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## Govt working to hold polls by Dec

It assures BNP as party delegation meets chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has assured the BNP of working to hold the national election by December this year, the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

The assurance came at a meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and a BNP delegation led by Fakhrul at the state guesthouse Jamuna last evening.

Fakhrul said the BNP reiterated the call for holding the election swiftly after implementing minimal reforms based on a consensus.

Yunus and those accompanying him assured the BNP leaders that the election would be held "very soon", Fakhrul said.

"He [Prof Yunus] has also said they were working so that the election could be held by December this year," Fakhrul said, adding that the BNP hopes that the government will soon declare a roadmap for the election as per the people's expectations.

Asked when the roadmap would be announced, Fakhrul said, "Probably, they will say something about it by

February 15."

The National Consensus Commission led by Prof Yunus is supposed to start talks with political parties for unanimity on reforms on that day.

The Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam confirmed the date at another briefing after the meeting with the BNP leaders.

When the BNP leaders sought early national polls, Prof Yunus said the National Consensus Commission would work on it, according to Shafiqul.

He said the chief adviser reiterated the two possible election timeframes -- within December 2025 or June 2026.

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Three-year-old Tahasin raises his hand and turns away as police shoot water from a cannon directly at him and his mother, a female protester from Brahmanbaria, during a sit-in at Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon. Police used batons, water cannons, and teargas shells to disperse the protesters demanding their appointment as assistant teachers in government primary schools. Story on page 3. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Yunus calls for reconciliation

Pledges fair trial for those linked to fascist regime, says there will be no injustice



**"The sacrifices were made because we stood against injustice. If we indulge in injustice, where is the difference between them and us?"**

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus



### Star INTERVIEW

**Salman F Rahman used IFIC Bank for personal gains**

Says the bank's current chairman

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Salman F Rahman, the former chairman of IFIC Bank and a trusted adviser to ousted PM Sheikh Hasina, used the bank for his personal benefit, said Md. Mehmod Husain, independent director and current chairman of IFIC Bank.

"Despite holding only a 6 percent stake, the conglomerate heavily influenced IFIC and benefited from approximately Tk 10,000 crore in loans -- this posed a major risk for a bank of this scale," he told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Yunus went on to say, "They need to be brought to the right path. They need to be told that what you have done was wrong. You have to make them understand that their path is wrong and they should apologise for what they have done. This is how our country should move forward. Constant conflict will only hold us back."

"We have to win them over. If you

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the consequences. But to those who have not, we will tell them that 'you have caused me a lot of pain, but I will not do the same to you. This is your country too. The country belongs to all of us. We are all children of this soil,'" he said.

Yunus went on to say, "They need to be brought to the right path. They need to be told that what you have done was wrong. You have to make them understand that their path is wrong and they should apologise for what they have done. This is how our country should move forward. Constant conflict will only hold us back."

"We have to win them over. If you

Md Mehmod Husain

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## Economy faces headwinds

In its monetary policy statement, BB says growth outlook for 2nd half of FY25 doesn't appear optimistic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh economy is bracing for substantial hurdles in the second half of the 2025 fiscal year, with growth projected to decelerate amid inflationary pressures, financial strain and external headwinds.

GDP growth is expected to remain in the 4-5 percent range in FY25, reflecting continued output losses from floods, labour unrest, and gas supply shortages that have slowed industrial production, Bangladesh Bank said yesterday in a monetary policy statement for the January-June period.

"The growth outlook for the second half of FY25 for Bangladesh does not appear optimistic due to the existing challenges," the central bank said.

Bangladesh's struggles underscore the uneven recovery across South Asia. Bangladesh faces a tougher road to recovery due to inflation, domestic disruptions and external shocks. The next several months will be pivotal as the country works to balance fiscal and monetary reforms, restore confidence in its financial system, and chart a path towards long-term stability and growth.

The trend of elevated inflation predates the interim government, as the post pandemic economic recovery was

### CENTRAL BANK FORECASTS

- GDP growth is likely to slow to 4%-5% in FY25
- Growth may rebound to 6% or over in FY26
- Inflation is expected to ease to 7%-8% by June
- Non-performing loans could exceed 30% of total loans by June

sluggish during Sheikh Hasina's tenure. Real GDP growth slowed to 4.22 percent in FY24, amid sustained high inflation driven by the Russia-Ukraine war, global uncertainty, and weak economic performance by key trading partners and remittance source countries.

Then economic activity faced additional setbacks in the summer of 2024 when a student-led mass uprising, followed by a change in government, created uncertainty among consumers and investors. This uncertainty was

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**Mobs will be dealt with a firm hand from now on**  
Says Mahfuj Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing a strong warning against any sort of mob violence, Mahfuj Alam, adviser to the interim government, said the government would handle such issues with an iron hand from now on.

"If you support the mass uprising, stop engaging in mob actions. If you engage in mob actions, you will also be treated as a devil. After today's incident, no further requests will be made. It is not your job to take the law into your own hands," he wrote on his verified Facebook account today.

