



The 'Kingdom of Stones' on Sangu banks

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Hurting Talha 'living the dream' of forging fast bowlers

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Reform now at crucial stage

Interim govt completes 6 months amid a host of challenges

TANIM AHMED and MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

Poised on the cusp of discussions on its much-promised reforms, the interim government completes six months in office following a wave of turbulence.

The six major reform commissions are set to submit their full set of proposals today while Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus's government grapples with restoring order as angry protesters have torn down symbols of Awami League's autocratic regime.

Prof Yunus faces perhaps the most crucial phase as head of the interim government that took power on August 8, 2024 after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India after facing a popular uprising. Since then, the Nobel Peace laureate, who took over the helm of Bangladesh amid high expectations, has pledged "reforms followed by election" almost every time he was asked about an electoral roadmap.

Now that the recommendations to reform the constitution, electoral system, judiciary, civil service, police and the Anti Corruption Commission are in, Prof Yunus faces the challenging task of reaching a political consensus before he can proceed with the election.

During the last 15 years of Awami League's absolute ironclad rule, it had rendered the parliament a rubber stamp, destroyed the electoral system, politicised the civil service and judiciary, severely eroding their integrity, and instituted a state-sponsored system of rampant corruption. It will now be the political parties who decide on the extent of reforms on each front.

Since expectations for reforms and ideological stance on key issues diverge sharply across the political spectrum, the challenge of achieving consensus is formidable.

But that is not the only challenge the Yunus-led interim government faces.

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People taking away iron rods and whatever salvageable material they can find from the ruins of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence on Dhanmondi 32 yesterday after its demolition by protesters.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Stop attacks on assets linked to AL or any citizen

Yunus urges all to respect rule of law, help establish peace, order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus calls on all citizens "to immediately restore complete law and order and to ensure there will be no further attacks on properties" associated with the family of Sheikh Hasina and politicians of the fascist Awami League party or against any citizen on any pretext.

The anger of the activists who have attacked properties is understandable because they and their relatives and friends lived through years of tyranny under Hasina, said a statement released by the chief adviser's press wing yesterday.

The government understands the activists' sense of outrage that even from her refuge in New Delhi, Hasina continues to try to mobilise her militants to hamper Bangladesh's recovery from years of abuse under her leadership.



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Dhanmondi 32 now lies in ruins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only a three-storey skeleton remains to haunt road 32 in Dhanmondi. Once Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence, the house had become a symbol of tyranny for many. Today it stands in ruins as angry protesters swooped in on Wednesday.

Scrap collectors were taking away the iron rods and bricks from the debris while curious people looked on yesterday.

A middle-aged man was using a hacksaw to cut rods from chunks of concrete in the morning. By midday, he had collected almost 10kg of rods. A woman was picking up anything made of metal from a pile of rubble.

There were several others, low-

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26 NOTED CITIZENS, TIB, BLAST, CONDEMN VANDALISM - PAGE 3

BNP worried over law and order

Party leaders may meet chief adviser this week, convey concerns

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP is likely to hold talks with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus this week and express concerns over the country's "deteriorating" law and order situation, especially the demolition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence in Dhanmondi, say several party leaders.

They fear that these attacks and vandalism in the last two days could pose a serious threat to national stability and disrupt the upcoming national election.

The leaders also think that these attacks could be "well-planned", not just mere expressions of outrage.

They said that such incidents could create a chaotic situation for the country and could benefit the Awami League instead.

The party plans to express its position on the current situation and urge the government to take immediate steps to restore law and order.

The meeting with the chief adviser is slated for February 10 with a delegation led by Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, who will return home from the US tomorrow, according to party sources.

The issues were discussed during a meeting of the Standing Committee, the highest policymaking body of the BNP, at its chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday. BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman presided over the

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Trump sanctions ICC for 'baseless' Israel, US probes

The world court vows to continue 'providing justice'

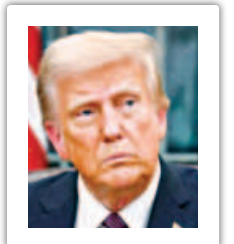
AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump on Thursday authorised economic and travel sanctions targeting people who work on International Criminal Court (ICC) investigations of US citizens or US allies such as Israel, repeating action he took during his first term.

ICC condemned the sanctions yesterday and called on its 125 member states to support its staff.

"The court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



A policeman snatching a banner from demonstrators in front of the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna, yesterday. They gathered to protest against a High Court verdict that cancelled their appointment as assistant teachers at government primary schools. Inset, some female protesters try to shield themselves from jets of water.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Surviving Dhaka: One commute at a time

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Dhaka is full of stories and opportunities. However, living in the capital city comes with a price. Mostly in the form of time, physical and mental stress, and last but not least, stress on your pockets. But perhaps nothing annoys the residents more than the toll of its traffic.

Call me melodramatic, but I find commuting in Dhaka is an odyssey itself. Even if it's a short distance such as Karwan Bazar to Mirpur-10, it's challenging all the same.

EENY, MEENY, MINY, MOE; ON THE PACKED BUS I GO

Every morning, while setting out for work, I have a number of choices. I can take a bus, or get on the Metro, or hire something from a ridesharing company, or get on a human hauler known as leguna. Each choice comes with its disadvantages since only the most optimistic person can find advantages of Dhaka commute, and I am not one of them.

Buses are the cheapest option in Dhaka, but finding a seat on a local bus during office hours is like winning a lottery. If you are a skinny person like me, whose only defence is his sarcasm, you will have a hard time on the bus.

THE ULTRA-FAST PRESSURE COOKER

Or as the average Dhaka office goes calls it – Metro Rail.

It's an amazingly helpful transportation system and people are thankful for it. It has reduced hours of commutes into literally minutes, and it's been a blessing for office goers. But calling it crowded is an understatement.

Getting off the metro is easy because the wave of crowd will take you with them, but getting on it is an entirely different story. You have to get in the line. There are the entitled ones who think they are above getting in a queue and tries to bump in. Engaging in an argument with one of them is as much part of the commute as toiling your way into the compartment.

The compartments are usually so

tightly packed that you cannot even stand properly, and if you are anything like I am, you will come out with joint pains because of all the pushing and shoving. So perhaps, calling this commute a pressure ride won't be an injustice.

HAULED ACROSS TOWN

Without the larger transportations, life in Dhaka will become very difficult. The rickshaws are too expensive and not a good choice for longer commutes. CNGs are hard to find during peak hours and will leave a mark on your wallet. The only other choice is smaller public transports like a leguna.

The reckless driving, the poorly maintained vehicle that feels like it will fall apart at the next speed breaker, and the tightly packed seats where they force one extra person than the seats are made for; it's another terrible experience.

THERE'S MORE

Then there are the common issues such as the vehicles delaying on purpose

in hopes of getting more passengers. The terrible seats that will readjust your spine at every bump, and last but not least, the average Dhaka residents who are rude for no reason. They will hog more than their fair share of the seat and most frequently, they will be silently hostile. The average Dhaka resident is just as terrible as the daily Dhaka commute. But, after living in the city for a few years, you will feel sorry for them. Because if you had to go through such struggles twice every day, you will become irritable too.

Amongst all these terrible experiences, the good news is a new ticket counter-based bus service has been launched. Approximately, 2,610 pink buses operated by 21 different companies are expected to bring some solace to commuters. With strict adherence to designated stops for entry and exit, one can expect the buses to bring respite to Dhaka residents. Whether they have any positive effect or not, remains to be seen but as another Dhaka resident, I sincerely hope that they do.

Polls could be held by year end 'at the earliest'

Yunus tells NHK

STAR REPORT

The next general election in Bangladesh could be held at the end of this year at the earliest, said Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus.

In an interview with Japanese public broadcaster NHK on Wednesday, Yunus also discussed his plans to rebuild Bangladesh.

Yunus became the chief adviser of the interim government following a mass uprising that toppled the Awami League government, led by Sheikh Hasina, after 15 years in power.

He told NHK that he had taken charge of a country that was "devastated" in every aspect by the Awami League and vowed to ensure that Bangladesh "lands on its feet and becomes stronger."

"Given the circumstances when we took over, I believe we have come a long way. It was a completely devastated society—its economy, political system, and judiciary were all in disarray," he said.

Acknowledging the importance of elections in a democratic system, he expressed his commitment to creating a "safe and sound" environment before holding elections, ensuring that the next elected government can build upon his administration's efforts.

Regarding the election timeline, he reiterated that voting could take place at the end of this year at the earliest.

"When the election is held, the newly elected government will inherit a stable and secure foundation to work with," Yunus told NHK.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate expressed hope that young people, who played a key role in last year's uprising, would continue to have an "influential" role in shaping the country's future.

"What young people want is to showcase their creative power and share it with the rest of the world. That is the ambition we have in mind," Yunus said.

The chief adviser also conveyed his gratitude to Japan, Bangladesh's largest development partner, acknowledging that Japanese technology and investment have helped create jobs for young Bangladeshis.

Reform now at crucial stage

FROM PAGE 1

The overwhelming and unanimous support that Prof Yunus enjoyed when he was sworn in to helm this interim government, which included representatives from among the students who had spearheaded the uprising, may wane with the launch of a new party led by the protest leaders. Left it be seen as partial, the interim government will have to clinically evaluate its neutrality having three cabinet members who are tipped to join the new political party and run in the upcoming election.

A professor of economics and globally acknowledged as the father of social business, Prof Yunus, along with his team of advisers, has not been able to bring down the rising costs of food and essentials. The closure of large factories (especially those linked with the Awami League leaders or beneficiaries of the previous regime) leading to job losses has only compounded the employment situation. Economic forecasts for the year remain dismal and show little signs of improving soon. Despite some of the reforms in the financial sector, the economy has remained almost stagnant.

To make matters even more complicated, the Muslim month of fasting, Ramadan is set to start in March when food prices typically peak. This will coincide with the scorching summer months when

power demand is set to peak as well. However, efforts or measures to cater to power demand during the summer may prove to be insufficient. Projections on this front remain dismal as well.

The perceptibly deteriorating law and order situation has been another cause of concern for the citizens. There have been numerous incidents of petty crimes and mugging in broad daylight with rather insignificant efforts to bring that under control. The morale of the police force remains low even after six months of this government's tenure.

The debilitating series of protests and demonstrations that characterised the first few weeks of the incumbent's tenure continues even now. These protests and demonstrations, whether by jobseekers or students or deprived madrasa teachers, continue to plague the government and gridlock Dhaka almost every week, causing immense suffering to the citizens.

The incumbent's reputation for flip-flopping on decisions has only been reaffirmed with the recent, rather embarrassing, announcement and cancellation of the Bangla Academy awards.

While the lacklustre measures to contain the outbreak of dengue might be overlooked, the health ministry's lack of sincerity in dealing with the wounded protesters of the

July uprising cannot certainly not be waved off. A full month gone in the new year, students are yet to get their textbooks, and it might be another few months still before young pupils get their books.

Relation with Bangladesh's most important neighbour, India, remains a work in progress and leaves much to be desired. Bangladesh has yet to send a clear message about its vision, which should be based on a win-win scenario.

Meanwhile, the issue of Rohingya repatriation has become ever more complicated as the Arakan Army has seized control of most of Rakhine State, making it rather uncertain at best, and almost impossible at worst.

With Donald Trump back in office, there is bound to be a shift in global order. But the effects are being felt quite directly as he has shut down funding for all USAID projects, which heightens apprehension regarding Rohingya expenditure besides another round of job losses due to this fund crunch.

It is unlikely that the incumbent will be able to meet all these expectations and deal with all these challenges. But it will at least have to get to the lowest hanging fruit and meet the bare minimum, which is what the chief adviser has been saying from the beginning. Necessary reforms, followed by election.

Stop attacks on assets linked to

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"Despite this understanding, the Government appeals to the citizens to abide by the law to show the world we are a nation that respects the rule of law. Respecting the rule of law is what differentiates the new Bangladesh we are working together to build from the old Bangladesh under the fascist regime. Let us not undermine Bangladeshis' sense of security and stability; any disregard for the law endangers the lives and property of citizens," reads the statement.

"For the citizens who rose up and overthrew the Hasina regime in July and August to realise their dreams for the country, it is imperative to prove to ourselves and our friends around the world that our commitment to our principles – respecting one another's civil and human rights and acting

under the law – is unshakable."

Champions of a new Bangladesh must never act in ways that could support any perceived equivalence, however unjust, between the behaviour of today's institutions and those of the ousted autocrats.

"Our security forces are aware of this imperative. The Government is working with the country's security forces to preserve law and order and to protect the lives and property of all Bangladeshis."

If any attempt is made to destabilise the country through any kind of provocative activities, law enforcement agencies will immediately take strict action against anyone acting to create chaos and anarchy, which includes the destruction of property. The government will bring the responsible

individuals and groups to justice.

The leaders of the fascist regime have left the country in complete ruins.

They have no chance that they can come back as long as "we remain alert" and retain the moral high ground. Any attacks to their properties give them an excuse to draw international attention to themselves and dish out their fabricated stories.

"We are in the process of trying them for their crimes against humanity. The whole world is with us. Any deterioration of law and order will give a wrong message to the world."

The chief adviser calls on all citizens to materialise "our dream of building a country where all Bangladeshis can live in security and dignity to act with self-discipline and to channel their energy into productive, peaceful efforts to support positive changes".

Dhanmondi 32 now lies in ruins

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income people, like them. They will sell their finds to recyclers.

Excavators and a crane had torn down the building between 8 at night on Wednesday and 11 in the morning the next day.

Yesterday morning, a crowd of curious spectators gathered: Some peered inside and around the demolished structure, others took selfies, and motorists slowed down to take a look.

A few individuals were breaking parts of the pillars with hammers to collect bricks.

A few young people went to the basement.

The protest began after an announcement that prime minister Sheikh Hasina would deliver a speech online.

The protesters created a Facebook event titled "Bulldozer March", urging people to gather on Dhanmondi 32 at 7:30pm on Wednesday.

Large crowds gathered, and by 9:30pm, the building was set ablaze. Shortly before midnight, a crane and an excavator were at the scene. In the following couple of hours, parts of the building were razed to the ground. The heavy equipment left the scene by 11:00am on Thursday.

The protesters also demolished parts of an adjacent building which housed an art gallery and an extension of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Last night, 15 people were injured in Gazipur city as locals assaulted a group

of young men who tried to vandalise the ancestral home of former Liberation War affairs minister AKM Mozammel Haque, reports our correspondent from the city.

Witnesses said dozens of men gathered near the house of the Gazipur AL president in the Dhirashram when locals stopped them. As the men tried to run away, locals caught 15 of them and assaulted them, said Arifur Rahman, officer in charge of Gazipur Sadar Police Station, adding that two of them were in critical condition.

The injured men were sent to the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital.

ARSON ON THURSDAY NIGHT

Protesters set fire to the house of Awami League Presidium Member Sheikh Selim in the capital's Banani around 1:30am yesterday. Firefighters said they didn't dare go to the scene because there were not enough law enforcers to protect them.

In Noakhali's Begumganj and Hatiya, the houses of former army chief Moeen U Ahmed and former MPs Mohammad Ali and Ayesha Ferdous were vandalised and set on fire on Thursday night.

The incidents occurred between 8:00pm and 2:30am. Upon receiving reports, separate teams of the army and police visited the sites.

Liton Dewan, officer in-charge of Begumganj Police Station, told The Daily Star that a group of over 100 men wearing masks and helmets stormed the house of Moeen in Chaumuhani around 8:00pm.

BNP worried over law and order

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meeting virtually from London.

Talking to The Daily Star, Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "The BNP urged the government to strictly control law and order situation to prevent chaos in the country. We have also urged the people not to engage in any provocative activities and to remain calm. If the situation worsens, it could create a scope for fascists to return to politics."

In the meeting, BNP leaders criticised the interim government for its failure to stabilise law and order over the six months, which they claim has led to spreading a "mob culture" across the country.

They also questioned the government's silence and delayed response to the recent vandalism and arson attacks, including those on the Dhanmondi 32 residence and the homes of Awami League leaders and activists.

On Wednesday and Thursday, a group of protesters vandalised and set fire to the Dhanmondi-32 house. Parts of the building were razed to the ground. Homes of AL leaders were also knocked down and torched, while murals and busts of Sheikh Mujib were damaged in nearly two dozen districts.

A BNP leader, who attended the meeting but wished to remain anonymous, raised serious concerns about the government's preparedness.

"Did the government not anticipate

that such incidents could occur? With its intelligence agencies and extensive network, how could it be unaware of such widespread unrest? If the government was truly unaware, those responsible must be held accountable," he told this newspaper.

At the meeting, the party leaders also pointed fingers at the AL, accusing it of fuelling public anger through its recent programmes, such as leaflet distribution, strikes, and blockades.

They added that if the interim government could take legal action against AL leaders for their anti-state activities, the country might not have faced such a situation.

The BNP leaders expressed concern that the ongoing situation has not only damaged the credibility of the chief adviser but also tarnished the country's image.

Several Standing Committee members discussed whether any gap between student leaders and the government has created over the last two days' incidents.

The party hopes that the government will take immediate and effective measures to restore stability and ensure a peaceful environment for the upcoming national polls.

During the 90-minute meeting, BNP leaders discussed various issues, including reports of reform commissions and the current political situation. They also talked about

their divisional and district-level programmes, which are going to take place this month.

Meeting insiders also said that a three-member BNP delegation of Standing Committee members Nazrul Islam Khan, Salahuddin Ahmed, and Selima Rahman may visit the Election Commission office tomorrow to discuss the commission's preparations and related issues regarding the national polls.

Before the meeting, the BNP, in a statement early yesterday, said that failure to control situations has encouraged people to take the law into their own hands and engage in "illegal activities".

If the government cannot effectively manage the ongoing situation, the stability of both the state and the government will face serious threats. The current situation could lead to the resurgence of defeated fascists alongside extremists, anarchists, anti-democratic evil forces, both domestic and foreign, said the statement.

Apart from Fakhru, other Standing Committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Jamir Uddin Sircar, Mirza Abbas, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Salahuddin Ahmed, Selima Rahman, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, Hafizuddin Ahmed, and AZM Zahid Hossain joined the meeting.

Trump sanctions ICC

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of innocent victims of atrocities across the world, in all situations before it," it said in a statement.

The United Nations yesterday called for Trump to reverse his decision to slap sanctions on the ICC.

Dozens of countries warned that Trump's targeting of the ICC with sanctions could "increase the risk of impunity for the most serious crimes and threaten to erode the international

rule of law."

"Sanctions would severely undermine all situations currently under investigation as the Court may have to close its field offices," the 79 countries - who make up about two-thirds of the court's members - said in a statement.

Trump's move coincided with a visit to Washington by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who - along with his former defence minister

and a leader of Palestinian group Hamas - is wanted by the ICC over the offensive in the Gaza Strip.

It was unclear how quickly the US would announce names of people sanctioned. During the first Trump administration in 2020, Washington imposed sanctions on then-prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and one of her top aides over the ICC's investigation into alleged war crimes by American troops in Afghanistan.



PHOTO: TITU DAS, HABIBUR RAHMAN, KONGKON KARMAKER

Clockwise from left, the demolished residence of former Barishal City Corporation mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah on Kali Bari Road in the city after it was torn apart by locals on Thursday night. The remains of a bungalow located on Sheikh Hasina's ancestral property in the Nagar Ghat area of Khulna's Dighalia upazila, by the banks of the Bhairab river. Locals at Dinajpur town dismantled the residence of M Iqbalur Rahim, former Awami League lawmaker of Dinajpur-3. The photos were taken yesterday.

26 noted citizens, TIB, BLAST slam vandalism, arson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-six eminent citizens, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) yesterday expressed deep concern over the recent incidents of vandalism and violence across the country, including at Dhanmondi-32.

They also demanded justice for these incidents.

In a statement, the eminent citizens said the law enforcement agencies were aware of the demolition of Dhanmondi 32 and the government cannot evade responsibility with a post-incident statement.

They said the responsibility for the incidents on February 5 and 6 largely falls on the adviser in charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the interim government.

The statement said, "On February 5 [Wednesday], the historic house of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman located at Dhanmondi 32 was demolished using cranes and

The responsibility for the incidents on February 5 and 6 largely falls on the adviser in charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the interim government.

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'Govt bound to fail as it lacks spirit of uprising'

Farhad Mazhar says if students form polls-centric political party, they'll fail too

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is bound to fail as it does not have the spirit of the July uprising in it, said columnist and writer Farhad Mazhar yesterday.

"Dr Yunus is bound to fail. This government, which may have emerged from the mass uprising, is destined to fail as well. This is because the spirit of the uprising is absent within this government, it is not built upon the essence of the movement," he said at an event of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee.

The upazila-level representative meeting of the Dhaka south metropolitan unit of the committee was held at the Institute of Diploma Engineers in Kakrail.

Criticising the members of reform commissions, Mazhar said, "If you form a commission by bringing in elite and privileged individuals, who previously benefited under the Awami League regime or in the international arena, what will you achieve?"

"Bangladesh needs to be rebuilt. The correct term is 'restructuring,' not reform. We haven't even gotten our language right yet," he said.

Addressing the Nagorik Committee and student leaders, he said if they are aiming to build an election-centric party, that will eventually fail.

"Now that you have started the process of forming a party, I must ask -- are you creating another BNP, or are you truly building the revolutionary force needed to complete the mass uprising we could not finish? If you are planning to rise again with full organisational strength to complete the uprising, then you are welcome."

"But if you are merely forming another so-called liberal party, one that exists only for elections... If your goal is only to protect a government or build a new state through elections, it is nothing but a delusion," he added.

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MANDATORY BACHELOR'S DEGREE FOR UPPER HOUSE

It contradicts spirit of constitution, uprising

Says political analysts

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Political analysts have opposed the Electoral Reform Commission's recommendation of making a bachelor's degree mandatory to become a member of the upper house in the proposed bicameral legislature.

They argue that setting such a minimum educational qualification contradicts the spirit of the constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to form associations or unions.

"This is an illogical provision. On one hand, you say everyone has the right to participate in politics, but on the other hand, you impose a requirement that a graduation degree is necessary to become a member of the upper house," said Prof Nizam Ahmed, an expert on parliamentary affairs.

"There are many people who do not have a graduation degree but possess vast knowledge of political matters and people's needs through their experience. Conversely, many may have a graduation degree but lack knowledge of realpolitik," added Nizam, who is also a Public Administration teacher at Chittagong University.

The Electoral Reform Commission, in its report submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in mid January, recommended that members of the upper house should be at least 35 years old, with a minimum educational qualification of a bachelor's degree.

The Constitutional Reform Commission also proposed a bicameral legislature but did not impose any minimum educational qualification or age cap as a prerequisite for membership for the upper house.

According to the constitution, a citizen of Bangladesh who is at least 25 years old is eligible to run for a seat in parliament. Moreover, there is currently no minimum educational

mass uprising was against such discrimination," he said.

A political scientist, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the move to impose a minimum educational qualification as "undemocratic," arguing that every citizen should have the right to run for elections and that education cannot be a barrier.

"We have seen many political figures without a bachelor's degree who have made significant contributions to the nation. Such leaders are still active in politics," he added.

BNP standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said his party would issue an official response to the various proposals of the reform commission at a later date.

However, another BNP standing committee member commented that for a policymaker, educational qualifications are irrelevant; what truly matters is their capability to govern effectively.

Electoral Reform Commission member Abdul Alim said they proposed a bachelor's degree as the minimum educational qualification to ensure better decision-making in the upper house.

He said the recommendation was based on the majority opinion during stakeholder consultations. According to him, many people who submitted proposals through emails, websites, and social media supported the educational qualification requirement.

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According to the constitution, a citizen of Bangladesh who is at least 25 years old is eligible to run for a seat in parliament. Moreover, there is currently no minimum educational qualification for the positions of president, prime minister, or even members of local government bodies.

qualification for the positions of president, prime minister, or even members of local government bodies.

Prof Sabbir Ahmed of Dhaka University's Political Science department said there is no educational qualification requirement for becoming the president or the PM.

"Setting a bachelor's degree requirement is a form of discrimination, and the latest

TEACHER CANDIDATES

Police use water cannons, charge batons to foil demo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday charged batons and used water cannons to disperse protesting candidates who were demonstrating against a High Court verdict that cancelled their appointments as assistant teachers in government primary schools.

The law enforcers took action around 3:00pm when the protesters gathered near the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna.

Witnesses said the demonstrators first assembled in front of the Jatiya Press Club before marching towards Jamuna, demanding the cancellation of the HC verdict and the announcement of their joining date.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

As they reached near Kakrail Mosque, police intercepted them. However, the protesters broke through several barricades and advanced towards Jamuna.

At that point, police used batons and water cannons to disperse them, our staff photographer reported from the scene.

Protesters claimed several of their colleagues were injured in the police action.

"We qualified through exams. Why are we being denied our jobs? Why are the police beating us?" asked Taslima Begum, one of the demonstrators.

The protesters argued that all recruitment procedures had been completed and that the only step remaining was their joining.

"Our appointments were cancelled before we even received our joining letters. The verdict must

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ROHINGYA NID SCAM

Five years on, probe still incomplete

ACC likely to take over case

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Police have yet to conclude their investigation and submit a charge sheet to the court in the case filed over the Bangladeshi NID scam for Rohingyas, even after five years.

Investigation into the case, filed with Kotwali Police Station in Chattogram in 2019, reportedly stalled after the involvement of senior Election Commission (EC) officials surfaced during the probe.

The case is now likely to be transferred to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In 2019, an ACC team first discovered that Rohingyas had been added to the Bangladeshi NID database using NID forms and EC laptops. The ACC also found that several laptops used for entering NID information had been missing for years.

Currently, the Criminal Investigation Department of Chattogram is handling the case after it was transferred from the Counter-Terrorism (CT) Division of Chattogram Metropolitan Police on February 12, 2023, following an order from Police Headquarters.

"The case will be handed over to ACC as some sensitive information and names of EC officials have emerged during the investigation. As per the law, ACC now has jurisdiction over it. When the court orders us to transfer the case, we will comply,"

said Shahnewaz Khaled, superintendent of police, Chattogram CID.

He declined to elaborate further.

Meanwhile, another case related to the NID scam has recently been transferred to the ACC.

Investigators said more than 20 EC officials, from directors to office assistants, were involved in a syndicate that issued Bangladeshi NID cards to Rohingyas directly from the NID servers.



Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not determine how many times police sought time extensions from the court to finish the investigation.

"If someone is named in a criminal's statement, it does not automatically prove their guilt. A proper investigation and solid evidence are required to establish involvement," said a police official, requesting anonymity.

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EKUSHEY BOI MELA

A fun-filled day for little ones

HASAN MEER

The Ekushey Boi Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan was alive with energy yesterday, as families flocked to the book fair, eager to soak in the festive atmosphere.

