



Cooking oil goes missing from grocery shelves, again

B1



Ukraine captures 909 Russian troops over Kursk ops

P7



The misdirected outrage over the women's football team strike

P9



The state and its human rights obligations

P10

## Dhanmondi 32 remnants being torn down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of protesters were holding a feast at Dhanmondi 32 as remains of the demolished house of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were being taken away last night.

As of 11:45pm, around 500-600 people were seen around the house. Many were curious onlookers; some of them went looking into the underground of the building.

At least 100 people were on the premises. Some were manually dismantling the structure, taking apart bricks and rods using sledgehammers.

A fire was seen on the top floor of an adjacent building around 10:30pm.

In the afternoon, the protesters slaughtered a cow and the preparations for a feast began by the night.

Using loudspeakers, the protesters demanded justice for all the wrongs done by the Awami League during its 15-year rule, including the execution of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders on war crimes charges.

No law enforcers were seen around the spot.

The protest was sparked by an announcement of an online programme where deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina was slated to speak.

The protesters launched a Facebook event titled "Bulldozer March", which brought crowds to Dhanmondi 32 at 7:30pm on Wednesday. By 9:30pm, the building was set ablaze.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Crowds gather at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum lying in ruins in Dhanmondi 32 yesterday. The demolition of the building by protesters began on Wednesday night and continued till late last night.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Vandalism, arson spread

Protesters torch AL leaders' houses, destroy murals, busts of Bangabandhu in over 20 dists

STAR REPORT

Houses of Awami League leaders were attacked and torched, and murals and busts of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were demolished and defaced in nearly two dozen districts yesterday.

A day after the Dhanmondi 32 residence of Sheikh Mujib was torched and torn down, protesters attacked, ransacked, and set fire to the house of Obaidul Quader, general secretary of AL and former road, transport and bridges minister, in Noakhali's Companiganj.

During the attack on the house in Bora Rajapur Mohalla area around 1:00pm, the two-storey building and tin-roofed rooms of Quader's younger brother Abdul Quader Mirza, president of Companiganj AL, and Shahadat Mirza, former mayor of Basurhat municipality, were also ransacked.

A car parked in front of the house was also torched.

No one was home then.

In Rajshahi, a group of protesters set fire to the three-storey house of Shahriar Alam, former state minister for foreign affairs, in Chaksingha Mohalla in Bagha upazila, reports UNB.

Witnesses said over 100 people from Bagha and Charchhat upazilas went there on motorbikes and set the house on fire around noon.

Firefighters doused the flames around 2:00pm.

Protesters also attacked and torched the house of AL leader Abu Sayeed in Shalgaria village of Pabna yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## DUBAI PROPERTIES 2 rejoinders, our reply

Mohammad Mosaddak Ali, chairman of ntv, and Mohammad Obaidul Karim, chairman of Orion Group, have sent two separate rejoinders to our story titled "Parking wealth under the Dubai sun" published on January 7, 2025. Both rejoinders essentially confirm our findings and we stand by our report. However, we are still publishing their rejoinders in full, followed by our response to the points they raised in their rejoinders.

**Mosaddak Ali's Rejoinder**  
Mosaddak Ali's rejoinder, signed by an unnamed individual on behalf of the ntv chairman, is in Bangladesh. Below is a rough translation: "In your widely circulated newspaper, The Daily Star, a false and misleading report titled "Parking wealth under the Dubai Sun" was published involving me. I strongly condemn and protest the publication of this report without any verification."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## BTRC's bid to regain independence

Draft ordinance aimed at rolling back AL's drastic changes to telecom law

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has come up with a draft ordinance that would bring sweeping changes to the law, paving the way for the telecom regulator to win back its independence taken away by the previous regime through amendments.

The original Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2001 gave the BTRC several powers, including granting licences, managing the radio spectrum, setting tariffs, regulating telecom services and resolving disputes.

In 2010, the Awami League government amended the law in a way that necessitated prior government approval for issuing licences, spectrum allocation and tariff approval.

The ministry was given sole authority over licensing, tariffs, services and spectrum approvals for all operators, effectively reducing the BTRC to what its current chairman Md Emdad ul Bari termed a "rubber stamp".

The regulator needs a certain level of freedom as it acts as a referee, he said.

In Bangladesh, there is a deep conflict of interest as the ministry holds authority over the commission, as the secretary of

**"The regulator needs a certain level of freedom as it acts as a referee. So, if the ministry becomes the regulator of the regulator, how will the commission ensure fair competition?"**

Md Emdad ul Bari BTRC Chairman

the telecom ministry is the chairman of the board of directors of six state-owned companies.

"So, if the ministry becomes the regulator of the regulator, how will the commission ensure fair competition? A backdoor was created when pre-approval from the government was added to the law."

This led to anarchy in the licensing regime – where a single company holds licences at multiple layers, and numerous unnecessary licences have been created in the telecom sector through this backdoor.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Prof Yunus to visit Aynaghars at the soonest  
Says CA's press wing; local, foreign press to accompany

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will soon visit the secret detention centres, commonly known as Aynaghars, where victims of enforced disappearance were held in inhuman conditions during Sheikh Hasina's rule, the advisory council decided yesterday.

"Both local and foreign media will accompany him," said a statement from the chief adviser's press wing, issued after a meeting of the advisory council at the Chief Adviser's Office.

Earlier on January 19, the chief adviser's press wing in a statement said Prof Yunus will soon visit the secret detention facilities.

"The incidents uncovered by your [the Commission of Enquiry on Enforced Disappearance] investigation are chilling. I will soon visit Aynaghars," the statement quoted Prof Yunus as telling the Commission members.

That visit was later slated for February 3.

However, in a letter to chief adviser's principal secretary on January 29, the Commission expressed its "inability" to take part in the visit if victims of enforced disappearance were not allowed to join in.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



The father of Jihad Hossain, a student who was shot dead in the capital's Jatrabari area on August 5 last year, holds aloft a photo of his son. Families of the July uprising martyrs yesterday blocked the Shahbagh intersection, demanding justice and state recognition for the sacrifices their loved ones made.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



KSRM

শেকড় থেকে শিখিবে

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government last night said it would firmly resist any attempts by individuals and groups to vandalise and set fire to various institutions and establishments across the country.

A statement from the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said, "If any attempts are made to destabilise the country through provocative activities, law enforcement agencies will take immediate and strict action against the responsible individuals and groups and bring the culprits to justice."

"The interim government is prepared to protect the security of citizens' lives and property."

Earlier in the day, the press wing in another statement said the "vandalism" at Dhanmondi

## Stop Hasina from making false remarks

Dhaka tells Delhi, summons Indian envoy to lodge protest

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has lodged a strong protest against the "false and fabricated statements" made by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, saying that those statements have been instigating instability in Bangladesh.

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned acting high commissioner of India in Dhaka, Pawan Badhe, and handed over a protest note, conveying deep concern, disappointment, and serious reservation. "Such statements are hurting the sentiments of the people in Bangladesh," it said.

It also emphasised that such activities by her are considered a hostile act towards Bangladesh and are not conducive to the efforts at establishing a healthy relationship between the two countries.

"She has been continuously provoking the students... If she restrained herself from making such remarks, these incidents might not have taken place," Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain told a press briefing at his ministry yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## EKUSHEY PADAK 14 individuals, nat'l women's football team get the award

UNB, Dhaka

The government has announced the names of 14 eminent citizens and the Bangladesh women's national football team for the Ekushey Padak 2025 in recognition of their contributions to their respective fields.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs revealed the names in a press release yesterday.

The women's football team was selected for the prestigious prize in recognition of their contribution to the country's sports sector.

Eminent poet Helal Hafiz (posthumous) and Shahidul Zahir (Md. Shahidul Haque) (posthumous) will receive the award for their contributions to language and literature.

In the field of arts and culture, the awardees include Azizur Rahman (posthumous) for film, Ustad Nirad Baran Barua (posthumous) for music, Ferdous Ara for music, Nasir Ali Mamun for photography, and Rokeya Sultana for painting.

Mahfuz Ullah (posthumous) and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



**CENTRE:** Locals yesterday morning continued tearing down the Sheikh Bari, which was already half demolished the night before, with hammers and other handheld tools. The photo was taken in Khulna city. **LEFT TOP:** Sudha Sadan, the residence of Sheikh Hasina's late husband MA Wazed Miah, was set ablaze around 11:00pm on Wednesday. **LEFT BOTTOM:** Books and other items being burned at the top floor of the extended building of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi 32. **RIGHT TOP:** A woman shielded by some youths from a mob assaulting her for allegedly expressing support for the Awami League in Dhanmondi 32 yesterday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

## Dhanmondi 32 remnants being torn down

FROM PAGE 1

Shortly before midnight, at least one crane and an excavator arrived at the scene. By 2:00am yesterday, parts of the building were razed to the ground.

The excavators left the scene by around 11:00am yesterday, leaving the house to be demolished manually.

More than half of the building was torn down by that time, while a number of people were tearing apart the rest of the structure with hammers and digging bars.

The protesters also started razing down the building behind Bangabandhu's residence. This building housed an art gallery and was an extension of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Another building in the adjacent plot with the offices of several Awami League outfits was also being demolished. By noon, most of the inner walls had been torn down, with the main structure still standing.

Thousands of people from all walks of life thronged the site. Most of them were visitors who took photos, selfies and videos, with the demolished house and hoisted flags in the background. Some were chanting slogans intermittently.

Some other groups of low-income people primarily focused on tearing out the pipes and other metal fittings of the buildings.

They were taking away anything with a resale value, including books. Piles of the materials on the road were being loaded onto rickshaws or vans. The rest of the rubble remained untouched.

A young man, wearing a flag bandana, walked out of the art gallery building with a book on Sheikh Russell, Mujib's youngest son killed with most members of the family on August 15, 1975.

"I found it inside. There were a few but people took them all. You won't find any now," he said.

Sirajul, a resident of Hazaribagh, was seen loading various items onto

his van. "I'll sell them to scrap dealers. What else can I do? Everyone is taking things, so I took whatever I could find," he said.

Sujan, who was cutting rods from the partially demolished building, said, "They are demolishing it, so we are taking whatever we can. Whatever we get is a gain."

By around 12:30pm, a group gathered outside the house with a microphone and chanted slogans in favour of the 2024 student-led mass uprising and against the fallen Awami League regime.

The slogans included: "Delhi Na Dhaka? Dhaka, Dhaka! (Delhi or Dhaka? Dhaka, Dhaka!)"; "Bottrish Na Chhotrish? Chhotrish, Chhotrish! (Thirty-two or thirty-six? Thirty-six, thirty-six!)"; "Ekta Ekta League Dhor, Dhoira Dhoira Jobai Kor (Catch League members, one by one, and execute them)"; "Dalali Na Mukti? Mukti, Mukti! (Brokerage or freedom? Freedom, freedom!)"; "Khuni Hasina Fashi Chai (We demand execution of murderer Hasina)"; "Amar Bhai Kobore, Khuni Keno Baire? (My brother is in the grave, why is the murderer free?)"; and "Sobkhane Khobor De, Mujibbader Kober De (Spread the word to everyone, bury Mujibism!)."

Jihadul Islam, one of the participants, said, "Where is the arrogance of power now? Where is the pain of losing loved ones? People couldn't even walk past this house during the day. Today, those same people are demolishing the house, taking away bricks as they please. I hope future leadership will learn from the downfall of this autocracy."

Meanwhile, some people beat a man and a woman in front of the Dhanmondi 32 residence between 11:00am and 11:30am. The identity of the victims could not be confirmed. Eyewitnesses said they were beaten for chanting "Joy Bangla" and speaking in favour of the AL.

After the injured man fell to the

ground following the assault around 11:00am, several people took him away from the scene and place him on a rickshaw.

Shortly afterwards, the woman began speaking in favour of the AL, witnesses said. She reportedly referred to the house as "Apar Bari (sister's house)", which led to an argument between her and the angry crowd.

Subsequently, the crowd beat and humiliated her.

A journalist who witnessed the incident told The Daily Star that the woman was taken towards the main road. She pleaded with the crowd not to hit her. Later, a few other women helped her onto a rickshaw.

Earlier, the overnight demonstration at the site had resumed after a brief pause, with hundreds gathering at the location.

### SUDHA SADAN

The "Bulldozer March" programme was not limited to Dhanmondi 32. After launching the demolition there, protesters set fire to Sudha Sadan, Hasina's residence at Dhanmondi 5, around 10:45pm on Wednesday.

The fire set on Wednesday night was still burning in some parts of the building yesterday morning. By noon, despite the intense heat inside, people were removing rods, sofas, chairs, tables, partially burnt furniture, air conditioners, refrigerators, and other items.

Saleha Akhtar was loading various items onto a rickshaw from the front of the house. "Everything is burnt. Many people came early in the morning and took whatever they could. I also took whatever I found. If I can sell it, I might get some money," she said.

For some time in the past, the Awami League had offices in this house. It remained locked afterwards, with Hasina visiting the house on some occasions. Throughout her tenure, a large number of security personnel were deployed to protect the house.

offices of AL, Jatiya Party, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal in the town last night.

Demonstrators also set fire to several properties, including the Feni district AL office and the houses of ex-MPs Lt Gen (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury, and Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury.

In Thakurgaon, protesters defaced five murals of Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Russell, and Sheikh Moni in the town.

Bangabandhu's murals were vandalised at four places in Kurigram yesterday.

In Manikganj, protesters defaced Bangabandhu Square in front of the deputy commissioner's office yesterday evening.

The front part of the house of former food minister and Naogaon AL General Secretary Sadhan Chandra Majumder was demolished and the house was torched around 5:30pm.

In Habiganj, Bangabandhu's mural, located in front of the deputy commissioner's office, was vandalised last night.

In Patuakhali, a mural of Sheikh Mujib near a Rab camp was defaced by protesters yesterday morning, said witnesses.

Another mural of Mujib at the Brahmanbaria Government College was vandalised yesterday afternoon.

Two murals of Mujib were demolished with an excavator in Boda of Panchagarh.

In Khulna's Digholia upazila, demonstrators vandalised the guest house and other structures on reportedly Sheikh Hasina's familial land.

On Wednesday night, protesters demolished houses of AL leaders and defaced murals of Sheikh Mujib in at least 10 districts, according to our correspondents.

The districts are Khulna, Kushtia, Chattogram, Sylhet, Rangpur, Barishal, Mymensingh, Chuadanga, Narayanganj, and Pabna.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.]

## Prof Yunus to visit

FROM PAGE 1

The Commission sought to take some of the victims to some of these secret prisons, including the Taskforce for Interrogation Complex located inside the Rab headquarters and the Crime Prevention Company 3 unit of Rab 2, said the letter signed by Commission Secretary Ashikul Khabir.