From now on, we will firmly confront so-called movements and mob demonstrations. Any attempt to render the state ineffective and prove it

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.

## AMAR EKUSHEY-11

February 21, 1952, Cumilla town. The local student community, like the rest of the country, takes out a procession in support of the Language Movement. As protesters pass through a Bihari (non-Bangalee) colony, several residents attack the procession with knives. At least 15

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TCB trucks began distributing Ramadan essentials, including sugar, dates, edible oil, lentils, and chickpeas, yesterday. Although this truck, stationed at the Shantinagar intersection in the capital, had packages for 250 low-income consumers, over 1,000 people turned up.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Protest comes under knife attack

AHMAD ISTIAK

February 21, 1952, Cumilla town. The local student community, like the rest of the country, takes out a procession in support of the Language Movement. As protesters pass through a Bihari (non-Bangalee) colony, several residents attack the procession with knives. At least 15

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Ask Interpol to issue 'red notice' against Benazir

Court orders authorities  
COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered authorities concerned to request an Interpol "red notice" for the arrest of the former inspector general of police, Benazir Ahmed.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court issued the directive after Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Hafijul Islam submitted an application in this regard.

In the application, Hafijul Islam said during the preliminary investigation, the ACC confirmed that Benazir

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Family members of July uprising martyrs and victims, who received financial assistance yesterday, pose for a photo with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at his Tejgaon office. Before that, the chief adviser inaugurated a programme for providing state help to the families of uprising victims.

PHOTO: PID

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## Govt working to hold polls by Dec

FROM PAGE 1

Shafiqul said the BNP leaders expressed their support for the government's reform initiatives and assured Yunus of standing by him.

Responding to a query at the briefing after the meeting with the chief adviser, Fakhrul reiterated that the BNP would never agree to hold local government polls before the national election.

"We're making it clear, as we did in the past: there will be no election before the national polls."

He said they told Yunus that the government cannot avoid responsibility for recent incidents because those occurred in front of law enforcers. The BNP believes these incidents have jeopardised law and order and given the fascists an opportunity to speak out.

The party also demanded repatriation of laundered money and action against those in the administration who aided fascism and were involved in looting the country's resources.

Additionally, they called for the withdrawal of false cases against political leaders and activists over the last 15-16 years.

Fakhrul said the party expressed concerns over soaring commodity prices. "One of the biggest failures of this government is its inability to

control prices. They have told us that they are working on it."

He said the BNP discussed the ongoing Operation Devil Hunt aimed at maintaining law and order. The party emphasised that no innocent individuals should be harassed during the drive.

CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul said Prof Yunus told the BNP delegation that violation of human rights during the operation would not be tolerated in any way.

"We are seriously monitoring it. We do not want any violation of human rights, and it will not happen."

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, Industries Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan and Law Adviser Asif Nazrul accompanied Prof Yunus at the meeting while Fakhrul had BNP Standing Committee members Salauddin Ahmed and Major (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed with him.

### LETTER TO CA

At the meeting, the BNP delegation handed a letter with suggestions over to Prof Yunus upon the completion of his government's six months in office.

The letter says that the Awami League is attempting to destabilise the country through various programmes, and Sheikh Hasina plans to continue these activities from abroad with the support of a "neighbouring country".

"Therefore, it is imperative to make the Awami League face trial as a political party for genocide and crimes against humanity," the letter reads.

The party in the letter expresses deep concern over provocative remarks by Hasina and her allies regarding the July-August uprising. It further said that their remarks ignited public outrage and led to growing demands for the removal of statues, structures, and nameplates associated with the AL across the country.

The letter also criticises the interim government for its failure to bring the fugitive dictator and her accomplices to justice, saying that this inaction has fuelled public unrest and could tarnish the government's image both at home and abroad.

To restore stability and uphold democratic rights, the party urges the interim government to hold early elections and establish a political government that "truly reflects the aspirations of the people".

In the letter, the party also says that the absence of an elected government has stalled economic growth and investment. Global partners are hesitant to engage in development agreements, which has slowed the country's progress, according to the letter.

While speaking to reporters after a meeting on voter list update, he said the EC had already reviewed the necessary steps for holding a good election and "erasing the shame of the past".

"We will make decisions based on the reform report and work accordingly," he added.

It emphasises that the interim government must remain fully neutral and ensure that no group gains political advantage through its actions.

It also expresses concerns about growing public suspicion that "some advisers within the interim government are exploiting their positions to form political parties".

"Various signs of using administrative machinery for political purposes are gradually emerging, which is detrimental to the country and its democratic values," the letter reads. "We welcome the emergence of any political party through a proper democratic process, in line with the people's expectations."

### EC MAKING PREPARATIONS

At an event in Manikganj yesterday, Election Commissioner Md Anwarul Islam Sarker said that the Election Commission is making preparations to hold the national polls by December.

While speaking to reporters after a meeting on voter list update, he said the EC had already reviewed the necessary steps for holding a good election and "erasing the shame of the past".

"We will make decisions based on the reform report and work accordingly," he added.