The air was filled with the joyful laughter of children, their excitement contagious as they darted from one bookstall to another, their eyes wide with wonder.

Parents watched over them with a mix of amusement and attentiveness, ensuring their little ones were safe while relishing the vibrant surroundings themselves.

The Boi Mela opened its gates at 11:00am yesterday and continued till 9:00pm.

The children's corner was bustling with activity, packed with eager young readers flipping through colourful pages, absorbed in the magic of stories.

Some pointed excitedly at books featuring their favourite characters, tugging at their parents' hands and pleading to buy those.

Others sat cross-legged on



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Excited to discover something magical within the pages of a book, a girl calls out to her mother, eager to share the joy of reading together.

the floor, lost in the pages of adventure and fantasy, oblivious to the crowd around them.

Afruz Akter, a mother of two, stood smiling as her children browsed through the books. "It's wonderful to see them so interested in reading. In this digital age, it's a relief to know that the charm of books isn't lost on them," she said, holding a bag already filled with purchases.

"I promised them one book each, but how can I say no when they're so excited about reading?" said Afruz, a resident of Kalabagan.

For many parents, the fair was not just about buying books but also about reliving their own childhood memories.

Shahriar Kabir, a father accompanying his six-year-old daughter, reminisced about his own visits to the Boi Mela as a

child. "I remember coming here with my father and brother, and now I'm bringing my daughter. It's a beautiful tradition, and I hope she will continue it with her own children someday," he said, watching as his daughter clutched "Thakurmar Jhuli".

Children, too, were thrilled to be surrounded by so many stories waiting to be discovered.

Six-year-old Ayaan was overjoyed with his new finds. "I got a comics book! I'm going to read it all by myself," he said excitedly, holding up the book for all to see.

However, there were some drawbacks too. There were no arrangements for Sisimpur at the book fair yesterday, which dampened the spirit of the young attendees who looked forward to the beloved children's programme. Parents and children alike expressed disappointment, as Sisimpur had always been a highlight, offering interactive activities and engaging storytelling sessions.

As the sun began to set, families left with arms full of books and hearts full of happiness.

Once a lifeline, now a lifeless canal

Siltation chokes Kakoria river; locals demand immediate dredging

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

The Kakoria river, stretching nine kilometres through Aruail and Pakshimul unions under Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila, was once a vital lifeline for the region's people.

A tributary of the mighty Meghna, the river served as an important waterway for communication while supplying water to thousands of farmers for irrigation and providing livelihoods to local fishermen.

Now, however, Kakoria is a mere shadow of its former self.

Years of neglect and the absence of dredging have gradually transformed the river into a narrow, lifeless canal due to unchecked siltation. Its poor navigability has disrupted transportation, while the lack of natural flow has deprived farmers of irrigation water and taken away fishermen's means of survival.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sarail upazila, Boro paddy is cultivated across 1,840 hectares of land in Aruail and 2,290 hectares in Pakshimul. For decades, farmers depended on the Kakoria River to irrigate their fields, but in recent years, its flow has ceased due to siltation.

Now, the worsening situation has forced local farmers to extract groundwater using deep or shallow tube wells, significantly increasing their fuel costs and raising production expenses.

Locals have urged the authorities to take immediate steps to dredge the Kakoria River and restore its natural flow for the benefit of farmers.

Due to heavy siltation, Kakoria's confluence with the Meghna has become narrower, severely affecting the water flow. As a result, hundreds of hectares of agricultural land across Boroichara, Rajapur, Kakoria, Charpara, Ranidiya, Paromanandpur, Shatbariya, and Haripur villages have been deprived of irrigation water, making Boro paddy cultivation increasingly difficult. Transporting goods has also become more expensive, as boats can no longer navigate the river.

Rahul Das, a fisherman from Ranidiya village, said the water level had dropped alarmingly low during the dry season, preventing them from casting their nets. This, he added, has severely impacted their livelihoods.

Locals expressed frustration over government inaction, pointing out that

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Years of neglect and the absence of dredging have gradually transformed the Kakoria river, a tributary of the Meghna, into a narrow canal. Its poor navigability has disrupted transportation, while the lack of natural flow has deprived farmers of irrigation water.

PHOTO: STAR



Shaon, Saba released after questioning



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Actors Meher Afroz Shaon and Sohana Saba, who were taken into custody on Thursday night, were released yesterday afternoon after being questioned over allegations of plotting against the state.

They were handed over to their families, Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Media and Public Relations) of DMP, told The Daily Star.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police picked up the actors in the capital on Thursday night.

Rezaul Karim Mallick, additional commissioner (DB) of DMP, earlier told The Daily Star that Shaon was taken into custody over allegations of plotting against the state. However, he did not elaborate.

Her detention came just 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, Mohammad Ali, near Narundi Railway Station in Jamalpur Sadar upazila.

GALLAMARI IN KHULNA

People suffer for delay in bridge work

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Gallamari Bridge, a key gateway to Khulna city, has long been a source of suffering for thousands of residents.

According to the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), there were initially two bridges over the Mayur river in Gallamari. The older bridge, built during the Pakistan period, became dilapidated and unusable over time. Subsequently, a second bridge was constructed in 2013 at a cost of Tk 6.9 crore and opened to the public in 2015.

However, the design of the second bridge failed to consider crucial factors such as river protection. It was built too low, preventing even small boats from passing underneath.

Environmentalists protested the bridge's construction, citing its low quality, insufficient height, and lack of environmental consideration.

Later, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) alleged that RHD had built the bridge without securing its approval.

RHD then initiated a new project to demolish the old bridge and construct a replacement at a cost of Tk 68 crore.

The new bridge, measuring 68.7 metres in length, 13.7 metres in width, and standing 5 metres

above the water level, commenced construction in 2020, with a deadline set for May 2025.

However, progress has been extremely slow, and work came to a halt around six months ago.

As a result, residents are still forced to use the old bridge with

around 5,000 easy-bikes use the bridge.

Kamal Hawlader, an easy-bike driver, said, "We often have to wait for an hour or more just to cross the bridge. This frustrates passengers and wastes our time." "Additionally, abandoned



Built too low, Gallamari Bridge, a key gateway to Khulna city, has long been a source of woe for residents due to its faulty design. Meanwhile, the work for a new bridge goes on at a snail's pace, exacerbating public sufferings.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

its flawed design, enduring severe hardship and long hours of traffic congestion.

The bridge is one of 18 major routes connecting Khulna to other districts, including Dhaka. Every day, at least 500 vehicles, including cargo-laden trucks, and

construction materials are scattered along the road, making it extremely difficult and hazardous to drive," he added.

Akbar Hossain, a resident of ward-21 in Khulna city, said he had heard that the contractor

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Woman killed, house of UP chairman vandalised

UNB, Narsingdi

An armed group yesterday shot a woman dead while attacking and vandalising the house of Riaz Murshed Khan, chairman of Sreenagar union parishad, in Raipura of Narsingdi.

The deceased was identified as Shanta Islam, 24, wife of Riaz's cousin Shakil Khan.

The incident took place in Sreenagar village in the union during Juma prayers.

According to the victim's family, a group of 10 to 12 armed men, led by Sohel Mia of the same union, stormed into Riaz's house over previous enmity.

Failing to find the chairman and his family members, the assailants vandalised and looted the house. When Shanta attempted to intervene, they opened fire, leaving her seriously injured.

Family members rushed her to Raipura Upazila Health Complex, where a doctor declared her dead.

Md Adil Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Raipura Police Station, said police have been deployed at the scene and filing of a case is underway.

Shanta's body has been sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

Man dies in police custody

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A 65-year-old man died in police custody in Jamalpur early yesterday.

Huttu, a resident of Hat Chandra village in Jamalpur municipality, was an accused in a land dispute case, said police.

Faisal Muhammad Atik, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said police arrested him at his home around midnight.

Within 10 minutes of his arrest, he suffered a cardiac arrest, said the OC.

When he was rushed to a hospital, doctors declared him dead.

Woman's body found in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police recovered the beheaded body of a woman from a crop field in Pirganj upazila, Rangpur yesterday.

The victim -- Dilwara Begum, 25, daughter of Rabiul Islam -- was from Dilalpara in Gobindaganj, Gaibandha, police said.

Locals at Chatra village noticed the mutilated body in a field early in the morning and informed police, said MA Faruk, officer-in-charge of Pirganj Police Station.

He said a forensic team from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the police confirmed the victim's identity using fingerprint analysis.

The body was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

He said investigators have yet to determine the motive behind the murder.

However, initial findings suggest that the victim was killed elsewhere, and her body was later dumped in Chatra village.

The OC said filing of a case was underway.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Chittagong Hill Tracts North Forest Division
Rangamati.

E-mail: dfochn@gmail.com

Memo No. 22.01.8400.885.01.001.2025-357

Date: 06.02.2025

e-Tender Notice 2024-2025 Open Tendering Method (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal for the procurement of following works as stated below.

SL No	Tender ID	Name of work & Package No	Last selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	1073148	(a) Repairing of DFO Residences at Reserve mukh, Rangamati under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati. (b) Repairing of ACF Residences at Banarupa, Rangamati under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati.	23 February 2025 17.00 PM	24 February 2025 13.00 PM	24 February 2025 13.00 PM
2	1073183	(a) Repairing of Narachori Range Office at Jamtali Dighinala, Khagrachari under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati. (b) Repairing of Massalong Beat Office at Baghaichari Upazila under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati. (c) Repairing of Sadar Range Office at Rangamati under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati.			
3	1073187	(a) Repairing of Banasnruti Rest House, Mainimukh, Longodu under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati (b) Repairing of Boundary wall and Staff Barrack at Reserve mukh under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati.			
4	1073188	(a) Making Uniform for the FD field Staffs under CHT North Forest Division, Rangamati			

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and offline/hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and also form e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury)
Divisional Forest Officer
Chittagong Hill Tracts North Forest Division
Rangamati.
Phone: 0233-3371489



"We're very happy with bti's commitment to excellence; they kept their word & handed over a beautiful home with even a mesmerising rooftop to us"

Mrs. Simky Afrin
Homeowner
The Finesse, Bashundhara



Modi to meet Trump during US visit on Feb 12-13

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit the United States from February 12 to 13 and hold talks with President Donald Trump, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said yesterday.

Misri told reporters that Modi's visit will "give further direction and impetus to this very important partnership".

Asked if the Bangladesh issue would come up during Modi's talks with Trump, Misri said that "I cannot prejudge right now," reports Firstpost online.

"But there will be discussions on regional and international issues and I imagine it might be one of the issues that will come up," he added.

India, a strategic partner of the United States in its efforts to counter China, is keen to enhance trade relations with the US and make it easier for its citizens to get skilled worker visas.

Hezbollah must not be in Lebanon govt Says US envoy

AFP, Beirut

A senior US official visiting Beirut said yesterday that Hezbollah's presence in Lebanon's new government was a red line, calling the Iran-backed group "defeated" in its war with Israel.

The visit by US Deputy Special Envoy for the Middle East Morgan Ortogus comes as prime minister-designate Nawaf Salam struggles to form a government amid political pressure from Hezbollah and its allies.

Lebanon is desperate for funds to rebuild after the conflict and a prolonged economic crisis. "We have set clear red lines in the United States that they (Hezbollah) won't be able to terrorise the Lebanese people, and that includes by being a part of the government," Ortogus said after meeting President Joseph Aoun.



Pro-Palestinian protesters attend a rally against US President Donald Trump's recent remarks on Gaza in Sydney, Australia, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Trump's Gaza plan derails Saudi-Israel ties: analysts

AFP, Riyadh

US President Donald Trump's plan to take over Gaza will imperil attempts to forge landmark ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel and fuel anti-American sentiment in the oil-rich kingdom, analysts said.

Trump's proposal to redevelop Gaza and oust the more than two million Palestinians living in the territory prompted a global backlash and enraged the Arab world, making it difficult for the Saudis to consider normalisation.

"If this is going to be his policy, he shut the door on Saudi recognition of Israel," James Dorsey, researcher at the Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore, told AFP.

Recognition of Israel by Saudi Arabia is seen as a grand prize of Middle East diplomacy intended to calm chronic tensions in the region. But Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and the Middle East's largest economy, now faces

the spectre of instability on its borders if neighbouring Jordan and Egypt suddenly house large numbers of Gaza exiles.

At the same time, Riyadh must maintain cordial relations with Washington, its long-time security guarantor and bulwark against key regional player Iran.

Saudi Arabia now faces the spectre of instability on its borders if Jordan, Egypt suddenly house large numbers of Gaza exiles.

"When it comes to security, Saudi Arabia has nowhere to go but to Washington," Dorsey said. "There's nobody else. It's not China. They're not willing and they're not able. And post-Ukraine, do you want to rely on Russia?"

The Saudis were engaged in tentative

talks on normalisation via the United States until the outbreak of the Gaza offensive, when they paused the negotiations and hardened their position.

They reacted with unusual speed to Trump's proposal, made during an appearance with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington.

About an hour after his comments, at around 4:00 am Saudi time, the foreign ministry posted a statement on X that "reaffirms its unequivocal rejection of... attempts to displace the Palestinian people from their land".

In the same statement, the Saudis rejected Netanyahu's comment that normalisation was "going to happen", repeating their insistence there would be no ties without a Palestinian state. Trump's plan carries real risks for Riyadh, which is throwing everything at an ambitious post-oil economic makeover that relies on stability to attract business and tourism.

NEW NUCLEAR DEAL

Khamenei warns against negotiating with US

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday that there should not be negotiations with the United States, days after US President Donald Trump called for a new nuclear deal.

"You should not negotiate with such a government, it is unwise, it is not intelligent, it is not honourable to negotiate," Khamenei said during a meeting with army commanders.

The United States had previously "ruined, violated, and tore up" a 2015 nuclear deal, he said, adding that "the same person who is in power now tore up the treaty". On Wednesday, Trump suggested striking a "verified nuclear peace agreement" with Iran, adding in his social media post that Tehran "cannot have a Nuclear Weapon".

Trump, who returned to the White House on January 20, reinstated on Tuesday his "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran over allegations the country is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes and denies any intention to develop atomic weapons. Following the policy's reinstatement, Washington on Thursday announced financial sanctions on entities accused of shipping hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Iranian crude oil to China.

Flight carrying 10 reported missing in Alaska: police

AFP, Washington

A small commercial flight carrying 10 people was reported missing Thursday in the northwestern US state of Alaska, according to law enforcement.

Alaska state police said a Bering Air Caravan with nine passengers and one pilot on board was reported overdue on a flight from Unalakleet to Nome at 4:00 pm Alaska Standard Time (0100 GMT).

The two cities are located roughly 146 miles (235 kilometers) apart from each other across the Norton Sound.

Search and rescue crews "are working to get to the last known coordinates" of the flight, authorities said in a statement.

The missing flight is the latest incident in a long string of aviation disasters in the United States.

On January 30, a passenger jet collided midair with a US Army helicopter in the capital city of Washington, killing all 67 people aboard.

The disaster was followed closely by the crash of a medical plane into a busy Philadelphia neighborhood, killing seven and injuring 19.

Govt will move soon to ban Awami League Renaming education cadre proposed

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He emphasised that the consensus among political parties would make it easier for the government to implement such a decision.

When asked whether the government was taking immediate steps to ban the Awami League, Asif Mahmud responded, "We -- the common people and political parties -- represent the people of this country. Prioritising their aspirations and demands should be our main goal."

"From that perspective, I would like to applaud the BNP for raising the demand to ban the Awami League," he added.

Apart from the judicial process, he noted that the government has

four laws under which it can take action against any party through an executive order. However, he clarified that the government had yet to decide on the specific legal framework it would follow in this matter.

The adviser said the Awami League's involvement in the July-August massacre must be proven through the judicial process. Once established, this would allow the government to take necessary actions, including banning the party as a political entity and revoking its registration.

However, he reaffirmed that the government would follow due legal procedures in any move to ban the party.

"I want to assure everyone that

the government will take immediate steps in this regard to reflect the aspirations of the people," he said, without specifying a timeframe.

Regarding the formation of a new political party by students who led the July mass uprising, Asif Mahmud said the idea arose out of necessity.

"We have seen in the past that the gains of mass movements were often lost because their organisers could not play a role in subsequent state affairs," he said, referring to the movement against the autocratic regime of General Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1990.

Considering these factors, he explained, the idea of forming a new political party led by the leaders of the July uprising had gained traction.

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educators meet strict research criteria for promotion. A teacher would be required to publish at least three original research papers in indexed journals for promotion to associate professor, while those being promoted to professor would need to publish five. These publications must be featured in both national and international journals.

The report also suggests a structured promotion system for BCS General Education Cadre officers, ensuring their progression from Grade 9 to Grade 1. The commission calls for a transparent, merit-based promotion policy, with decisions based on competence, performance, experience, and academic qualifications. Promotions should follow a standardised examination and evaluation process under the newly proposed "Education Service Commission", the report reads.

As part of this, the commission recommends that at least 5 percent of education cadre professors be promoted to Grade 2 of the national pay

scale. Eligible professors would need to have a PhD and serve for at least five years.

The commission also says that the current student-teacher ratio is below international standards. It calls for increasing the education sector's budget and swiftly filling vacant teaching positions. For technical education, the report suggests introducing technical subjects from Class 8, expanding technical institutions, and recruiting qualified teachers.

The report highlights the diminished role of the National University (NU), which currently oversees over 2,200 colleges. Given the growth of public universities across various divisions, the commission recommends affiliating degree-level colleges with their respective regional universities. It also proposes selecting one leading college in each division and district and developing it into a specialised higher education institution comparable to university-level institutions.

To further enhance education, the

commission recommends establishing specialised higher education and women's madrasas in each division, as well as madrasa teacher training centres. It also suggests extending primary school facilities to Extended-day-level students, improving the monitoring and investment in private madrasas with strong performance, and implementing a policy for hiring qualified principals and teachers.

The commission also advises that managing committees for private colleges and secondary schools be led by government officers instead of political figures, aiming to reduce issues related to political involvement.

Additionally, the commission proposes that the National Technical Resource Centre (NTRC) recruit teachers from Chattogram and the Chattogram Hill Tracts based on local recommendations. It also suggests establishing residential schools in selected areas of hill tracts and using VSAT technology to enable online schooling in these remote regions.

Barishal retain BPL title with thrilling win

FROM PAGE 16

heroic knock to bring Barishal close to the title again, but when it got tight, Rishad prevailed.

With Barishal needing eight off the last over, the first delivery from Hussain Talat sailed over long-on for a six to get Barishal into breathing space. Needing one in three deliveries, Talat bowled a short one that went over Tanvir Islam's head, and although the batter could not complete a single, he rejoiced as the umpire signalled wide. Rishad remained unbeaten on a six-ball 18 as Barishal celebrated yet another BPL triumph.

Tamim showed the full array of his strokeplay against the new ball, finding boundaries with immaculate timing. He smashed Binura Fernando for three fours in the first over of the Barishal chase to show the quality of the batting surface.

Shoriful produced a double breakthrough in the ninth over, first with Tamim getting holed out at long-off before scalping David Malan out leg before. Tawhid Hridoy had been playing second fiddle to Tamim but when he departed to Naeem Islam, out for a 28-ball 32, Barishal were slipping.

Mayers, Barishal's hero in last BPL final, first strung a 14-ball 34-run stand with Mushfiqur Rahim and a 29-ball 42-run stand with Mahmudullah Riyad, to bring Barishal into the driving seat. Shoriful brought further

life back into the game, removing Mayers after a 28-ball 46 and then bagging Mahmudullah.

In the end, Rishad's two sixes, one off Binura and then off Talat in the final, proved to be the difference.

Earlier in the first innings, Khawaja Nafay and Emon propelled the opening partnership with a lot of authority from early in the innings. In the process, the Chittagong opening duo produced the highest-ever opening stand in a BPL final with a 121-run stand, overtaking the 76-run stand by Tamim Iqbal and Mehedi Hasan Miraz in last year's BPL final.

The Powerplay saw Emon take control, hitting Kyle Mayers for boundaries to get the innings motoring along. He would hit left-arm spinner Tanvir for two big sixes in the fourth over to put real momentum to the innings. As the Powerplay finished at 57 for no loss, Nafay finally came to the party after a slow start.

With Emon completing a 30-ball fifty, Nafay hit Rishad for back-to-back sixes to complete his own fifty. After 12 overs, Chittagong were 115 for no loss and it looked like they would get over 200 in the all-important final.

Ebadot Hossain broke the partnership with the wicket of Nafay, out for a 44-ball 66, nicking a delivery to wicket-keeper Mushfiqur Rahim. However, the acceleration in the

death overs was slightly stifled by Barishal bowlers.

Emon and Graham Clark picked off Tanvir for a 22-run over but Mohammad Ali bowled the 17th and 20th overs, conceding just 10 runs. Despite Emon's unbeaten 49-ball 78 and Clark's 23-ball 44, Chittagong reached 194 for three with Ali being the pick of the Barishal bowlers with 21 for one in four overs.

Barishal captain Tamim was adjudged the man of the final for his 29-ball 54 while Khulna captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz was adjudged as the player of the tournament for 355 runs and 13 wickets.

Swetchhasebak Dal leader

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Mamun was rushed to Narayanganj 300-bed hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

The family suspects that a long-standing business dispute with the family of a local Awami League leader could be a possible motive behind the murder.

OC Shariful said the exact reason behind the murder was still unknown. "However, we have spotted two individuals in hoodies in CCTV footage, and efforts are underway to identify them."

A murder case was expected to be filed in connection with the incident, he added.

Dr Muhammad Shahidullah's role

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its Principal linguist Dr Muhammad Shahidullah played a crucial role in organising the protests in Bogura for Bangla as a state language.

On February 27/28 of 1948, in the wake of the opposition of Muslim League members to a proposal to recognise Bangla as a state language in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, a huge procession led by Azizul Haque College Chhatra Federation leader Abdul Matin marched around the city and reached its heart, the Satmatha intersection.

Several student leaders were injured when Muslim League leaders and activists attacked the protesters, according to the book *Bhasha Andolan Kosh Part 1*, written by M Abdul Alim.

On that day, a Sarbodoliyo Rashtrobhasha Sangram Committee (All-Party State Language Struggle Committee) was formed with Ataur Rahman, a senior student leader of the college, as the convener and Dr Muhammad Shahidullah as the adviser. The members included Gaziul Haque, Abul Fazal Siddiqui and Saleha Khatun.

On March 11, a huge procession led by Dr Muhammad Shahidullah was brought out in support of the Language Movement. People from all walks of life participated in this programme. After the procession, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah presided over a rally at

Bogura Zilla School field.

In continuation of the protests in 1948, the Language Movement stirred up in 1952. According to the book *Bhasha Andolan Teknaf Theke Tutulia* by Ahmed Rafiq, on January 27, 1952, when the government declared Urdu as the state language of Pakistan, the angry students and public of Bogura erupted in protests. At a protest rally at Edward Park on February 12, Majiruddin Ahmed, farmers' leader Abdul Aziz Kabiraj, labour leader Subodh Lahiri, and others spoke in favour of Bangla as a state language.

On February 17, a Sarbodoliyo Rashtrobhasha Sangram Committee was formed with student leader Golam Mohiuddin as the convener, Majiruddin Ahmed president, and Abdul Aziz Kabiraj as the vice president. The other members included student leader Abdus Shahid and labour leader Subodh Lahiri. It was decided to form similar committees in every Thana.

A general strike was observed on February 21. On that day students and the public took out a peaceful protest procession from Azizul Haque College, chanting the slogan "Rashtrobhasha Bangla Chai (We want Bangla as State Language)". At a rally at Altafunessa Maidan that afternoon, speakers demanded the resignation of the members of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly.

The news of the killing of students in police firing in Dhaka reached Bogura on February 22. Bogura was seething with anger at that time. At a rally at Edward Park, all the educational institutions were declared shut indefinitely.

According to the book *Bhasha Andolan Teknaf Theke Tutulia*, on February 23, agitating students organised a huge rally attended by around 10,000 people at Jagannath Maidan in Bogura amid a full-day strike. A huge procession of students and the public gathered for the rally after marching around the city.

On February 24, another spontaneous strike was observed with shops and business establishments completely shut. Gradually, all administrative activities in Bogura came to a standstill as the agitation spread to the remote towns and rural parts of Bogura.

India has 'no role to play'

FROM PAGE 16

responsible for the persistent negativity."

According to Jaiswal, "While the government of India will make efforts for a mutually beneficial relationship, we expect that Bangladesh will reciprocate similarly without vitiating the atmosphere."

'We need to be patient'

Says Kremlin on Trump and possible Ukraine talks; 3 killed in Russian strikes

AGENCIES
The Kremlin said yesterday there had been a lot of inaccurate reports on US plans for ending the Ukraine war and called for patience as speculation swirled around the timing of a possible meeting between presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

At a briefing with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was asked about a report that Trump's envoy for Russia and Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, was seeking to arrange a truce even before talks on a peace settlement. "We have nothing to add yet. There are a lot of statements and reports on this topic that are refuted, changed, recognised as hoaxes or something else the next day," Peskov said. "There is nothing substantive on this account yet; we just need to be patient."

Trump and Putin have both said they are keen to meet in person. The agenda, if such a meeting takes place, is expected to focus on Trump's stated aim to bring a swift end to the three-year old conflict, reports Reuters.

"Russia is open to negotiations. In any case, a settlement should come as a result of negotiations," Peskov said.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes on the Ukrainian border region of Sumy overnight killed three people who were pulled from the rubble of a two-storey residential building, prosecutors said yesterday.



A National Guard officer on a pickup truck stands guard during a check on vehicles heading to the United States at the Mexican side of the San Ysidro crossing port in Tijuana, Baja California state, Mexico, on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

China blames US 'sabotage' after Panama exits BRI

REUTERS, Beijing

China is opposed to US "smearing and sabotage" of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Panama through "pressure and coercion", its foreign ministry said yesterday, after the South American nation decided to exit the programme.

At a regular press briefing, a ministry spokesperson, Lin Jian, said China deeply regretted Panama's decision.

"We hope that Panama will make the right decision based on the overall situation of bilateral relations and the long-term interests of the two peoples, and eliminate external interference," he added.

Panama has formally presented a document to exit the Belt and Road Initiative, President Jose Raul Mulino said on Thursday, after meeting US Secretary of State



Marco Rubio this month, but denied that the United States had sought the move.

More than 20 Latin American nations are among the more than 150 countries that have participated in the Belt and Road Initiative, with results benefited their people, Lin said.

China introduced the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013.

In November 2017, Panama became the first Latin American country to officially join, five

months after switching diplomatic ties to China from Taiwan, the democratically governed island Beijing claims as its territory.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said Panama has ceded control of the canal to China, an accusation both nations deny.