"Accordingly, we had communicated with the victims and prepared them given the sensitivity of the matter," said the letter, adding that it was agreed in principle that their presence is crucial.

During the previous visits, the Commission was not allowed to take photos of these secret prison cells, and so it is extremely important for the victims to be present during the inspection for identification purposes, it said.

Without identification, it would not be possible to ensure justice for the victims, it added.

Under the circumstances, the Commission "expresses its inability to visit the detention centres (the so-called Aynagar)" since the visit would not be fruitful without some of the victims being present there, it said.

"The Commission will ensure its participation only if the victims are allowed in," the letter concluded.

The advisory council's decision about Prof Yunus's forthcoming visit came a week after the letter. However, it is not clear if the victims of enforced disappearance would be allowed in.

Comments from the Commission members were not immediately available.

## Will firmly resist arson, vandalism

FROM PAGE 1

32 on Wednesday was "unexpected and undesirable".

The incident was a manifestation of anger triggered by Sheikh Hasina's provocative remarks against the July uprising, said the Chief Adviser's Press Wing in a statement yesterday.

It said over the last six months there had been no attack there. "This incident happened on Wednesday night over the statement of fugitive Sheikh Hasina, which has two aspects."

"By making irrelevant, absurd, and hateful remarks about the martyrs of the mass uprising, fugitive Sheikh Hasina has shown disregard and disrespect to the July uprising."

Secondly, despite having to flee amid the uprising, Hasina continues to speak in the same threatening tone as she did while holding on to power through corruption, terrorism, and repression, the statement said.

"She is relentlessly attacking the wounds of the uprising in people's minds and threatening every person who participated in it," it said, adding that the reaction to her violent behaviour caused the incident of vandalism.

"Sheikh Hasina has threatened to create instability in the country," said the statement.

The government remains highly vigilant in protecting the lives and properties of the people. Law enforcement agencies are making every possible effort to bring the situation under control.

If Hasina, accused of crimes against humanity, refrains from making statements, such incidents can be avoided in the future, it said.

"The government expects that India will not allow its territory to be used for activities that create instability in Bangladesh and will not give Sheikh Hasina the scope to speak," it added.

"The government will examine what legal actions can be taken against those involved in inciting unrest," the statement said.

## 14 individuals

FROM PAGE 1

Mahmudur Rahman will receive the award for their contributions to the field of journalism. The latter has also been mentioned for his contribution to the field of human rights.

Shahidul Alam was named for contributions in the fields of culture and education while Dr Niaz Zaman for education.

Mehedi Hasan Khan will receive the award for science and technology, while Mohammad Yusuf Chowdhury (posthumous) will be honoured for social service.

Meanwhile, Moidul Hasan will receive the Ekushey Padak for research.

On the review of agreements signed with India during the Awami

## BTRC's bid to regain

FROM PAGE 1

On top of that, the pre-approval requirement causes unnecessary delays, creating a major hurdle for investors, Bari added.

Subsequently on October 22 last year, a meeting on the draft of the "Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2024" was held under the chairmanship of the secretary of the Posts and Telecommunications Division.

In the meeting, it was decided that the BTRC would prepare and submit the draft to the Posts and Telecommunications Division.

Following this, the BTRC formed a committee to draft a law aimed at expanding the scope of the telecommunications sector, modernising existing telecom regulations and aligning them with internationally recognised standards.

The BTRC has already sent the draft amendments to the ministry on January 14.

In the draft, the BTRC also brought social media platforms, over-the-top (OTT) content providers, online streaming companies, and broadcasting companies under the act.

The BTRC also proposed repealing the section that mandates taking all necessary actions to establish its rights and fulfil its obligations under

international laws, regulations, or any international agreements related to telecommunications.

It sought to revert to the original mandate of the law that had bestowed this power upon the commission.

The 2010 amendments to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act significantly weakened the BTRC's independence, transforming it into an extension of the ministry, said Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, a telecom expert.

"This has not only deterred telecom investments but also led to regulatory actions heavily influenced by government revenue targets, rather than prioritising consumer interests. To ensure the public receives the best possible telecom services at optimal prices, it's imperative to reinstate the BTRC's independent status," he added.

The industry people welcomed the changes in the draft as they think the BTRC's independence will enable quicker services, enhancing efficiency in the sector.

"However, for matters such as licence grants, fines, cancellations and the appointment of administrators, we think there should be an arbitration clause to help operators resolve disputes between the regulator and the operators, ensuring checks and balances," said an official of an operator wishing anonymity.

## Stop Hasina from making false remarks

FROM PAGE 1

He said in reference to the vandalism at Dhanmondi 32 and houses and other establishments of Awami League leaders across the country.

Hasina delivered her speech through social media on Wednesday night. Around the same time, hundreds of protesters destroyed the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital's Dhanmondi and other installations linked to Awami League in different parts of the country.

Dhaka requested New Delhi to immediately take appropriate measures, in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding, to stop her from making such false, fabricated, and incendiary statements using social media and other communications while she is in India.

Earlier, Dhaka had written New Delhi to restrain Hasina, who fled to India after her ouster on August 5 amid a mass uprising, from making speeches.

In December last year, the ministry also had sent a diplomatic note to the Indian government, seeking her extradition as she faces numerous cases for killings during the mass uprising in July-August last year.

Asked what was India's response, the adviser said the Indian government stated that they were not providing any platform to Hasina, but she was using her own phone and making statements. The platforms she is using are based in other countries, including in the US.

Responding to a query as to why the government did not properly act to prevent the destruction on Wednesday night, Touhid said it took a few days to stabilise the law and order after the August 5 changeover, but the remarks of Hasina were so aggressive that the students could not take it.

"But you know the army personnel rushed there and contained the incident. It could have been worse otherwise," he said.

Dhaka's relations with New Delhi strained since Hasina was sheltered in India.

Touhid said Dhaka tried to remove the uneasiness and establish a balanced relationship with New Delhi that is mutually beneficial, and that effort is continuing.

He said Pakistan took an initiative to normalise relations with Bangladesh and "we accepted that initiative".

League regime, he said that the countries negotiate deals before signing, not afterwards.

"If both countries agree, they can go for review. Otherwise, you cannot cancel the deals. In the cases of commercial deals, parties can move to the courts in Singapore or the Netherlands. We don't want it to go that level," Touhid said.

He mentioned that power purchase deal with Indian company Adani was a bad deal, and the government will have to initiate if it wants to make any changes to the deal.

### INDIA REGRETS VANDALISM

India yesterday said the vandalism of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence at Dhanmondi 32 should be strongly condemned.

"It is regrettable that the historic residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a symbol of the heroic resistance of the people of Bangladesh against the forces of occupation and oppression, was destroyed on February 5, 2025," said Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for external affairs ministry, in response to queries of journalists in New Delhi.

He said, "All those who value the freedom struggle that nurtured Bangla identity and pride are aware of the importance of this residence for the national consciousness of Bangladesh."

"This act of vandalism should be strongly condemned."

### BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Touhid said Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar may visit Dhaka in April as part of improving bilateral relations, but did not detail the meeting agenda.

## Families of July martyrs block Shahbagh for 7hrs

Demand recognition, compensation; commuters suffer amid gridlocks

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dozens of family members of July uprising martyrs blocked the Shahbagh intersection for seven hours yesterday, demanding justice, recognition, and compensation.

Holding placards and photographs of the deceased, the protesters accused the interim government of neglecting their plight.

They also demanded that Sheikh Hasina, the ousted prime minister, be extradited from India and brought to trial.

The protesters outlined three key demands – state recognition of the martyrs, fair compensation for their families, and swift legal action against those responsible for the killings.

The blockade, which began at 11:00am, paralysed traffic in surrounding areas, including Mirpur Road, Moghbazar, and Bangla Motor, causing severe congestion.

Commuters were seen walking long distances to reach their destinations, while minor altercations erupted between protesters and frustrated motorists.

We have gone from door to door seeking justice, but we were treated with disrespect.

Abul Hasan  
Father of martyr Sharif Hossain

Mother of martyred Mehedi Hasan said, "The perpetrators are roaming free. Dr Yunus must fulfil his promises of delivering justice and recognition."

Another mother broke down, shouting, "They say it's a new Bangladesh, but those in power are only doing business with the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

The blockade was lifted at 6:00pm after Sarjis Alam, chief organiser of the Jatiya Nagorkit Committee, assured the protesters that he would facilitate a meeting with Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus by Sunday.

Sarjis also pledged to take the families to the July Smriti Foundation today to ensure they receive due recognition and compensation, said Biplob Hossain, father of martyr Mominul Islam Hridoy.

Abul Hasan, father of martyr Sharif Hossain, alleged, "We have gone from door to door seeking justice, but we were treated with disrespect."

Kamal Hawlader, father of martyr Sifat, alleged that they had repeatedly attempted to meet Dr Yunus but were denied access.

Mother of martyred Mehedi Hasan said, "The perpetrators are roaming free. Dr Yunus must fulfil his promises of delivering justice and recognition."

Another mother broke down, shouting, "They say it's a new Bangladesh, but those in power are only doing business with the



Family members of the martyrs of the July uprising staged a blockade at Shahbagh around 11:00am yesterday. They demanded official recognition of the martyrs, compensation for their families, and swift legal action against those behind the murders. The blockade, which caused immense sufferings to commuters and pedestrians, was called off around 6:00pm.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

### DEMOLITION OF DHANMONDI 32

## Rights group, left parties condemn arson, vandalism

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights group Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and some left-leaning parties yesterday condemned the ongoing incidents of vandalism and arson across the country, including the demolition of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi 32.

ASK in a statement said the incidents, which began on Wednesday evening and continued till yesterday, are considered direct violations of the rule of law, equal access to justice, and proper legal procedures.

Quoting media reports, it said a call to attack and destroy the Dhanmondi 32 residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was widely circulated on social media throughout the day, and later that evening, a group of people "under the guise of students" gathered from various parts of the country to engage in vandalism, looting, mayhem, and even arson.

"Despite the presence of a military team at the site, no significant action was taken, and the team eventually left the scene. As the unrest spread throughout the night, numerous other buildings, properties, and locations across the country were targeted," it said.

ASK emphasised that under international human rights laws, everyone is entitled to equal protection, the right to property, and access to proper legal procedures.

"It's the government's responsibility to ensure these rights, and the inability to do so can be seen as a sign of its failure."

The rights body called on the government and all relevant parties to

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

Stop! Be calm, justice and reform will come: Mahfuj

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahfuj Alam, an adviser to the interim government, has asked the protesters to "stop" following the demolition of Dhanmondi 32 residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and attacks on other Awami League-owned establishments across the country.

In a Facebook post around 12:20am, Mahfuj wrote: "Stop!"

"Be calm. Let the government do its work. Justice and reform will come. I know in this heated season, no one will tell you to stop. But even if you curse, I will say, stop."

He wrote that the people now have the opportunity to become politically educated. Now is the time for constructive politics. The time to show better alternatives. "To resist, it is necessary to train, mature, and calm ourselves."

He said this is a long-term struggle. "Prepare, don't act impulsively. Do

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

## Administrative void hampers DSCC operations

### HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has been operating without an administrator for over a month, severely disrupting its day-to-day activities.

Due to the absence of an administrator, many crucial administrative and financial decisions remain stalled, affecting the corporation's overall functionality, sources said.

DSCC Secretary Mohammad Bashirul Haque Bhuiyan has been carrying out the duties of the chief executive officer (CEO) as an additional responsibility for the past few months. In the absence of an administrator, he has also been overseeing routine activities.

The CEO position has been vacant since December 24 last year, following the transfer of the immediate past CEO, Md Mizanur Rahman, who went on PRL on December 31. Since then, the DSCC secretary has been performing dual roles.

The administrator's position has remained empty since Md Nazrul Islam was promoted to the rank of secretary on January 6. Nazrul had succeeded DSCC's first administrator, Dr Mohd Sher Ali, on August 20, 2024.

Several officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the absence of key personnel has left many files unattended, causing

stagnation in the city corporation's operations. Urgent activities, including eviction drives, contractor payments, immediate road repairs, and water body clean-ups to prevent mosquito breeding, have all been affected due to the lack of an administrator.

After assuming office, the interim government removed all mayors of 12 city corporations and 1,873 public representatives at three other tiers of local government.

The affected city corporations include Dhaka south, Dhaka north, Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barishal, Narayanganj, Cumilla, Rangpur, Gazipur, and Mymensingh.

It also removed mayors and administrators of all 330 municipalities, 61 zilla parishad chairmen, 493 out of 495 upazila parishad chairmen, and 988 vice-chairmen and women vice-chairmen of upazila parishes.

The government appointed administrators to carry out the responsibilities of the mayors of the city corporations and municipalities at that time.

Sabakat Sabris Sami, an HSC candidate, said mosquito menace has increased dramatically in recent weeks.

"We haven't seen any anti-mosquito drives in East Shewrapara for weeks. It is becoming extremely difficult to concentrate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

### FOREIGN TRIPS, FAKE DEGREES

## ACC to probe Hasina over irregularities

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has launched an investigation against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina over allegations of wasting hundreds of crores of taka from state funds on foreign trips and obtaining fake doctorate degrees.

ACC director general Md Akhtar Hossain disclosed the development at a press conference held at ACC headquarters yesterday. He said a formal decision was made to proceed with the inquiry after initial evidence was found during the ACC's intelligence investigation.

According to the ACC, Hasina used to charter Biman's aircraft for her foreign trips at the government's expense, accompanied by a large entourage.

She traveled to different countries using Biman's Boeing 777 and 787 aircraft. Between 2019 and mid-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

### Today Is The 1st Death Anniversary of



## SALMA ASGHAR RIZVI

(1st January 1950 - 7th February 2024)

The Alliance family and her sons Zaki Rizvi and Razi Rizvi and grandchildren Afraz, Ariana and Alazne request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to remember her in their prayers for the eternal peace of her soul.



Once the crowd dies down at Kamalapur Train Station, Yusuf takes a nap right next to his trolley, his only means of earning. Every day, he uses it to transport luggage for passengers at the station. Working around the clock, he earns around Tk 300-400 per day. The photo was taken yesterday evening.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## HELICOPTER GUNFIRE Probe into deaths of children: HC

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in the full text of a verdict has directed the government to take necessary initiatives about the children who died by gunshots fired from helicopter during the July uprising.

"We are of the opinion that the justice would be best served, if we dispose of the rule directing the respondent government to hold proper investigation on the matter specially on the babies/kids who died at the July-August, 2024 incident; even they were found innocent but even then, they have died by gun-shot fired from helicopter".

