
Al Nassr (Saudi Arabia): **77m**
Stade Rennais (France): **74.65m**
PSG (France): **70m**
Al Ahli (Saudi Arabia): **59m**
RB Leipzig (Germany): **55.5m**
Como (Italy): **49.20m**
Brighton (England): **48.74m**
Palmeiras (Brazil): **36.65m**
Zenit (Russia): **33m**

NOTABLE TRANSFERS

ENGLAND	BRAZIL
Manchester City: Nico Gonzalez (from Porto, 60m); Omar Marmoush (from Frankfurt, 70m); Vitor Reis (from Palmeiras, 36m); Abdukodir Khusanov (from Lens, 40m)	Santos: Neymar (from Al-Hilal, free agent)
Manchester United: Patrick Dorgu (from Lecce, 30m)	GERMANY
Aston Villa: Marcus Rashford (Man Utd, on loan); Donyell Malen (from Dortmund, 24m); Marco Asensio (from PSG, on loan)	Bayer Leverkusen: Emiliano Buendia (from Villa, on loan)
FRANCE	Borussia Dortmund: Carney Chukwuemeka (from Chelsea, on loan)
PSG: Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (from Napoli, 70m)	ITALY:
TURKEY:	Galatasaray: Alvaro Morata (from Milan, on loan)
SAUDI ARABIA:	AI Nassr: Jhon Duran (from Aston Villa, 77m)
SPAIN	Real Betis: Antony (from Man Utd, on loan)

** Spendings shown in Euros



GP staffers kept locked inside office for 13hrs Ex-employees block entrance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dozens of former Grameenphone employees staged a protest at GP House, the company's headquarters in the capital's Bashundhara area, claiming they were illegally dismissed and denied their rightful benefits.

The protesters kept the building's entrance blocked, preventing hundreds of employees from leaving the Grameenphone office until 12:00am today.

"We are going out of GP House now. The protesters have left the scene," a high official of Grameenphone, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star at around 12:15am today.

However, he could not give any more detail.

They alleged that Grameenphone ignored a government directive and, instead of distributing 5 percent of its profits to workers, filed a writ petition with the High Court.

Despite a court ruling and ongoing protests, the company only paid the

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A group of former beneficiaries of the government's family card programme for low-income people show their now-invalid cards during a demonstration in the Kaunia area of Barishal city yesterday. The Trading Corporation of Bangladesh revoked the cards that allowed them to buy essentials at subsidised prices. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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Free healthcare for all if BNP voted to power

Says the party, proposes allocating 5% of GDP for health sector

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has proposed allocating at least five percent of the Gross Domestic Product to reform the health sector, as part of a set of suggestions it unveiled yesterday.

The proposals also include recruiting "rural health assistants" to increase rural employment, and introducing a "health card" programme to provide free medical treatment for everyone.

These recommendations were presented as part of the party's draft of the "National Health Sector Reform Proposal" at a press conference held at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharraf said that if the BNP comes to power, it will ensure free healthcare for everyone, similar to the system in the UK.

"If the BNP is elected to form the government, the party will implement all its reform proposals," said Mosharraf, who was the health minister during the BNP-led four-party alliance government's tenure.

"We don't believe an interim government will be able to implement these reforms, as it will not have the time."

In line with "Universal Health Coverage" for comprehensive health protection, the BNP has suggested health sector reforms in the 26th clause of its 31-point outline, which the party describes as a plan to repair the state structure.

Mosharraf outlined the health plan, which includes five dozen proposals classified as short-term, medium-term, and long-term initiatives.

In the short-term plan (1-3 years), the BNP focuses on strengthening primary healthcare services, where the key initiatives include recruiting a required number of "rural health assistants", with 70 percent women, upgrading upazila health complexes to 100-bed facilities, equipping hospitals with tools like X-ray, ECG, and ultrasound machines.

The medium-term (1-5 years) proposals include introducing a

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SEDITION CASE
HC rejects Chinmoy's bail petition

Asks authorities to explain why he should not be granted bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday did not grant bail to Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, a former ISKCON leader, in a sedition case lodged over disrespecting the national flag.

The court, however, issued a rule asking the state to explain in two weeks why Chinmoy should not be granted bail in this case.

The law secretary, home secretary, and deputy commissioner of Chattogram have been named as respondents in the rule.

The bench of Justice Md Ataur Rahman and Justice Md Ali Reza issued the rule after holding a hearing on a petition filed by Chinmoy seeking bail in the case.