The BRI is a massive infrastructure project that is a central pillar of using the BRI to enmesh developing nations in unsustainable debt to exert diplomatic leverage over them or even seize their assets.

Western critics accuse China of using the BRI to enmesh developing nations in unsustainable debt to exert diplomatic leverage over them or even seize their assets.

Beijing yesterday insisted that it "supports Panama's sovereignty over the canal". "The US side's attacks and interference in relevant cooperation once again expose its hegemonic nature," the foreign ministry said.

Six Chinese balloons detected near Taiwan

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan detected six Chinese balloons off the island, the defence ministry said yesterday, as Beijing maintains military pressure to push its claim of sovereignty.

The six balloons were spotted in the 24 hours to 6:00 am yesterday (2200 GMT Thursday), the ministry said, giving one of its highest daily tallies of the devices.

Along with the balloons, nine Chinese military aircraft, six warships and two official ships were detected near Taiwan over the same period.

SEISMIC ACTIVITY Greece declares state of emergency on Santorini

REUTERS, Santorini

Greek authorities are monitoring increased seismic activity on the island of Santorini, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said yesterday, urging the public to remain calm and follow the advice of the civil protection service.

Greece has declared a state of emergency on Santorini as hundreds of earthquakes have rattled the popular tourist island over the past week, prompting the evacuation of more than 10,000 residents and workers.

Authorities have warned of a high landslide risk on parts of the island and have shut schools, sent rescuers and advised residents to avoid indoor gatherings and ports. Army, fire service and police units have been deployed preemptively.

Some of the measures have been extended to islands of Amorgos, Ios and Anafi. "I want to assure the residents of Santorini and the neighbouring islands, which are being tested these days, that the state mechanism is on their side," Mitsotakis said.

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The 25th Convocation

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

IUB AT A GLANCE

Established in 1993, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) is a leading private university in Bangladesh with a focus on research and global partnerships. With over 10,000 students enrolled at undergraduate and graduate levels, 237 highly qualified full-time faculty members (more than 50% holding PhD degrees), and an alumni network of nearly 19,000, IUB is committed to ensuring education for all to promote the national agenda of sustainable and inclusive development.

Vision
IUB aspires to be a leading seat of learning and research, developing technologically competent, environmentally responsible, and globally conscious future leaders with a strong liberal arts foundation.

Mission

- Produce graduates with cutting-edge knowledge and transferable skills.
- Foster an environment to enhance research and innovation promoting sustainable development.
- Develop impactful partnerships through academia, industry, and community engagement to contribute to the advancement of society.

The Campus
The IUB campus, spread over 3.2 acres in Bashundhara Residential Area, Dhaka, features an amphitheater, state-of-the-art laboratories for life, environmental and social sciences, pharmacology, and engineering. The campus houses 95 multimedia classrooms equipped for both physical and online classes, an auditorium, separate gymnasiums for men and women, a swimming pool, an international-standard squash court, yoga and self-defense studios, chess and carrom stations, table tennis courts, a spacious sports complex with a multipurpose pulastic floor, and a food court and cafeteria.

Accommodation
IUB offers secure, need-based dormitories for meritorious female students from outside Dhaka, foreign students, and a guesthouse for visiting scholars.

Library
The IUB Library contains over 250,000 e-books and provides access to renowned resource hubs, including ABI Global (ProQuest), Cambridge University Press Journals, EBSCOhost,

POFILE OF THE 25TH CONVOCATION SPEAKER

Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur

Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, former Executive Director of the Policy Research Institute (PRI), joined as the 13th Governor of Bangladesh Bank on 14 August 2024.

Dr. Mansur started his career in 1976 as a Lecturer in Economics at the University of Dhaka. In the same year, he left for Canada to pursue higher studies in Economics. As a graduate student and research assistant, he also imparted regular Economics courses at the undergraduate level at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, from 1978 to 1981. Dr. Mansur joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under its Economist Programme in 1981.

During his long career at the IMF, Dr. Mansur worked with Middle Eastern, Asian, African, and Central American countries. He worked in several important functional departments (Fiscal Affairs and Policy Review and Development departments) and area departments (the Middle East and Central Asia and Asian departments) of the IMF. He also served as the IMF Senior Resident Representative to Pakistan from 1998 to 2001 and as the Fiscal Advisor to the Minister of Finance, Government of Bangladesh (1989-91). During his assignment in Bangladesh, Dr. Mansur was involved in the successful introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) in 1991. He also served as the Division Chief of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Division and, at the same time, as the IMF Mission Chief for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. After taking early retirement, Dr. Mansur joined with some professionals to establish an institute for policy analysis and became the founding Director and Executive Director of the Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh. Meanwhile, between 2017 and 2023, he served BRAC Bank PLC as a Director and later as the Chairman.

Dr. Mansur has published extensively in various prestigious journals (including Econometrica, Journal of Economic Theory, and IMF Staff Papers), edited books on specialized economic topics, and contributed to the IMF Occasional Paper and Working Paper series. He edited a book (with Fernando Delgado) titled Stock Market Developments in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, published by Palgrave Macmillan in its Finance and Capital Markets Series in November 2008.

Dr. Mansur received the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in International Economics, awarded through an open worldwide competition (1979-81); the Special University Scholarship, University of Western Ontario (1977-81); the Graduate Students Award, University of Western Ontario (1977-81); the McMaster University Graduate Scholarship (1976-77); and the First Grade Merit Scholarship, University of Dhaka (1970-75).

Dr. Mansur obtained a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, in 1982. He completed his M.A. at McMaster University, Canada, in 1977 and earned a B.A. (Hons.) in Economics with first-class honors and distinction in Mathematics from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1974.

GRADUATING STUDENTS OF THE 25TH CONVOCATION

Name of School	Graduate	Undergraduate
School of Business and Entrepreneurship	232	859
School of Engineering, Technology and Sciences	31	279
School of Environment and Life Sciences	-	118
School of Law	5	47
School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences	34	88
School of Pharmacy and Public Health	63	159
Total	419	1,550

THE 25TH CONVOCATION AT A GLANCE

Total Number of Graduates : 1,969
Undergraduate Level: 1,550
Graduate Level : 419

TOP PERFORMERS (Undergraduate Level)

Chancellor's Gold Medal	02
Summa Cum Laude	20
Magna Cum Laude	98
Cum Laude	139

TOP PERFORMERS (Graduate Level)

Top Achiever's Awards	05
CGPA: 4.0 (on a scale of 4.0)	

TOP PERFORMERS

Valuedictorian and Chancellor's Gold Medalist	Chancellor's Gold Medalist	All-Rounder Award	Community Service Award	Community Service Award and Cultural Activities Award	Cultural Activities Award	Sports Activities Award

TOP PERFORMERS AT SCHOOL LEVEL | Undergraduate Program

School of Business and Entrepreneurship	School of Engineering, Technology and Sciences	School of Environment & Life Sciences	School of Law	School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences	School of Pharmacy and Public Health

TOP ACHIEVER'S AWARD | Graduate Program

School of Environment & Life Sciences	School of Engineering, Technology and Sciences	School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

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Act now to normalise cooking oil supplies

Soybean oil crisis fuelling prices, raising concern ahead of Ramadan

It is concerning to see the shortage of both branded (bottled) and non-branded (loose) soybean oil in kitchen markets, which has caused their prices to spike, adding to the frustration of consumers already struggling with high inflation. According to a report by this daily, retailers and wholesalers in major cities—who claim to be receiving only a portion of usual supplies—attribute the crunch to oil importers reducing distribution after the government refused their request for a price increase last month, citing higher import costs. Now, it is ordinary consumers who are having to suffer for it, searching from store to store for soybean oil.

Bangladesh heavily relies on cooking oil imports to meet its annual demand of 24 lakh tonnes. Official data shows that the price of bottled soybean oil now stands at Tk 175-176 per litre, reflecting a one percent increase over the past month. Meanwhile, loose soybean oil has seen a steeper rise of nearly four percent in just one week, reaching Tk 180-182 per litre on Thursday. Other edible oils, including palm and rice bran, have also become costlier. For instance, a one-litre bottle of rice bran oil now costs Tk 205-210, marking a 6.41 percent increase in a single day. This pattern of shortages leading to artificial price hikes was also observed in late November and early December—before supplies normalised following an official approval of price increase—and again in late January. When an essential commodity like cooking oil repeatedly vanishes from store shelves only to reappear at a higher price, we must ask: who benefits from this cycle?

Oil importers and refiners are, of course, largely to blame for the situation. Although the importers our reporter spoke to claimed that supply remains steady, wholesalers and retailers tell a different story. A senior official at the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) has also described the crisis as “artificially created,” as imports are in line with domestic demand. It is likely that a syndicate involving importers and wholesalers is orchestrating the crisis through hoarding to drive up prices ahead of Ramadan, when both demand and prices of staples typically increase. This shouldn't be news to the interim government, which has repeatedly warned against price manipulation and twice reduced value-added tax (VAT) on cooking oil—cutting it from 15 percent to five percent since taking office in August. Why, then, is it failing to prevent such scenarios? If intelligence agencies and monitoring cells are indeed tracking supply chains, why are consumers still facing a shortage?

The government must intervene urgently to normalise supplies and restore stability in cooking oil prices. For that, it is essential to enhance market surveillance and hold importers, wholesalers, and retailers accountable for any deliberate supply disruptions. Strong legal action should be taken against any trader or group found creating artificial crises to extract undue profits. The Competition Commission should also be properly activated to take decisive action against monopolistic practices in the edible oil market.

Gaza belongs to its people

US taking over Gaza is an outrageous idea

The US may no longer be the beacon of hope it once was, but there are still things expected from the country as a global power. Chief among them is a responsibility to uphold basic human rights and international law. This expectation has been tested time and again, but rarely as starkly as it is now, with Donald Trump's alarming plan for Gaza. On Tuesday evening, at a joint news conference alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the US president proposed “long term ownership” of Gaza by the United States. This came after he repeatedly called in recent days for the war-ravaged territory's 1.2 million residents to be resettled. While officials later tried to walk back the takeover proposal amid fierce criticism, saying any displacement of Gazans would be temporary, Trump on Thursday restated his vision, suggesting his determination to go ahead with it.

This should send shivers down the spine of anyone who values justice and human rights. For decades, US foreign policy—despite its inconsistencies—has at least paid lip service to a two-state solution for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine. Trump's approach obliterates that pretence. If implemented, it would not only mean “ethnic cleansing” in Gaza—as the UN chief has rightly called it—but also set an extremely dangerous precedent where stronger powers might feel emboldened to resolve territorial disputes through mass expulsions. It is also deeply insulting for the Gazans after the genocide and devastation they endured at the hands of Israel over the last 15 months. Suggesting that those still alive should be uprooted, cast aside, and scattered across unwilling nations is outrageous, to say the least.

Naturally, Palestinians and Arab states where Trump and Netanyahu want Gazans to be resettled have rejected the proposal. Similarly, the world must also stand firm against this effort to make the suffering of Gazans permanent by robbing them of their homeland. Reportedly, emboldened by Trump, Israel has already instructed its military to formulate a plan for their “voluntary” departures. In other words, a permanent displacement may already be in motion even though they have only recently begun to return to the rubble they once called home following a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. All nations must come forward to prevent this modern-day holocaust.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

US secures Guadalcanal



On this day in 1943, Japanese troops evacuated Guadalcanal, leaving the island in Allied possession after a prolonged campaign. The US victory paved the way for other Allied wins in the Solomon Islands during World War II.

SIX MONTHS OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

Bangladesh stands at a critical crossroads



Prof Syed Munir Khasru is chairman of the Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), an international think tank.

SYED MUNIR KHASRU

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus announced in December last year that the next general election might take place at the end of 2025 or in the first half of 2026, depending on political consensus and reforms. His government, which took over after Sheikh Hasina's ouster on August 5, formed at least 15 reform commissions. However, six months in, the interim government finds itself navigating troubled waters, surrounded by complex socioeconomic, political, and governance challenges that threaten to overshadow its initial promises.

Economic struggle and the crisis of confidence

The interim administration inherited a fragile financial landscape marked by high inflation, a banking sector in crisis, and dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Inflation eased to 9.94 percent in January from 10.89 percent in December, driven by stable food prices due to an influx of winter vegetables. Despite this decline, inflation has remained above nine percent since March 2023, causing hardships for fixed-income and low-income people.

Following criticism over recent hikes, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) revised down VAT and supplementary duty on some items. The VAT adjustments follow IMF recommendations under a \$4.7 billion loan programme, pushing for tax reforms at the expense of public well-being to increase revenue collection. The banking sector, long plagued by bad loans and financial mismanagement, has seen some positive steps, such as asset quality reviews and hiring of international auditors to clean up failing banks. The government has worked to curb illicit financial outflows estimated to be \$16 billion annually under the previous regime.

Foreign direct investment dropped to a six-year low in the July-September quarter of FY25, reaching only \$104.33 million, a 71 percent decline from FY24. Net equity investment fell by 46 percent to \$76.79 million, while reinvested earnings dropped by 73 percent to \$72.9 million. The decline has been driven by political unrest, labour agitation, inflation, import restrictions, dollar shortages, and weak law and order. Investors remain wary due to uncertainty over political transitions, economic mismanagement, and inconsistent policies.

Law and order, reform and good governance

Law and order remain one of the most critical aspects. While the administration has attempted to restore stability following months of violent protests, crime rates have surged. Sharp rise in political violence, robberies, and extortion has been exacerbated by a weakened police force recovering from the post-uprising trauma and restructuring.

Violent crime, particularly murder and mugging, has created fear, especially in the evenings. Despite increased patrolling and intelligence surveillance, police efforts have not significantly curbed crime rates. Murder cases surged in 2024, with 583 in September, 399 in October, and 337 in November, whereas in the same months in 2023, the numbers were significantly lower at 238, 258, and 227, respectively. Muggings have escalated as armed gangs target victims in alleys and even in broad daylight.

While the interim government has exposed past human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, allegations of politically motivated arrests and reprisals have raised concerns about the government replicating some of the sametendencies. While no significant extrajudicial killings have been reported, the recent death of a BNP youth front activist in the custody of security forces has fuelled fears that old patterns may be re-emerging.

The interim government formed 11 inquiry teams to investigate

corruption allegations against the family members of Sheikh Hasina and 10 major industrial groups, including S Alam, Beximco, Bashundhara, and Summit. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is leading the investigation, with support from other agencies like the NBR and CID. There is a lack of transparency on the progress of the investigations, and no timeline or public update on how these investigations are being conducted or their effectiveness.

Though it has aggressively pursued investigations into the previous government's misdeeds, the interim government has been less proactive in tackling corruption and unrest happening under its tenure. The administration's tendency to cherry-pick aspects that require reform has raised concerns on the intent and efficacy of the reform commissions. In absence of any meaningful conversation with political parties, who will ultimately have to agree to implement the proposed reforms, the commission reports will be another academic paper gathering dust.

July uprising victims plagued by red tape

Victims of the July uprising continue to suffer as compensation remains caught up in bureaucratic red tape. Although the government pledged Tk 5 lakh for families of martyrs and Tk 1 lakh for the injured, disbursement is hindered by tedious verification procedure. Families are forced to make repeated visits, only to face rejection due to minor discrepancies or the unavailability of officials.

Limited staffing of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation, with only 35 employees, has exacerbated delays, making it difficult for applicants to receive timely support. Inefficiency and slow processing has pushed affected families into financial distress, forcing them to struggle for survival while their applications remain unresolved.

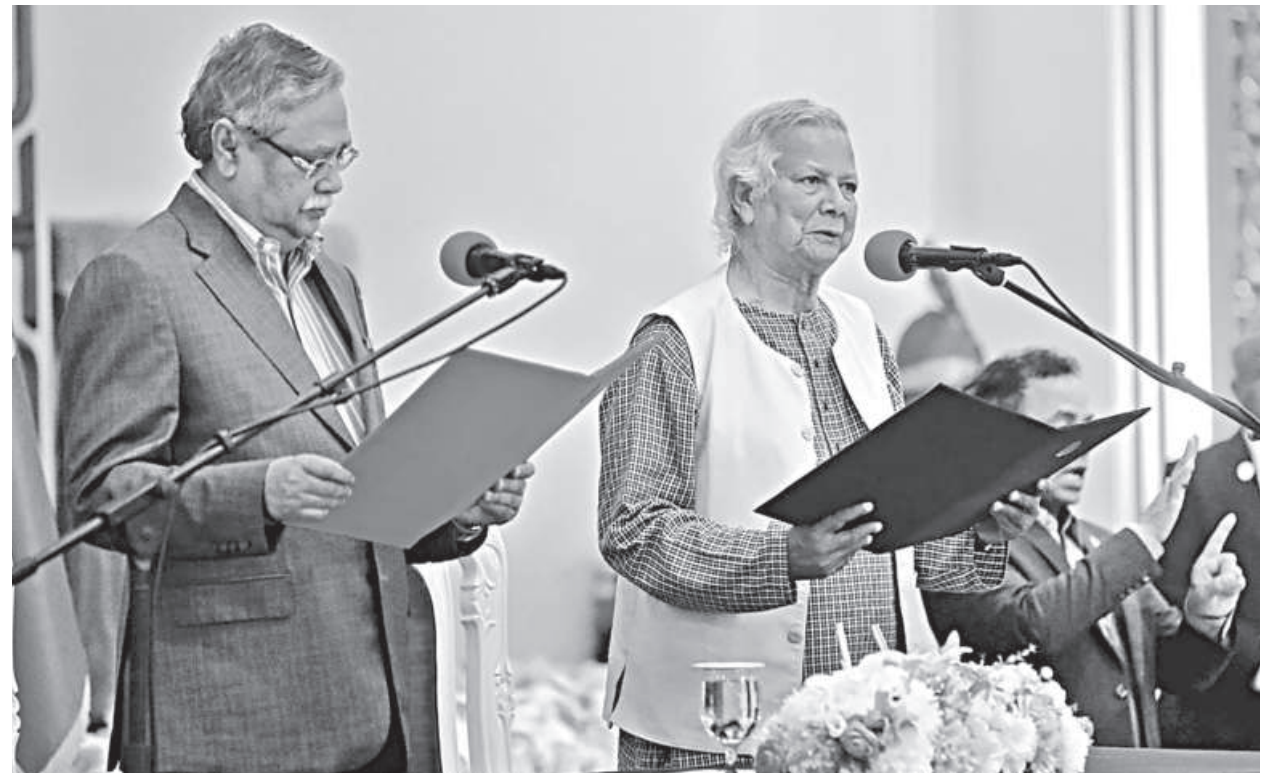
Strained ties with India and scepticism

While India's narrow focus on backing Hasina rather than engaging with Bangladesh's broader political spectrum has been a strategic mistake, the resulting growth of anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh is also worrying and counterproductive as we have to find ways for constructive engagement with our largest neighbour. A stable and cooperative relationship is crucial for regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Unresolved bilateral issues, including water-sharing, border killings, and

Gopalganj” bias of the Hasina regime. Some student leaders who played a vital role in the uprising have been included in the government, giving reasons to raise questions about the interim government's impartiality as students are planning to launch a new political party to contest elections.

The heroic and patriotic role of the students should have been recognised by giving them a separate platform to share their legitimate aspirations in education, job, and entrepreneurial ambitions, and to support the same with appropriate policies and programmes. After all, the movement started with the legitimate demand of the student community to have a fair chance to much coveted government jobs by reforming the quota system. If students want to be in politics, it is their democratic right, which they should exercise by being outside the government. Including them in the cabinet, openly supporting their political ambitions, and by referring to them as “appointing authorities,” Prof Yunus has undermined his official position and moral authority. This was uncalled for as it is the students who requested him to take the helm of power; hence, there was no need to act otherwise.

Similarly, to introduce one of the student leaders in an international forum as the “mastermind” of the uprising and that “everything was meticulously planned” was unnecessary and has led into the hands of those who have been propagating that the ouster of Sheikh Hasina was the outcome of a “well-planned conspiracy,” as opposed



On August 8, 2024, three days after the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus was sworn in as the chief adviser of the interim government, along with 13 other advisers.

FILE PHOTO: P10

Protests, gridlock, and disruptions

Since August 5, ongoing traffic disruptions in Dhaka due to relentless protests have brought the city's mobility to a grinding halt, making daily commute a struggle for millions. One such recent disruption came from the students of Government Titumir College, who staged multiple road blockades demanding university status for their institution. On January 30, they obstructed both sides of the road in front of their campus and at the Gulshan 1 intersection, causing hours long congestion that left commuters helpless. Protests also extended to rickshaw drivers who blocked roads to ban battery-run powered rickshaws, only for battery-run rickshaw drivers to stage counter-protests when a High Court ruling restricted their operations.

Efforts by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), which include deployment of 4,200 officers, have had little impact. Between September and December alone, the DMP issued over 139,000 traffic violation cases and confiscated thousands of illegal rickshaws, yet the gridlock persists. The capital city risks descending into complete chaos, where every day is dictated by yet another protest and another gridlock.

The failure of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) to timely distribute textbooks caused frustration, leaving parents and children bewildered. By mid-January, only 37 percent of 40.15 crore textbooks were delivered, disrupting primary and secondary education. This fiasco places the government in a negative light as the previous government had a good track record of delivering the books on time.

trade imbalances need to be addressed to maintain long-term cooperation. The Western nations have adopted a guarded attitude towards the interim administration, though the EU and the US have expressed support for democratic reforms.

Electoral uncertainty, regionalism, and moral authority

The primary mandate of the caretaker government is to pave the way for a free and fair election. Six months in, there is still no confirmed election date, with the chief adviser juggling between 2025 and 2026, citing the need for institutional reforms. This has led to growing frustrations among political parties, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which has been demanding elections sooner rather than later. BNP insists electoral reforms be undertaken after a new government is elected, rather than delaying the process indefinitely.

The government's indecisiveness has fuelled speculation that it is prolonging its tenure under the guise of reform, and some have accused that procrastination is for giving time to student leaders to prepare for the elections. These uncertainties, combined with the need for broader political consensus, make it difficult to predict whether the reforms will succeed, especially as the government faces challenges in managing its relations with other political forces, providing a clear date for the election, and navigating the complexities of governance.

Almost one-third of the cabinet members are from a single district, which is not expected from someone who should have been above such regionalism, as moral ground is lost against the much criticised “pro-

to her fleeing in the face of a popular mass movement led by students and general public.

A government in limbo and the slippery slope ahead

Despite initial optimism, the interim government has failed to deliver a clear political roadmap to elections and reforms. This is not understandable as it is not rocket science. The uncertainty surrounding elections, prevalence in crime, and economic hardships have eroded the goodwill this government initially enjoyed. While Prof Yunus remains a respected figure internationally, his government's lack of strategic planning, slow decision-making, inefficient management, loose and reckless talks by some advisers and officials at the CA's Office have all led to growing frustration and scepticism.

The coming months will be crucial for the interim government and decide the fate of the people banking on the government for a free, fair, and participatory election, resulting in the return to democratic governance and rule of law. To have credibility and retain trust, the interim government must commit to a clear election timeline with a concrete date, address law enforcement inefficiencies, and ensure that economic policies do not burden ordinary citizens to meet requirements set by the likes of IMF.

If this state of weak leadership, poor governance and resulting chaos and confusion, disorder and disruption, instability and uncertainty continue for another six months, we will be treading an uncharted territory. A slippery slope which not only risks plunging the country into an abyss and civil strife, but also a predicament that can be more ominous than the one we got rid of. The clock is ticking.

The many faces of gender-based violence and herd mentality



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Social media acted as an incubator for the July uprising. And the heat for that incubator came through human energy: it was not just “manpower,” it had an equal share of “girl power.” On July 14, female students from Dhaka University’s Rokeya Hall were the first to break the hall gate, protesting against the “Razakar” branding of student protesters by the now-fallen prime minister. The heavily guarded male halls prevented the boys from being there first. Two images have stuck in our mind from the early days of the uprising: the attack on a girl with a machete by a helmet-clad Chhatra League goon in front of Rokeya Hall, and the defiant march of two residents of the hall, one wearing Western clothes and the other wearing hijab. The extraordinary courage shown by the female students can be best summed up by the image of a young girl with a backpack trying to stop a police van with her arrested friend from leaving the High Court area.

This is the generation that is no stranger to protest. We have seen their overwhelming presence during the Road Safety Movement (2018) and Rage against Rape (2020). Tactically, protesters often place women at the forefront of protest marches, hoping law enforcement agencies would show some leniency. But the kind of brutality with which police attacked the women protesters last year was unprecedented, adding fuel to the public outrage that led to the fall of the previous government. The transition to an anti-discriminatory government stirred some hope of attaining gender parity. But that optimism was marred when only male student representatives were included in the interim government.

The announcement of the Bangla Academy Prize without a female nominee continued the trend. After criticism, the award declaration was postponed. But when the vetted awardees hit the stage, we noticed that there was no change in the gender portfolio. What’s even more alarming is the social unrest that has



Women’s participation in all major movements in the country, including the July uprising in 2024, has been on par with their male counterparts.

FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

accompanied the political transition. Certain groups, led to believe they can act with impunity, exhibit a peculiar herd mentality. With the focus of law enforcement and the judiciary diverted in dealing with demands, sabotage, and external threats, there is a systemic rise in the abuse and violence of marginal groups, including women. Women, especially those who are vocal or visible, have become soft targets of public scorn.

Our women footballers, for instance, received threats of murder and rape, prompting Bangladesh Mahila Parishad to register a protest. The tears of our booters

who brought two SAFF Championship titles for the nation—which earned the team this year’s Ekushey Padak—contradict the spirit of the anti-discriminatory movement. In an emotional press conference, the players revealed the mental torture inflicted by their English coach that had drained them out. Instead of garnering sympathy, these women were bullied on social media by a mob who don’t want to see women perform in the

in Bengal has come under serious scrutiny for her alleged involvement in “leading the women astray.” Earlier, a group blackened one of Begum Rokeya’s sculptures because they found it a distraction from their prayers. We have seen celebrities being boycotted or stopped from attending ceremonies. This is a regress from the powerful role played by women in the ouster of the previous regime. It exemplifies the patriarchal orientation of

collective aggression that we are seeing are products of a social machine that demands unquestioning conformity. They strive to establish a homogenous and inclusive group. The exclusion of women, by extension of indigenous entities, from the calculus is no accident.

Herd mentality is supported by a molar structure that suppresses diversity and enforces uniformity. The pervasive victim-blaming or slut-shaming that we have seen recently is symptomatic of such a structure. Its insidious nature became evident when social media erupted with the search for an 11-year-old girl who had reportedly gone missing in Dhaka recently. Police found her in Naogaon, and we were told that she eloped with a young man aged 19 or 22 years, who was following her on social media. This could very well be a case of grooming by a paedophile. The adolescent girl wanted to escape the trauma of her ailing mother, who came to Dhaka from Barishal for cancer treatment. Once the truth came out, the girl became the target of online bullying and shaming. The potential groomer of sexual exploitation received little or no attention. This is one of many such cases that highlight our society’s tendency to shame victims rather than hold perpetrators accountable.