"... we direct the respondent government to take initiatives specially on the babies or kids who died at the July-August, 2024 incident while they were found into their mothers' laps or

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Woman held for trafficking people to Russia for war

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the police has arrested a woman on charges of trafficking people to Russia for forced participation in the war.

The arrestee, Fabia Zerin Tamanna, a partner at Dream Home Travels and Tours Ltd, was arrested on Wednesday night at Dhaka airport while she was attempting to flee to Nepal, said CID Special Superintendent (Media) Jashim Uddin Khan.

He said the trafficking racket lured victims with promises of high-paying jobs in Russia, offering salaries between Tk 200,000 and 250,000 per month in chocolate factories, as cleaners, or as cooks.

Under this pretence, 10 individuals were first

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Hawkers association gets new committee

CITY DESK

Md Moniul Islam has been elected the president of Dhaka Sangbadpatra Hawkers Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Ltd, and Md Farhad Hossain and Mosharrif Hossain have been elected members of the association, said a press release.

The interim committee was formed under section 22(7) of the Co-operative Societies Act 2001 (amended in 2002 and 2013) after the Dhaka District Samabaya Officer dissolved the last committee on February 2, 2025.

The committee was dissolved under section 22(2) of the Co-operative Societies Act 2001 (amended in 2002 and 2013), added the release.



## Administrative void

FROM PAGE 3  
on my studies while constantly being bitten by mosquitoes," Sami said.

Rassel Hasan, a resident of Bashiruddin Road in Lalbagh, echoed him.

"Two weeks ago, we did not need to apply mosquito repellent, but now it is mandatory to use it after evening due to these blood-sucking insects," Hasan said.

The post of DSCC's chief health officer has also been vacant since the transfer of Fazle Shamsul Kabir on December 31. Health officer Dr Nishat Parvin is now performing the duties of the chief health officer.

Contacted, Mohammad Bashirul Haque Bhuiyan, acting CEO of DSCC, said a proposal to appoint a new administrator has already been submitted, and they are hopeful of getting one by next week.

"In the absence of an administrator, I have been using my full authority as acting CEO to carry out time-sensitive and routine tasks. I also have financial

and administrative power, though I exercise it with caution," Bhuiyan said.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, criticised the government for neglecting city corporations since coming to power.

"The absence of an administrator and CEO in DSCC, one of the country's key city corporations, highlights this negligence," he said.

As a result, many city dwellers are either being deprived of essential services or facing severe issues due to damaged roads and other infrastructural shortcomings, Adil added.

"It is beyond my understanding why the government is giving less priority to city corporations across the country," he said.

"If the government were sincere, they would have appointed interim mayors by selecting eligible individuals nationwide. Their failure to do so has led to the current crisis," he added.

Humayun Kabir from Singra, Natore, was killed in the war, while Aminul from Keraniganj, Dhaka, sustained critical injuries, said the CID.

Among the victims, 24-year-old Akram Hossain from Narsingdi's Palash managed to escape from the training camp and returned to Bangladesh on January 26. He then contacted the families of other victims.

Based on his information, Aminul's wife, Jhumur Akter, filed a case with Banani Police Station. Following an investigation, CID arrested

## Families of July martyrs block

FROM PAGE 3  
blood of martyrs. They don't care about us or how we live." The families warned to withdraw their cases if the government does not show sincerity in addressing their demands.

## PEOPLE SUFFER

The prolonged blockade caused significant disruption in the city.

Patients, commuters, and emergency workers faced delays as they navigated around the blocked roads.

Mofizul Islam, 28, was seen walking with his wife and 15-month-old son, who is suffering from pneumonia. Unable to find transport, the family walked from Mymensingh to Gulistan.

"Rickshaw pullers were charging double the normal fare. We had no

choice but to walk," he said.

Ambulances were let go by protesters, but many ambulances were seen stuck in nearby roads due to the gridlock.

Nurses from Birdem Hospital expressed frustration over repeated roadblocks near Shahbagh.

Later in the evening, a separate group gathered in front of the National Museum, demanding the immediate formation of a Truth Commission. They did not block the road.

Speakers criticised the government for failing to hold Awami League accountable. They demanded compensation for martyrs, treatment for the injured, and rehabilitation for victims.

Among the participants

## ACC to probe Hasina

FROM PAGE 3  
2024 alone, the national flag carrier operated 48 VVIP flights for Hasina, spending a total Tk 250 crore.

Hasina reportedly spent Tk 200 crore from the state's fund on these foreign trips. On September 18, 2021, her VVIP Biman flight for New York included a two-day stopover in Finland instead of being a direct flight, resulting in additional expenditure of Tk 7 crore, said Biman sources.

Notably, as of 2023, the government owed

approximately Tk 500 crore to Biman.

Hasina allegedly obtained fake doctorate degrees from different foreign universities by hiring lobbyists using state funds to bypass academic standards.

Some of those degrees were reportedly obtained through excessive spending or deals contrary to national interests, including those from Tripura University, Catholic University of Brussels, and Visva-Bharati University.

## Probe into deaths

FROM PAGE 3  
inside their homes and they died by gun-shooting from helicopter," the HC bench of Justice Md Akram Hossain Chowdhury and Justice KM Rasheduzzaman Raja said in the full text of verdict which was released recently.

On December, the bench delivered its verdict following a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Taimur Alam Khondaker. Earlier, the HC had issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to give Tk 1 crore to each family of the children who

were killed in the violence centring quota movement.

In the rule, the court asked the government to show causes why they should not be ordered to probe the incidents of deaths through an international commission.

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

## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

e-Zone  
Sourcing Change Managers

E-Zone HRM Limited is a management consulting group providing one-stop solutions to clients who seek improved and sustainable profitability through the effective use of their people and resources. We specialize in delivering innovative and value added services that promote revenue growth and cost containment. E-Zone HRM Limited has a formal agreement with one of the United Nations Agency to provide outsourcing services for the requirement. E-Zone HRM Limited is now accepting applications from Bangladeshi Nationals for the following vacancies as per the ToR below:

## Title-1: EPIDEMIOLOGIST

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un238.html>

## Title-2: STATISTICIAN

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un239.html>

## Title-3: ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un240.html>

## Title-4: IT OFFICER

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un241.html>

## Title-5: ENTOMOLOGIST

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un242.html>

## Title-6: PROJECT FACILITATOR

Number of Vacancies: 08 (Eight), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un243.html>

## Title-7: DATA MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT

Number of Vacancies: 02 (Two), Duty Station: IEDCR

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un244.html>

## Title-8: FINANCE OFFICER

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: NMEP, CDC, DGHS, Mohakhali.

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un245.html>

## Title-9: MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&amp;E) ASSISTANT

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: NMEP, CDC, DGHS, Mohakhali.

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un246.html>

## Title-10: OFFICE ASSISTANT

Number of Vacancies: 01 (One), Duty Station: NMEP, CDC, DGHS, Mohakhali.

<https://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ezone/un247.html>

Contract Duration: 10 Months | Contract Type: Agreement with IEDCR & NMEP, CDC

Last Date of Application: February 13, 2025

LEGAL NOTICE  
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
COMPANY MATTER NO. 118 OF 2025

FUJI KNITWERS LTD, Address Hossain Ahmed Road, Fatullah, Narayangonj.  
...PETITIONER.

- VERSUS -  
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC), of TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), I Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. ....RESPONDENT.  
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 13 read with Sections 12 and 13 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed and moved on behalf of the petitioner name above in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and after hearing his Lordship Justice **Mr. Ahmed Sohel** has been pleased to admit the said application on 02.02.2025.

Anyone interested to participate in the hearing may enter appearance either personally or through his appointed Advocate and contest the matter. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned upon payment of necessary cost.

(Rani Akhter)  
Advocate  
Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Room No. 1016 (Annex)  
Supreme Court Bar Association, Shahbagh, Dhaka.

LEGAL NOTICE  
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
COMPANY MATTER NO. 117 OF 2025

FINE TEX KNITWERS LTD, Address North Masdar, Ghatoli, Fatullah, Narayangonj.  
...PETITIONER.

- VERSUS -  
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC), of TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), I Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. ....RESPONDENT.  
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 13 read with Sections 12 and 13 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed and moved on behalf of the petitioner name above in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and after hearing his Lordship Justice **Mr. Ahmed Sohel** has been pleased to admit the said application on 02.02.2025.

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Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Room No. 1016 (Annex)  
Supreme Court Bar Association, Shahbagh, Dhaka.

LEGAL NOTICE  
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
COMPANY MATTER NO. 119 OF 2025

ESQUIRE SWEATERS LTD, Address Hossain Ahmed Road, Fatullah, Narayangonj.  
...PETITIONER.

- VERSUS -  
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC), of TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), I Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215. ....RESPONDENT.  
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 13 read with Sections 12 and 13 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed and moved on behalf of the petitioner name above in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and after hearing his Lordship Justice **Mr. Ahmed Sohel** has been pleased to admit the said application on 02.02.2025.

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(Rani Akhter)  
Advocate  
Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Room No. 1016 (Annex)  
Supreme Court Bar Association, Shahbagh, Dhaka.

Invitation to submit proposals for  
Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by UNICEF Bangladesh

RFP No. LRPS-2025-9195602: Planning, Designing, Environmental Clearance Certificate from Department of Environment (DoE) and Implementation of 'An Operational Medical Waste Management Plant' in collaboration with Khulna City Corporation (KCC), Bangladesh.

UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a proven track record and professional credibility of providing the above-required services under one contract.

- Download the electronic copy of Bid documents from UNGM <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/258479>

- Alternatively, vendors may request the bid documents via email at [supplybangladesh@unicef.org](mailto:supplybangladesh@unicef.org) by 20 February 2025.

Deadline for submission of the proposal is 26 February 2025 at 11:00 AM (GMT +6)

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

[www.unicef.org/bangladesh](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh)

unicef for every child

Invitation to submit proposals for  
Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by UNICEF Bangladesh

RFP No. LRPS-2025-9195552: Gender Equality Analysis on Sexual Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child & Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH) services in 5 districts of Bangladesh.

UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a proven track record and professional credibility of providing the above-required services under one contract.

- Download the electronic copy of Bid documents from UNGM <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/258438>

- Alternatively, vendors may request the bid documents via email at [supplybangladesh@unicef.org](mailto:supplybangladesh@unicef.org) by 18 February 2025.

Deadline for submission of the proposal is 24 February 2025 at 11:00 AM (GMT +6)

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

[www.unicef.org/bangladesh](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh)

unicef for every child





## 2 rejoinders, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

The report mentions that I have an office space in the Silicon Information Technology Tower in Dubai, valued at approximately Tk 1.3 crore. In reality, the company I have in Dubai has been declared in my tax returns during the previous government's tenure. I have not concealed any information about my business.

We stand by our report.

### Orion Group's rejoinder

"On January 7, 2025, The Daily Star published a report titled "Parking wealth under the Dubai sun." It has come to my attention that the report contains false and fabricated information regarding Mohammad Obaidul Karim, Chairman of Orion Group.

Below are my clarifications, which I believe will address the baseless allegations made in the report about a respected businessman in Bangladesh. I request that The Daily Star publish this as a formal rejoinder to set the record straight. (Numbering of the following paragraphs is ours)

### 1. Regarding having property worth BDT 66.60 Crore in UAE

The news regarding having property worth BDT 66.60 Crore in UAE by Mohammad Obaidul Karim and family is completely false, baseless and without any source mentioned to substantiate it. In this regard, I am mentioning below the actual facts which will clarify the issue that I have no investment outside Bangladesh. Moreover, I want to emphasize that as it was not permitted by the Government of Bangladesh to invest any amount, we did not invest any money from Bangladesh. So, if inquired properly, it can be guaranteed that no such amount can be found in my name or in the name of family members that the money was taken out from Bangladesh.

### 2. Regarding Agri Products Europe in Albania

Having known ORION's long and diversified business track records

in Bangladesh, the then President of Albania offered me to invest in Albania for developing an industry in their country. In this connection, Agri Products Europe was established in Albania in 2013 and he also offered me industrial plots to establish this project. To facilitate this and to ensure my frequent visit to Albania for overseeing the development of the project, the then president of Albania issued me a Albanian passport as a token of our strong relationship. The issuance of Albanian passport was also duly declared in the Ministry of Home Affairs in Bangladesh.

Later on, as per Bangladesh Government's rules and regulations, as any Bangladeshi citizen were not allowed to invest outside the country, I did not make any investment there. As a result, the allotted land for the project was cancelled by the land department of Albania. Also, my passport was not renewed after expiry as I could not invest any money in their country.

### 3. Regarding Orion Pharma Bahrain

Orion Pharma Bahrain was incorporated on January 6, 2015, with the objective of setting up the facility for manufacturing pharmaceutical products mainly food supplements and nutraceutical products. This was also an initiative from the Bahrain Government who wanted to develop the pharmaceutical sector in their country as at that time there was no pharmaceutical plant in Bahrain. The Government of Bahrain was outsourcing pharmaceutical products from experienced manufacturers of other countries. At that time, we got qualified for having expertise in this sector. As part of developing Pharmaceutical Industry, Bahrain Government was arranging up to 70% to 80% financing. So, Industry developers had to inject 20% to 30% equity.

Afterwards, the Government of Bahrain also allotted land for

developing a pharmaceutical plant for manufacturing food supplements and nutraceutical products.

However, as we have always been in compliance with Bangladesh Government's rules and regulations, but we could not get the approval from Bangladesh Government to invest outside our country. Consequently, the project was cancelled by Bahrain Government.

### 4. Regarding Property in UAE

First of all, we would like to mention here that, the name of the hotel is Reflections Hotel LLC instead of the Palette Royal Reflections Hotel and Spa.

Already I have discussed with the concerned person of The Daily Star that, ORION or Mohammad Obaidul Karim is not the owner of the hotel even not 1%. I described very clearly to the concerned person of your newspaper that my responsibility was only to operate the hotel as Lessee. So, whatever I have described, is the reality. So, it is not clear mentioned in the newspaper that, whatever I have described, is the reality. So, it is not clear to me why again they published in their newspaper after knowing everything. It is very clear that they have only published the news to defame my name. I have such confidence that, any national or international agency can check and find out the real facts which will match with my statements.

5. Regarding the ownership of 3 apartments in Dubai

Regarding the ownership of 3 apartments in Dubai, which values are shown in the newspaper as BDT 66.59 Crore of which up to 65% was financed by the local bank of UAE and the remaining portion was financed by us as our equity which we provided from the income of our Hotel operation of (Reflections Hotel LLC).

Again, I am giving guarantee that, from Bangladesh me myself or any family member did not invest any

money outside Bangladesh for which I am ready to face any kind of inquiry.

### 6. Regarding Zeysha General Trading LLC

This Company was formed only for getting UAE Visa easily. It is confirmed and guaranteed that, there was no business activities in the name of this Company and even there is no bank account. This is also for your information that, the Company is already closed as we did not renew the license.