Chinmoy cannot get released from jail following the HC order, his principal lawyer, Advocate Apurba

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AFP, Beijing

China yesterday said it would impose tariffs on imports of US energy, vehicles and equipment, firing a return salvo in an escalating trade war between the world's two biggest economies.

US President Donald Trump on Saturday announced sweeping measures against major trade partners Canada and Mexico, with goods from China hit with an additional 10 percent tariff on top of the duties they already endure.

Minutes after they came into effect, Beijing unveiled levies of 15 percent on imports of coal and liquefied natural gas from the United States, while crude oil, agricultural machinery, big engined vehicles, and pickup trucks face 10 percent duties.

China is a major market for US energy exports and according to Beijing customs data, imports of oil, coal and LNG totalled more than \$7 billion last year.

But that is dwarfed by China's imports from more friendly powers such as Russia, from which it purchased \$94 billion worth last year.

Beijing said the measures were in response to the "unilateral tariff hike" by Washington.

The US decision, China said, "seriously violates World Trade Organization rules, does nothing to resolve its own problems, and disrupts normal economic and trade cooperation between China and the United States".

With that in mind, Beijing said it would file

US-China trade war escalates

Beijing imposes tariffs on US energy, autos

a complaint with the WTO over the "malicious" levies.

Alongside its tariffs, China announced a probe into US tech giant Google and the addition of US fashion group PVH Corp. -- which owns Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein -- and biotech giant Illumina to a list of "unreliable entities".

Beijing also unveiled fresh export controls on rare metals and chemicals including tungsten, tellurium, bismuth, and molybdenum, used in a range of industrial appliances.

"I think the retaliation is not aggressive, as China only targets some US products, in response to the US tariff on all China's exports to the US," Zhang Zhiwei of Pinpoint Asset Management said in a note.

"This is likely only the beginning of a long process for the two countries to negotiate."

Trump has said his tariffs aimed to punish countries for failing to halt flows of illegal migrants and drugs including fentanyl into the United States.

But he said Monday that he planned a call with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in the next 24 hours.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had both earlier struck last-minute deals with Trump to tighten border measures against the flow of migrants and fentanyl into the United States, leading to a 30-day pause on threatened tariffs.

Former BSEC chairman Shibli Rubayat arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested Prof Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam, the former chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC).

He was arrested around 10:30 from Dhammandi in connection with a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), said Rezaul Karim Mallick, additional commissioner of the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, while speaking to The Daily Star.

Shibli, a faculty member of Dhaka University, resigned from his position on August 10 last year, just five days after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government in a mass uprising.

He was initially appointed as the chairman of the BSEC in 2020 and was reappointed for a four-year term in May last year.

This latest development follows the government's

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Beximco lays off another 8,000 workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Embattled Beximco Limited has announced another round of layoffs citing a lack of work orders, a decision that affects nearly 8,000 workers across five manufacturing units in its industrial park in Gazipur.

The layoffs at Beximco Yarn 2, Textiles, Denim, Knitting and RR Washing will become effective today, according to layoff notices issued by the Beximco authorities yesterday.

The workers will be paid salaries as per the labour law: half of their basic salaries and some other benefits during the 45-day layoff period, the Beximco authorities said.

Labour Secretary AHM Shafiquzzaman told The Daily Star that the laid-off workers will be placed in various factories after Beximco settles their dues.

"We are not receiving any work orders from local manufacturers, leaving us with no choice but to declare layoffs," said Osman Kaiser Chowdhury, managing director of Beximco Limited.

Earlier on December 15 last year, the labour and employment ministry advised Beximco, whose vice-chairman Salman F Rahman has been in jail since August 13 last year, to proceed with the layoffs as the government could no longer provide indefinite financial assistance, he said.

"We requested that four factories under Beximco Limited remain open to meet work orders from local manufacturers. But those orders never materialised."

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After the tumultuous days of July, August and the subsequent period of uncertainty, the import of goods has picked up pace ahead of Ramadan, which is less than a month away. The photo of workers unloading goods at a jetty was taken at Anu Majhir Ghat in Chattogram city yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

19-year-old girl dies by suicide

Family says it happened after she was assaulted by a man in public

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A 19-year-old college student died by suicide at her home on Monday night after she was physically assaulted by a man at a restaurant in Bauphal of Patuakhali, family members and police said yesterday.

Iti Das was a student of literature at BM College in Barishal. She used to live with her parents and younger sister in the Daspara area of Bauphal upazila.

Her grieving father Samir Das said she went to a nearby temple for Saraswati Puja around midday.

After puja, Iti and a friend of hers went to a

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