Around the same time, the body of a 13-year-old girl was discovered in Hatirjheel Lake 17 days after she had gone missing. Police nabbed two suspects who confessed to gang rape, murder, and dumping the body.

Police data shows a sharp rise in gender-based violence. With all the talk of reforms, it’s crucial to implement policy adjustments, such as awareness campaigns, to halt the manipulation of the desire machine that perpetuates patriarchy and other societal phenomena. We need legal reforms, societal education, empowerment of women, support for feminist movements, and international collaboration.

Let me end on a positive note. We can draw inspiration from a recent story involving a 14-year-old from Rajshahi. Faced with the prospect of child marriage at the age of 13, she fled her home and sought refuge at her school. The teachers of Rajshahi Alor Pathshala halted the marriage and funded her education. She finished her school with the dream of becoming a teacher one day. This is the Bangladesh that we desire, a country where girls can bloom without being marginalised, humiliated, raped and murdered. After all, they were at the forefront of the fight that brought changes to the system.

Building resilience: Asia’s sustainable development imperative



Kirstine Damkjaer
is assistant secretary general at the United Nations and deputy executive director of Delivery and Partnerships at the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

KIRSTINE DAMKJAEER

Asia has long been heralded as a beacon of progress in poverty reduction, lifting 1.5 billion people out of extreme poverty within just two generations. Yet, this remarkable achievement cannot mask the region’s remaining challenges. About 692 million people remained trapped in extreme poverty in 2024, living on less than \$2.15 a day. Projections suggest that 266 million more could fall into poverty by 2040. Climate change compounds these vulnerabilities, leaving communities in Asia, the world’s most disaster-prone region, grappling with recurring crises.

In the face of these challenges, sustainable infrastructure, climate action, and resilient health systems emerge as pillars of hope. These interconnected priorities are not merely aspirational—they are essential for securing the region’s hard-earned progress and ensuring a future where no one is left behind. And I have witnessed how transformative projects across Asia and the Pacific bring the promise of sustainable development to life.

From typhoons to floods, Asia’s exposure to climate-related disasters is unparalleled. In 2023 alone, the region endured the highest number of weather, climate, and water-related hazards globally, according to the World Meteorological Organization. The impacts of these disasters are devastating, both in human and economic terms. Bangladesh, ranked seventh on the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, exemplifies the stakes. In the country, Cyclone Remal and recurrent floods have left over 18 million people affected, with six million in urgent need of assistance. Coastal erosion, rising sea levels, and intensifying cyclones further threaten the livelihoods of millions.

In Bangladesh’s southwest Satkhira district, the European Union-funded, UNOPS-managed Lives in Dignity Grant Facility has supported vulnerable communities affected by climate displacement. Between 2022 and 2024, two partners, Uttaran and Educo, worked alongside communities and authorities to strengthen resilience, improve access to sanitation, water and income opportunities, and enhance disaster preparedness, management and

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adaptation for some 7,000 people. By acting as a catalyst for collaboration and enabling communities to lead adaptation efforts, this initiative highlights how these integrated, locally driven solutions can help vulnerable populations rebuild and thrive.

Sustainable development cannot succeed without robust health systems. The Covid pandemic underscored the importance of accessible, resilient health infrastructure. Yet, many countries in Asia still face significant gaps in healthcare delivery, exacerbated by climate-related disruptions. Investing in health infrastructure—from hospitals to clean water systems—is essential not only for improving public health but also for enhancing communities’

ability to withstand shocks.

At UNOPS, we take pride in supporting initiatives that align infrastructure investments with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), driving sustainable progress and lasting impact. For example, we have worked with the Bangladesh government and the Global Fund to procure and install 29 oxygen plants across district and rural (upazila) hospitals. This project, valued at over \$16 million, strengthens Bangladesh’s healthcare infrastructure with a sustainable, local supply of medical oxygen, reducing the country’s reliance on external suppliers. These oxygen plants provide oxygen at a fraction of the cost—17 to 22 times lower than cylinder-based supplies—enabling tens of thousands of patients to receive life-saving oxygen therapy every day and benefitting over 8.2 million people annually. This

initiative also enhances emergency preparedness, ensuring hospitals are ready for surges during public health crises or natural disasters. Such projects show us that true development is not just about growth, but about building the strength to endure, ensuring every community is prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

Another critical challenge for sustainable development in Asia is plastic pollution. The Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia (PLEASE) project, funded by the World Bank and implemented by the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) with UNOPS support, exemplifies how regional collaboration can drive impactful solutions. Covering all eight South

Asian nations, including Bangladesh, this initiative fosters circular economy innovations to reduce plastic waste entering our oceans. UNOPS contributions—from project management and procurement to infrastructure support—have been instrumental in promoting knowledge-sharing, building partnerships, and advancing best practices in plastic waste management.

In addition to supporting grant investments for circular solutions, UNOPS facilitated the construction of SACEP’s green headquarters, incorporating sustainable design principles that reflect the project’s environmental ethos. By addressing the root causes of plastic pollution and equipping communities with the tools to adopt sustainable practices, the PLEASE project aligns with broader global efforts to protect our ecosystems and combat climate change.

Bangladesh’s vulnerabilities to climate change and its commitment to sustainable development hold valuable lessons for the broader region. The Lives in Dignity Grant Facility’s innovative approaches, such as climate-smart agriculture and livelihood diversification, demonstrate the importance of tailoring solutions to local contexts. Community ownership, continuous capacity-building, and integrated strategies that address immediate needs while fostering long-term resilience are critical to success.

Similarly, regional initiatives like the PLEASE project highlight the importance of collaboration and innovation in addressing shared challenges. By leveraging partnerships with public, private, and civil society actors, we can maximise impact and drive sustainable solutions at scale.

Asia’s path to a sustainable future hinges on bold climate action, resilient infrastructure, and stronger health systems. For countries like Bangladesh, investing in these areas is critical to protecting progress and unlocking new opportunities. By combining global expertise with local innovation, we can drive real impact, creating a future where communities don’t just adapt, but thrive.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

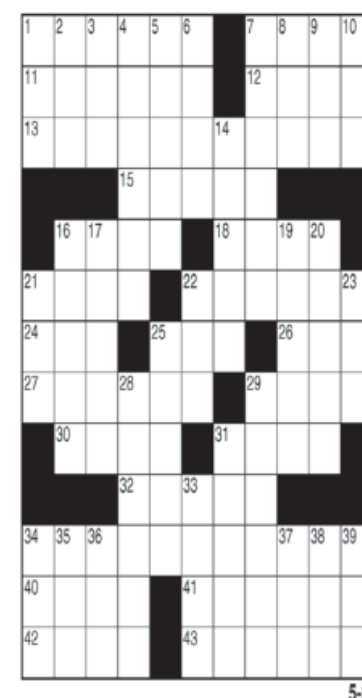
- 1 Looks forward to
- 7 Labyrinth
- 11 Malay island
- 12 Weary sigh
- 13 Face a difficulty
- 15 Casts a ballot
- 16 Prayer ender
- 18 Turn to slush
- 21 Recipe instruction
- 22 Singer Harry
- 24 Old calamity
- 25 Halloween cry
- 26 Director Spike
- 27 Tickled
- 29 Ore source
- 30 Rigging support
- 31 Wagers
- 32 Fancy parties
- 34 Begin fighting
- 40 Heaps
- 41 “Search me”
- 42 Like lawns in the morning
- 43 Swift

DOWN

- 1 Jackson 5 hit

2 Court

- 3 Sleeve filler
- 4 Indignant cry
- 5 Wyoming’s - Range
- 6 Chimney grime
- 7 Squishy and wet
- 8 Boxing great
- 9 Ray-gun sound
- 10 Snaky shape
- 14 Influence
- 16 Molecule’s makeup
- 17 Confusion
- 19 Dole out
- 20 Hoe targets
- 21 Massage setting
- 22 Lawn material
- 23 Notice
- 25 Floppy top
- 28 Protection from harm
- 29 Caron of “Gigi”
- 31 Jazz style
- 33 Heaps
- 34 Scoundrel
- 35 Bullfight cry
- 36 Do a yard job
- 37 Exalted work
- 38 Tie the knot
- 39 Utter



FEBRUARY 1’S ANSWERS

O	B	A	M	A	S	E	C	T	S
P	A	P	A	S	I	G	L	O	O
T	R	E	Y	S	G	O	A	T	S
			F	E	R	N	M	O	O
T	O	O	L	S	H	E	D		
U	N	D	O		O	R	A	T	E
S	T	O	W	S		S	Y	R	I
K	O	R	E	A	N		F	U	N
			R	O	O	T	L	E	S
V	A	T		T	R	I	O		
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ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

Ushering in a new era of work

The first key takeaway is a surprising one: frontline and essential jobs are booming. Farmworkers, delivery drivers, and tradespeople in construction-related roles are expected to see massive growth. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive in a world obsessed with tech startups, cryptocurrency, and the metaverse. So why the rise in these roles?

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The global job market is changing faster than ever before, driven by shifts in technology, demographics, and the rise of new industries. These changes are not just limited to advanced economies; they are impacting countries like ours, where rapid economic growth and a young, ambitious workforce are driving conversations about the future of work. While some job roles are charging forward, others are quietly fading into the background. The recent "Future of Jobs Report 2025" published by World Economic Forum provides critical insights into this new era of work, exploring how these changes are reshaping employment opportunities worldwide.

The first key takeaway is a surprising one: frontline and essential jobs are booming. Farmworkers, delivery drivers, and tradespeople in construction-related roles are expected to see massive growth. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive in a world obsessed with tech startups, cryptocurrency, and the metaverse. So why the rise in these roles? The answer lies in changing demographics. As populations age, particularly in developed countries, the demand for food security, efficient logistics, and infrastructure upgrades is climbing. Similarly, the rapid growth in the gig economy, powered by e-commerce and quick delivery systems, highlights why roles like light truck drivers and delivery workers are soaring in demand. With e-commerce global companies thriving in Bangladesh, the groundwork for this sector is already laid. The challenge now lies in creating safe, well-paying jobs that leverage technology for scalability.

On the other side of the coin, tech roles are unsurprisingly the golden ticket to future-proofing your career. AI specialists, data

scientists, and cybersecurity experts are becoming the architects of tomorrow's world. For a country like Bangladesh, where we are already making strides in IT outsourcing and software exports, this comes as excellent news. But here's the catch—not everyone is invited to the tech party. The reality is, a large portion of our workforce is stuck in low-skill or semi-skilled roles. Without urgent and widespread upskilling initiatives, we risk being left behind as the global economy embraces AI-driven transformation. What's more alarming is that some roles in tech are actually declining.

For example graphic designers suffer the most when tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Canva Pro democratise creativity. Suddenly, anyone can whip up a professional-looking design, reducing the demand for full-time designers. For our growing freelance community, heavily reliant on graphic design and web development gigs, this could be a storm on the horizon.

The report mentions that traditional desk jobs are in decline. Cashiers, administrative assistants, and clerks—roles once considered stable—are being replaced by automation and self-service technology. Even professions like accounting and auditing, long viewed as unshakable, are beginning to feel the heat. This trend should serve as a wake-up call for the burgeoning middle class. For decades, the dream was simple: get a degree, land a desk job, and climb the corporate ladder. But as AI continues to take over routine tasks, the ladder is disappearing altogether. The question then becomes: how do we prepare for a future where stability is the exception, not the norm?

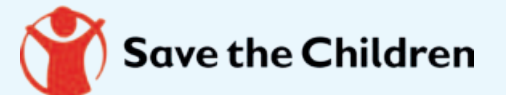
While technology charges ahead, the irony is that human skills like creativity, resilience, and collaboration are more valuable than ever. Employers are no longer just looking for workers

who can do the job; they want employees who can think critically, adapt quickly, and lead with empathy. For Bangladesh, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. We are uniquely positioned to capitalise on these global trends, but only if we act quickly and decisively. First of all, we need to invest in upskilling. Public and private partnerships must focus on providing affordable, accessible upskilling programs. From AI and data analytics to soft skills like leadership and resilience, the training needs to be relevant to both emerging technologies and evolving human roles.

Next, we need to prioritise the essential sectors. It is easy to get caught up in the buzz around tech, but let us not forget the basics. Agriculture, healthcare, and education are essential not just for our survival but for our growth as a nation. By modernising these sectors through innovation and investment, we can create millions of sustainable jobs while addressing critical societal needs. Finally, we need to foster entrepreneurship by reforming the startup ecosystem. With traditional career paths becoming less reliable, entrepreneurship could indeed become the safety net of the future. By supporting small businesses and startups, be it through funding, mentorship, or infrastructure, we can empower individuals to create their own opportunities and more jobs in the long run.

Amid all the disruption, one thing remains clear: change is not inherently bad. Yes, some jobs will disappear, but others will rise to take their place. For Bangladesh, the key lies in our ability to adapt. Currently, the global economy is playing musical chairs, and the music is speeding up. We can either scramble to find a seat when it stops or build a bigger, better chair before anyone else does.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT



Save the Children

Coordinator, Awards
Deadline: February 8

Eligibility:
• Masters in Finance/ Commerce/ Business/Social Science or relevant field with previous relevant experience.
Minimum experience: 5 years



iDE Bangladesh

Associate Officer, HR
Deadline: February 8

Eligibility:
• Bachelors, preferably in Human Resources/Public Administration/ Management/Business Administration/ other relevant field.
Minimum experience: 2 years

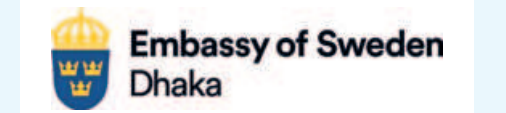


Transcom Electronics Ltd.

Territory Sales Manager

Deadline: February 10

Eligibility:
• Bachelors/Masters with previous working experience in dealer/distribution sales.
Minimum experience: 3-6 years



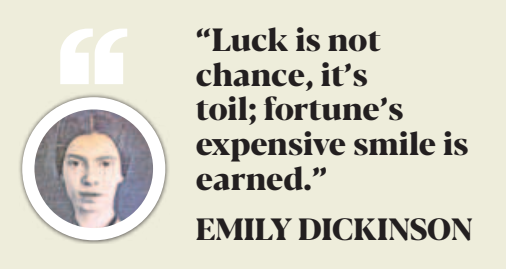
Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka

Trade Facilitator

Deadline: February 17

Eligibility:
• University degree in Economics or Business Admin, or equivalent academic qualification.
Minimum experience: 2 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



Google ends diversity hiring goals

Google is stepping back from its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, including its goal to hire more employees from underrepresented groups. The move comes as part of a broader trend among US companies scaling back diversity programs, often in response to political and legal pressures.

According to a report by Reuters, in an email to staff on Wednesday, Google's parent company Alphabet's Chief People Officer Fiona Cicconi announced that the company would no longer set "aspirational hiring goals" for

increasing diversity. These goals were initially established in 2020 following widespread protests against racial injustice.

At the time, Google CEO Sundar Pichai pledged to increase the number of leaders from underrepresented groups by 30% by 2025, states Reuters. However, the company has not provided updated figures on its progress toward this goal. In 2021, Google began evaluating executive performance based on team diversity and inclusion, but recent changes suggest a shift in priorities, adds the report.

PHOTO: ALLEN BOGUSLAVSKY/PEXELS

Shikho aims to bring in the AI hype to ed-tech—here's how

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

This week, Shikho, a Bangladesh-based edtech company, introduced a beta version of Shikho AI, an artificial intelligence tool aimed at addressing educational gaps for Bengali-speaking students. The platform, which initially focuses on resolving academic doubts in Bengali, represents the company's first foray into AI-driven learning solutions. While access is currently limited to existing paid users, the long-term vision includes expanding to teachers, parents, and schools.

The tool relies on generative AI models fine-tuned for education, incorporating Bengali-language processing and reinforcement learning from human feedback. To understand its potential, The Daily Star spoke with Shahir Chowdhury, Shikho's founder and CEO, about the platform's development, challenges, and aspirations.

DS: What prompted the development of Shikho AI, and how does it fit into the broader educational landscape in Bangladesh?

Chowdhury: Bangladesh's education system faces two systemic issues: uneven access to resources and a lack of contextualised materials for Bengali speakers. While traditional edtech platforms have made strides, personalisation remains a hurdle. With advancements in AI, we saw an opportunity to address these gaps more dynamically.

Shikho AI builds on six years of curriculum-aligned content development here. The beta phase allows us to test solutions tailored to local needs, such as doubt-solving in Bengali. Our goal is not just to replicate existing models but to adapt them for scalability—first within Bangladesh, then potentially for Bengali-speaking populations globally.

DS: Why prioritise doubt-solving as the initial

focus?

Chowdhury: Doubt-solving is often where learning stalls, especially for students in large, under-resourced classrooms. Many learners struggle to get the support they need, either due to a lack of access to quality teachers or the sheer scale of the classroom environment. Many students avoid asking questions due to fear of judgment or limited access to instructors.



We want to break down this barrier by acting as a 24/7 co-pilot, providing a safe, private space for learners to ask any question without hesitation. This focus on doubt-solving addresses two critical challenges at once: removing the stigma of asking for help and delivering instant, accessible support.

DS: How does Shikho AI ensure response accuracy, given concerns about AI-generated errors?

Chowdhury: Accuracy is critical, especially in education. The AI combines curriculum-specific data with human oversight. A team of educators reviews outputs, and students can rate responses, creating a feedback loop to refine the model. This "human-in-the-loop" approach, used by other AI firms, aims to balance automation with quality control.

Students also have the option to rate responses, helping to refine the AI's capabilities over time. This feedback-driven model is similar to strategies used by leading AI companies, ensuring continuous enhancement of the system's performance.

DS: What measures are in place to ensure accessibility across socioeconomic groups?

Chowdhury: A freemium model will provide core features for free, while advanced tools may require payment. The platform is optimised for low-cost smartphones and minimal data usage—a necessity in regions with limited connectivity. Partnerships with NGOs and government bodies could broaden reach, though such discussions are ongoing.

DS: How might this technology reshape the role of teachers?

Chowdhury: Teachers often spend hours on administrative tasks like grading. By automating some workflows, Shikho AI could free up time for mentorship. For instance, the platform can generate student performance analytics, which might help educators identify struggling learners.

Our vision is to transform teachers into strategic facilitators, equipped with AI-driven insights to deliver more impact. In the future, we will expand to include tools tailored specifically to educators' needs, ensuring they benefit fully from the technology we are building.



12th CONVOCATION

08 FEBRUARY 2025

DAFFODIL SMART CITY, BIRULIA, SAVAR, DHAKA



Message

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
BANGABHABAN, DHAKA
25 Magh 1431
08 February 2025

On the propitious occasion of the 12th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU), I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the graduating students, guardians, faculties, and university authorities for their collective endeavors.

A university is the cradle of learning and a beacon of knowledge. It plays a pivotal role in fostering students' excellence, offering enormous opportunities to help them flourish their innate brilliance through academic and co-curricular activities. To build a knowledge-based society, universities should focus on ensuring quality education, imparting cutting-edge research supported by theoretical and practical exposures. I hope universities, including DIU will comply with government policies and continue to promote quality education, fostering creativity and entrepreneurial aptitude.

The student led mass uprising in July-August 2024 will always be remembered as a transformative milestone in the history of Bangladesh. The courage, unity, sacrifice and resilience demonstrated by the students of private universities, including DIU, were truly commendable. I am confident that the graduates will embrace the responsibility of realizing the vision of a progressive, inclusive, and prosperous Bangladesh.

Convocation signifies a unique milestone as it formally confers degrees upon graduating students and evaluates overall performance of the institution. I hope fresh graduates of DIU will serve the nation with utmost dedication and contribute to the peace and progress of our beloved country. I wish them a very bright future.

I wish the 12th Convocation of Daffodil International University a grand success.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Mohammed Shahabuddin

An overview of Daffodil International University (DIU)

"Glorious Past - Thriving Present - Promising Future".

Introduction: Daffodil International University (DIU), established on January 24, 2002, is a leading private university in Bangladesh with over 24,000 students and 1,100 faculty members. It ranks as the top private university and the second among all universities in Bangladesh in the Scopus-indexed ranking. DIU aims to create responsible global citizens by providing education in science, technology, and entrepreneurship. Committed to sustainability, DIU has implemented green initiatives like biogas plants, solar energy, and cycling tracks. It promotes personal and social transformation through leadership programs, sports, yoga, and wellness activities. The campus features cutting-edge labs, digital classrooms, a medical center, a startup market, and recreational facilities, ensuring a holistic learning environment that fosters innovation, morality, and career readiness.

Awards, Honors, and Ranking: DIU has secured top positions in global and national rankings. In the THE World University Rankings 2025, it ranks jointly 1st in Bangladesh and among the top 1000 globally. By subject, it ranks 1st in Medical & Health, Social Sciences, and Engineering, and 2nd in Computer Science. It is also ranked 1st among private universities in THE Interdisciplinary Science Rankings 2025.

In the QS Rankings 2025, DIU ranks 3rd among private universities and 5th overall in Bangladesh, with notable positions in Sustainability (1st), Asia (280th), and World (1201+). It also received the QS Performance Improvement Award 2025.

DIU leads in Impact & Innovation, ranking 1st in Bangladesh and among top 400 globally in THE Impact Rankings 2024. DIU also ranks 22nd globally in Quality Education (SDG-4). It excels in GreenMetric, WURI, and Scopus-indexed research. These achievements highlight DIU's excellence in education, research, and sustainability.

DIU Expands Globally with International Campus & PhD Partnerships: DIU strengthens its global presence through PhD partnerships with top universities like USIM, CNU, and KIIT, with 100+ faculty members pursuing PhDs. It has also expanded internationally by establishing campuses in the UAE, reinforcing its commitment to world-class education and academic excellence on a global scale.

Faculty Members: DIU has 1,061 dedicated faculty members, including 823 full-time, 238 part-time, and 64 visiting foreign faculty. Their expertise and commitment create a dynamic learning environment, ensuring high educational standards and inspiring students to achieve academic excellence and personal growth.

Officials and Supporting Staff: DIU's operations are efficiently managed by 375 officials, 520 support staff, and 450+ outsourced personnel. Advanced automation enhances productivity, streamlining workflows and ensuring accuracy, efficiency, and excellence in service delivery while reducing manual intervention.

International Students: DIU welcomes 225+ international students and has over 1,000 global alumni. Embracing diversity, it fosters a multicultural environment, enriching education and preparing students for a globally connected world.

Scholarships and Waivers: DIU offers scholarships in 33 categories, benefiting 29,978 students in 2024, including 99 under the Freedom Fighter Quota. A total of BDT 8,016,164,910 was awarded, with a special 20% waiver of BDT 3,118,393,950 granted to 23,226 students for contributions to the anti-discrimination movement.

One Student, One Laptop: DIU's "One Student One Laptop" project aims to equip each student with a laptop, distributing over 65,000 laptops to date.

CSR and ASR: DIU actively engages in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Academic Social Responsibility (ASR). Its Daffodil Institute of Social Sciences (DISS), launched in 2016, provides education, food, and tech training to 67 underprivileged street children, empowering them for brighter futures and contributing to social equity and development.

Cheer with the Champions: DIU has excelled in sports, winning the Ispahani Prothom Alo Football Tournament and Uprising Memorial Cup Futsal in 2024. It also triumphed in East West Winter Smash, with past victories in Bangabandhu Sports Championship and North South Sports Carnival, showcasing its sports leadership.

International Academic Partnership: DIU has formed academic partnerships with over 620 universities across 70+ countries and 54 international organizations. These collaborations provide opportunities for research, exchange programs, and joint initiatives, enhancing academic excellence and preparing students and faculty for a competitive global environment.

Entrepreneurs Network: DIU's Department of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, along with initiatives like the Innovation Lab, Co-working space, and Startup Market, has helped create over 4,000 entrepreneurs globally, providing students and alumni with tools and support to turn ideas into successful businesses.

Daffodil Smart City (DSC): Daffodil Smart City (DSC) in Birulia, Dhaka, is a hub for international events, hosting major gatherings like AUPF, AUAP, Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW), and the Bangabandhu Inter University Sports Championship. Its modern facilities, including a 7000+ seat auditorium and innovation labs, make it an ideal venue for global events.

A Vibrant University to Regenerate Response: DIU has demonstrated its commitment to academic excellence by hosting the ICPC Asia Dhaka Regional Contest 2024. The event was expertly organized at Daffodil Smart City, with detailed preparations including participant kits and a Mock Contest on December 6th. The main contest on December 7th was a great success.

Division of Research: DIU's Division of Research, integrated into the Faculty of Graduate Studies in 2022, fosters a research-driven culture. The university has seen significant growth in research output, with publications increasing across faculties: Business & Entrepreneurship (382), Science & IT (2,314), Engineering (314), Health & Life Sciences (1,177), Humanities & Social Sciences (361), and Graduate Studies (283). By 2024, DIU has a total of 4,771 Scopus-indexed publications, highlighting its rising global research impact.

International Memberships: DIU maintains partnerships with renowned global organizations like AUPF, IIE, IAUP, IEEE, and UNAI, offering students opportunities to participate in international activities. These collaborations help enhance students' skills and provide them with global fitness and exposure to diverse experiences.

Clubs and Associations: DIU provides 50 clubs like BNCC and Air Rover Unit, facilitating student engagement in activities, skill development, and peer connections.

Internship, Job Placement, and Entrepreneurship: DIU organizes activities like Job Utsav, mock interviews, Training sessions, startup competitions, and the TAF program to prepare graduates for the job market. These events provide hands-on experience, skill development, and networking opportunities for student success.

Alumni: DIU maintains an extensive alumni network and fosters ongoing connections, offering professional growth opportunities to graduates in prominent positions globally.

Industry-Academia linkages: DIU has built strong industry-academia linkages to enhance education and bridge the gap between learning and industry needs. Collaborations with local organizations like piCredo Software and SELISE provide internships and training, while international partnerships with universities support advanced research. Connections with industry giants such as bKash, Data Soft, and bFTI offer real-world exposure and job opportunities, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for success.