Paragraph 6 sheds light how they set up a company only for the purpose of obtaining UAE visas.

### 7. Regarding Indian Citizenship/Nationality

Regarding the Indian citizenship/nationality issue, I would like to strongly mention that, it is completely a false and misleading information as I never had any passport from India. So, there is no question of holding Indian Citizenship/nationality. You already know that, it was not possible and still it is not possible to get any citizenship from India by Bangladeshi Nationals.

### 8. Conviction

Regarding conviction by a kangaroo court in 2008, your report produced partial and misleading information saying "Obaidul was sentenced to 13 years in jail for amassing illegal wealth and hiding asset information."

Your report failed to mention the fact that all the cases filed against me during the emergency regime have been quashed by the apex court a decade ago.

In this light, we request that you publish the above statements clarifying the truth."

### Our reply

Paragraph 1: The contention that we did not mention any source in our report is untrue. We cited specific official documents for each of the properties listed in his and his family's name. We also clearly mentioned how we estimated the values of those

properties – from official documents or readily available average market prices in the specific locality. Also, we did not mention or even indicate that any of these properties are fruits of any financial misconduct or money laundering from Bangladesh. On the contrary, we clearly stated, twice in our story, that we have seen no evidence of money laundering from Bangladesh.

Paragraph 2: This paragraph confirms his Albanian passport and the establishment of the company called Agri Products Europe in Albania, which we reported in our original story citing official documents.

Paragraph 3: Again, it confirms what we have reported – the launch and closure of Orion Pharma Bahrain.

Paragraph 4: As for his contention about Reflections Hotel LLC, we published his comments in our story in full, where he denied owning it and insisted that he is a lessee. Post-publication, we also received the agreement papers from the Group where he is listed as a lessee. However, official documents in our possession list him as a "partner", not a lessee, holding 49 percent stake.

Paragraph 5: This paragraph reaffirms our findings that he and his family own three residential properties in Dubai.

Paragraph 6: In our original report, we did not claim he has an Indian passport. We simply reported that he is "listed as an Indian" in Bahrain's documents. Also, in our original report, we used his version where he denied that he has Indian citizenship.

Paragraph 7: As for his acquittal after conviction in a graft case, we learned about the acquittal from the rejoinder, and have updated our online version accordingly.

Overall, the rejoinder acknowledges his and his family's links with the properties listed in our story. We stand by our report.

## Govt moves to build road

FROM PAGE 12

So, we've decided to construct another road connecting Phoenix Road and Abdul Gani Road," he explained.

An earlier attempt to implement this project failed due to resistance from the then Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, he said.

However, he claimed DSCC has already given its approval this time.

The development comes at a time when the DSCC has been without an administrator for over a month. The post of chief executive officer has also remained vacant for since December last year.

At present, DSCC Secretary Mohammad Bashirul Haque Bhuiyan is serving as acting CEO and has been given financial and administrative authority to oversee routine operations in the absence of an administrator.

Contacted, he said the decision was taken by the ministry, and DSCC was not aware of the details. Meanwhile, Project Director Kayrul Baker did not respond to repeated phone calls for comment.

A DSCC official claimed that 92 percent of the park's modernisation work has already been completed.

The Daily Star called and sent messages to the senior secretary of the public administration ministry for a comment regarding the project

multiple times, but he did not respond.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Urban planners and environmentalists have condemned the decision, saying it will have devastating consequences.

"This is a terrible decision," said Adil Mohammad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP).

"Destroying parks and playgrounds to accommodate private cars is unacceptable. If this road is built, it will cause irreversible damage to the park's environment. The government must halt this initiative immediately, and those responsible [in approving it] should be held accountable."

Former BIP president Mohammad Fazle Reza Sumon said, "When we don't even have one square metre of park space per person, where at least nine square metres are required, such a move will only make things worse for city residents."

"Out of Dhaka's 265 parks, only 42 remain. If the government doesn't protect them, what will we tell future generations?"

The World Health Organization advocates for nine square metres of open space per person within a 15-minute walking distance from home.

Amirul Rajiv, coordinator of the Tree Protection Movement, said every park and playground in the city is in a deplorable state.

About the long-standing battle

to protect Osmani Udayan, he said that despite a three-decade-long movement in this regard, no tangible progress has been made.

"There is no model udayan [garden or park] in Dhaka city.... If this move goes forward, it will push the city towards a critical state, as Dhaka can no longer afford to lose even a single leaf."

### IMPLEMENTATION DELAYS

The project to modernise Osmani Udayan, initially set for completion in 2018, was stalled for almost two years after the original contractor, Builders Limited, had its work order cancelled in 2022 over allegations of contract breaches.

A new contractor was then appointed in September 2023.

After missing five deadlines, the new deadline has now been set for June 2025.

DSCC sources said it was first extended to June 2019, then to June 2020, June 2021, June 2022, and June 2024.

The project includes constructing boundary grills; gates on the north and south sides; walkways, including ones that link the Secretariat to Nagan Bhaban; a library; a food court; drainage systems; large jetties at the lakes; an indoor games zone; and parking facilities.

Osmani Udayan is home to numerous rare trees and plants, two small lakes, sand islands, sculptures, and an auditorium.

failure to take effective and visible steps over the last six months to bring fugitive autocrats and their accomplices to face trial.

This failure has encouraged people to take the law into their own hands and engage in "illegal activities", said the press release.

If the people take the law into their own hands while a government is in power, the government's image at home and abroad could be

tarnished."

The BNP highlighted the growing trend of public unrest, with people from various professions and classes taking to the streets with diverse demands at any time, often resorting to what the party termed as "mob culture".

This, the BNP claimed, is causing public suffering, and the government has failed to demonstrate the necessary competence in addressing these issues through appropriate measures.

## Don't spiral once again

FROM PAGE 12

through consecutive unfair elections and then attempted to quell the 2024 uprising with excessive force, leading to over 800 deaths, the statement read.

"A mob in Bangladesh has demolished the Dhaka family home of ousted prime minister, Sheikh Hasina; properties owned by some of her relatives and party leaders were also targeted. The attack, a so-called "bulldozer procession," was announced and shared on social media. However, the authorities were still unable to protect the properties," the HRW said.

"There is growing demand on India to repatriate Hasina. But the Indian government will be required, under international standards, to evaluate risks ahead of extradition."

It also said the interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, while facing a campaign of

misinformation about alleged abuses against religious and ethnic minorities, has yet to "successfully reassure minority groups, particularly Hindus, who fear attacks".

"The military is obstructing access to sites of previous unlawful detentions and destroying evidence, apparently to protect its image," the rights group said.

The HRW said that the Yunus government should propose a consensus resolution at the upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council session in March to request technical assistance, further investigations, and monitoring and reporting by UN-backed human rights experts.

The resolution should also acknowledge the tyranny of the previous administration and recognise positive human rights steps taken by the interim government, it added.

## Putin sacks space agency chief after setbacks

AFP, MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday sacked the head of the Roscosmos space agency, the Kremlin said, citing the need to "develop" the corporation after suffering years of humiliating setbacks.

Yuri Borisov had been in the role since July 2022, presiding over the crash landing of the Luna-25 probe in August 2023, Moscow's first lunar lander mission in almost 50 years.

He has been replaced with Dmitry Bakanov, a 39-year-old deputy transport minister and former head of a satellite company, the Kremlin said.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the move was part of a "rotation", adding: "The corporation needs to dynamically develop."

Borisov often had extravagant ideas to develop Russia's space programme, including putting a nuclear reactor on the Moon with China, but struggled to put them into action.

Once a space-faring pioneer, Moscow has grappled with a loss of scientific talent and erratic funding since the collapse of the USSR, causing it to lag behind competitors like the United States and China.

The Russian segment of the International Space Station has suffered three coolant leaks in just over two years, with Moscow signalling it aims to pull out of the project as early as 2028 and build its own orbital station.

Borisov warned in 2023 that most Russian equipment on the station was beyond its warranty and that the ISS as a whole was "approaching the finish line of its existence".

Roscosmos also struggled with corruption under Borisov's tenure.

## DB picks up Shaon

FROM PAGE 12

Mohammad Ali, around 6:00pm near Narundi Railway Station in Jamalpur Sadar upazila.

Mohammad Ali had sought an Awami League nomination for the Jamalpur-4 (Sadar) constituency ahead of the 12th parliamentary election last year.

Her mother, Begum Tahura Ali, served as an MP from the reserved seat for women from 1996-2001 and again from 2009-2014.

Later in the night, Sohana Saba was similarly taken into DB custody for questioning, said DMP Deputy Commissioner (media) Talebir Rahman.

The WhatsApp notification on the DMP media cell sent around 1:00am did not include any further details, so it is unclear why or from where she was picked up.

## Kushtia erupts into protest

FROM PAGE 12

student leaders like Shahida Khatun, played a crucial role in mobilising public opinion.

Tamaddun Majlis, a prominent student organisation, also played a pivotal role, under the leadership of Abdus Sattar, a lecturer at Kushtia College and a former Dhaka University student, as the president of the Kushtia district unit.

The declaration of Urdu as the sole state language by then Pakistan Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin on January 27, 1952, sparked widespread protests in Kushtia, just like it did across the country.

On February 17, an important meeting, attended by members of the Tamaddun Majlis, political leaders, social and cultural figures, and student leaders, led to the formation of the All Party State Language Action Committee in Kushtia.

According to M Abdul Alim's "Bhasha Andolon Kosh Part 1," this committee spearheaded the movement, declaring February 21 as a day of protest.

Laflets demanding Bangla as the state language adorned the walls of Kushtia, while the sound of tin cans being blown echoed through the streets, amplifying the message of resistance.

On February 21, Kushtia observed a complete



People displaced by the ongoing war in Sudan return to Wad Madani in the Jazira state yesterday after the city was retaken by the Sudanese army from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitaries.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israel to hand over Gaza to US after fighting: Trump

Israel orders its army to prepare to allow 'voluntary departure' of enclave's residents

REUTERS, Jerusalem

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Israel would hand over Gaza to the United States after fighting was over and the enclave's population was already resettled elsewhere, which he said meant no US troops would be needed on the ground.

A day after world wide condemnation of Trump's announcement that he aimed to take over and develop the Gaza Strip into the "Riviera of the Middle East", Israel ordered its army to prepare to allow the "voluntary departure" of Gaza's residents.

Trump, who had previously declined to rule out deploying US troops to Gaza, clarified his plans in comments on his Truth Social web platform.

"The Gaza Strip would be turned over to the United States by Israel at the conclusion of fighting," he said.

- Palestinians fear another 'Nakba'
- UN chief warns Trump against ethnic cleansing in Gaza
- Katz suggests countries opposing Israel take in Palestinians

Hamas official Basem Naim accused Katz of trying to cover up "for a state that has failed to achieve any of its objectives in the war on Gaza", and said Palestinians are too attached to their land to ever leave.

January sets 'surprising' heat record

Says EU monitor

AFP, Paris

Last month was the hottest January on record, Europe's climate monitor said yesterday, despite expectations that cooler La Niña conditions might quell a streak of record-breaking global temperatures.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service said January was 1.75C hotter than pre-industrial times, extending a persistent run of historic highs over 2023 and 2024, as human-caused greenhouse gas emissions heat the planet.

Climate scientists had expected this exceptional spell to subside after a warming El Niño event peaked in January this year and conditions gradually shifted to a cooling La Niña phase.

But the heat has lingered at record or near-record levels ever since, sparking debate among scientists about what other factors could be driving warming to the top end of expectations.

## INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

### China, Pakistan pledge to boost cooperation

REUTERS, Hong Kong

China and Pakistan will upgrade and reconstruct Pakistan's railway network and further develop its Gwadar port, while Chinese companies can invest in the South Asian nation's offshore oil and gas developments, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday.

The comments came as Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari visits China from February 4-8, where he will also attend the opening ceremony of the Asian Winter Games.

Chinese investment and financial support for Pakistan since 2013 have been a boon for the South Asian nation's struggling economy.

The two countries have had close ties underpinned by long-standing wariness of their common neighbour, India, and a desire to hedge against US influence across the region.

Pakistan and China recognised the importance of Pakistan's Gwadar Port and agreed to fully unleash its potential as a key node for connectivity and trade," Xinhua said quoting a joint statement from the two countries. Chinese-funded enterprises would be encouraged to "carry out mining, investment cooperation in Pakistan" and cooperate in terrestrial and marine geological resources.

"Pakistan welcomes Chinese companies to participate in the development of offshore oil and gas resources in Pakistan."

Longtime Pakistan ally China has thousands of nationals working on projects grouped under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

## UK govt to fire civil servants who fail to make savings

AFP, London

Senior civil servants in the UK could lose their jobs if they fail to make savings, while those who do will receive bonuses, the government said yesterday.

The moves come as part of an effort by the Cabinet Office, the ministry that supports the prime minister in running the government, to create a "more agile and modern" state.

Under the new policy, all senior civil servants will have to meet a set of core standards, including being able to demonstrate they have made savings, the ministry said in a statement sent to AFP yesterday.

Those who do not meet the minimum standards will be placed on a performance development plan, which could lead to dismissal if no improvement is observed.

"We need to reform the state to make it more agile and modern so we can transform the public services people rely on every day," said Cabinet Office minister Pat McFadden.

"It is vital that senior leaders are not just encouraged, but held responsible for this," he added. "We will introduce new checks to identify and tackle poor performance where we find it, and to recognise the good work of senior leaders across the civil service," he added.

Government departments have been told to find savings worth five percent of their budgets as the UK struggles to rein in public borrowing against the backdrop of a stagnant economy.

## ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area

Dhaka-1208

### Local Press Tender Notice



Sealed tenders are hereby invited from Genuine Importers/ Reputed Suppliers for supply of following Hydraulic Trolley for Liquid, Tablet, Packing & ORS Section under the production department at EDCL (Dhaka) Plant on urgent basis:

S.I. No.	Tender No. & Date	Name of the Item	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & opening
01.	EDCL(Dhaka)/PUR/LT/2025/29 Date: 06/02/2025	Hydraulic Trolley ---- 06Pcs (Details as per Tender Schedule & Technical Specification)	Tk. 750.00/set Non-refundable	Closing :19/02/2025 at 12.00PM Opening :19/02/2025 at 12.30 PM

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited(EDCL), Dhaka on Payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The Tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of "Essential Drugs Co. Ltd." without which the Tender will be considered as non-responsive.

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

General Manager(CC),  
Procurement Deptt.  
For: Managing Director.