Degrees to be awarded at the 12th Convocation

Faculty	Bachelor's Programs	Master's Programs	Total
Faculty of Business & Entrepreneurship	460	173	633
Faculty of Science & Information Technology	1316	134	1450
Faculty of Engineering	802	27	829
Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences	232	121	353
Faculty of Health & Life Sciences	476	210	686
Total	3286	665	3951

Chancellor's Gold Medal

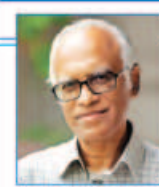
Mr. Abu Farhan Siam
ID: 201-29-1649
Mr. Jabed Hasan
ID: 201-33-1126
Mr. Humayra Asima Mim
ID: 201-34-238
Mr. Mashoor Saad Karim
ID: 193-43-422
Mr. Asiful Haque
ID: 201-35-2961

BoT Chairman's Gold Medal

Mr. Annan Sanzid Ali
ID: 211-23-999
Mr. Md. Rashik Shahrir Akash
ID: 202-15-3825
Mr. Md. Sahadat Hossain
ID: 211-15-14607
Mr. Talat Mahmud Hridoy
ID: 203-40-717

Vice Chancellor's Gold Medal

Mr. Md. Zubair Bin Rashid
ID: 203-11-1209
Mr. Rakibul Hasan Bhuiyan
ID: 203-10-681
Mr. Md. Rashed Jamil Alif
ID: 202-24-744



Message



Adviser
Ministry of Education
Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

I am pleased that Daffodil International University (DIU) is going to celebrate the 12th Convocation this year. This significant milestone stands for the unwavering dedication of the university in fostering academic excellence, innovation and social responsibility. In alignment with the aspirations of the anti-discrimination student movement, the university is actively building an educational environment that transcends barriers and nurtures individual potential of all the students from every corner of society. This dedication embodies the broader vision for education in Bangladesh - a vision that prioritizes equity, cultivates critical thinking and fosters global competencies to empower our youth to navigate the complexities of the future.

To the 2025 graduating class: today marks the culmination of your hard work, determination and resilience. You have achieved a significant milestone in your journey and I commend you for embracing the challenges and opportunities of your academic achievement and glory. As you step into the next chapter of your lives, may you carry the values and knowledge gained at DIU to contribute meaningfully to society and lead the nation with integrity and patriotic zeal.

Dear 2025 graduating class! I urge you to use your education as a tool for transformation - for yourselves, for your family, for your society and the nation and for the world. Remember, true success lies in making a positive impact in the lives of others.

I wish Daffodil International University may this convocation serve as a reminder of the metamorphosing power of education and inspire us all to contribute to a brighter future.

Wahiduddin Mahmud



Message



Chairman
University Grants Commission
of Bangladesh

It gives me great pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the graduates, faculty members, staff, and stakeholders of Daffodil International University (DIU) on the occasion of its 12th Convocation on 8 February 2025. This milestone reflects the university's continued commitment to academic excellence and its efforts to foster an environment of innovation, inclusivity, and integrity.

Convocations are not merely celebrations of academic accomplishments; they are milestones that mark the beginning of new responsibilities and opportunities for graduates to contribute meaningfully to society. Your achievement today is a testament to your perseverance and the dedication of your instructors and mentors.

Private universities remain a pivotal component of the higher education framework in Bangladesh. Currently, a total of 106 private universities out of 115 are offering academic programs across the country. It is evident that these institutions have continually opened doors, facilitating the expansion of higher education for our growing student populace. These students, in return, significantly contribute to the socioeconomic progression of our nation. Recognizing that these universities embody an essential segment of our higher education landscape, it is imperative that they consistently offer quality education at an affordable cost, ultimately serving our nation's best interests.

The University Grants Commission remains steadfast in its mission to ensure the quality of higher education across the nation. I am pleased to note DIU's proactive role in aligning its academic programs with global standards and addressing the evolving needs of society.

Graduates, as you step into the professional world, remember that your education is not just a personal asset but a powerful tool for societal transformation. Embrace lifelong learning, uphold ethical values, and contribute to building a nation that is inclusive, progressive, and resilient.

I extend my gratitude to the leadership of Daffodil International University for their unwavering dedication to creating a vibrant academic community.

I wish the 12th Convocation of DIU a grand success.

Professor Dr. S. M. A. Faiz



Message



Chairman
Board of Trustees
Daffodil International University

Today marks a momentous occasion-your convocation from Daffodil International University. It is a day of celebration, reflection, and anticipation for the future. As you embark on this new chapter, I am filled with immense pride for your accomplishments and the bright futures that lie ahead.

At DIU, we have strived to provide you with an education that not only imparts knowledge but also fosters innovation, critical thinking, and an entrepreneurial mindset. We have equipped you with the tools and resources to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world and to become leaders in your chosen fields.

Your journey at DIU has been marked by dedication, perseverance, and a thirst for knowledge. You have embraced challenges, participated in groundbreaking research, and launched innovative startups. You have demonstrated the power of collaboration and the unwavering spirit of the DIU community.

As you step out into the world, remember the values that have been instilled in you during your time here. Embrace lifelong learning, remain adaptable, and never cease to seek new opportunities for growth. Uphold the highest ethical standards, and use your knowledge and skills to make a positive impact on society.

The DIU alumni network spans the globe, connecting you with a community of accomplished individuals who share your passion for excellence. Stay connected, support each other, and continue to contribute to the growth of our university.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of you. May your paths be filled with success, fulfillment, and the unwavering spirit of DIU.

Md. Sabur Khan



Message

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



CHIEF ADVISOR
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
08 February 2025
25 Magh 1431

On this momentous occasion of 12th convocation of Daffodil International University, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating students, guardians, faculty staff, & the entire university community. Today, we celebrate your achievements and the resilience and determination that have brought you here.

The world today requires leaders who are innovative, courageous, and deeply empathetic. At Daffodil International University, you have been equipped with values of creativity, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility. Let these guide your journey as you take on roles that shape industries, influence policies, and inspire meaningful progress. Remember, true success is measured not only by personal accomplishments but also by the positive impact you create for others.

This convocation is a celebration of your journey and a call to action. Your education is a powerful tool for driving progress that transcends borders and builds a future rooted in dignity, compassion, and sustainability. Let your actions honour the sacrifices and support that have brought you here; let your work reflect a commitment to building a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Dream boldly, act with purpose, and carry forward the legacy of this institution with pride and integrity.

I wish the 12th convocation of Daffodil International University all success.

Professor Muhammad Yunus



Message



Adviser
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dear Members of the Daffodil International University Community, It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Daffodil International University (DIU) as it prepares to celebrate its 12th Convocation in 2025. This momentous occasion is a testament to the university's steadfast commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and the holistic development of its students. DIU continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of Bangladesh, fostering a new generation of leaders equipped with the knowledge and skills to address the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.

To the graduating class of 2025: Your journey at DIU marks a significant chapter in your lives. This convocation is not merely a ceremony but a celebration of your dedication, resilience, and the triumph of your academic endeavors. As you step into the next phase of your journey, I urge you to embrace the responsibility of contributing to society and the nation. The education you have received at DIU is not just a personal achievement but also a tool to drive positive change in your communities, uplift others, and lead with integrity.

Daffodil International University stands as a beacon of modern, technology-driven education in Bangladesh. Its initiatives in entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and cutting-edge technology integration are exemplary. The university's focus on aligning education with the demands of the global economy while fostering empathy, creativity, and social responsibility is commendable. I express my sincere gratitude to the university leadership, faculty members, and staff for their relentless efforts in nurturing an environment where students thrive academically and personally.

To the graduates: Let your education be the foundation upon which you build a brighter future for yourselves and others. Carry forward the values instilled in you at DIU, and remember that true success lies in serving humanity, fostering innovation, and promoting justice and equality. I wish Daffodil International University continued success in its journey toward excellence and in contributing to the socio-economic advancement of Bangladesh. May this convocation inspire all of us to recognize the transformative power of education and work together for a better tomorrow.

Professor Dr. Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar



Message

Former Prime Minister
of Lebanon

It is a profound honor to join the 12th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU), a momentous occasion that celebrates the culmination of your academic journeys and the dawn of a new era of leadership and entrepreneurial pursuits.

DIU has cultivated a unique environment that nurtures innovation, critical thinking, and a strong entrepreneurial spirit. This focus on developing not just skilled professionals, but also visionary leaders, is commendable. As you embark on this new chapter, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of entrepreneurship - not just in the traditional sense of business, but in all aspects of your life.

Seek out challenges, embrace calculated risks, and cultivate a mindset of continuous learning and adaptation. Be a leader in your chosen field, inspiring others through your creativity, innovation, and dedication to ethical and sustainable practices.

Remember that true leadership is not about power or position, but about serving others, inspiring positive change, and making a meaningful contribution to society. Use your education to address the pressing challenges of our time, whether it's developing sustainable solutions, fostering social impact, or driving technological advancements for the betterment of humanity.

To the graduates, your families, and the entire DIU community, I extend my warmest congratulations. May this milestone mark the beginning of a life filled with purpose, excellence, and a legacy of leadership and positive impact.

With heartfelt best wishes for your future endeavors,

Professor Dr. Hassan Diab



Message



Vice Chancellor
Daffodil International University

My heartiest congratulations to the graduating students of the 12th Convocation in 2025. This convocation demonstrate the successes and accomplishments of the students and marks an important event in the history of the university. It is a time for revitalizing our commitments to the future generations and to set sights on higher goals.

In line with the mission and vision of the university, almost all academic and administrative activities of the university have been digitized and the university has emerged as a prominent ICT oriented smart university of the country. DIU has set up research and innovation labs with a view to equip the students with knowledge and skills to face the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution. Students are provided with on-campus Internet and WiFi facilities, free laptops, campus TV and campus radio.

I am proud to be a part of the ceremony that recognizes the achievements of the students. While congratulating the graduates, I would like to congratulate my colleagues, specially the esteemed teachers, for supporting each student on the way to success. I would like to thank the Convener of the Convocation Ceremony and all those who have worked relentlessly to make the convocation successful.

On this festive occasion, I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Board of Trustees of the university, especially Dr. Md. Sabur Khan, Chairman of the Board and Founder of the university for Visionary leadership and continuous supports for quality education, research and rankings of the university.

I would like to thank our distinguished international and local guests, dignitaries and specially the convocation speaker Professor Dr. Hassan B. Diab, Honorable Former Prime Minister of the Lebanese Republic for gracing the ceremony and encouraging our new graduates.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Dr. Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, Honorable Adviser, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, for gracing the occasion through representing Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Chancellor of the university as the Chairperson of the Convocation.

I wish the convocation a grand success.

Professor Dr. M. Lutfar Rahman



DEALING WITH DIGITAL CLUTTER

The importance of digital organisation cannot be overstated

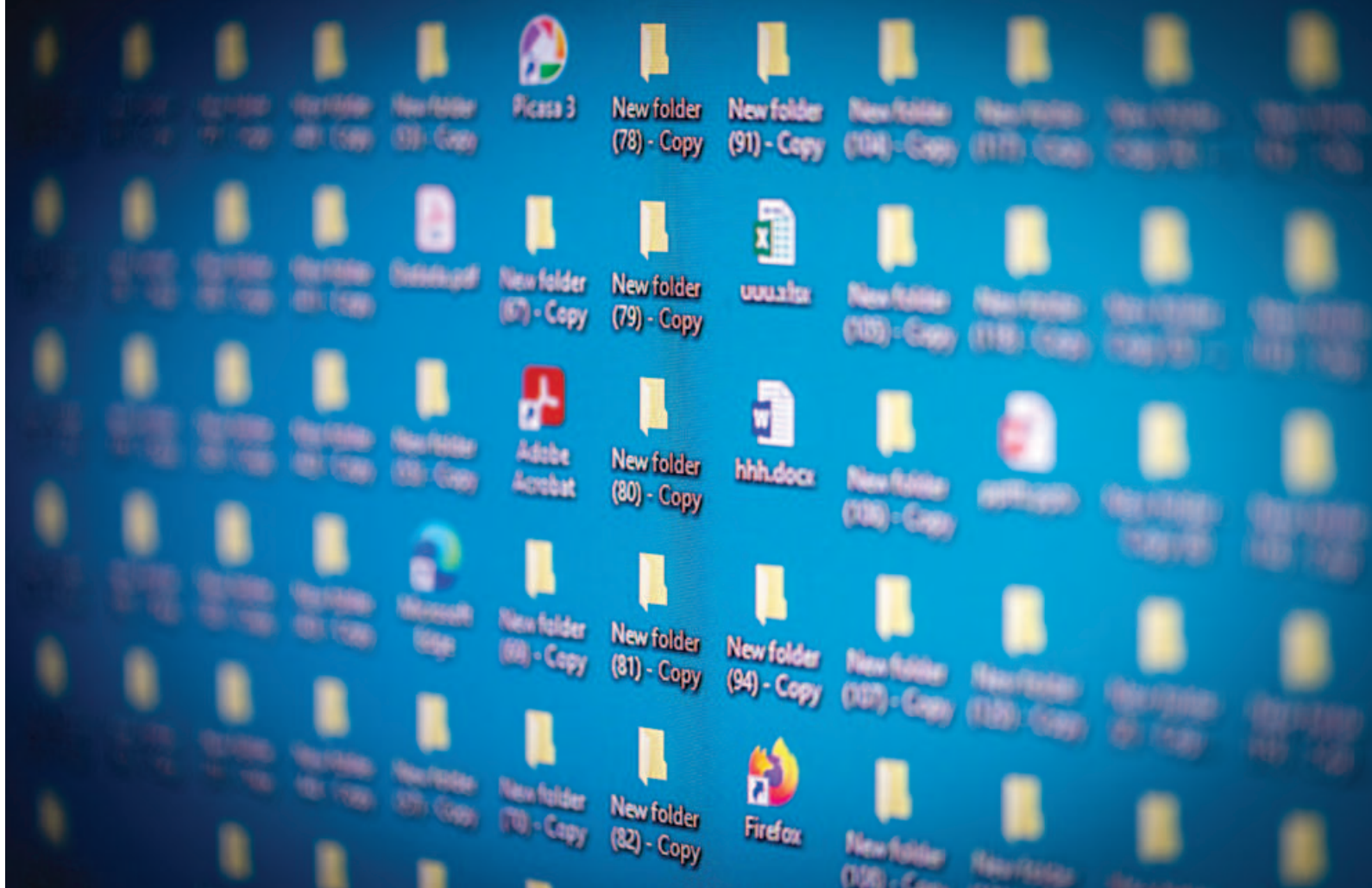


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

The virtual world hums with a ceaseless barrage of pings and pop-ups – where drowning in a sea of emails, stacked data files, and multiple tabs is an all-too-familiar scenario. An unrelenting cascade of content is thrown our way, at all times. While we are being swept away in a whirlpool of distractions, this endless stream of digital noise often creates a sense of mental exhaustion due to digital clutter. Much like its physical counterpart, this phenomenon refers to the state of disorganisation of

data within our virtual spaces.

What makes it tempting to hoard information, however, is the convenience of cloud storage and vast device capacity. Users are often under the illusion that every file, picture, or link might prove useful in the future. For many, digital clutter sneaks in unnoticed. It begins with storing several unused screenshots on the phone, leaving a few browser tabs open 'for later', or accumulating countless saved articles and documents that never get read – eventually compounding into an overwhelming cluster.

One primary reason why digital clutter persists is because we often fail to accurately gauge out precisely how useful some data is to us. A study published in the *Journal of Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders* reveals that individuals who tend to stack information often overestimate the value of their digital possessions. This can lead to significant distress over the thought of deleting digital items. Such findings underscore the profound impact of our relationship with digital possessions and the impact it has on our mental well-being, making

it imperative to address the rising phenomenon.

The cluttered digital landscape can mimic the effects of physical chaos, with similar outcomes on emotional health. Research has drawn parallels between digital overload and mental fatigue, highlighting how multitasking and constant interruptions diminish cognitive performance. Switching between tasks consumes more time than anticipated, leaving the brain scattered and depleted. Over time, this pattern cultivates burnout, making even the simplest of responsibilities feel overwhelming.

Virtual clutter also significantly impacts workflow. When our digital spaces are unorganised, it becomes increasingly difficult to locate specific information, leading to wasted time and mounting frustration. Besides, the constant influx of information can overwhelm our cognitive abilities, making it difficult to focus and prioritise tasks. Often, productivity turns into a myth in the digital expanse.

In addition, digital clutter may pose security hazards. As we accumulate more and more digital data, we increase the potential for data breaches and cyberattacks. This is because the more files a user has on their device, or on the servers or cloud system, the greater the odds that a perpetrator can access them. However, it is possible to reduce the risk of sensitive information being compromised by regularly decluttering our digital spaces.

Adopting a habit of digital organisation can implement several benefits, extending beyond technical performance. Firstly, it promotes a sense of control and reduces the mental fatigue that accompanies digital chaos. By categorising files, emails, and other digital assets systematically, users can achieve a clearer state of mind, akin to how a tidy workspace fosters productivity and creativity.

Additionally, regular digital maintenance encourages mindful consumption of information. When we consciously sort through our digital spaces, we become more selective about what we save or download, reducing the

tendency to hoard unnecessary data. This practice cultivates an approach to technology where the quality of content takes precedence over quantity, and distractions are effectively minimised.

Another key advantage lies in sustainability. Data storage, though seemingly intangible, has a tangible environmental impact. The energy consumed by data centres and cloud storage contributes significantly to carbon emissions. By deleting unused data and reducing storage requirements, we indirectly lower our digital carbon footprint, contributing to a greener planet.

Decluttering your digital space involves a systematic approach. It is essential to identify areas that demand attention and create a manageable roadmap. This could include purging obsolete files, deleting pictures, or unsubscribing from unwanted newsletters. You may consider uninstalling unnecessary apps and unfollowing creators on social media whose content no longer resonates or adds value to your life in order to streamline a minimal digital experience. With the help of regular maintenance, it is possible to prevent further digital clutter.

By taking proactive steps to declutter our digital spaces, we can enhance our productivity, embrace mindfulness, and protect our privacy online. Adopting a minimalist approach to digital consumption and regularly maintaining our virtual environment leads to a more focused, efficient, and sustainable lifestyle.

References:

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2. George, A. Shaji. (2024). Digital Hoarding: The Rising Environmental and Personal Costs of Information Overload.

Titir is part-time a student and full-time a no brainer. Find her at punomirahman@gmail.com

How stress eating might put you at risk of prediabetes

OHONA ANJUM

Most of us have turned to food for comfort during stressful times as it is a common way for a lot of people to cope with negative emotions. Stress eating, often triggered by anything from work pressure to personal struggles, can feel soothing in the moment. But the food items we typically reach for, loaded with excessive sugar and unhealthy fats, can do more harm than good.

When you're stressed, your body releases cortisol, often called the "stress hormone," to help manage the "fight or flight" response. This is your body's way of preparing for a perceived threat by providing an energy boost. However, when stress becomes chronic, cortisol levels remain elevated, disrupting your body's natural balance.

One of the side effects of cortisol is an increase in appetite, especially for quick-energy foods like sugary, high-calorie snacks. This craving isn't random, cortisol prompts the body to seek out foods that can rapidly replenish energy stores, even if there's no physical danger requiring such fuel.

The repeated consumption of these comfort foods leads to frequent blood sugar spikes, causing the pancreas to produce more insulin to manage the excess glucose. Over time, the constant demand on the pancreas can wear it down, leading to insulin resistance, a major precursor to prediabetes.

Prediabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes. Think of it as a warning sign, a critical stage

where your body is signalling that your glucose metabolism isn't functioning as it should. This stage is often overlooked because it doesn't have obvious symptoms, but the damage to your body may already be underway.

According to an article, titled "Prediabetes Prevalence by Adverse Social Determinants of Health in Adolescents", published in *JMAPediatrics*, nearly one in three adolescents and teens has prediabetes and the rate among 12 to 19 year-olds



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANUM

doubled between 1999-2002 and 2015-2018, jumping from 12 percent to 28 percent.

Common signs of prediabetes include fatigue, unexplained weight gain, darkened skin patches (especially on areas like the neck, armpits, or elbows), blurry vision, and increased hunger. These symptoms may seem minor or easy to overlook, but they can be early signals that your body is struggling with blood sugar regulation.

Fatigue often results from

your cells not receiving enough energy due to insulin resistance. Unexplained weight gain, especially around the abdomen, is another sign, as excess glucose gets stored as fat when it's not used for energy. Darkened skin patches, a condition known as acanthosis nigricans, can appear as a direct result of insulin resistance and often serve as a visible warning sign. Blurry vision occurs when high blood sugar affects the lens of your eyes, while constant hunger is your body's cry for more energy because glucose isn't being effectively utilised.

The first step in addressing prediabetes is becoming aware of the triggers behind unhealthy habits, particularly stress-driven cravings. Understanding why you reach for comfort foods can help you interrupt the cycle and make more mindful choices. Stress is a major driver of unhealthy eating patterns, and managing it in healthy ways is essential to preventing prediabetes.

This means finding alternatives to emotional eating like taking a walk, meditating, journaling, or talking to a friend when stress strikes. Incorporating small, sustainable changes, such as opting for whole foods over processed snacks, staying active, and prioritising sleep, can significantly reduce your risk. Remember that every step toward managing stress and making healthier decisions is a step toward reversing the prediabetic stage and safeguarding your long-term health.

Ohona writes, rhymes, and studies English literature.

It is time we rethink new year's resolutions

SILWAT QUADER

The calendar has begun to collect dust on the table, along with the sticky note with our new year's resolution on it as we've passed the first month of the new year.

The practice of beginning a new year by attempting to implement changes and attain goals to help us become the best version of ourselves isn't new. After all, twelve new months that are yet to be tainted give us the potential for a new start. Despite the warm welcome to new beginnings, the days pass at a faster pace and our fervour to implement meaningful changes fades.

Resolutions have a way of making themselves big and grand, often inspiring us to take on challenges that might prove to be unattainable or unrealistic later on. With that being said, it is important to remember to aim for plausible personal goals that bring about positive changes no matter how big or small. A fresh start also does not necessarily mean remodelling your whole life; instead, it means refining what is working and letting go of what is not.

Instead of framing our resolutions as yearly goals, we could instead opt to break them into daily or weekly goals. For instance, if your goal is to hit the gym, it might be better to aim for a weekly number of days that you'd like to attend the gym than just going every day for the

first five days of the year. What this will do is give you severe muscle cramps and cause fatigue. In the process, your resolution remains unfulfilled. Dividing the task into weekly activities instead of daily ones will allow you to maintain the pace. This will not only make it more manageable, but will also give you a sense of achievement.

It is also important to remember that a fresh start cannot simply be forced into our schedules. It requires mindfulness on our part as well, and that starts with taking care of your physical and mental health. A start to the latter might begin with a shift in mindset as well as learning self-compassion. Some actionable steps might include decluttering your physical space, setting boundaries, practising mindfulness, or prioritising rest, which are all powerful ways to reset and recalibrate. This enables creating space for newer and better things to take root. Anything that creates a lasting positive impact on yourself should be considered a milestone.

The concept of a fresh start is not about perfection but about persistence. We aim to create work-life balance but fall back into the

same patterns. It is not easy to let go of old habits and learn new ones. Adapting or applying change is not a linear development. So, instead of abandoning your resolution entirely, take a moment to pause, reassess, and reflect on your progress. Give yourself the due credit and modify your goal to fit your current reality.

Regardless of the date on the calendar, the act of learning, improving, and self-growth, is a continuous process. Even though a new year, in all its glory, seems like an optimum opportunity to take on challenges and bring about changes in our lives, a fresh start is not defined by a new year or a birthday. We can aim for a clean slate on a random Monday evening, halfway through a dull ordinary month, or in the middle of a challenging day. Even when things feel overwhelming, remind yourself that it is okay to pause, reset, and start over. We do not need to abandon our goals just because we did not get it right the first time. And we definitely don't need a new year to start over.

Silwat is majoring in Economics at NSU, reach her at silwatquader@gmail.com





BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology

Excellence through Education

Nishatnagar, Turag, Dhaka 1230
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Email: info@buft.edu.bd

Congratulations GRADUATES

8 February 2025

BUFT at a Glance

Overview:

Founded in 2012, BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) evolved from the BGMEA Institute of Fashion & Technology (BIFT) to meet the growing demand for skilled professionals in Bangladesh's thriving Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector. As a key contributor to national development, BUFT supports the \$80 billion RMG export goal by 2030 through quality education in textile technology, fashion design, and business.

Academic Programs:

- Undergraduate in Apparel Merchandising & Management, Apparel Manufacturing & Technology, Business Administration, CSE, English, Environmental Science, Fashion Studies, Fashion Design & Technology, Industrial Engineering, Knitwear Engineering, Textile Engineering, and Textile Engineering & Management.
- Postgraduate in Business Administration, English, Fashion Design, and Textile Engineering.
- Diploma/Certificates: Post-Graduate Diplomas in APM, GBM, KWM, SCM, and WGM.
- Enrollment: Over 6,000 students.

Campus & Facilities:

- 8.5-acre green campus in Nishatnagar, Turag (www.buft.edu.bd).
- 500,000 sq. ft. modern infrastructure with 52 labs, AC classrooms, auditorium, seminar rooms, library, swimming pool, gym, playground, cafeteria, female hostel, Smoke-free, and politics-free environment.

Academic Excellence:

- Ph.D.-qualified faculty from renowned universities.
- 30+ global academic partnerships.
- Workshops, seminars, industry visits for practical learning.

Student Life:

- 21 active clubs and forums.
- Global participation in fashion shows, competitions, and cultural events.
- Free bus service, language labs, career development, and international scholarships.

Research & Industry Collaboration:

- Focus on sustainable textiles, garment innovation, and environmental solutions.
- Partnerships with DBL Group, BEXIMCO, Walton, and global institutions.

Global Recognition:

Member of IFFTI, Association of Commonwealth Universities, B&R World Textile University Alliance, Corporate member - The Textile Institute, UK



President

People's Republic of Bangladesh & Chancellor

Message

On the auspicious occasion of the 2nd convocation of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT), I extend my warm felicitations to the graduating students, their parents and the university authorities.

In this age of globalization, quality education is a prerequisite for the development of a society and the nation. As the apex institution for higher education, universities should equip students with knowledge, skills, and values as well as develop their creative ingenuity to help them propel toward a bright future. I hope, BUFT will undertake appropriate initiatives to ensure quality education for students, preparing them as competent and confident in facing the evolving challenges of the millennium.

I recall with gratitude the contribution and sacrifices of students from all educational institutions, including BUFT, during the July - August uprising. The courage, unity and resilience demonstrated by the students were truly commendable. I urge all to uphold the spirit of this uprising and work together to realize the vision of a knowledge-based, equitable and just society.

Convocation is a significant milestone in the lives of students. It recognizes their achievements and evaluates the performance of the university. I hope the new graduates will make the best use of their hard-earned knowledge for the welfare of the motherland and the greater world.

I wish the 2nd convocation of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology every success.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Mohammed Shahabuddin



Advisor

Ministry of Industries
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

It is my pleasure to be part of the 2nd Convocation of the BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT). I extend my warmest congratulations to the graduating students, their joyful parents, and everyone working at and associated with BUFT on this momentous occasion.