(Size: 6 Inch. x 4 column)

## Engineering Office University of Chittagong Chittagong

Ref No. Cons-04/CECU-2594/25

Date: 05/02/2025

### Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)

1. Ministry:	Ministry of Education
2. Procuring Entity Name:	University of Chittagong
3. Programme Name:	Chief Engineer, Engineering Office, University of Chittagong
4. EOI Ref No.:	N/A
5. Date:	Chittagong
6. EOI Closing Date:	Engineering & Architectural Consulting Firm
7. Eligible Entities	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)
8. Source of Fund	GoB
9. Selection Process (Overall)	Consultant for Architectural and Engineering Design of a 06 (Six)-Storied Annex Building for Jamal Nazrul Islam Research Center for Mathematical and Physical Sciences at University of Chittagong.
10. Contents of EOI Application	Providing consultancy services for the Preparation of Architectural and Engineering Design of a 06 (Six)-Storied Annex Building for Jamal Nazrul Islam Research Center for Mathematical and Physical Sciences at University of Chittagong.
11. Financial Capacity	Up to 12.00pm on 20/02/2025. Technical offer shall be submitted at the Engineering Office, C.U. (Please seal envelope duly marking the envelope as technical offer bearing the Name & Address of the Consultant).
12. Technical Capabilities	Technical offer will be opened at the Office of the Chief Engineer at University of Chittagong on the same day at 2.00pm in presence of the consultant or his representative if thereby any.
13. Documentation Criteria	a) Trade license (updated) b) VAT, TIN and TAX Assessment Certificate (updated) c) Last 05 (Five) years Audit report (Only summary part) d) Average annual turnover: The consulting firm must have at least an average annual turnover of BDT 1,50,00,000.00 (One Crore and Fifty Lakh) for at least 02 (Two) years within the last 05 (Five) years.
14. Evaluation Criteria	The consulting firm shall meet the following minimum qualification criteria. 1. The consulting firm shall have a minimum of 15(Fifteen) years' experience in the field of providing architectural and engineering design. 2. The consulting firm must have experience in completing both architectural and engineering design of at least 10 (Ten) different projects in last 10 (Ten) years. 3. The consulting firm should have specific experience in both architectural and engineering design of at least 02 (two) similar types of building projects, each having minimum 05-storied construction (above ground) with a minimum total floor area of 10,000 square meter in each project in the last 05 years.
15. Scope of works	a) The plan shall be prepared considering environmental, ecological impact & topographical condition. b) The plan shall reflect/represent proposed structures showing three-dimensional visualization. c) Demarcation of the boundary line against acquired land of the University of Chittagong d) Preparation of detail Architectural Design Structural design, MFP, Firefighting system, Bill of quantities (BOQ). e) Provide animation of the proposed plan. f) The plan should fulfill requirements considering present & future demand of the University for minimum 50 (fifty) years.
16. Name, designation of official inviting EOI	Engr. Syed Zahangir Fazal, Chief Engineer
17. Address, contact details of official inviting EOI	Engineering Office, University of Chittagong. PABX-02334460789, Ext: 4213. Mobile No: 01863-521561

18. The Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any part of all proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever.  
19. If it is not possible to receive/open the Proposal on the schedule date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received/opened on the next working day at the same time and same venue.

20. For any kind of query please contact with the related person or email us at [ce\\_engroff@cu.ac.bd](mailto:ce_engroff@cu.ac.bd)

Chief Engineer  
Engineering Office  
University of Chittagong  
Chittagong

Director General  
Department of Military Land and Cantonment

## US fund cuts will worsen Rohingya crisis

The world must not ignore their plight

We are deeply concerned about the US government's recent executive order suspending aid funding worldwide, which will further exacerbate the Rohingya crisis. According to a report, the impact is already evident in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas. While the World Food Programme's emergency food assistance—supported by the US—continues, at least five US funded hospitals have suspended operations. Waste management and landfill activities have also ceased. This will significantly affect the Rohingya, limiting their access to healthcare and worsening their already dire living conditions.

The US has long been the largest donor for the Rohingya humanitarian response. According to the UN, out of the \$852.4 million required for the Rohingya in 2024, the US contributed \$301 million—55 percent of the total \$548.9 million provided by foreign donors last year. Therefore, its suspension of funding is bound to have disastrous consequences. If support for World Health Organization and the vaccine alliance GAVI is also halted, the Rohingya will further struggle to access critical medical care and life-saving vaccines, especially for women and children. Although the Trump administration is currently reviewing all overseas funds and projects before making any final decisions, the uncertainty is already affecting nearly 100 projects in Bangladesh—worth \$450 million last year—as well as the development professionals involved, who have been asked to stay home without work.

This crisis comes amid concerns over renewed conflict in Myanmar, which has forced around 80,000 more Rohingya to seek refuge in Bangladesh since August, adding to the staggering 1.2 million already residing here. Since foreign aid for the Rohingya has been on the decline for several years now due to conflicts in other parts of the world, Bangladesh as a host has already been in a tight spot. A recent RMMRU study painted a grim picture of living conditions in the camps, highlighting gender-based violence and security concerns. With each refugee receiving only Tk 16 per day, many have been forced into informal labour or even criminal activities. The US fund cuts will only worsen their plight and complicate efforts to manage the crisis.

As we have reiterated many times before, the Rohingya crisis is a global issue, so Bangladesh cannot be expected to bear this burden alone. The international community must step up to support them. Since the US provided humanitarian aid to the Rohingya even during Donald Trump's previous tenure, we urge the US administration to continue this support in the interest of humanity. The global community must also take concrete steps to resolve the crisis and ensure safe repatriation of the Rohingya to their homeland.

## Bring more businesses under the VAT net

Why are 80 percent of jewellers outside the net?

The heavy loss of revenue due to the government's failure to bring all high-cost luxury item sellers into the value-added tax (VAT) net is alarming. Consider the case of gold. Reportedly, out of 40,000 jewellery shops in Bangladesh, only 8,000 have VAT registration, while only 1,000 have Electronic Fiscal Devices (EFDs) installed for sales monitoring. As a result, VAT collection from this sector was only about Tk 100 crore in the last fiscal year.

Given the high price of gold, which ranges from Tk 8,533 to Tk 12,673 per gram, and its estimated demand of 20-40 tonnes per year, the government could have earned at least Tk 850 crore annually in VAT, taking into account the five percent VAT on jewellery sales. Yet, over the past 15 years, efforts to boost tax collection through electronic sales registers have largely failed—not just in the jewellery sector, but in many others as well. It is no wonder that Bangladesh remains among the countries with the lowest tax-GDP ratio—below eight percent.

It is ironic that while the government struggles to collect VAT from luxury sectors such as jewellery, it has, earlier this year, raised the VAT on some essential items and services, such as mobile phone talk time and broadband internet. This decision, though later withdrawn, sparked criticism from experts who advocated for expanding the tax base rather than imposing additional indirect taxes on ordinary citizens.

Thankfully, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has initiated measures to enforce VAT registration and EFD installation, beginning with the jewellery sector. While the agency's meeting with the Bangladesh Jewellers' Association is expected to bring positive results, NBR officials must also conduct on-site visits to ensure compliance and encourage businesses to digitise their VAT payment processes. Strict action must be taken against any attempts at VAT evasion, and internal investigations should be conducted to identify and penalise officials likely complicit in helping businesses evade VAT and tax.

It is unacceptable that despite having approximately 2.72 lakh registered companies and 79 lakh small and medium enterprises, the number of VAT payers in Bangladesh stands at only five lakh. This number must be significantly increased. A comprehensive approach—combining strict enforcement, technological integration, and institutional accountability—is essential to ensure that all businesses, particularly those dealing in luxury goods, contribute their fair share to national revenue.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### The Beatles arrive in the US



On this day in 1964, the musical British Invasion began when the Beatles landed in New York City, and two nights later, as Beatlemania stormed the United States, their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show was watched by 73 million viewers.

# EDITORIAL

## Police reform must break free from colonial legacy



Muhammad Nurul Huda  
is former IGP of Bangladesh Police.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

The Police Reform Commission instituted by the interim government in October last year has come up with a set of recommendations for improving police efficiency and transforming the organisation into a people-friendly outfit. The reform proposals focus on various functional areas such as human rights, use of force, arrest, search and interrogation, criminal investigation, police corruption, training, changes of law, regulation, and procedure, among others.

While the recommendations don't show any novelty, they have demonstrably failed to indicate the rationale behind principal changes that need to be made in the Police Act, 1861, Police Regulation of Bengal, 1943, and also the procedural legislation of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. It is now well-established that the 1861 law is an anachronism insofar as managing a 21st-century police organisation is concerned. Let me elaborate on the legislative deficiency and how that has affected the police performance, and what needs to be done.

The current Police Act was principally aimed to administer a static, immobile, and backward rural society living in villages and small towns in the 1800s. It envisaged exercise of authority without local accountability. It presupposed a society without constitution, basic and fundamental rights, organised public opinion, and mass media projecting and agitating the public interest.

The Police Commission, 1902-03 presided over by Sir Andrew Fraser reported that the 1861 system had completely failed to produce an efficient and professional police force in the region. One of the major causes of failure of the 1861 law, according to this commission, was undue interference with the police by the civilian authorities. However, it was strange

that despite gathering compelling evidence to support, in addressing adequately the fundamental and chronic organisational deficiencies of the police organisation created under the Police Act, 1861, no action was taken.

A reasoned view in this regard is that the colonial rulers purposely designed the police organisation in such a manner so as not to attract better talent, thereby ensuring built-



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

in subservience of the police to the executive, regardless of the resulting corruption, lack of professional excellence, police high-handedness, and police-public estrangement.

In the years that followed the Fraser Commission report, the mass political agitation for freedom threw up unprecedented challenges to the skills and strength of the police in the subcontinent. What we saw during those tumultuous years ending in 1947 was a hardening of the foreign rulers' attitude, enactment of draconian legislations, and making the police respond to the national struggle with fury and unbridled violence.

proactively give up their long-held powers of "superintendence" over the police in favour of apolitical public safety commissions charged with the responsibility of designing and implementing measures necessary to ensure political neutrality of police operations.

As a first step, the responsibility of the maintenance of law and order will need to rest unambiguously with the police. The police hierarchy will have to be made responsible not merely for the organisation and the internal administration of the force, but also exclusively for all matters connected with maintenance of law and order.

## Teachers are responsible for students' mental health, too



Ruhina Tabassum Promi  
is research associate at Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management (BIGM).

RUHINA TABASSUM PROMI

The start of the new year was marked by a tragedy that sent shockwaves throughout academic communities: the untimely death of Mehdi Hasan, a student of urban and regional planning at Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET). Found in his dorm room on January 10, Mehdi's death by suicide painfully underscores the crisis of academic depression and the systemic failures that allow such despair to fester. His death, far from being an isolated incident, follows a disturbing pattern. In July 2023, Tanveer Fuad Rumi and Samir Rahman, students of the same institution, also died by suicide. These cases are part of a broader epidemic of student suicides in Bangladesh—513 in 2023 and 532 in 2022, according to Aachol Foundation—each a harrowing story of unfulfilled dreams, silenced voices, and grieving families.

While the causes of student suicides are complex and multifaceted, ranging from societal pressures to financial struggles, the role of academia—specifically educators—requires urgent attention. University years, intended to foster growth and discovery, often become a source of despair for students. Allegations of unprofessional conduct by faculty members, including deliberate failing of students, highlight a darker side. Students have alleged that the combined impact of teachers' behaviour and the environment at RUET, creating a toxic atmosphere, is responsible for the recurring suicides. Mehdi's tragic case points towards irresponsible teaching practices: bias,

grudge-driven grading, and hostile communication.

In response to growing dissatisfaction regarding the suicide cases, RUET students have put forward a set of demands aimed at improving transparency, fairness, and mental health awareness within the institution. Key points include the implementation of a coding system for exam evaluation to ensure impartiality, prompt publication of results with opportunities for students to review answer scripts, and stricter accountability for faculty members

**University years, intended to foster growth and discovery, often become a source of despair for students. Allegations of unprofessional conduct by faculty members, including deliberate failing of students, highlight a darker side.**

accused of misconduct. They have also demanded for regular mental health awareness sessions for both students and teachers to reduce stress and promote understanding. Importantly, they emphasise the need for enhanced campus security and fairness in attendance policies, ensuring that institutional structures support, rather than hinder, students' well-being. These demands reflect students' deep discomfort with the university system, particularly the grading system and the conduct of teachers, highlighting their frustration with perceived biases, lack of transparency, and insufficient

support for mental health and overall well-being.

A recurring issue in universities seems to be the recruitment process of educators, which often prioritises academic qualifications over the ability to mentor and support students. Many institutions hire teachers based solely on their degrees or research credentials, without assessing their capacity for teaching or their emotional intelligence.

Effective teaching requires more than mastery of a subject; it demands an understanding of students' psychological and emotional challenges. Teachers who fail to connect with their students or are unaware of the impact of their actions can foster feelings of alienation and frustration.

In particular, how educators respond to struggling students is crucial. Teachers should provide constructive support, identify when students are falling behind, and engage proactively. Universities must adopt

policies that focus on mentorship and individualised support, offering resources like personalised feedback or flexible exam retakes.

Adequate training is a critical missing link in the current system. Universities in Bangladesh rarely provide structured programmes to equip educators with the tools necessary to handle diverse challenges. Training in mental health awareness, active listening, and conflict resolution should be mandatory as well as ensuring that teachers can recognise signs of distress and respond constructively. Additionally, educators

In short, policing operations will no longer have to be subjected to general control and direction from outside the police department.

Without enabling the police to function freely, fairly, justly, and independently, there can be neither justice nor an enviable order. Since the sole purpose of police is to enforce the laws of the land, without fear or favour to anybody, it is crucial to render it politically neutral. Such neutrality has been achieved in other countries by placing the police under apolitical control, thus creating a cushion between political expediency and law enforcement. In the absence of such a cushion, persons of influence simply won't let police do its mandated duty.

Under the circumstances, the first order of business is the enactment of a new police law to replace the present archaic legislation. As it is, the act is weak in almost all the parameters that must govern democratic police legislation. For example, the Police Act has made it easier for others to abuse and misuse the police organisation, mainly because: a) the law gives the government the authority to exercise superintendence over the police, without defining the word superintendence or prescribing some guidelines to ensure that the use of power will be legitimate; b) it does not establish any institutional and other arrangements to insulate the police from undesirable and illegitimate outside control, pressures and influences; c) it does not recognise the government's responsibility to establish an efficient and effective police force; and d) it does not make it necessary to outline objectives and performance standards, nor does it set up independent mechanisms to monitor and inspect police performance.

The police law needs to be in consonance with the requirements of democratic policing, which the current law is not. These requirements insist on the existence of a police force that is subject to the rule of law, rather than the whims of the party in power, can intervene in the life of citizens only under limited and controlled circumstances, and is publicly accountable. Without rectifying these issues, building a modern, pro-people and democratic police organisation will not be possible.

should adapt their teaching methods to suit the university setting, where students need a balance of guidance, autonomy, and respect.

Another issue is the lack of accountability for educators' behaviour. Instances of bias, grudge-driven actions and unprofessional conduct often go unaddressed due to the hierarchical nature of academic institutions. Universities must establish mechanisms for students to report grievances without fear of retaliation. Independent committees should investigate complaints and ensure fair outcomes. Regular performance evaluations, incorporating student feedback, can help identify and address problematic behaviours, if any, among faculty members.

To address these systemic issues, institutional reforms are essential. Universities should revamp recruitment processes to evaluate candidates' teaching aptitude, interpersonal skills, and understanding of student needs. Orientation programmes for new faculty members should emphasise empathy, fairness, and the psychological impact of their actions. Periodic workshops on mental health awareness and effective communication should be mandatory for all educators.

Universities also must invest in resources such as trained mental health counsellors and peer support networks. Very few universities provide dedicated counselling services, and many students do not even know how to access them. Institutions must prioritise breaking the stigma surrounding mental health by encouraging open and judgement-free discussions. Replacing hyper-competitive academic cultures with one that values collaboration, personal growth, and learning over grades and rankings is critical. These changes can transform universities into spaces where students feel safe, supported, and equipped to thrive.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### The Beatles arrive in the US



On this day in 1964, the musical British Invasion began when the Beatles landed in New York City, and two nights later, as Beatlemania stormed the United States, their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show was watched by 73 million viewers.

# The misdirected outrage over the women's football team strike



Azmin Azran  
is digital features coordinator at The Daily Star.

AZMIN AZRAN

A section of players of the Bangladesh national women's football team went on a training strike last week over alleged behavioural issues of coach Peter Butler, and the Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) apparent lack of action despite repeated complaints. The strike, which involved 18 national team players, including many of the stars of the two recent SAFF Championship wins, is not unprecedented in sports. Players banding together to force out management—both fairly and unfairly—is a regular occurrence. However, the vitriol hurled towards our footballers and the refusal to acknowledge their grievances has been eye-opening. It is yet another reminder of how we as a society fail to acknowledge the humanity of athletes, the dignity of women, and when it comes to female athletes, the sheer lack of respect.

On the players' part, they have communicated quite clearly the reasons behind their demands. The three page joint statement made by the players details both specific incidents of ineptitude and misconduct by the coach and the generally abrasive nature of his demeanour. If these allegations made by the players hold true, Butler has a lot to answer for—not least his decision to "wilfully" field lesser experienced players in an important match against Pakistan, his miscalculation over the number of substitutions allowed in a game, and his abusive pitchside behaviour towards a player.

The statement also mentioned

the coach's off-pitch behaviour, and much of the players' grievances have to do with his derogatory tone and offhand comments about their clothing, bodies, and their personal lives. The allegation is that he has created an environment of terror, disrespect, and division within the team.

As mentioned before, sports fans in the 21st century are more than familiar with "player power." It is a phrase that is negatively used to refer to the fact that players across different sports and different nations make up the most powerful group within a team structure, and often band together to oust coaches and other management staff with whom they fail to get along. A recent example would be the litany of first team coaches fired at famous football club Manchester United, where the players have consistently failed to perform over many years, but instead of any wholesale changes to the squad, each time the coach is pushed under the bus.

Another example closer to home would be our own national men's cricket team, where for years, it has been alleged that coaches have had to navigate the egos and the demands of the core group of senior players or face unceremonious sackings. In none of these cases did the players ever come out in the media and spell out clearly what their problems were. Their star power was enough to move the pieces in the back rooms while things changed in the public eye according to their wishes.

Yet, with the national women's

football team, despite being presented with a detailed account of the background to their revolt, the public seems to be largely unconvinced. The public, as sampled on social media, seems to be appalled by the idea that players are humans too, who demand to be treated with the respect that every person earns by the virtue of being born. Fans have reacted

at home assuming a professional athlete does not know the difference between fitness demands and body shaming is perplexing.

The criticism has wholly overlooked the technical deficiencies of the coach pointed out by the players. People have even gone so far as to belittle the achievement of the two-time SAFF Champions,

an obsessive and unhealthy sense of entitlement from athletes. It is lost on spectators that athletes go through an extremely difficult journey to get to a position where they can don the national colours, and if they fail to perform, people like to say that the money being spent on them is a waste. The truth, however, is never as simple. The money sports bodies

The public reaction to this whole ordeal has gone off the charts in its harshness and disproportionate toxicity. And given Bangladesh's social context, one has to wonder what part the gender of the players had in eliciting this reaction. However, the thing about misogyny and prejudice is that they always bubble under the surface, and it doesn't take a lot for them to seep through.

For instance, when a letter from the players reached the BFF president, its contents were not the primary topic of discussion. News outlets quoted members of a special BFF committee expressing surprise that these players could pen a letter in English, and apparently that has become a major point of the investigation. Would this have even been a humorous thought had the players been men?

On the other hand, coach Peter Butler has gone out and spoken to the media in a tone that lends credence to the players' allegations and also epitomises the derisive way these players are being spoken about right now. It may just be that the people of the country are taking cues from responsible authorities like the BFF officials and the national team coach on how to mistreat some of the most successful athletes in the country's history.

"You gotta remember, I'm from the football culture, where if they performed and did things which they had been doing here, they would be upstairs, having their bags packed, they'd be frogmarched down the stairs and kicked out into the streets," he told reporters on Wednesday.

"I mean, do they understand what it's like to work in a department store, stack shelves, do menial work? They are lucky girls."

I, for one, am outraged that a coach gets to speak like this about my country's national footballers. Why the rest of the country is outraged over the training strike but not this tone of language is a question without an answer.



Senior players of the Bangladesh national women's football team speak at a press conference in Dhaka about the alleged behavioural issues of coach Peter Butler, on January 30, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: COLLECTED

over harshly to the players' allegation that the details of their personal lives were being questioned by their coach, which is a clear violation of a professional relationship. Many fans are saying that the players want "impunity" for their "antisocial behaviour" whatever that means. Many have even speculated that the players have cried body shaming because their fitness issues may have been pointed out by the coach, but the audacity of regular people sitting

overlooking the fact that these were the only regional accomplishments for a Bangladeshi team in football or cricket in almost two decades. The worst excess of all has been the abuse players have been subjected to on their personal social media handles—abuse that has extended to death and rape threats, as stated by Matsushima Sumaya, one of the national team players whose "crime" was to help her teammates write a letter in English.

In Bangladesh, people seem to have

spend on players is made because of the players. It is because players are successful or have star power that a sport makes any money at all, and this is the pool from which boards like BFF pays players. The footballers' strike that has disrupted the women's team's training seems to have stoked this sense of entitlement among fans, who think—mistakenly—that the players and their well-being were not the major factors behind the team's recent success.

## Can Trump actually 'take over' Gaza?



Ramisa Rob  
is in charge of Geopolitical Insights at The Daily Star.

RAMISA ROB

The US government's invasion of Afghanistan, for example—on the premise of self-defence—did kill innocent civilians, despite claims that it was only targeting terrorists and enemy combatants. The US has ratified both The Hague and Geneva conventions that render unjustified killing of innocent civilians or unnecessary destruction of property

statehood and the condition was suspension of Israeli settlers' plans to annex the West Bank. Trump hit the middle ground between the Israeli far-right and UAE to score the deal. Trump's transactionalism embedded in his foreign policy that predates his outlandish statements presents a few questions: is the plan a calculated move to tame both Hamas and Israeli far-right? Or is it a negotiating tactic with the Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia? Both are plausible.

For Hamas, Trump's plan applies maximum pressure to give up the control of Gaza and simply maintain a presence there. The flip side of Trump's pressure could be Hamas pulling out of the ceasefire agreement, which jeopardises the Israeli hostages returning, and the second phase of the ceasefire which includes a permanent end to the war and withdrawal of Israeli troops. The latter holds little meaning now as Trump suggests Palestinians should leave their homeland anyways. Hamas, which has been destabilised, might settle for maintaining some sort of presence of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, as it would not be able to endure against US troops. On the other hand, far-right extremist Israelis—specifically those who were unhappy with Netanyahu and

On the geopolitical front, relations with the US have been a source of security aid and financial assistance for some Arab states, and have

unwavering with "no compromise," which could presumably refer to the UAE normalisation deal. The statement added that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "clearly and unequivocally reaffirmed this stance."

For the past 15 months of Palestinian slaughter in Gaza, many of the Arab states have been on the sideline, with Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia clamping down on pro-Palestinian protests in their own nations. All these nations have authoritarian governments who view grassroots activism as a threat to their regimes. "Arab states today do not like Palestinian nationalism because Palestinian nationalism is a source of popular mobilisation on the Arab street," according to Nader Hashemi, director of the Prince Alwaleed Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. But in order to keep pro-Palestinian sentiments under control, Arab states have catered to public opinion with token gestures to support Palestine against Israel and succumbing to Trump's plan would fuel public anger.

On the geopolitical front, relations with the US have been a source of security aid and financial assistance for some Arab states, and have



US President Donald Trump welcomes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the entrance of the White House in Washington DC, US on February 4, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Palestinian territories and still talked about "two states" and "peace." Sure, Biden had not suggested a plan so aggressive, but his administration had gone around trying to find an "international coalition" that would temporarily govern Gaza after the war. The fact is, US foreign policy has never intentionally recognised Nakba as a root cause of Palestinian resentment towards Israel, and no government has truly cared about Palestinians' rights to self-determination. US interests in the Middle East lie with strong-arming Israel. One could argue that Trump has replaced "Israel" with "United States" in terms of who will own and govern Palestinian land and Palestinian people.

International law, so to speak, has not really been a force to stop any atrocities in Gaza so far. Israel has openly committed crimes against humanity, and Netanyahu stood in the press conference with the US president despite an arrest warrant against him by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

as a violation of international law, though not "war crimes." Though the country ratified both conventions, it repeatedly violated them in Afghanistan. The US government denied many instances of civilian suffering until *The New York Times* published declassified records. Despite the documentation, none of the US military officials involved in strikes were held accountable. Only the victims paid the price for the US military's "mistake." We have seen Netanyahu use the word "mistake" to refer to the deadly fire in refugee tents in Rafah last year, after images of charred bodies and a beheaded child went viral.

As history is laden with unaccountability, it should be clear that laws will not stop Trump's plan. So what can? Geopolitical relationships with the Arab states, and especially, Saudi Arabia, the most powerful US ally in the region.

In 2020, Trump managed to persuade UAE and Bahrain to sign his Abraham Accords. UAE's reservation to signing the deal was Palestinian

threatened to collapse his coalition for the ceasefire deal—positively reacted to Trump's plan. An expulsion of 2.5 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip has been a fantasy of the Israeli far-right, and Netanyahu has faced criticism for not having a "day after Gaza" plan. When Trump made the announcement, Netanyahu seemed incredibly delighted that Trump's idea could reset his own difficult choices in Israel.

Worldwide uproar followed Trump's statement, and Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry was the first to react to the announcement. They affirmed that the nation's position on the establishment of a Palestinian state is firm and

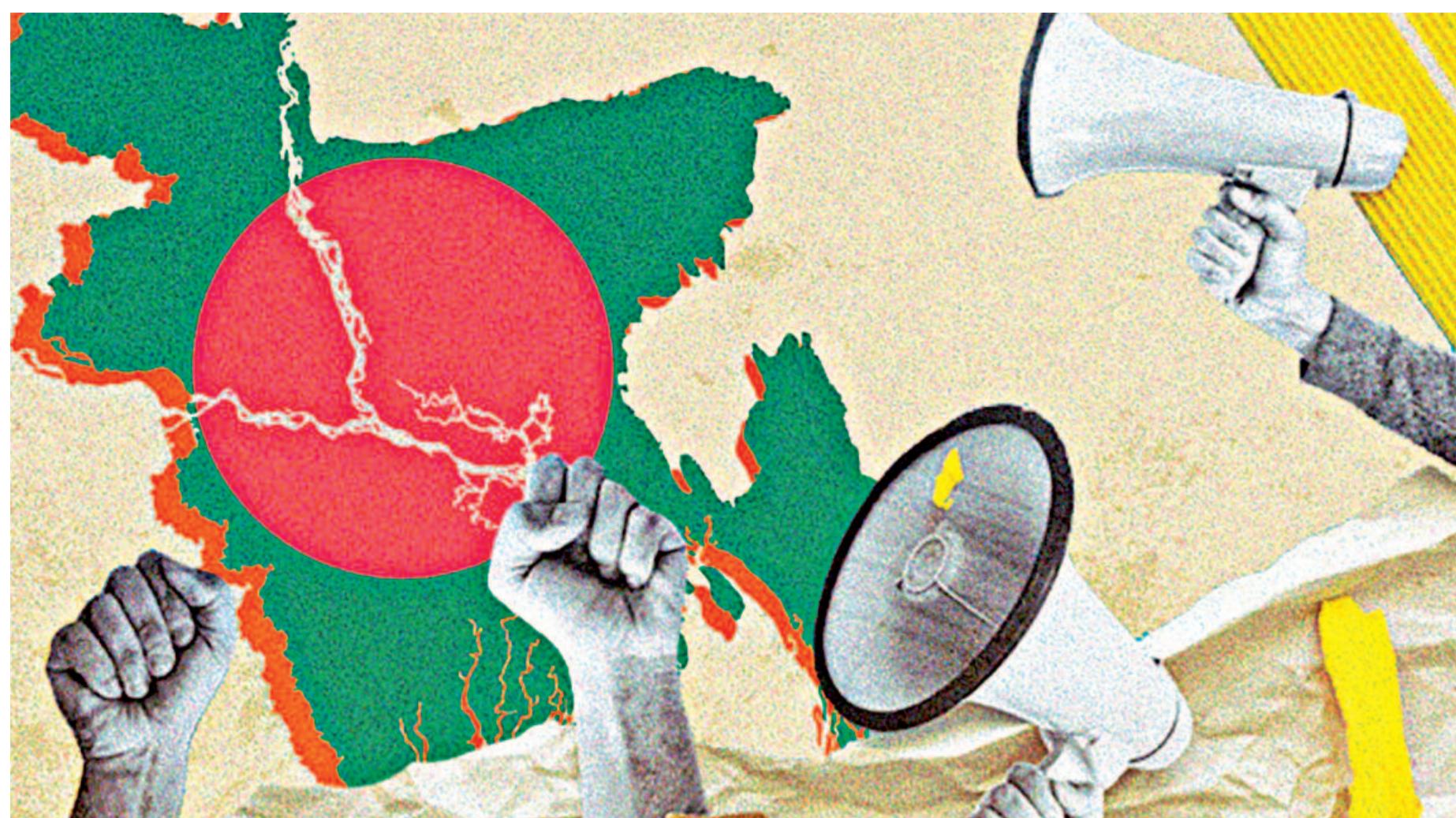
prevented them from confronting Israel. For Mohammed bin Salman, eliminating Hamas and Hezbollah, who do not exist in Saudi Arabia, has been in his best interest against archrival Iran to maintain his nation's dominance in the Middle East, and to ensure no politicisation of Islam can topple him in his country. Normalising relationships with Israel, too, is in his interest as it's good for business—an ideology he shares with Trump. Mohammed bin Salman wants deals with the US for security and weapons, and Trump has already talked about asking Saudi Arabia to invest \$1 trillion in the US economy. Here, Trump's Gaza plan puts a spanner in the works. Mohammed

bin Salman would be careful so as not to anger his citizens by supporting Trump's plan to expel Palestinians from Gaza. Making compromises would risk his position domestically, while losing deals with the US would not serve him geopolitically.