BUFT has been providing advanced study and teaching facilities in an optimal learning environment for academic and extracurricular activities. The focus of the university is on excellence through education. I am sure it will also uphold the spirit of the July uprising and instill hope and dignity in the hearts and minds of all who pass through its doors.

A university's convocation serves as a barometer of its ongoing progress and accomplishment. I believe that this convocation will significantly raise the profile of BUFT among Bangladesh's leading institutions of higher learning. The graduates of BUFT have earned the day. They are stepping into the practical world with confidence and the knowledge and skill they have earned in BUFT. They will make their Alma Mater and Bangladesh proud through their achievements and commitments to social values, respect, tolerance and professional integrity.

I wish the 2nd Convocation of BUFT a grand success.

Adilur Rahman Khan



Chairman

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

Message

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to know that BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT) is going to host the 2nd Convocation. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations and felicitations to the graduating students, their proud parents, the faculty members and management of the university. A convocation marks the achievement of goal at the culmination of the students' academic journey.

Presently, private universities are an indispensable part of tertiary education ecosystem across the globe. The highest level academic institutions established in country's private sector are making substantial contributions to infuse knowledge and skills to the graduating students who, in turn, are advancing the social and economic development of Bangladesh. I believe that BUFT has made significant progress in providing quality higher education to produce skilled graduates within a short span of time, although started functioning as a university in 2012. BUFT is specifically striving to meet the demand of the RMG sector by producing innovative researchers and skilled manpower.

I earnestly believe that the students graduated from this university will enter into professional and personal life with a sense of responsibility, patriotism, and the resolve to contribute immensely at home and abroad.

I wish the 2nd Convocation of BUFT a complete success.

Professor Dr. S.M.A. Faiz



Convocation Speaker

Message

On behalf of Youngone Corporation, I warmly congratulate BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) on its 2nd Convocation in 2025. It is an honor to attend this milestone event as the convocation speaker.

Bangladesh holds a special place in my heart, with a connection spanning over 45 years. Youngone was the first foreign investor in the RMG sector, pioneering female employment and contributing to the industry's growth, which now accounts for 81% of the country's export earnings. As the industry evolves, there's a growing need for sustainability, technological advancement, and high-value products.

Youngone has been part of the Man-Made Fiber (MMF) supply chain for over 25 years. Our new MMF Hub in the Korean EPZ, with five factories totalling 2 million sq. ft., will strengthen backward linkages and reduce import dependency. We're also committed to sustainability—developing eco-friendly zones, installing 40 MW of rooftop solar power (expanding to 60 MW), planting 2.7 million trees, and creating 32 water bodies for rainwater harvesting.

BUFT will shape Bangladesh's RMG future by nurturing skilled professionals. I invite BUFT graduates to join Youngone and enhance the global apparel market.

Congratulations and best wishes for BUFT's success.

Kihak Sung



Chairman
Board of Trustees
BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology

Message

It is a pleasure and an honor to congratulate the graduating students on the occasion of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology's (BUFT) 2nd Convocation. I am proud to be part of this long-awaited milestone, which reflects BUFT's unwavering commitment to academic excellence.

Dear graduates, as you step into the next chapter of your lives, I encourage you to apply the knowledge and skills you've gained to contribute meaningfully to our nation. I am confident that BUFT has prepared you to face future challenges with courage and competence.

I'm delighted to share that BUFT is now operating from its permanent campus in Nishatnagar, Turag, offering state-of-the-art educational and research facilities in a serene, green environment.

Congratulations to the parents, guardians, and Board of Trustees for their steadfast support, and heartfelt thanks to the Government of Bangladesh and the University Grants Commission for their continued guidance. I also extend my deep appreciation to the faculty, staff, and organizing committees whose dedication made this convocation a success.

May the Almighty Allah bless us all.

Faruque Hassan

Board of Trustees

Founder Members

- Mr. Faruque Hassan, Chairman
- Mr. Muzaffar U. Siddique
- Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam
- Mr. Tipu Munshi
- Mr. Abdus Salam Murshedy
- Mr. Md. Siddiqur Rahman
- Mr. Nasir Uddin Chowdhury
- Mr. SM Mannan
- Mr. Reaz-Bin-Mahmood

Members

- Mr. Md. Atiqul Islam
- Mr. Kutubuddin Ahmed
- Mr. Arshad Jamal (Dipu)
- Mr. Khandokar Rafiqul Islam
- Mr. Md. Moshuiul Azam (Shajal)
- Mr. Mohammed Nasir
- Mr. Salahuddin Ahmed
- Mr. Rafiqul Islam
- Mr. Md. Mahidul Islam Khan
- Mr. Md. Sajjadur Rahman Mridha
- Mr. Md. Jakir Hossain
- Mr. Abdullah Hil Rakib

Chancellor's Gold Medal Awardees



Farzana Faiza
202-008-8111
Program: MTE
CGPA: 3.99



Md. Rakibul Islam
182-106-101
Program: AMT
CGPA: 3.99



Faria Afrin
191-060-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.99



Zakia Sultana Zeba
191-092-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.99



Noor - E - Tasnim Maliha
201-033-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.99



Sumiya Rahman Tasha
191-440-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.99



Naima Afrose
192-134-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.94



Md. Fazla Alahi
192-008-121
Program: KMT
CGPA: 3.94

Chairman's Gold Medal



Md Ashikur Rahman
191-104-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.98



Shiyama Sarker Tuli
201-013-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.97



Ajoy Chandra Das
182-031-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.95



Md Iftekhar Hasan
192-010-111
Program: AMM
CGPA: 3.92



Sweed Mobine Ahmed
192-008-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.92

Vice Chancellor's Gold Medal



Homayra Mehnaz Himi
191-020-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.97



Md. Nazrul Islam
191-066-811
Program: AMT
CGPA: 3.96



Tasnim Binte Noor
201-065-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.95



Sumiya Akter Anika
191-041-501
Program: FDT
CGPA: 3.93



Nizam Uddin
182-010-401
Program: BBA
CGPA: 3.92



Md. Kamroz Zaman
182-120-101
Program: AMT
CGPA: 3.92



Hasif Mahmud Arnob
192-003-811
Program: TEM
CGPA: 3.91



Md. Ilesur Rahman
191-049-401
Program: BBA
CGPA: 3.90



Tanzina Khasru Choity
192-030-511
Program: BFS
CGPA: 3.90



Palash Bhowmik
182-019-801
Program: TE
CGPA: 3.90



Anika Ebnat Khan Avey
192-007-101
Program: AMT
CGPA: 3.90

Chief Advisor

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH



Message

I am pleased to learn that BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) is holding its 2nd convocation on 08 February 2025. On this occasion, I congratulate all the graduating students, their families, faculties, and staff.

BUFT has been playing a pivotal role in developing human resources for the Readymade Garment (RMG) Sector in Bangladesh, which is making a significant contribution to the economic development of the country.

The garment industries are the pride of the country. The efficiency of our worker brothers and sisters has impressed the world. The Interim government of Bangladesh is committed to working on removing any obstacles the industries face to grow further.

I believe that BUFT graduates, with their RMG-based education, will be able to easily face the challenges in the job market and contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. I also hope that they will exploit their utmost creativity and knowledge for bringing the dreams of the people into reality.

I wish the second convocation of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology all success.

Professor Muhammad Yunus



Advisor
Ministry of Education
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Message

I am very glad to know that BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) is celebrating the convocation day of the graduates. On this occasion, I congratulate the graduating students of BUFT.

Bangladesh's readymade garments (RMG) sector contributes significantly to the national economy by reducing poverty through growth and foreign exchange earnings, generous employment generation and socio-economic development. There is a growing demand for expert professionals and skilled manpower in this sector. To address the demand, a number of institutes and universities have been built under the authority of UGC and supervision of the Ministry of Education, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT) is one of the famous institutes among them. BUFT is committed to producing quality graduates to meet the need of the textile sector.

Convocation is a milestone for a university as it reflects the achievements of the students, teachers and founders of the university. This momentous occasion marks an end and a beginning - an opportunity to push back the boundaries and set sights on higher goals.

Education remains the driving engine for growth and social development of the country. It is believed that through education one can realize one's capabilities and make oneself a competent citizen. I hope, BUFT graduates will be able to meet global needs through their talents and will come forward to serve mankind.

I wish the convocation a grand success.

Wahiduddin Mahmud



Vice Chancellor (Acting)
BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology



Message

On the special occasion of BUFT's 2nd Convocation, we warmly congratulate all the graduates for reaching this significant milestone and stepping into the real world to apply their knowledge and skills. We are proud to have been part of your academic journey, witnessing the truth of Benjamin Franklin's words: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

Since its establishment in 2012, BUFT has been committed to providing quality education, training, and research at an affordable cost. Today, BUFT stands as a leading private university in Bangladesh with global recognition, academic collaborations, and credit transfer facilities with institutions across Asia, Europe, America, and Australia. As a member of esteemed organizations like ACU, SDC, IFFTI, AMDISA, and IAF, BUFT continues to shine through the achievements of its students and faculty in international platforms.

In this era of globalization, BUFT embraces Outcome-Based Education (OBE) to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for the 21st century, fostering their potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

I am grateful to our Honorable Chairman, Board of Trustees, distinguished members, and my esteemed colleagues for their unwavering support in organizing this convocation. I am confident that our graduates are ready to face the future with courage, confidence, and commitment to serve the nation with pride.

Congratulations, Graduates!

Prof. Dr. Engr. Ayub Nabi Khan

No. of Students Graduating During 2018-2023

Undergraduates: 2403 • Graduates: 328 • Total Graduates: 2731

COURTESY BY

TEAM

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE MORE



NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH

The competence to see and the courage to act



PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
BANGABHABAN, DHAKA

25 Magh 1431
08 February 2025

Message

On the auspicious occasion of the 2nd Convocation of the Notre Dame University Bangladesh, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating students, their parents, faculty members, and the university authorities.

Universities stand as bastions of knowledge and are essential for cultivating high-quality human capital, which is indispensable for a nation's growth and development. As the interim government is marching forward to build a progressive, inclusive and prosperous new Bangladesh, the demand for skilled and proficient individuals to meet both national and global requisites is immense. I hope that Notre Dame University Bangladesh will persistently strive for academic excellence, enabling its students to navigate and address the multifaceted challenges of the twenty-first century.

The student led mass uprising in July-August 2024 will always be remembered as a transformative milestone in the history of Bangladesh. The courage, unity, sacrifice and resilience demonstrated by the students including Notre Damians were truly commendable. I am confident that the graduates will uphold the spirit of the uprising and embrace the responsibility of realizing the vision of a knowledge based, equitable and just society.

Convocation marks a unique milestone in the lives of students, recognizing their achievements and the dedication of their alma mater. I am optimistic that the graduates would apply their acquired knowledge for the betterment and prosperity of the masses. I wish them all a bright and successful future.

I wish the 2nd Convocation of the Notre Dame University Bangladesh a grand success. May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Mohammed Shahabuddin
Ministry of Education
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Adviser
Ministry of Education
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am glad to know that Notre Dame University Bangladesh is publishing the commemorative on the occasion of its second convocation. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all concerned with publishing the commemorative.

The role of the educational institutions of Holy Cross Congregation in imparting quality education is admirable. These institutions are recognized and admired for fostering moral character by instilling values and developing leadership skills among students.

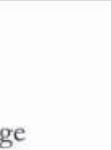
For decades, the educational institutions run by Catholic missionaries have been imparting not only academic knowledge but also the principles of human development, equality, and justice. This holistic approach to education ensures that students are equipped and inspired to contribute positively to society.

I firmly believe that in the future, Notre Dame University Bangladesh will continue to play a significant role in advancing higher education and contributing to the creation of a prosperous and progressive Bangladesh.

My best wishes go to the proud parents of the graduates, all the teachers, staff and administrators of Notre Dame University Bangladesh. May this journey, propelled by the democratic revolution of 2024, pave the way to a bright and successful future for all.

May the path ahead for Notre Dame University Bangladesh be smooth and glorious, and may its reputation continue to flourish in Bangladesh and beyond.

Wahiduddin Mahmud
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources,
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges & Ministry of Railways
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Adviser
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources,
Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges & Ministry of Railways
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

I am honored to be a part of this momentous occasion—the 2nd Convocation ceremony of Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB). This day marks the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance and dedication by the graduates. I am reminded of the incredible journey that each of you has undertaken to reach this point.

Graduates are being handed over the keys to unlock the future full of possibilities. They stand on the threshold of a world that is rapidly changing—one that is full of challenges and rich in opportunities.

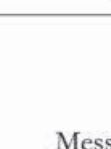
I firmly believe that NDUB has equipped the graduates with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to excel in their chosen fields and this university will continue to play a significant role in advancing their higher education and contributing to the creation of a prosperous and progressive Bangladesh.

To the faculty members of NDUB, I extend my deepest appreciation. Their dedication to nurturing young minds and fostering an environment of academic excellence will be remembered.

Special thanks to the parents and families of graduates for the sacrifice and unwavering support that have made all the differences.

This step of graduates into this world is not the end but the beginning of a new chapter. I wish all the success and fulfillment of our graduates in future endeavors.

Dr. Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan
CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION



CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Message

Dear Graduates, Administration, Faculty, and Friends,

I am pleased to offer my prayerful best wishes and congratulations to the graduates of Notre Dame University Bangladesh on the occasion of your 2025 annual Convocation. You now join hundreds of thousands of men and women who are proud graduates of other Holy Cross educational institutions around the world.

During 19th century France, when schools were based on the classical system of education, our holy Founder, Blessed Basile Moreau, saw the importance of a more holistic, value-based education integrating the fine arts and emerging sciences within a rigorous academic program, while also providing time for spiritual, social, and physical activities. This unique philosophy of "educating the hearts and minds" of students has endured almost 200 years and continues today to be a hallmark of Holy Cross education in our schools on five continents. I am delighted that Notre Dame University Bangladesh continues this fine tradition.

Occasions such as this is a time to express gratitude. I thank your teachers who have patiently and successfully brought you to this day and your families who have supported you throughout this journey. I also thank the many people who continue to support the mission and educational philosophy of Notre Dame University Bangladesh.

As you look to the future, I encourage you to seek God's guidance in your life's decisions and to uphold the Holy Cross values of building community with respect for all people so a world of love, justice, and peace will one day prevail.

May God continue to reward and bless you so that you may be an inspiration to all of those you meet. I assure you of my prayers and blessings for your continued success. I remain



Dr. R. Scott Appleby
Keough-Hesburgh Professor of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, U.S.A.

Message

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the graduates of Notre Dame University Bangladesh as you receive your diplomas on this special occasion.

You have devoted years of your lives to attain this goal and I am sure you will later look back on this experience as a time that prepared you well for the challenges ahead. But as you know, a university is not only a place of academic training and scholarly research. A university is also a community. You belong to a great family, that shares a vision of hope and bonds of friendship to help you overcome many obstacles.

As a student at NDUB, founded in the tradition of Holy Cross education, you are joining a global community that includes graduates on every continent, who have been inspired by these same ideals and values. Together you recognize that today's world needs the integration of mind and heart in its approach to conflicts and problems. We must always take into account the human dimension of every technical application.

The great advances in science that have greatly improved our lives in recent centuries have also placed upon us an inescapable responsibility. We cannot drive a car, use a computer, or run a business without recognizing that the powerful machines we depend on must be guided by our decisions.

As a graduate of NDUB, you are carrying with you the promise of remedies for a suffering world that needs repair, transformation, healing, and renewal in many ways. With the benefit of your education, you can make a difference by your choices. You are at the beginning of great possibilities for yourself, your family, your country, and a world that is waiting to welcome you. Go to meet it with courage and the confidence of an NDUB alumnus.

Dr. R. Scott Appleby
Keough-Hesburgh Professor of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, U.S.A.



With a reputation for quality education, Notre Dame is recognized both in Bangladesh and around the world. Since 1853, the Holy Cross missionaries have been working tirelessly to provide education, not for profit, but for the betterment of society. Their dedication laid the foundation for many renowned institutions, benefiting the people of Bangladesh for generations. Building on that tradition, the Holy Cross missionaries took the academic journey to its next level and there comes the first private university in the country, Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB), which envisions to achieve diligently true knowledge and wisdom for life and living, through studies in humanities, technologies, and also business, preparing the youth globally and culturally so that students can contribute effectively to humanity.

OUR VISION: Formation of mind and heart for truth and for the fullness of life and living.
OUR MISSION: To seek sincerely and achieve diligently true knowledge and wisdom for life and living, through studies in humanities and technologies, based on the local Bangladesh culture and spiritual heritage, so that the students may develop their best selves to serve their society and contribute effectively to humanity.

Values that constitute the foundation of the university and the essential elements of our teaching and learning are: Pursuit of truth, Rational thinking, Respect for human dignity, Non-violence, Social responsibility, Commitment to human development, Solidarity and justice, Peace and charity, Gender equality, Global unity, Communal harmony, Respect for creation

COLLABORATION
NDUB has a collaboration program with the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, United States of America. Each year faculty members from foreign universities conduct workshops and training programs for the faculty members and students at NDUB campus. Furthermore, NDUB and Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster academic exchange and cooperation.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
NDUB also believes in pragmatic training for the students and there NDUB presents its full-fledged running clubs at task where students explore their potentials, work on their dormant talents, learn the leadership skills and get prepared for a better future through achieving competency in career. Moreover, NDUB has its own in-door and outdoor game facilities. Annual sports competition is held every year. By participating in these games students are given the opportunities to be fit mentally and physically, learning team management, leadership, resolving instant crises, and effective communication skills.

RECENT HISTORY
The Government of Bangladesh, along with its dedicated officers and resources, has cooperated enthusiastically to accelerate the founding and growth of the university. The Governing Body of Notre Dame College donated land on the south edge of their campus, which now serves as the home of NDUB. The Principal of Notre Dame College, worked tirelessly to prepare the initial application to the University Grants Commission, while Fr. Thomas O'Hara, CSC, former President of King's College in the USA, offered valuable advice in establishing the institution and forming its Board of Trustees. Since 2013, this Board has met continually, with guidance from the Syndicate and Academic Council, to support the University leadership in upholding its founding vision and preparing for future challenges. After 11 years of teaching and learning, a dedicated faculty, committed administration, and a diverse student body have gathered on our Motijheel campus today, February 8, 2025, to celebrate the Second Convocation of Notre Dame University Bangladesh. These outstanding graduates, and those to come, are an undeniable proof of the vision's worthiness. We believe they now have "The Competence to See and the Courage to Act."

THE BEGINNINGS
Following the end of the British Raj and Pakistan's independence in 1947, the Holy Cross community extended its educational mission to support the new nation by offering intermediate college education. In November 1949, Notre Dame College opened its doors alongside St. Gregory's High School in Luxmibazar. A year later, the college moved to a nearby pharmacy building on Subhash Bose Lane, and in 1954, it shifted to the developing Motijheel area of Dhaka. Shortly thereafter, the Holy Cross Sisters established Holy Cross College for girls at Tejgaon. These institutions quickly gained a reputation for academic excellence and strong character training, reflecting founder Fr. Basil Moreau's belief that education should nurture both mind and heart. In 1954, Notre Dame College launched a small degree program initially affiliated with Dhaka University, later transitioning to National University affiliation in 1992. Over subsequent decades, growing support from friends and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Bangladesh spurred calls for a Catholic university in Dhaka. With effective advocacy by Bishop Theotonius Gomes, CSC, and leadership from Br. Bijoy Rodrigues, CSC, an exploratory taskforce was formed. In July 2012, the Holy Cross Fathers established Notre Dame University Bangladesh. Today, they continue inspiring truly outstanding educational excellence nationwide.



Message

Welcome back. A great many members of the university have worked hard to make this Convocation a celebration you will always remember. I hope you are enjoying the fruits of their efforts. You have earned it. I ask myself what it must be like for you to return to Notre Dame today. Because it has been a few years since our last Convocation, I imagine the first impression of many of you will be that much has changed since you have been away. Most noticeably, our beloved old building is gone! As someone who hasn't been at Notre Dame very long, I'm grateful that I had a chance to experience life in the old building when I first arrived. The cradle of the university, it was filled with a beautiful spirit. Despite all the crowding and inconvenience, it was clear that the students, faculty and staff cared deeply for the place, and for one another. Now that we have a beautiful new building, with air-conditioning and elbow room, we're doing our best to ensure that the old spirit takes root in the new soil.

You will notice too that some of your most beloved faculty and staff are no longer with us. For example, a lot of us are still coming to terms with loss of Fr. Tom McDermott, CSC. His wisdom, dauntless enthusiasm and profound commitment to the university and its people inspired so many. He and the others we have lost have left something beautiful behind them – a university to be proud of – a university worth loving. And you are that university. Notre Dame students in America have a favorite chant. They love to shout out together, "We are ND." It's true. They are. So are you. You are Notre Dame University Bangladesh. That has not changed. That will not change. You are young and have limitless potential. The same is true of NDUB. Our university will continue to grow and will achieve its potential as you achieve yours. Who knows, the next time you visit the campus we may all be in yet another, even bigger more beautiful building! But wherever we are, we will all still be NDUB. Meanwhile, today we recognize your achievement. Well done, and once again, welcome home.

Charles B. Gordon, CSC
Dr. Fr. Charles B. Gordon, CSC
Pro-Vice Chancellor



Message

As one of the NDUB family members, I am privileged to be a part of the Second Convocation ceremony! The best words that I want to utter for you today, are "Congratulations, Graduates of NDUB!" The Holy Cross Fathers who have been working in this part of the world since 1853, established a Catholic university in Bangladesh in 2013. The birth process of the founding of this University was tough because of many obstacles and difficulties, yet this experience was like a woman's first conception and giving birth to her first child. With the Benjamin's effective leadership and wisdom we were able to reach the far distant "promised land" on 7 December 2014; on that day that we had our first day of class with 303 new students. We forgot all our weariness to see that our graduates are finding jobs in many esteemed firms, companies and institutions.

Today I can hear the guiding voices of many Holy Cross men like Bishop Theotonius, Cardinal Patrick, Fr. Frank, Fr. Benjamin, Fr. Tom O'Hara (former Provincial, US Province), Fr. Tom McDermott, Fr. James Cruze, and many others who greatly contributed to making many important decisions and thus to implement the dream of the Holy Cross Fathers of establishing NDUB in Dhaka. The invaluable contributions of Archbishop Joseph S. Marino (former Vatican Ambassador), the Ministry of Education, the UGC, Barrister Shabiq Ahmed (former Law Minister), Prof. Dr. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Dr. Kamal Hossain, Dr. S A Samad, the Members of the Board of Trustees and the Syndicate can never be forgotten.

The goal of NDUB is to impart quality education to the students and maintain a high standard in all academic and administrative activities. And so, NDUB has chosen "formation of mind and heart for truth and for the fullness of life and living" as its vision and "the competence to see and the courage to act" as the motto. To implement these NDUB tries to teach all students a set of important values like pursuit of truth, rational thinking, respect for human dignity, non-violence, social responsibility, commitment to human development, solidarity and justice, peace and charity, gender equality, global unity, communal harmony and so on. NDUB ensures a learning environment and maintains that our students can complete all courses of studies within stipulated timeframes and affordable costs. To help them in this regard, NDUB offers various types of scholarships and waivers. This financial assistance helps many of our meritorious but underprivileged students complete their studies.

Our students get ample opportunities to practice public speaking with effective communications in the classrooms, clubs and national programs; they can develop leadership by serving as Class Representatives (CR) and club executives, enrich their hearts by taking part in 'Fullness of Life' programs in Bhadun, seminars, workshops, training programs, and the national programs. From these they develop qualities which cannot be attained from curriculum-based lessons. In 2024 many of our alumni and current students jointly collected money, prepared hundreds of bags with relief goods and went to distribute to those among the flood victims. By such charitable deeds, our students proved that they loved humanity. Thus, our graduates are becoming competent to see and courageous to act. I strongly believe, they will not fail to practice in their workplaces, families and society what they have learned at NDUB. May the Almighty be with all our graduates to let their light shine in our beloved motherland and everywhere else.

Dr. Fr. Subash Adam Pereira, CSC
Treasurer & Acting Proctor



CHIEF ADVISOR
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

25 Magh 1431
08 February 2025

Message

I am pleased to learn that the second convocation ceremony of Notre Dame University Bangladesh is set to take place. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the esteemed faculty, parents, and members of the administration for their unwavering support in guiding these students to success.

The nation has witnessed the remarkable capabilities of our students, who stand as the harbingers of social reform and catalysts for positive change. The spirit of the July-August Revolution serves as a testament to the power of educated youth and the profound impact they can have on the nation's progress.

The name of Notre Dame University Bangladesh has garnered widespread respect for its exemplary leadership in advancing quality education in Bangladesh. I trust that the institution will continue to uphold its motto—the competence to see, and the courage to act—in alignment with the spirit of the July-August Revolution.

I wish the graduating students and the university continued success in all their future endeavors.

Professor Muhammad Yunus



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

Message

I am immensely pleased that Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB) is holding its 2nd Convocation on 8 February 2025 at its permanent campus. It is, indeed, a very special day for this university because it bears testimony to the accomplishments of students, faculty members, and the management of the university. On this occasion, I take the opportunity to express my sincere congratulations and warm felicitations to the graduating students, proud parents, dedicated faculty members, and committed administration of the university.

Nowadays, private universities are an integral part of the higher education of Bangladesh and making substantial contributions to infuse knowledge and skills to the graduating students who, in turn, are playing a vital role in building their careers and promoting the economic development of the country. Since these universities are an integral part of our higher education system, quality educational facilities must be provided at an affordable cost by these universities for the benefit of our nation.

I am informed that Notre Dame University Bangladesh, since its inception, has striven for excellence in higher education through a student-centered, value-based, and service-oriented philosophy. The faculty members at NDUB are known for their competence and dedication, always ready to support students in the development of their knowledge, skills, and ethical outlook. Moreover, NDUB has established itself as a safe and respectful space for all members of its community. Its safeguarding policies prioritize the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. This holistic approach to education not only prepares graduates for excellence in their chosen fields but also equips them with the values needed for responsible citizenship in the global community.

As NDUB continues to expand its contribution to higher education, I am confident that it will play an even greater role in shaping the destiny of the nation. I hope and pray for the grand success of the 2nd Convocation of Notre Dame University Bangladesh and invite their graduates to keep scaling new heights in their personal and professional lives beyond their time at Notre Dame.

Professor Dr. S. M. A. Faiz
Chairman



Message

It is my honor and privilege to congratulate you, as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Notre Dame University Bangladesh (NDUB), on this momentous occasion of the 2nd Convocation Ceremony of our beloved university. This ceremony recognizes your remarkable academic accomplishments and celebrates our collective commitment and dedication to education, values, and service to society.

Since its establishment in 2013, Notre Dame University Bangladesh has made a tremendous and tireless effort to provide a quality education and create a conducive learning environment that facilitates the flourishing of young minds. Over the years, our university has been a beacon of hope and excellence for the youth of Bangladesh by empowering them with knowledge, skills, and strong moral foundations. This convocation marks yet another milestone in our journey. It is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and vision that we all share.

At the heart of this institution lies the Congregation of Holy Cross, which has been the driving force behind the success of our university. The Congregation has a long and illustrious history of contributing to education, not only in Bangladesh but across the globe. In Bangladesh, in the spirit of Blessed Basil Moreau, the founder of the Congregation, the Priests of the Congregation have been pioneers in value-based education and knowledge that educates both the hearts and the minds of the students.

Dear Graduates, this is your day that marks the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, and dedication to your studies and human growth. You stand here today as proud graduates of NDUB and are ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As you step out into the greater world, kindly remember the values Notre Dame University Bangladesh instilled in you. These values enable you to see and give you the courage to act in this materialistic and competitive world. The education that you have received here at NDUB is more than a degree. Rather, it is a call to action to wholeheartedly commit to the service to your families, societies, and the nation.

As graduates of an institution committed to providing excellent academic training while emphasizing moral integrity and social awareness, I encourage you to live purposeful lives and always strive for excellence. Be bold in your dreams, humble in your successes, and resilient in your challenges. Remember that true success is not measured by wealth or status, but by the positive impact you make in the lives of others.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to each faculty member and staff member of NDUB for their unwavering commitment to nurturing and educating our students. At the same time, I also congratulate and thank our proud parents and families for entrusting us with the shared responsibility of forming your sons and daughters and allowing us to witness their phenomenal achievements.

Once again, my heartfelt congratulations to the graduates. Dear students, may your journey ahead be filled with success, happiness, and fulfillment.

Thank you! God bless you all.

Fr. George K. Rozario, CSC
Chairman, NDUB Board of Trustees



Message

The second convocation at Notre Dame University Bangladesh marks a welcome occasion for celebration, for gratitude, and for reflection. While we joyfully and publicly congratulate the graduates of the past several years, we also pause, with them, to take our bearings. As they go forth with our blessings and best wishes, we share with them our apprehension as we look ahead toward an inviting but unclear future. The challenges that face them will require not only competence and courage, but strong hearts and open minds that are prepared to resist false promises and to work for change where justice, respect, and compassion are needed.

You who are receiving your certificates today have won our admiration for your dedication and hard work. As NDUB students, you learned new ways of understanding the world and you acquired practical skills that will allow you to take up professional responsibilities and pursue creative enterprises in settings that are both familiar and have yet to be explored. We urge you to set your sites on targets that not only demonstrate your ability, advance your careers and support your families, but work to help transform societal structures to improve and to enrich the lives of others.

You who are the first generation of twenty-first century stand before a global phenomenon that no one completely understands because no one is the master of all the complex units that interact to form the systems of power, production, exchange, socialization, law, media, and movement. The pace of technological innovation over the past 50 years has been stunning, but the possibilities for more in the next decades are no less extraordinary. But are we ready to absorb these marvels? For example, try asking AI (Artificial Intelligence) a question like "when humans will establish colonies in outer space." Then open a newspaper to see reports of ecological disasters, wars, economic turmoil, corruption, malpractice, political repression, and the chaos of international migration.

The proof of a successful education is not a university diploma but the integral development of a whole person. The essential work of every university graduate is not merely to reproduce what has been learned in the classroom or in the laboratory, but to adapt this knowledge in real situations where circumstances inevitably require ethical judgment and moral accountability.

Interestingly, the prestigious weekly news magazine The Economist recently named Bangladesh "the country of the year" for 2024. The editors justify this choice mainly by pointing to the results of the student led protest that brought about the "36 Days of July." You who are the students of this privileged moment in the history of this country know the high cost and the triumphant achievement of this remarkable effort. May that experience continue to inspire you, as graduates of NDUB, to strive for a world order that provides all that is best, fair, and beautiful.

Dr. Fr. Patrick Daniel Gaffney, CSC
Vice Chancellor

Rajshahi miss another payment deadline

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League franchise Durbar Rajshahi have missed another payment deadline yesterday.

A press release from the Ministry of Youth and Sports said on Monday that the owner of Durbar Rajshahi, Md Shafiq Rahman – who was picked up by law enforcement agencies on the same day for unpaid dues – had promised to clear “all dues of the team in three instalments of 25 percent each on February 3, 7 and 10.”

Rajshahi players, who had received 50 percent of their dues before February 7, did not receive the third instalment of payments yesterday, several Rajshahi players claimed.

“They didn’t give us the payment today [yesterday]. We have been told [by the team officials] that we will be paid on Tuesday,” a Rajshahi player, on request of anonymity, told The Daily Star yesterday.

It was learnt that Rajshahi requested the Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud on Thursday for a 10-day extension to clear the third instalment.

FORTUNE BARISHAL RETAIN BPL CROWN



Fortune Barishal skipper Tamim Iqbal (R) hit a brisk 54 off 29 balls and formed a 76-run opening stand with Towhid Hridoy (32 off 28 balls) to set up the base for their three-wicket win over Chittagong Kings in the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BPL 11: Chaos, drama and cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

As the dust settles on what has been a train wreck of a season of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the time for retrospection has begun.

It would be unfair to say that nothing of note has happened on the field in the 11th edition. Taskin Ahmed’s record breaking 25-wicket season, Nurul Hasan chasing down 30 runs in the final over to pull off a miracle for Rangpur Riders, and the last-ball finish in the second qualifier that saw Chittagong Kings overcome Khulna Tigers and reach the final were all memorable events.

However, after 46 matches spanning 40 days across three venues, cricket still remained as an afterthought in the country’s premier franchise competition. On-field action got pushed out of the spotlight while the many off-field shenanigans took centre stage.

Here, The Daily Star takes a look at some of the more notable incidents of the outgoing edition:

Morning shows the day

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had announced plans to introduce a full-fledged e-ticket system for the 11th edition.

However, till noon of the day before the opening contests, tickets had not been put up for sale.

Hundreds of fans had arrived at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on December 29, to purchase tickets only to see that the booths were closed and found no clear communication from the board about where and how they can buy tickets.

Some irate fans then tried to break Gate-1 of the venue and the law enforcement officers had to use force to disperse them. Later in the day, the BCB

sent a press release, detailing where fans can buy physical and online tickets and also the prices.

The Rajshahi fiasco

On January 15, Durbar Rajshahi players boycotted a scheduled training session in Chattogram, protesting unpaid wages. The Rajshahi officials managed to appease their players and convince them to train and play. But the saga did not end there.

On January 26, the overseas recruits of Rajshahi boycotted their match against Rangpur Riders, again alleging unpaid wages. Rajshahi then sought and received



a special approval from the BPL technical committee to field an all-local XI, a never before occurrence in the BPL.

The non-payment issue kept getting uglier as the days progressed as local players complained the cheques they had received bounced. Even the hotel accommodating the team and the team’s bus driver complained of non-payment.

The situation worsened to such a degree that the government had to step in, with law enforcement agencies picking up and interrogating Rajshahi owner Md. Shafiq Rahman in the early hours of January 3.

In the interrogation, the owner promised to clear all payment in three instalments by February 10. But whether he will be able to keep his promise is anyone’s guess.

‘Self satisfaction’

Chittagong Kings owner Sameer Quader Chowdhury got in hot water on January 24, after he told The Daily Star he did not pay his team’s opener Parvez Hossain Emon any portion of his payment because he was not ‘satisfied’ with the player.

This comment was panned by all and BPL governing council member secretary



Nazmul Abedeen Fahim later said that Sameer expressed his regret over the comment.

Wide, Wider, Widest

The elephant in the room in this year’s BPL were the many sketchy on-field occurrences that raised fears of fixing.

Wides missing the pitch and going to the boundary, sometimes even from spinners, giant no balls, strange bowling changes and the fact that many of these events matched what the online betting agencies had predicted, all were ominous signs.

The BCB-ACU has already singled out suspicious eight matches, flagged 10 cricketers and the BCB has formed an independent inquiry committee to aid in the investigation.

The investigations has just begun and this saga is far from reaching its conclusion.

The tree falls, but makes no sound

In an attempt to make this BPL standout, the sports ministry organised a countrywide ‘Festival of Youth’, which ran concurrently with the tournament.

Kabaddi, athletics, chess, swimming, archery and many other sporting bodies held regional and divisional age-level competitions, rallies and educational institution in all 64 districts held sports events as part of the festivities.

However, as these events were not integrated with BPL, these competitions gained very little traction. For a lack of coordination, a novel and seemingly earnest attempt did not completely succeed.

The one-match disasters

Rangpur Riders, reeling from four defeats in a row in the league phase and pitted against Khulna Tigers in the eliminator, flew in heavyweight replacements in Andre Russel, Tim David and James Vince from the IIT20 in Dubai on the morning of the match.

However, this trio collectively made just 12 runs off 25 balls as Rangpur lost the match by nine wickets.

Runs flow and crowds turn up

In a tournament where most things have gone wrong, there were two big positives. Firstly, the pitches on average were much better, allowing batters to score big and secondly, fans in the stands, who turned up in big numbers in Sylhet and Chattogram. Even in Dhaka, the attendance was better than recent editions.

Fate of women’s football in Tabith’s hands

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Tabith Awal will make a call on the report prepared by a seven-member special committee regarding the ongoing impasse over women’s football team’s camp, even though it is uncertain whether the president will declare the findings of the report today or will take more time before making it public.

BFF’s senior vice-president and head of the probe committee Imrul Hassan on Thursday night told reporters that they had forwarded the report to the president, who he said would either discuss it with the executive committee or will himself take a decision on delivering the verdict on the feud between 18 senior players and the head coach Peter Butler.

Hassan also said that discipline was the key factor in considering the recommendations made in the report while acknowledging the contribution of the players in bringing success for the nation.

The Daily Star tried to reach Tabith, also a politician and a businessman, for a comment but he did not answer the calls and the text messages.



The 18 senior players led by captain Sabina Khatun have been boycotting the national team’s training camp since Butler took over the camp on January 29 after returning from the UK. The senior players, who had a public rift with the coach during last year’s successful title defence of SAFF Women’s Championship, blamed the coach of driving a wedge among the players, of bodyshaming them and of questioning their personal lives. They also threatened to retire *en masse* if the Englishman was not removed from the job. Butler, meanwhile, has publicly announced that he would not stay in charge if the boycotting players were brought back into the camp.

The Daily Star contacted a number of members of the special committee, who interviewed 30 squad members as well as the coach before preparing the recommendation report. And the common impression from them is that a middle-ground might be reached.

A member of the special committee told The Daily Star that the BFF president will sit with both the players and the coach before making a final call on the issue.

“It’s not matter of leniency or strictness. It’s a matter of well-being of women footballers in general and of course of our women footballers. Hence I believe whatever our president will decide, will be best for football,” said Fahad Karim, a member of the committee and a BFF vice-president.

Sayed Hasan Kanon, a former national team player and member of the committee, said he believed no harsh measures will be taken for the good of women’s football.

“These girls are our national asset. They have done a lot for the country,” Kanon said. “They may have done something wrong and breached discipline which they shouldn’t have. But we are considerate about them. We don’t want the careers of these girls spoil.”

With both parties seemingly rigid in their stance and with two important international matches lined up later this month, this is the first real challenge for Tabith as the president of the federation. And only a sensible and accommodating approach from him might help him and the country’s football overcome the challenge.

Hurting Talha ‘living the dream’ of forging fast bowlers

A dramatic last-ball boundary shattered Khulna Tigers’ Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) campaign to a heartbreaking end on Thursday. Yet, head coach Talha Jubair deserves credit for guiding a team lacking star power to the penultimate hurdle, marking another chapter in the former national pacer’s coaching journey. The 39-year-old spoke to **The Daily Star’s Samsul Arefin Khan** about why he prefers being a bowling coach, the evolution of Bangladesh’s pace bowling and more. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

The Daily Star (DS): It must be difficult to get over such a heartbreaking defeat to Chittagong Kings.

Talha Jubair (TJ): What I felt was that we were kind of relaxed after Chittagong lost a couple of quick wickets. Jason Holder then conceded a six and a four in the 18th over. If we had 30 runs to defend in the last over, we could have bowled the 19th over with Musfik [Hasan] and kept the last over for Hasan [Mahmud]. But when it required only 21 runs, [Mehedi] Miraz didn’t take that risk... I’m not blaming anyone. The way our players played in the tournament, I’m so proud of them.

DS: At one stage, it looked like you guys wouldn’t be able to make the playoffs. Then you won back-to-back matches to reach the knockouts and also beat Rangpur Riders in the Eliminator. What was the team’s mindset during

that phase?

TJ: Actually, we never thought of losing the game against Rangpur. The way we batted, especially [Mohammad] Naim, was absolutely awesome. In the Eliminator, if I told you that we planned to beat Rangpur in a similar way, I would be lying. When I heard that Sunil [Narine] didn’t come and Itikhar [Ahmed] wasn’t playing, I became confident but the way we beat them, I couldn’t even have imagined.

DS: Can you describe your coaching journey so far?

TJ: I couldn’t lengthen my career as it should have gone. That disappointment will remain until my death. So my main purpose right now is to help produce more pace bowlers for Bangladesh.

My wife has sacrificed a lot to help me take up coaching as a profession. Khaled Mahmud Sujon bhai gave me a big break by allowing me to work with Dhaka Dynamites when I had just come into coaching. I also worked for Abahani in the same year as a bowling coach. Then Sujon bhai made me the head coach of Shinepukur Cricket Club for the next season. I also worked as the head coach of Dhaka Metro. Then I got U-19 responsibilities. I feel so proud that I’m living my dream of working with the pacers.

If anyone proposes that I become a head coach and another offers me the role of bowling coach, I may choose the second option. I prefer being a bowling coach because I own that place.

DS: Has your disappointment from your playing days subdued to some extent now that you’re in coaching?

TJ: To be honest, it has reduced quite a bit. But when players like Nahid [Rana], Ripon [Mondol], Ashikur Zaman, Musfik, Shoriful [Islam], Khaled [Ahmed], and even Taskin [Ahmed] play really well, I feel so proud. The more pace bowlers I produce, the more my disappointment will reduce gradually.

DS: What are the differences you see in current pacers compared to your generation or before?

TJ: I think currently, players face pressure situations more than at any other time, and that improves their game sense. That’s why they think about the game so much, because they know that without work ethic and hard work, they can’t reach the next level.



Australia wicket-keeper Alex Carey celebrates with Steve Smith after scoring a century during Day 2 of the second Test against Sri Lanka in Galle yesterday. Carey remained unbeaten on 139 at stumps and had Smith not out on 120 at the other end as Australia finished the day at 330-3, leading by 73 runs.

PHOTO: AFP

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SHAH CEMENT

Govt will move soon to ban Awami League Says Asif Mahmud

BSS, Dhaka

The interim government will soon take steps to ban the Awami League as a political party, Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain said yesterday.

"First of all, it is very positive that political parties have reached a 'consensus' on banning the Awami League," he stated in an interview with BSS, marking six months of the interim government.



Asif Mahmud, who also serves as the adviser to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, said the people of the country rejected the undemocratic and monopolistic rule of the Awami League. "This is why political parties are now reaching a consensus on banning the party," he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Jubilant scenes as Fortune Barishal players celebrate their back-to-back Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) triumph with family members and coaching staff, posing with the coveted trophy after a thrilling three-wicket victory over Chittagong Kings in the final of the tournament's 11th edition at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Barishal retain BPL title with thrilling win

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It went right down to the last over in the end but Rishad Hossain held his nerve as Fortune Barishal retained the BPL crown with a three-wicket win against Chittagong Kings in the final of the 11th edition at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

This BPL was one of the most controversial in recent memory, with player payment issues and match-fixing concerns making headlines. Yet, for all the controversies, the cricket on the field was able to lift the big crowds during the BPL. The final, too, was played in electric atmosphere with the gallery filled to the rafters and the game certainly lived up to expectations as Barishal chased down Chittagong's 194.

Tamim Iqbal provided the impetus for the chase with a blistering 29-ball 54 but Shoriful Islam turned the game around in two instances with a four-wicket haul. Parvez Hossain Emon's 78 had earlier appeared to give Chittagong the upper hand. Then Kyle Mayers played another

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Renaming education cadre proposed

Reform commission suggests forming an autonomous body to oversee recruitment

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The Public Administration Reform Commission has proposed the creation of a separate body for recruitment tests to appoint education cadre officers.

The reform commission also recommends changing the name of the cadre to "Bangladesh Education Service" with "Education Service Commission" for the recruitment tests.

Basically, the report suggests renaming the entire Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) cadre system by replacing the word "cadre" with "service" for a "better reflection of their characteristics".

Currently, education cadre officers are appointed through BCS exams held by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

For educational administration, the reform commission recommends separating the Secondary Education Division from the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to create a dedicated "Directorate of Secondary Education".

In its report submitted to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on Wednesday, the commission also recommends forming a "Directorate of College Education" and upgrading the director general's position to Grade 1 to enhance efficiency.

The report further proposes the abolition of the dual governance system in higher education at the college level,

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create "Directorate of Secondary Education", "Directorate of College Education"
- Form edn secy-led panel to oversee honours courses at colleges
- Limit private college honours courses
- Affiliate colleges with universities in respective region

advocating for better coordination. A committee led by the education secretary should oversee the implementation of honours programmes. The launch of these courses in private colleges should be limited to maintain academic standards.

To improve the quality of education, the commission proposes that

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

HASINA'S SPEECH India has 'no role to play'

Delhi summons Bangladesh envoy, says she made the remarks in her own capacity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India summoned Bangladesh's envoy in New Delhi yesterday after Dhaka lodged a formal protest over ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's remarks.

Comments attributed to Hasina were "made in her individual capacity in which India has no role to play", India's external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in response to media queries at a briefing.

"Conflating this with the Government of India's position is not going to help add positivity to bilateral relations," he added. Md Nural Islam, the Bangladesh acting high commissioner in New Delhi, went to the South Block office of the ministry at 5:00pm.

The summons came a day after India's acting high commissioner in Dhaka was summoned by the Bangladesh foreign ministry to lodge a formal protest over Hasina's "fabricated and provocative" comments in a speech on Facebook Live two days ago.

Jaiswal said Nural was told that India "desires a positive, constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh, which has been reiterated several times in recent high-level meetings."

"It is, however, regrettable that regular statements made by Bangladesh authorities continue to portray India negatively, holding us responsible for internal governance issues. These statements by Bangladesh are in fact

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Saudis can create a Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia

Suggests Israeli PM after Trump floats Gaza takeover plan

AGENCIES

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Saudi Arabia had enough land to provide the Palestinians with a state.

"The Saudis can create a Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia; they have a lot of land over there," he said in a Channel 14 interview on Thursday.

When questioned about a Palestinian state as a condition of normalisation, Netanyahu said he "would not make an agreement that would endanger the State of Israel."

However, shortly after the press conference, the Saudi foreign ministry said it would not discuss ties with Israel without the establishment of a Palestinian state, reports The Jerusalem Post.

Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) urged the international community and "all donors" Thursday to help feed millions of Gaza civilians and rebuild the war-ravaged area.

The UN agency said it had provided more than 15,000 tonnes of food since a fragile January 19 ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas, feeding more than 525,000 people, but that much more needed to be done, reports AFP.

"We call on the international community and all donors to continue supporting WFP's life saving assistance at this pivotal moment," said Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau following a visit.

"The scale of the needs is enormous and progress must be maintained. The ceasefire must hold," he said in a statement.

- WFP calls for urgent action to rebuild Gaza
- Egypt says Israeli support for Trump's plan 'weakens' talks on ceasefire
- WFP urges int'l community to help feed millions in Gaza

Swedchhasebak Dal leader shot dead in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Swedchhasebak Dal leader was shot dead in front of his business establishment at Fatullah in Narayanganj early morning yesterday.

The victim, Mamun Hossain, 40, was the son of late Saman Ali and a joint convener of the Fatullah unit of BNP's volunteer wing.

He ran a construction material business in Purba Lalpur, where the incident took place around 4:30am, said Shariful Islam, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Model Police Station.

Mamun's elder brother Amjad Hossain said someone called Mamun out just after he had returned home and gone to sleep late on Thursday night. The family did not know who the caller was.

"Azad, a worker who sleeps inside Mamun's business establishment, heard the gunshots and came out to find Mamun lying motionless in a pool of blood," the brother said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



AMAR EKUSHEY-8

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.

Dr Muhammad Shahidullah's role in Language Movement

AHMAD ISTIAK

When the Language Movement started to create a huge stir across the country in 1948, the Government Azizul Haque College and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Children flip through colourful books at a stall of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan during Shishu Prohor yesterday. The book fair authorities arrange this special event dedicated to children from 11:00am to 1:00pm every Friday and Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Oxford scientists achieve teleportation with quantum supercomputer

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

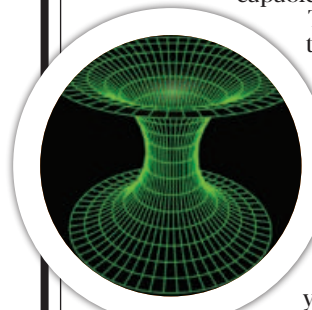
A major milestone in quantum computing has been achieved after researchers at the University of Oxford built a scalable quantum supercomputer capable of quantum teleportation.

The breakthrough centres on the so-called scalability problem of quantum computing, with the researchers claiming it will allow the next-generation technology to be realised on an industry-disrupting level.

The field of quantum computing has been around for decades, but only in recent years have significant advances been made towards realising them on a practical scale.

Utilising the properties of quantum physics, these next-generation machines replace traditional bits – the 'ones' and 'zeros' used to store and transfer digital information – with quantum bits (qubits), which can act as a one and a zero at the same time through a phenomena known as superposition.

This give quantum computer the potential to be orders of magnitude more powerful than today's state-of-the-art supercomputers that use conventional computing technology.



The 'Kingdom of Stones' ON SANGU BANKS



of about 150 families where the Marma community predominates, along with Khumi, Mro, and Tripura communities. The village head, Kraning Aung Marma, notes the establishment of a local market, Thindu Bazaar, bringing together the cultures that flourish in this area.

To further delve into the legends surrounding the Kingdom of Stones, one must listen to the wisdom of the village's eldest resident, Ngamong Marma, who at 82 years old embodies the history of the place. "I was born in this village. My mother, father, and all my ancestors have lived here," he says.

Reflecting on the changes that time has wrought, Ngamong shares, "Now the water of the Sangu has diminished significantly. Engine-powered boats operate on the river, making travel much easier for people. In our time, we could not travel by any boat on the river. There was so much water and current that walking was the safest option."

Ngamong recounts the perilous nature of the area known as Asang Bongdow kyaklung, where many lives have been lost due to the river's treachery. "It is said that if anyone transports trees, bamboo, or any crops produced from the hills without worshipping or paying respect to Bongdow they will inevitably fall into some trouble," he warns.

True to his words, these correspondents saw a family of five praying in front of a stone.

The eldest of the group, 69-year-old Hla Yoi Ching Marma, said, "Since childhood, we have heard from our ancestors that this stone possesses an invisible power and spiritual qualities. It was not easy to come here, but we are glad that we did it."

As the sun sets over the Sangu, painting the sky in hues of gold and crimson, the Kingdom of Stones stands resolute. This magical place is a sanctuary where nature, culture, and legend intertwine, inviting all who seek to uncover its secrets. Each visit deepens the allure of the Sangu, where the whispers of the past echo in the rustling leaves and the flowing water, beckoning the curious to return time and again, to listen, to wonder, and to revel in the enchantment of the Kingdom of Stones.

The allure of the Sangu lies not only in its serene beauty but in the narratives woven around the stones that grace its banks. As you approach the stony kingdom, you are greeted by two immense boulders that rise majestically from the riverbank. Locals affectionately call them Raja and Rani — king and queen.

MONG SING HAI MARMA and HASAN MEER

The Sangu river, winding through the hilly district of Bandarban, is an embodiment of nature's beauty, its crystal-clear waters flowing serenely past steep hills and lush greenery. Yet, as one meanders along its banks, a spectacle emerges: an array of stones that captivates the imagination and whispers tales of magic and mystery.

Locals refer to this enchanting realm as the "Kingdom of Stones", a place where granite giants stand sentinel over the flowing waters, embodying characters from ancient myths and legends.

Is it a royal tale, they wonder, or a miracle born from the depths of a natural disaster? Many questions linger in the air, fueling the curiosity of those who venture to this extraordinary locale.

MAJESTIC GUARDIANS

The allure of the Sangu lies not only in its serene beauty but in the narratives woven around the stones that grace its banks. As you approach the stony kingdom, you are greeted by two immense boulders that rise majestically from the riverbank. Locals affectionately call them Raja and Rani — king and queen. They stand like guardians, casting a protective shade over the river, while the current flows past their stony forms. Around them, the stone effigies of generals, soldiers, and washers are scattered, each imbued with a life of its own.

"Upon entering this stony kingdom, a shiver runs through your heart, and it feels as though you have become part of a story of nature," says a local villager, capturing the enchantment that envelops all who set foot in this realm.

As the river bends and curves, the whisper of the water beckons, and tales of the stones come alive. The general, whose stone form commands respect, is said to be the protector of the river and its surrounding lands. Those who wander near the shallow waters can

hear the echoes of everyday life told through the washer stone, a testament to the daily rituals of the villagers. Here, the stones seem to transcend mere inanimate objects; they are living testaments to the artistry of nature itself.

Nestled in a quiet corner of the river, one finds the Cook's Stone, resembling a busy chef preparing a meal by the riverside. According to the locals, this stone embodies the spirit of a food-loving cook, forever engaged in the culinary delights of the kingdom. Nearby stands the Pitcher Stone, formed into the shape of eleven pitchers, believed to be the king's water vessel. The legends tell of a fisherman who ventured deep into the Sangu, only to witness the sky darken ominously, and the waters began to rage. As he gazed into the tumultuous depths, he beheld the ghostly outlines of brass pitchers emerging from the water.

Some believe these pitchers are the cursed possessions of a princess, thrown into the river to shield them from greedy hands, locals recount. Over time, these vessels transformed into stones, remnants of a forgotten civilisation hidden among the hills.

Today, the pitcher stones continue to mesmerise visitors, their reflections shimmering in the clear waters of the Sangu.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, LOCAL LIFE
The Thindu area, where this magical kingdom resides, is not only renowned for its stones but also for the vibrant lifestyle of its indigenous people. The relationship between the villagers and the Sangu is profound, intertwining their lives and traditions.