Egypt, on the other hand, needs US money to exist, and also serves as a lynchpin containing a potential powder keg of radical sentiment that, if detonated, would puncture European and US interests. Jordan, as well, is not only a close ally of the US, but dependent on US aid. Trump has already threatened economic blockades for Jordan, and King Abdullah is scheduled to visit the White House next week. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt has indicated that Jordan can change its position and accept Palestinian refugees from Gaza. But Egypt and Jordan can avert an economic blow if the Gulf nations unite against Trump's Gaza plan.

Whether Trump can coerce Arab States remains to be seen. The US president made the statement with the prime minister of Israel beside him, and to analyse it with the "madman" theory, as David Remnick of *The New Yorker* has done, only circulates blame games at those who voted for Trump, believing his campaign promise that the US would end all foreign wars, especially in Gaza. Trump has intentions in saying what he said, and determining what they are is difficult; he is the harbinger of potent unpredictability.

The Trump administration has made it clear that the "Riviera of the Middle East" would not be made with US funds, supposedly expecting Arab states to foot the bill. Trump's proposal to play around with the lives of Palestinians could very well be a far-reaching offer on the table in exchange for normalisation, or Gaza's reconstruction funded by wealthy Gulf nations. If we think of it as a deal, it also means that he could settle for less. He could very well not move forward if Arab states offer concessions acceptable to his geo-economic agendas. Donald Trump does not always follow through. But whether he does usually depends on short-term gains that portray him as the winner and the强man who is "reviving America" as the sole superpower—in other words, making America great again.



## LAW OPINION

## The State and its Human Rights obligations

**The state is obligated to ensure rule of law and as a member of the judiciary a solemn responsibility rests on all of us to dispense justice impartially and in a free and fair manner which we are all pledge-bound to do as the repository of public trust.**

JUSTICE MD. MOZIBUR RAHMAN MIAH

My understanding of the term 'Human Rights' is that they are inalienable birthrights of a human wherever he/she is born in the world and that the state is obligated to ensure, protect, and respect such rights. Human rights include, amongst others, rights to life, liberty and dignity of any individual. Sometimes, we get confused about the literal meaning and distinction between "human rights" and "fundamental rights", although they have similar import. In fact, the idea of basic human rights coined in the universal declaration of human rights declared back in 1948 by the UN, subsequently percolated into the domestic legal systems as fundamental rights or as the bill of rights enshrined in specific Constitutions. In part III of our Constitution our fundamental rights have been enshrined and Article 44 endowed on citizens the right to enforce such rights through taking recourse to Article 102 of our Constitution.

Despite the solemn assertions of rights and entitlements in the Constitution, we have all been privy to the terms "extra judicial killings" and "enforced disappearance". Needless to mention, these diabolical offences are wanton violation of human rights. While the harrowing accounts of extra judicial killings and enforced disappearance have been reality for decades but barely have we seen any visible actions

regarding meting out exemplary punishment to those who are behind such heinous crimes. In this particular field, different human rights organisations have been found vociferous all along for the brutality unleashed to the defenseless citizens especially by different law-enforcing agencies but they eventually could not be successful in bringing the accountable to book and ensuring justice to the victims. However, our right defenders' deliberate engagement bluster collective anger against the state which in turn bring attention to the international community.

A country is considered civilised when the rule of law prevails therein, lest anarchy and lawlessness grips the country and oppression of the downtrodden becomes the order of the day. Further, the state is obligated to ensure rule of law and as a member of the judiciary a solemn responsibility rests on all of us to dispense justice impartially and in a free and fair manner which we are all pledge-bound to do as the repository of public trust.

At the same time, we have to bear in mind that, judiciary is not beyond reproach and we are also under constant public gaze; therefore we should remain vigilant and cautious while adjudicating any legal proceedings placed before us.

Now, I revert to the legal protection ensured by the state in case of violation of human rights in our country. We have a statute titled

"The National Human Rights Commission Act 2009" having as many as thirty-two sections therein. In section 12 of the Act, the functions of the commission have been delineated which is merely investigative in nature and then to hand in its suggestion and recommendation to the government to preserve and protect human rights and to sensitise the people over that. From the nature and function entrusted upon the commission, it appears to me, that the said commission is nothing but a toothless tiger having no authority to compel the violators to face the music. Indeed, such inherent limitations stave off the commission from doing anything substantive against serious human rights violations. Then again, ever since the said statute came into being, we found that individuals who were at helm of the commission, were mostly retired bureaucrats or those whose political ideology aligned with that of the party in power as if it were but a rehabilitation center for them. It has barely been given any authority to investigate any wrongdoing against the law enforcing agencies or top government high-ups. Now, time has come to bring changes in the Act for making it fully functional as an effective human rights defender for the oppressed section of people.

The writer is judge, High Court Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

## LAW VISION

## Can office of ombudsman investigate enforced disappearances?

ARAFAT IBNUL BASHAR

Article 77 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides for the establishment of the office of Ombudsman. The provision confers on an Ombudsman the power to investigate any action taken by a Ministry, a public officer, or a statutory public authority. The Ombudsman Act, 1980 was enacted to establish this office and define its powers and functions. However, the office of the Ombudsman has not been established even after 50 years of the existence of the Constitution, potentially undermining the constitutional spirit.

The concept of the Ombudsman can be traced to the Qin dynasty in China in 221 BC, while the modern iteration of the notion can be found in Sweden in 1713. In present times, the office of the Ombudsman has become a regular feature of modern states, having the power to initiate investigations with or without any formal complaint against government officials, judges and other judicial officials, local governments, and even military administration in some jurisdictions. Ombudsman and its different forms have worked as a "safety valve" against the arbitrary exercise of power and made executive as well as judiciary more accountable, without curbing their powers.

The Interim Government of Bangladesh recently signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (ICPED) and has vowed to implement it. The current legal regime of Bangladesh is not equipped to tackle and properly remedy instances of enforced



disappearances. Under the Convention, the State has been burdened with the responsibility to prevent crime and combat impunity for such crimes. The state will discharge such responsibility through its various institutions.

However, in Bangladesh, the conundrum is that the law enforcing agencies are themselves under the accusation of either committing the crime, supporting it, or concealing it. As such, it becomes quite tricky to confer the task of investigating the complaints of enforced disappearance to any law enforcement agencies. Instead, the responsibility may be assigned to an independent body like Ombudsman, who, in theory, will be free to perform his duties according to the law.

Section 6 of the Ombudsman Act, 1980 allows an Ombudsman to investigate any action taken by a Ministry, states that an alleged victim of enforced

disappearance has the right to report the facts to the competent authorities, who will examine the allegation promptly and impartially and, if necessary, undertake without delay a thorough and impartial investigation. In our present context, an Ombudsman would be more suited to conduct this investigation than a law enforcement agency.

Besides, section 15 of the Ombudsman Act, 1980 authorises the Government to exempt any public officer or class of public officers from the operation of this Act. This provision can defeat the object and aim of the legislation, making the Ombudsman a toothless tiger. Again, section 9 of the Act authorises the Ombudsman to make recommendations, and there is nothing substantive to equip an Ombudsman to compel relevant authority to implement any recommendations.

With proper amendments in the Ombudsman Act, the office of the Ombudsman could well be prepared as an alternative redress mechanism to fulfill the obligations under the ICPED. In the past, the office of Tax Ombudsman had been established in our country through a separate legislation, though it was abolished within a few years. In the current context, the office of the Ombudsman could be a much-needed mechanism to address the grievances of the people. In fact, such experimentation could be done to accommodate the office of the Ombudsman to deal with other issues of concern in the country such as banking or financial fraud, political harassment, etc.

The writer is Lecturer, School of Law, Chittagong Independent University.

## LAW ADVOCACY

## Judges' appointment in Bangladesh

RAGIB SHAHRIAR RAFI

The appointment of judges is a cornerstone of judicial independence and the rule of law. Article 95(2)(c) notes that judges of the supreme court shall have "such qualifications as may be prescribed by law for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court". Despite this mandate, no legislation has been enacted to detail these qualifications, leaving the appointment process vulnerable to subjective interpretation. This ambiguity undermines the spirit of constitutionalism, as it fails to provide clear criteria for ensuring the competence and integrity of judicial appointees. The absence of a statutory framework also opens the door to potential political interference, as successive governments have leveraged this loophole to appoint individuals aligned with their ideological preferences rather than prioritising merit or judicial independence.

Historically, the lack of legislative action on this matter can be attributed to political reluctance, as enacting such laws would curtail the discretionary power of the executive in judicial appointments. The judicial appointment process, therefore, stands at odds with the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances as enshrined in the Constitution. Over the decades, various legal experts and civil society organisations have highlighted the need for a comprehensive judicial appointment law. Attempts to initiate discourse on this issue have been met with resistance, largely due to the entrenched political interests that benefit from

**By enacting a Judicial Appointments Act and establishing an independent appointment commission, Bangladesh can ensure that its judiciary remains a bulwark of justice and democracy, free from undue political influence.**

maintaining the status quo. The judiciary's credibility has often been questioned, with accusations of bias and inefficiency stemming from the perceived politicisation of appointments.

To address this pressing issue, Bangladesh can draw inspiration from other jurisdictions. For instance, the Judicial Appointments Commission in the United Kingdom serves as an independent body that ensures transparency and meritocracy in judicial appointments. A similar model can be proposed for Bangladesh, wherein a bipartisan commission comprising representatives from the judiciary, legal fraternity, and civil society is tasked with recommending candidates based on predefined qualifications and standards. In addition, it is imperative to draft and enact a Judicial Appointments Act, clearly specifying the qualifications, experience, and ethical standards required for judicial appointees. Such legislation should include mechanisms for public scrutiny, periodic review, and accountability to ensure that the process remains fair and transparent.

From a policy perspective, a multi-stakeholder dialogue involving the judiciary, legislature, legal experts, and civil society organisations is necessary to build consensus on the contours of a Judicial Appointments Act. This dialogue should aim to strike a balance between ensuring judicial independence and maintaining executive accountability. Furthermore, the enactment of such a law must be accompanied by institutional reforms to bolster the judiciary's independence. For example, ensuring financial autonomy for the judiciary and enhancing the training and professional development of judges can significantly improve judicial performance and public confidence in the system. Political will is indispensable in this regard. Political parties must transcend partisan interests and prioritise the long-term stability and credibility of the judiciary as a foundational pillar of democracy.

The absence of legislation under Article 95(2)(c) of the Constitution of Bangladesh is a critical gap that undermines the principles of transparency, meritocracy, and judicial independence. Addressing this issue requires a combination of legislative action, institutional reforms, and political commitment. By enacting a Judicial Appointments Act and establishing an independent appointment commission, Bangladesh can ensure that its judiciary remains a bulwark of justice and democracy, free from undue political influence.

The writer is Student of Law, Jagannath University.



“

They [Chittagong Kings fans] should be supporting their own team in the final. But maybe when I go out in the field to bat, they could cheer for me a little.

Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal said he expects at least some support from the fans of Chittagong, the left-handed batter's hometown.

I think people would say that Barishal are probably the favourites, right? Fine. It is what it is. I think we have been playing really good cricket. I certainly think that people wouldn't be shocked if we won, right? We are a good team. That's what that is.

Chittagong Kings head coach Shaun Tait said ahead of today's BPL final.



Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal and Chittagong Kings captain Mohammad Mithun stand by the trophy in the captains' photoshoot at a city hotel on the eve of the Bangladesh Premier League final.

PHOTO: BCB

## ‘Recognition of a massive cultural phenomenon’

SPORTS REPORTER

In a unique move and a massive recognition, Bangladesh national women's football team were yesterday announced as a recipient of the Ekushey Padak 2025, the second highest civilian honour of the country, alongside 14 other individuals for their contributions in various fields.

Introduced in 1976 in memory of the martyrs of the Bengali Language Movement of 1952, the award is usually given to recognise contributions in a number of fields, including culture, education, journalism, and economics.

However, this is the first time a sporting team will receive the honour. Late Abdul Hamid, a noted sports journalist and sports commentator, was the first and only individual from the sporting arena to have received the honour previously, even though he was awarded in 2003 for his contribution to journalism.

The recognition of the women's football team, who last year successfully defended their SAFF Women's Championship title, comes at a time when women's football is facing obstacles from various reactionary elements of society.

Recently, at least three women's football matches were halted in three northern districts of the country, the latest of which occurred in Rangpur yesterday.

Mostafa Sarwar Farooki, the adviser to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, termed this decision



as a recognition of the women's team's success as a "massive cultural phenomenon."

"Bestowing the women's football team with the Ekushey Padak is important from two perspectives," Farooki, also a noted filmmaker, told The Daily Star.

"The first is their sporting achievement, which is beautiful. But we don't consider this progress and the amazing rise of the women's football team as just a sporting phenomenon; we also see it as a cultural phenomenon, and we believe it has a huge positive cultural impact on Bangladesh and Bangladesh's progress," the adviser added.

Bangladesh Football Federation's women's wing chairman, Mahfuzza Akter Kiron, who oversaw the rise of women's football over the last decade, expressed her delight at the news and her gratitude towards the government.

"I can't express how delighted and happy I am. You all know how difficult and rocky the road to success for women's football in Bangladesh has been. So this is, I believe, a recognition of the hard work and struggle that we all have made this far," Kiron told The Daily Star.

Kiron hoped that this recognition would pave a smooth path for the women's national team and women's football in general.

"Women's football is at a crossroads at the moment as it is facing a lot of obstacles. So this recognition will definitely help women's football overcome those hurdles.

"I hope the award will also motivate the national team players to concentrate on football and have a positive outcome," added the BFF member, referring to the current impasse created by the boycott of the head coach by 18 senior members of the squad.