Visiting the Kingdom of Stones is more than just a journey; it is an experience that ignites the spirit of adventure and wonder. Raja Pathor is nestled upstream along the Sangu. Begin by hiring a "Chander Gari (locally improvised vehicle)" or catching a bus from Bandarban Sadar to Thanchi Bazar, then enlist the help of a local guide and board a rented boat at the

market ghat.

Alternatively, you can reach the Raja Pathor area by renting a motorcycle or Chander Gari from Alikadam, traversing through Thanchi Bazar.

As you glide along the flowing river, listening to its gentle gurgling and surrounded by the stunning hills that rise on either side, your destination will come into view in approximately one to one and a half hours.

For those who love nature, it is an unforgettable destination that transports you to a realm where the ordinary becomes extraordinary. "One feels as if they have entered a kingdom where nature tells its own stories," says Zia Rajib, a tourist.

The historical significance of the Sangu adds another layer to this enchanting tale. An academic and researcher, Mongkya Shoo Nu (Navi), highlights the roots of the stones in the Marma language, explaining that Bongdow Kyaklung refers to the "head scarf" of the stone, a term that has evolved over time. Recently, nature enthusiasts have translated this into Bangla, adopting the name Raja Pathor, or King Stone, which has gained popularity among visitors.

Delving into the prehistoric past, Mongkyaw Shoo Nu references an earthquake that struck on April 2, 1762, measuring between 8.5 and 8.8 on the Richter scale. The earthquake devastated the northern part of the then Arakan Kingdom and the southern regions of the Indian subcontinent, causing landslides that formed the kingdom of stones we see today. "The earthquake created this magnificent landscape," he says.

For the villagers living alongside the Sangu, these stones are not merely formations of rock; they embody a sense of miraculous power. "Those who earn their living from the Sangu must worship or pray before passing through this stone area," shares Umangching Marma, 35, who has been navigating boats here for over a decade.

Near Raja Pathor lies Thindu Para, a village



PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA





ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

The heart remains a stone that does not skip through water

In these 14-and-half months away from home, he has held his breath without pause. And maybe he keeps going from one place to another to find parts of his heart he has lost in the process of trading his heroes for ghosts.

A.M. FAHAD

You tell me stories of the sea—of its waves, of how it speaks to you in a language only you can understand—whenever you write back to me. You're a funny man. It seems you've developed a fondness for soft-shell crabs and Loitta fries. We miss you. Ma's thyroid condition has worsened. We will go see Dr. Titu Mia next weekend. Everything else is okay. I hope you get to come back soon. Your son is growing into quite a rebel. He's just like you. Please eat well. I will be waiting for your reply.

Ayman reads the last bit of the letter again and folds it with a sigh. He gazes intently at the sunset. It's been almost 14-and-a-half months since he left home. As an independent journalist, he has traveled to many countries, seen many wars, and swallowed many of his emotions in the process of reporting and writing.

"It will keep the love intact! You won't forget that you are stuck with me when the parchment reaches your hands, Mr Journalist," Rity smiled as she folded his clothes 14-and-a-half months ago. She was talking about letters. She was always rather fond of letters because telephones are expensive.

Ayman was never ambitious about his work, but he never actively went against the idea of it. What he wanted to pursue, he felt—the feeling—had died by the time he grew up. He was nothing more or less than a doe-eyed child who grew bitter as he tasted the spoils of life. As bitter as the chalta fruit his father used to bring home, the scent of tobacco on his clothes, and the longing he felt for his approval of his little poems, left only with the memories of the hot anger and disappointment in his gaze. As he grew older, he found himself becoming more reserved about anything and everything the whole world had to offer him, except his now wife, whom he met during his time in university—the bicycle rides, the packageable picnics under mango groves, the dispensable dreams they would conjure under the soft shade of spring. And as most sons do, he loved his mother. 'Sabr' is Ma's favorite word. "You will see the world. You will travel to beautiful places and forget about this place. Have Sabr.

This will all be over when you're old enough. You're not old enough to take responsibility. And we could not survive without your father. Have Sabr. You're an impulsive child. Don't speak against your father if he says or does something. I have spent 26 years living this life. I have grown used to it. Have Sabr. It's not the end. Have Sabr, because the Almighty has plans for everyone. Have Sabr, my love, because it's only the end when you allow it to be the end," his mother said to him in a locked room on a cool and breezy day, with his back still red from the backhands of Abba's belt.

"Altaf bhai, my son will make the most beautiful cities," announced his father when he was old enough to remember the conviction in his father's gaze, but he didn't have any intention of building cities. He disliked cities, swarmed by people, cesspools of vice. Growing up in Chittagong, his heart belonged to the mountains and the seas, but living so close to the scent of despair disillusioned you of the veils of beauty. After traveling an hour from Khagrachari, he could see the camps and checkpoints on the way to Sajek. As a teenager, he was fascinated by armed personnel gracefully flinging their weapons and making sure everything was okay. But the matter of things being okay or not was a matter that would be decided by some higher presence that eluded the human eye here. Were they protecting him, or were they protecting themselves from something terrible? But what is a more terrible thing for the gulp in someone's throat than the truth?

His father served in the military. He enjoyed imposing authority, to which Ayman slowly exercised more and more defiance. He struggled to come to terms with the norms of discourse in his house. A place that turned all his propositions and questions to disrespect, a disrespect he struggled to understand, a term he was labeled that would slowly break all his patience. And it did, eventually, break all the Sabr his mother was piecing together bit by bit. It happened on a warm summer morning. It was fast. It was loud. Words and fists flew everywhere. When the dust settled, he was still only a "beyadob"; but this time, he had his mother's hand in his and a small bag of

his precious things with him. He walked out of the door years ago, and he never went back. His father has a weak heart now, and Ayman sends him his expenses every month in a parchment, though he has no need for it; it is devoid of any semblance of love.

He folds Rity's letter and gets up on his feet, walks 10 paces to find a clean and smooth rock to sit on, and he holds his face with trembling hands. Maybe he has turned into the opposite of what anyone had aspirations for. Maybe the world is a terrible place.

If there is beauty to be found in the world, he does not know of it yet. In 12th grade, he came across an excerpt by Ocean Vuong during one of his long escapades, "Let no one mistake us for the fruit of violence—but that violence, having passed through the fruit, failed to spoil it." He fancied himself the survivor, the hard seed buried deep inside the fruit, obstinate in his defenses against the corrosion that surrounded his soft skin, attempting to spoil his insides. Maybe he got it all wrong, or maybe he got it right. Only his reflection in the water now can tell what he is.

In these 14-and-half months away from home, he has held his breath without pause. And maybe he keeps going from one place to another to find parts of his heart he has lost in the process of trading his heroes for ghosts. And maybe he should breathe, for if he does not breathe to live another day, there will be another story buried under the rubble of chaos and destruction, hoping the rest coalesces into a form of existence that one can tolerate, if not love—an acceptable way of living, he thinks. And so, he tosses a rock into the sea and gets up from the one he had been sitting on, Rity's letter still folded in his hand. He must go back to his hotel and pack his bags. He must also buy a one-way plane fare now if he hopes to catch the last plane home; home, where his heart still remains.

A.M. Fahad wants to become a more prolific poet and writer. He is based in Dhaka, and he loves creating stories out of the mundane. Send him tips at amfahad1747@gmail.com so that he can stop falling into slumps every other week.

POETRY

I'M BUT A BUTTERFLY

AYESHA ABSARY AFIFA

I'm but a butterfly, not a bird;
Why do I want to soar high?
Every time I see an eagle piercing the sky,
I find longing in my eyes
When they fly, their leathers dazzle
They dive from a higher space,
Float as carefree as bubbles!
And I stare at them being amazed
Dream to fly the flights, ready to show my feathers!
But then I wake up; finding myself down here
I can't reach them, neither I have feathers
I have scales all over my body, my wings are fragile
How can I fly high? How come I dream?
But I've dreamt for a long while, none woke me up
Now that I yearn to fly, here they come.
Dragonfly says, "Butterfly or bird, does that matter?"
May fly says, "Why bother? Live the days as you are
But I still love the sky, want to leave the grassland
Lady bug mocks me, grasshopper sighs
Sometimes I think it's better to be a butterfly
Rather than being a spider or a caterpillar
They don't even have wings, they don't dream
But then again I hear a butterfly turned into a bird
I feel the urge again, that urge!
Winter passes, spring's here
I still fly from one flower to another
I fly all day, in a loop, can't leave the prairie
I'm but a butterfly, not a bird
Why do I want to soar high?"

Ayesha Absary Afifa is a student of Microbiology at Jagannath University.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

THE STRANGER

SHIBLEE SHAHED

In an obscure restaurant in an anonymous suburb
During my midday meal,
A cloaked stranger will suddenly arrive and say,
"My name is Death. I have come to take you with me."
I will call the waiter again, urging him to hurry,
Then turn to the stranger and say—
"Why the rush? Have a seat.
I just read an Irish joke. Let me tell you."
I will tell him the joke.
Hearing it, he will burst into laughter.
And he will keep on laughing.
I will pay the bill and leave.
Even from outside, his laughter will be heard.
Then suddenly—
As if severed from the midday bustle—



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

The sound will vanish.
I will see three feline figures surrounding me
Chasing me into the day's farthest abyss
Running, and running—
At the crossroads, I will find André Breton
Now, a police inspector,
Bent over tying his shoelaces.
Gasping for breath, I will utter—
"Mr. Breton,
I have killed Death with my joke.
Arrest me."

Dr Shiblee Shahed is a public health specialist, essayist, poet, and translator. His debut poetry collection was published in 2013 by Shuddhashar Publications. His poems and articles have appeared in numerous national and international outlets. He is a regular contributor to The Daily Star, The Business Standard, and The Daily Observer.

THIS IS NOT A LOVE STORY

WRITE AN ANTI-LOVE STORY/POEM WITHIN 500 WORDS.

EMAIL YOUR WORK TO US AT DSLITEDITOR@GMAIL.COM AS A .DOC OR .DOCX FILE BY FEBRUARY 15, 2025.

The rise of Rizu

The name Polash seems to have an uncanny connection with Rizvi Rizu, as he has portrayed characters with this name in both 'Priyo Maloti' and 'Feu'.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

"If you ask me to perform an action scene, I'll do it; if you want romance, I'll do it. I'll even portray a sweeper if the role demands it. I'm willing to take on any challenge, depending on the director's vision," stated the emerging talent Rizvi Rizu. The young actor has been winning over audiences with his diverse range of characters — from playing the lovable Parkes in *Hawa*, to a devoted husband in *Priyo Maloti*, the fierce Kaiser in the *Waqf* episode of *Dui Shaw*, and a courageous, down-to-earth refugee in *Feu*. With each new role, he continues to push his limits, showing no signs of slowing down.

In an interview with The Daily Star, the actor opened up about his love for acting, the challenges he has faced, and much more.

While working as an assistant director, Rizvi Rizu caught the attention of Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, who cast him as the lively Parkes. The character instantly resonated with audiences, marking a turning point in Rizvi's career as he discovered his passion for acting.

With no theatre background, he fully immerses himself in his roles. "Letting go of Parkes was one of the hardest things I've ever done," he admitted. "I transformed everything — my appearance, body language, even my hair — to become him. My friends were scared of the person I had become, but the love I received for that character made it all worthwhile."

However, the showbiz industry is notorious for typecasting, when asked if he fears being offered supporting roles,

the actor replied, "I never felt like I was playing a supporting role — every character I've portrayed has felt like a main one. I have no problem playing a lead or a supporting role that adds depth to the story. As long as the character is versatile, I'm happy. Being born and raised in a village doesn't limit me to playing a village boy — I can just as easily be a tea stall owner, a chairman, or even an MP, as long as the role challenges me as an artist."

The name Polash seems to have an uncanny connection with Rizvi Rizu, as he has portrayed characters with this name in both *Priyo Maloti* and *Feu*. Interestingly, both versions of Polash share a similarity — they are grounded, kind-hearted, and devoted husbands. In *Priyo Maloti* he was allowed him to showcase a softer, more nurturing character. "Polash's

death scene in *Priyo Maloti* was particularly challenging for me, because of the emotional depth and the mental strain I had to face while wearing prosthetic makeup," he reflected.

During the death scene, Rizvi had to wear the prosthetic makeup for 22-23 hours which was an insane amount of time. "All credit goes to my prosthetic artiste, Sworna Bhoumick," he shared. The makeup process began at 3am and wasn't completed until 8am the next day. After filming, it was finally removed at around 1:30am.

The biggest challenge was eating — he could only consume liquids through a small hole in the prosthetic. To eat some solid food, the team had to trim the upper part slightly. "The extreme heat and humidity caused sweating and itching, but I didn't want to remove the prosthetic makeup, as it would have taken hours to redo and delayed the production," he explained.

In the process of getting into his character's skin Rizvi Rizu often pushes himself to the limit, even to a point of injury. "In *Feu*, I had a fight scene where I had to run at full speed through a forest, and the sharp leaves pierced my feet. In *Waqf*, I severely injured my thumb while holding a saw incorrectly. My thumb was on the body of the saw, and when I switched it on, it started moving and tore into my skin. I suffered for 15-20 days, and everyone was terrified," he recalled.

When asked if screen space matters, Rizvi Rizu replied, "I don't worry about it — if I'm on screen for one minute, that minute should leave a lasting impression. If people make a meme of my dialogue, I'd welcome it as a reflection of my acting skills."



PHOTOS: ZIAUDDIN SHIPLU

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Apple Cider Vinegar



Apple TV+
Love You to Death



HBO Max
The White Lotus



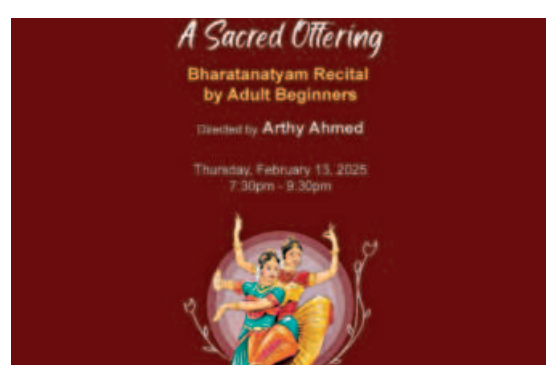
Amazon Prime
Newtopia



Chorki
Priyo Maloti



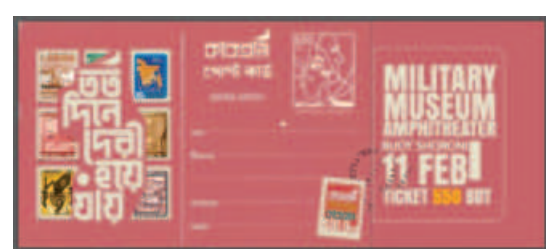
OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Play: 'Pakhider Bidhansobha'
February 7-10 | 7:30pm onwards
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Kaaktaal's 'Totodine Deri Hoya Jay'
February 11 | 5:45pm - 8:45pm
Bangladesh Military Museum



Dance Recital 'Arpanam'
February 13 | 7:30pm - 9:30pm
Satori Academy of Arts

'Not Like Us' by KENDRICK LAMAR

Kendrick Lamar's *Not Like Us*, which recently swept five Grammys during this year's event, is a fierce and unapologetic statement, packed with sharp lyrics and relentless beats.

The track is a West Coast hip-hop piece with strong hyphy influences. Produced by Mustard, it features samples from Monk Higgins's 1968 rendition of *I Believe to My Soul*, incorporating violins, piano, and brass instruments to create an urgent atmosphere.

Not Like Us has been described as a cultural touchstone and one of the most significant diss tracks in recent memory. It has sparked discussions about race, cultural appropriation, and authenticity in hip-hop. Some critics view the song as a critique of individuals who have shifted hip-hop away from its roots in Black and Brown communities. The track has also been interpreted as a rallying cry against cultural exploitation within the music industry.

Lamar employs a distinctive tempo throughout



the song, adding a unique vocal texture to the composition. The artist's confident flow and razor-sharp wordplay make the track both personal and commanding.

1-MINUTE REVIEW

'Moana 2': A delightful sequel that expands its predecessor's legacy

Moana 2, the sequel to the 2016 superhit Disney movie *Moana*, finally arrived last year as an answer to the anticipation of many. This follow-up, though it has shortcomings, panned out to be a delightful expansion, honouring the legacy of its predecessor.

Set three years after the first film the story explores how Moana's newfound fame impacts her. As the newly appointed master wayfinder, she is entrusted by her people to confront a looming threat. The plot is both complex and straightforward —



on one hand, it involves uniting an island chain and battling an unseen supervillain; on the other, the main

characters are clear about their roles and expectations.

While Moana (voiced by Auli'i Cravalho) assembles a new team alongside her loyal sidekicks (also known as Maui's "boat snacks"), her best friend, the magic hook-wielding demigod Maui, is held captive by a strange sea creature.

Even though the sequel was not meant to take place, the final scene in *Moana 2* serves as an ambitious lead-in for a potential third chapter. It is like a clever, promising, and well-crafted preview for the next film.

STYLE STATEMENT

Sabrina Carpenter

The *Espresso* singer Sabrina Carpenter turned heads at the 2025 Grammys on February 3, not only with her stunning look but also by securing two Grammy wins.

She appeared on the red carpet of one of the most glamorous and prestigious music awards in a baby blue halter gown with a peplum and a floor-length skirt hem adorned with plumes.

The stunning design, crafted by Jonathan Anderson (from the brand JW Anderson), dipped low to her rear, embellished with a string of 19 carats of diamonds. For accessories, she opted for pear-shaped diamond earrings and an oval brilliant diamond ring.

Carpenter embraced her signature blush-toned makeup, paired with minimal eye makeup and a rosy nude lipstick, while her blonde updo as a vintage French twist completed the flawless, polished look from head to toe.





PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



FROM PIYAJU TO PIZZA

Dhaka's street food business takes a delicious journey

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA and LUTHEA ARA TINA

Roughly two decades ago, Dhaka's street food scene was all about simplicity: crispy piyajus and singaras, deep-fried puris, or spicy jhal muri. Depending on the season, you would also find a variety of pithas – comforting, traditional and closely tied to local flavours.

Back then, your elder brother or sister might have enjoyed a plate of chotpoti after school, but the idea of grabbing a cheesy pizza, a spicy plate of momos, or a juicy burger from a roadside cart would have seemed almost laughable. Because street food was then about what was familiar, what felt like home.

Fast forward to today, and Dhaka's streets tell a completely different story.

Over the past 20 years, hundreds of restaurants and thousands of roadside food carts have sprawled across the city. Now, you will find food carts in almost every alley – run by young, educated and somewhat ambitious entrepreneurs who are reshaping the city's culinary landscape.

These vendors are not just selling food – they are bringing global flavours to the streets, served with a side of innovation and affordability.

"Gen Z is not about impressing people by dining at fancy restaurants and spending a fortune," says Tasfia Sultana, 29, who dishes out unique creations like "Kebab-e-Burger" from her cart, "Grills on the Wheel".

"Restaurants come with all these extra costs – service charges, VAT and whatnot. But we are here offering the same flavours at a fraction of the price, making it something everyone can enjoy."

These carts have become go-to spots for foodies, offering everything from Indian dosa, Nepalese momos, Pakistani chaap, and Turkish kebab, to Belgian-origin waffles.

After sunset, local residents, young professionals, students and friends gather at these carts, often with minimal seating arrangements. They share food, chitchat, laugh and sometimes sing along to popular band songs under the open night sky – "Cholo bodle jai..."

Interestingly, you still find old favourites like singara, puri and chotpoti, now sharing space with the newfound culinary offerings to Dhakaites.

THE RECIPE FOR CHANGE

So, what changed the food landscape of Dhaka in the past 20 years? The answer is simple: the internet.

As internet access became more widespread and access to smartphones increased, Dhaka's food scene began to change.

Young people, curious and tech-savvy, started exploring social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook.

They watched videos of Japanese ramen, Indian dosas, Nepali momos and Turkish kebabs; and suddenly, the world felt a lot closer.

But it wasn't just the customers who were learning – vendors were too. Through the same internet, they discovered recipes, cooking techniques and presentation styles from across the globe.

A street vendor in Dhaka could learn how to make momo or dosa almost in 10 minutes by watching a YouTube tutorial.

The result? A street food scene that is as diverse as it is delicious.

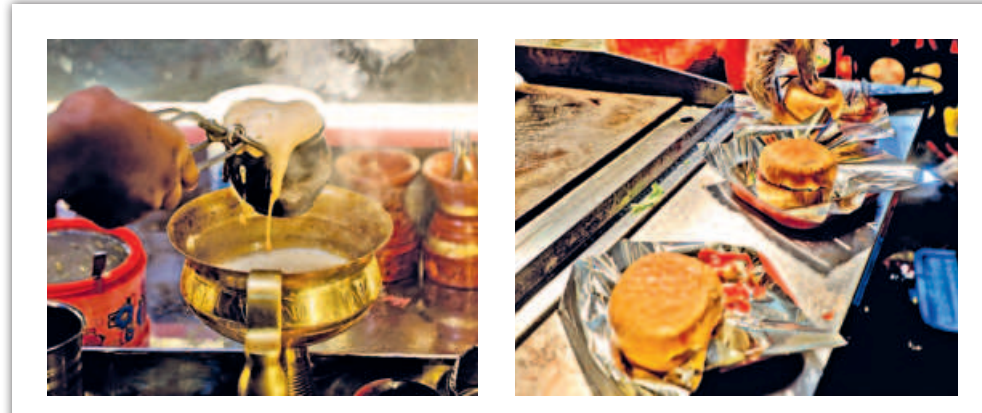
Local food vloggers also played a huge role in this transformation.

Food vloggers like Rafsan the Chotobhai, Adnan Faruque, or Syed Khaled Saifullah began showcasing Dhaka's street food to a wider audience.

Besides, international vloggers like Trevor James (The Food Ranger) and Sonny Side (Best Ever Food Review Show) visited the city, putting Dhaka's street food on the global map.

The internet did not just bring new recipes, it also created a community. Vendors and customers alike began sharing their

Over the past 20 years, hundreds of restaurants and thousands of roadside food carts have sprawled across the city. Now, you will find food carts in almost every alley – run by young, educated and somewhat ambitious entrepreneurs.



35,000 monthly, with potential earnings reaching Tk 40,000 during peak seasons like winter.

Then there is Kamrul Hasan, a 30-year-old jobholder who started a food cart in Dhanmondi to supplement his income.

"I could not afford my expenses with just my salary," Hasan says.

the city's economy.

According to Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the street food industry is a significant contributor to the informal economy.

"This sector is creating employment opportunities, especially for young people," he says. "Right policies and access to finance are key to their continued success and growth."

Echoing similar views, Tapas Kumar Paul, assistant professor of economics at North South University, says, "Street food is more than a business; it is a reflection of our changing society."

"But without proper regulation, its growth could lead to chaos," he added.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director at the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, also emphasised the potential for job creation. "This sector could provide opportunities for women and rural communities," he says. "It is not just about food – it's about empowerment."

WHAT'S NEXT?

As Dhaka's street food scene continues to evolve, at least one thing is clear: things will not remain the same after the next 10 years.

Waffle n'Momowali's Nowshin hopes to expand her tiny venture by opening multiple stalls after 10 years. She wants to create job opportunities, especially for young girls.

Rahman, with his Adnoon's Place, dreams about turning his cart into a full restaurant.

Meanwhile, vendors like Grills on the Wheel's Sultana put emphasis on maintaining high hygiene and food safety standards in upcoming years.

Her future target is to continue maintaining the use of fresh ingredients and keeping her stall clean to earn customer trust.

Economists say with the right support – whether through training, financing or regulation – this informal sector could become a formalised industry, creating jobs, boosting the economy, and preserving Dhaka's culinary heritage.

"The street food industry is already impacting the economy significantly," says Moazzem. "But to ensure its continued growth, we need to address challenges like licensing, hygiene, and access to finance."

experiences online, creating a buzz around street food that went beyond the streets themselves.

There were other factors, such as people's increasing disposable income, rapid urbanisation and many youths opting for entrepreneurship.

AFFORDABLE DELIGHTS

Faiyyas Hossain, a 16-year-old student residing in Dhanmondi, said, "I like having street foods like momo for their affordability. I can easily get one plate of momo comprising 5-6 pieces for Tk 100, while at a restaurant, it will cost at least double."

He also pointed out the wide variety of cuisines available at the roadside carts.

Hossain says he can pick between the spicy and tangy fuchka-chotpoti to a delicious pizza, often at the same spots like that at Dhanmondi 27, as it is more convenient.

Another customer, Sharifa Oishee, in the Dhaka University area, says, "From local snacks like chotpoti to foreign dishes, street vendors offer everything at a fraction of the price you would pay at a restaurant. It is not just convenient, it is also budget-friendly for us, especially with the rising cost of living."

However, Sharifa was a bit concerned about hygiene.

"While street food is a good option, vendors should focus more on cleanliness. Customers want to feel assured that the food they are eating is safe, so maintaining hygiene standards is crucial."

She said it would also be great if there were designated spots for street vendors, which would help reduce overcrowding and traffic problems.

According to Sharifa, proper seating arrangements and covered stalls could also make the experience more comfortable for customers.

Another customer, Fatima Rahman, who often brings her two kids to buy snacks from roadside food carts, said, "I prefer getting



pizza from street vendors for my kids because it is affordable, and they love it."

"It is quick and convenient, and I know they will enjoy it just as much as the expensive restaurant versions," says Rahman.

EVERY FOOD CART HAS A DIFFERENT STORY

Food carts, sized roughly around 6x3 feet, have their own stories of emergence, struggle, operations and aspirations for the future.

Take Nahida Nowshin for example. At just 27, she runs "Waffle n'Momowali", a food cart in the Nakhhalpara area of Dhaka.

After losing her mother, Nahida turned to cooking as a way to cope. "I remembered cooking with my mum," she says. "It became my way of keeping her memory alive."

Today, her cart serves waffles and momos, a unique fusion that has become a local favourite.

Nowshin now earns around Tk 30,000-

His cart, which dispenses burgers, pizza, and sub sandwiches, is a hit among students looking for affordable snacks without hurting the wallet.

Hafizur Rahman, 27, represents a new wave of entrepreneurs who have started turning away from typical 9-to-5 jobs.

Rahman's cart, Adnoon's Place, prepares burgers, meat boxes and momos.

"I started this because I wanted to build something of my own," he says. "When my business grows, I will quit my job and focus on this full-time," he says.

And let's not forget Azizul Islam, a 17-year-old who left school for personal issues but found an opportunity in street food.

"I saw that street food is affordable yet profitable," he says. "It is a business I can grow."

A GROWING INFORMAL SECTOR

On top of changing what people eat, Dhaka's street food scene is also reshaping