## Curtain falls on controversy-plagued BPL today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 11th Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is coming to an end with the final between Fortune Barishal and Chittagong Kings at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka today.

The organisers had made many lofty promises in the lead up to the event and many steps had been taken to set this edition apart which included a nationwide 'Festival of Youth'. However, the tournament did not live up to its billing and will most likely be remembered for the wrong reasons in the years to come.

Much of the discussion this season has been around players' non-payment issue and new additions Durbar Rajshahi have been at the centre of the debacle, followed by finalists Chittagong.

Concerns over match-fixing in the BPL have also surfaced which prompted the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to form an independent inquiry body to assist the BCB Anti Corruption Unit (ACU) regarding investigations.

Unsurprisingly, all of this has brought further ill-repute to Bangladesh's premier T20 tournament and harmed the reputation of the BCB globally.

In an apparent continuation of mismanagement in the BPL, there was no mention of an official captains' photoshoot when Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal came to the press conference at yesterday noon, however, at around 5:30 pm, the BCB in a press release said a photoshoot will take place in the evening in the team hotel.

Fortune Barishal are appearing in the BPL final for the second time in a row. Overall, it will be the franchise's third final in four seasons (2022, 2024, and 2025).

The last time Chittagong Kings featured in BPL was back in 2013 and they were finalists in that edition as well.

Barishal and Chittagong faced off thrice in the competition so far. Barishal outplayed Chittagong in Qualifier 1, winning it by nine wickets, while the teams won one each in the league phase.

Chittagong's English batter Graham Clark is the leading scorer for the franchise with 387 runs in 13 innings. Skipper Tamim Iqbal leads the chart for Barishal in this regard,

scoring 359 runs in 13 innings

Barishal's Faheem Ashraf is the leading wicket-taker for the side with 20 wickets in 11 games while pacer Khaled Ahmed is Chittagong's leading candidate in terms of wickets, scalping 20 in 13 matches.

Bangladesh Cricket Board announced Tk 2.5 crore as prize money for the champions -- Tk 50 lakhs more than the previous edition. Meanwhile, the runners-up will receive Tk 1.5 crore, increasing it from last year's Tk 1 crore reward.

For the first time in the tournament's history, the third and fourth placed teams (Khulna Tigers and Rangpur Riders) will also get Tk 60 lakh and Tk 40 lakh respectively

while the emerging player of the tournament award has also been included for the first time.

Bangladesh icon Tamim Iqbal will be honoured with special mementoes from BCB ahead of today's presentation ceremony, acknowledging his remarkable 17-year career.

BCB changed the start time of the final from 7:00pm to 6:00pm just a day before. Although the media was informed about the matter yesterday, a BCB official insisted that the franchises were informed about the change in timing much before.

Instead of fireworks, this BPL final closing ceremony will only have laser shows.

Still, Tamim tried to highlight some good things that have happened this time around, especially praising the wickets which have produced plenty of runs.

"We can debate all day over what could have been done and I would even agree with you. But some things have been good. The cricket has been good. There are many gaps that will have to be filled," Tamim said yesterday.

"Wickets are a big issue in the BPL and I have talked about it too. We have to credit the groundsmen as the wickets were great [this time]," he added.

Barishal are the defending champions with local stars like Mushfiqur Rahim,

Mahmudullah and Towhid Hridoy alongside international stars such as Dawid Malan, Kyle Mayers and the recently-arrived James Neesham in their ranks. Tamim, who won the BPL twice, said that the team which keeps their nerves will have the best chance of winning the final.

"If you are not calm and let the pressure get to you, you will make mistakes. The team which remains calm will have more opportunities. I have played two finals before so I am not too anxious during finals. Hoping that tomorrow [Friday] goes the same way," Tamim said.

Chittagong, on the other hand, have

banked on their locals such as Shamim Hossain, Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam in the absence of big name foreign stars. After a nail-biting win in the second qualifier against Khulna Tigers, the Port City team have no shortage of belief.

"Yes, absolutely confident [to lift the trophy]. I'm not getting overconfident, but you have to be. It's 50-50 almost as you are in the final. We came from a great win from the last night [Wednesday]. There is some confidence in the group but at the end of the day, you have to play well," Chittagong coach Shaun Tait said at yesterday's press meet.

## ‘No surprises’ as Howe’s Newcastle down Arsenal

AGENCIES

Eddie Howe hailed Newcastle's "huge" League Cup semifinal win against Arsenal and said his side's appearance in the final was no surprise.

Chasing a first major trophy since 1969, Newcastle swept to a 2-0 victory over Arsenal on a memorable night at a raucous St James' Park on Wednesday.

Jacob Murphy's first half opener and Anthony Gordon's strike after the interval sealed a 4-0 aggregate success that sent Howe's team to their second League Cup final in the last three seasons.

Newcastle were beaten by Manchester United at Wembley in 2023, but Howe is confident the lessons from that heartbreaking loss will provide valuable experience and motivation in the final against Liverpool or Tottenham on March 16.

The Magpies boss vowed his side would learn from the pain of their last visit to Wembley.



Eddie Howe has now led Newcastle to more EFL Cup finals (2) than every other manager in the club's history combined (1).

He has now overseen 17 EFL Cup ties in charge of the Magpies, losing just two of them. His only normal-time defeat came in the 2022/23 final against Manchester United, with the other a penalty shootout loss to Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last season.

Newcastle have beaten Arsenal for a third time this season -- twice in the EFL cup and once in the Premier League. This is also the first time that the Magpies have beaten The Gunners thrice in a campaign.

to superb performances from Sweden striker Alexander Isak and England winger Gordon.

Howe acknowledged he had tweaked his defensive system, switching to a back five to nullify Arsenal's set-piece threat.

Arteta had no answers to Howe's tactical masterclass as Newcastle beat the Gunners for the third time this season.

"It is huge (to get back to Wembley). The first appearance there was a bit unexpected, but we want to be there regularly, so it's not a surprise this time," he said.

"We are there on merit. Our run has not been easy this year, so we've done the hard yards.

"Hopefully we can learn from the last experience. We have come a long way since then. I would love to think we can go to Wembley and perform better."

Organised superbly by the astute Howe, they out-played Mikel Arteta's side thanks



Real Madrid's 20-year-old academy striker Gonzalo Garcia headed home a 93rd-minute winner to put his side into the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 3-2 victory at Leganes on Wednesday. Playing his third game for the senior side, Garcia scored for the first time for Real Madrid, who were without several key players -- including Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham, sidelined due to minor knocks -- ahead of Saturday's LaLiga derby against Atletico Madrid and next week's Champions League playoff clash at Manchester City.

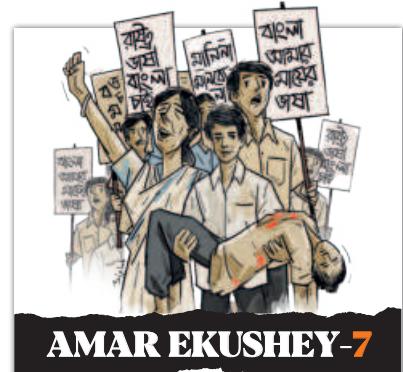
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This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the 1952 Language Movement. Drawing on research based on various published books, this 21-part series tells the story of the historic struggle for our mother tongue.

### Kushtia erupts into protest

AHMAD ISTIAK

Public sentiment in Kushtia began to shift in favour of the Language Movement towards the end of 1951.

Local political leaders, including Advocate Abdul Haque, Syed Altaf Ali, and Dr Abul Kashem, alongside

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Visitors at the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro stall of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at the Suhrawardy Udyana. The bookstall is shaped like a double-decker bus. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

'Don't spiral once again into deadly abuses'

HRW urges Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch yesterday called on Bangladesh to support a UN-backed mechanism that can help secure a democratic future instead of succumbing to a cycle of violence and revenge.

Mentioning the demolition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's house on Dhanmondi 32 by protesters, the international rights group said while anger against the former Awami League government is justified, lawlessness is not.

"Bangladesh, which has a history of political violence, should not spiral once again into deadly abuses," it said in a statement yesterday.

The HRW also mentioned how Sheikh Hasina had to step down after 15 years of repression, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances.

Her government had remained in office

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

### Govt moves to build road thru Osmani Udyana

Plans to link Phoenix Road with Abdul Gani Road; experts warn of ecological damage

HELEMUL ALAM and BAHARAM KHAN

The government has decided to construct a road, connecting Fulbaria's Phoenix Road to Abdul Gani Road, through the Osmani Udyana, in order to facilitate vehicles heading towards the Secretariat.

The 29-acre public park has remained closed for the last seven years on account of a "modernisation" project.

Urban planning and environment experts have pointed out that the Osmani Udyana, one of Dhaka's largest green spaces, plays a crucial role in maintaining the capital's environmental balance, and the construction of the road will damage the park's ecosystem.

According to sources, the decision came on Tuesday at a public administration ministry meeting, and a team already visited the proposed site yesterday to assess the project's feasibility.

If implemented, several dozen large trees could be felled to make way for the 20-to-25-foot-wide road, which was not included in the park's original design.

A top ministry official said that alongside the road construction project, a 20-storey car park will be built at the site of a government workshop on Abdul Gani Road, near Osmani Memorial Auditorium, to accommodate government vehicles.

"Abdul Gani Road will come under immense pressure once the parking lot is operational..."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

### DB picks up Shaon, Saba for questioning



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police picked up actors Meher Afroz Shaon and Sohana Saba from the capital last night.

Rezaul Karim Mallick, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that Shaon was taken into police custody on allegations of plotting against the state.

She was picked up from Dhammondi and taken to DB headquarters on Minto Road for questioning, according to the DMP's media wing notification around 8:30pm.

Her detention came hours after her village home in Jamalpur was attacked and torched.

A group of protesters set fire to the house belonging to Shaon's father,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

### WINGS OF THE WETLANDS

A red-naped ibis wandering the Char Bagdanga in Chapainawabganj. A striking medium-sized bird native to South Asia, it is found predominantly in India and parts of Southeast Asia. The red patch on its nape is especially pronounced during breeding season, adding some colour to its otherwise dark appearance. Red-naped ibises are often seen foraging in shallow waters, where they use their long, curved bills to find insects, small amphibians, and other invertebrates. These birds have a strong cultural significance in some areas and are even mentioned in local folklore. Though they have a broader distribution across parts of South Asia, they are considered rare and at risk in Bangladesh, mainly due to habitat loss from agricultural expansion, wetland degradation, and human encroachment. Wetland habitats, which are crucial for the ibis' survival, are increasingly being drained or disturbed, impacting their population in the country.

PHOTO: MOSABBER HOSSAIN RIBON

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

### Advisory council gives final nod to ICT ordinance

BSS, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers yesterday gave final approval to the draft ordinance of International Crimes Tribunals in principle with necessary amendments and subject to vetting by the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of the law ministry.

The draft of International Crimes (Tribunals) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 has been framed to amend the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 to make it more time befitting.

The approval was given at a meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office with Professor Muhammad Yunus in the chair, said a media release of the Cabinet Division.

The council also approved the draft of Sheikh Russell Rural Development Academy, Rangpur (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 in principle.

The approval was given to change the name of the institution to Rural Development Academy, Rangpur in line with the name of other

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

### 73% people do not read newspapers

Finds BBS survey on 45,000 households across 64 dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspapers are losing their appeal across the country, with more readers choosing mobile phones as the preferred device for reading news nowadays, according to a study by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

According to its findings released yesterday, 26 percent of respondents said they read newspapers. About 59 percent read news on mobile phones, while 37 percent prefer print newspapers.

Those who don't read newspapers make up 73 percent of the respondents, with 46 percent saying they do not feel it is necessary.

"Overall, people haven't lost trust in the media, but interference from political arena, government and influential persons is seen as a major obstacle to publishing objective news,"

said Md Sayem Hossain, senior information officer of the Media Reforms Commission, in a press release issued yesterday.

The BBS survey, the first of its kind in the country, was conducted across 64 districts, involving the participation of members from 45,000 households aged 10 and above.

Meanwhile, 65 percent of people watch television. Among the 34.58 percent who do not, 53 percent said they don't find it necessary.

During a national disaster or crisis, 35 percent of people first look for updates on news channels on television, followed by 28 percent

who turn to social media, and 24 percent who ask a trustworthy person.

The survey reveals that the people want to see the media independent, impartial, and free from government and political influence.

Of the respondents, 15 percent said mass media in the country is not free at all, while 23 percent said it is partially free, 24 percent said it is largely free, and 17 percent believe it is fully free.

Among the 6,849 respondents who believe mass media is not free at all, most cited political interference as the main reason, followed by government interference and influence by powerful individuals.

Nationally, 67 percent of people expect mass media to be independent, 60 percent expect media neutrality or impartiality, 37 percent want media to be free from political influence, and 32 percent expect mass media to be

free from government influence.

Most people think state-owned Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar should be operated under the stewardship of the government. Over 56 percent of people believe Bangladesh Television should be operated under government control, while 55 percent said the same for Bangladesh Betar.

In the case of radio, 93 percent of respondents said they do not listen to the radio, with 54 percent saying that they do not find it necessary.

If govt fails to act, stability could be at risk  
Says BNP about ongoing situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has expressed concern over the country's current situation, saying that stability could be at risk if the government fails to demonstrate its ability to control the emerging challenges.

"If the government cannot effectively manage the ongoing situation, the stability of both the state and the government will face serious threats," the party said in a press release last night.

Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi cautioned in the release that the current situation could lead to the resurgence of defeated fascists alongside extremist, anarchist, and anti-democratic forces, both domestic and foreign.

"The symptoms of such a resurgence are already visible," the press release added.

The BNP urged the interim government to take immediate and decisive action to bring the situation under control.

"Otherwise, anarchic conditions will spread across the country. It is now imperative to visibly demonstrate the role of the state and the government by strictly enforcing law and order," the statement read.

The party also criticised the interim government for its perceived

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

### Another girls' football match cancelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A girls' football match was cancelled in Rangpur's Taraganj upazila yesterday, just days after one was obstructed in Joypurhat.

The local administration had to impose section 144 around the venue, following protests led by an Islami Andolok leader who opposed the event citing religious grounds.

The match between Joypurhat girls and Rajshahi girls was scheduled to begin at 3:00pm at the Burirhat High School ground in Rangpur as part of an inter-district football tournament.

However, before the match began, Ashraf Ali, president of Islami Andolok Bangladesh's Taraganj unit, publicly called for its cancellation. He also announced a protest rally against the event, leading to a heated confrontation between the organisers and his followers, prompting the local administration to intervene.

The cancellation marks a growing pattern of resistance against women's participation in sports, raising concerns about the future of such

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4