## Salman F Rahman used

FROM PAGE 1

However, after a thorough review, the bank's real asset quality was revealed. Many of the loans extended to companies linked to Salman F Rahman defaulted by the December quarter, pushing the ratio to an estimated 26-27 percent, Husain said.

Asked about the controversial IFIC Amar Bond to fund a real estate project in which Rahman and his son Ahmed Shayan Fazlur Rahman have stakes, Husain said the bank serves as its guarantor.

While the bank is currently able to pay the bond's coupon due to pre-deposited funds, uncertainty remains regarding the principal amount.

"The promoter of the project is a fugitive, with some key individuals either in jail or outside the country. The government is exploring a solution, but the future of Amar Bond remains uncertain. In case of default, IFIC would be liable."

Husain criticised the bank's previous governance structure, stating that the 16-year tenure of the Awami League-led government was not characterised by an effective management culture.

"The absence of proper leadership significantly harmed the bank from an ethical standpoint."

The bank is currently struggling to recover a significant portion of the loans disbursed to politically exposed individuals and AL-aligned conglomerates.

"Many of these borrowers have either fled the country, are in jail or remain untraceable. We are assessing the collateral associated with these

loans to verify their valuations."

Additionally, the board has directed the management to identify other movable and immovable assets of defaulting borrowers, Husain said.

With a network of 1,422 branches and sub-branches, IFIC had deposits amounting to Tk 50,000 crore in June last year.

However, following the political transition, the bank faced massive deposit withdrawals, causing deposits to decline to Tk 44,400 crore by October as public confidence wavered.

The bank also faced a severe shortfall in its Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) with the BB. At one point, the shortfall reached thousands of crores.

"Following the political change, IFIC faced a severe crisis, leading many to fear that it would go bankrupt. However, we managed to reverse the situation and rebuild public trust."

By November, IFIC recorded a net deposit growth of Tk 1,036 crore, bringing total deposits to Tk 47,750 crore in December, Husain said. The bank has since stabilised its CRR and SLR, with no current shortfall.

Husain outlined the new board's commitment to restoring transparency and accountability within the bank.

"We have made it clear that IFIC will operate professionally and ethically. There will be no tolerance for non-transparent transactions, inefficiencies, or dishonesty," he said, adding that internal disciplinary actions will be taken against those involved in irregularities and misconduct.

## Protest comes under knife attack

FROM PAGE 1

Nazimuddin on January 27, 1952, ignited a wave of protests across the country, and Cumilla was no exception.

According to Ahmed Rafiq's book "Bhasha Andolon: Teknaf to Tetulia", February 4 saw a general strike in Cumilla, culminating in a protest rally held at the Town Hall premises.

The All Party State Language Action Committee, formed in Cumilla with Advocate Abdur Rahman Khan, the general secretary of the Awami League's district unit, as the convener, played a crucial role in organising and mobilising public support.

The College State Language Sangram Parishad, led by Sirajul Islam, the general secretary of the Victoria College Students' Union, also actively participated in the movement.

The days leading up to February 21, the main day of action, saw a concerted effort to mobilise public support. Leaflets were distributed, and tin trumpets were blown to raise awareness and rally support for the cause.

On February 21, Cumilla enforced another complete shutdown. A massive procession, comprising students and the general public, marched through the city, demanding the recognition of Bangla as the state language.

The peaceful protests, however, were met with resistance, leading to clashes between students and non-Bangali residents in several parts of the city, reads the book "Cumilla E Bhasha Andolon".

Later that evening, a large public meeting was held at the Town Hall grounds.

When the tragic news of the police firing on students in Dhaka reached Cumilla, protests erupted spontaneously across the city, with students from Nazrul Avenue, Chawkbazar, Rajganj, Mogaltuli, and Bagichagaon taking to the streets.

Clashes between students and the police ensued in the Rani Bazar area.

On February 23, yet another complete strike paralysed Cumilla. Businesses remained closed, and a sense of mourning prevailed.

The movement spread beyond the city limits, reaching Daudkandi, Kasba, Nabnagar, Burichang, Ramchandrapur, and other areas.

Students, farmers, and working-class individuals from all walks of life expressed their solidarity with the Language Movement.

Translated and edited by Subrata Roy.

## Yunus calls for reconciliation

FROM PAGE 1

uprising martyrs and victims.

Members of three families of martyrs and three protesters of the July uprising spoke at the meeting. They broke down in tears while describing their experiences.

They raised various issues, including receiving state honours, financial assistance, and rehabilitation.

The chief adviser said, "I think that the sacrifices of those, for which I can call my country a new Bangladesh, cannot be measured by any scale."

"The main thing about a trial is that it should be fair... There should be no injustice... The sacrifices were made because we stood against injustice. If we indulge in injustice, where is the difference between them and us?"

"Our country's future depends on our ability to overcome conflict. We must find a way forward together," he said.

At the programme, the chief adviser reassured the families of the victims that all killings and enforced disappearances would be investigated, and the perpetrators would be brought to justice. He also urged them to be aware of any moves to perpetrate violence or cause bloodshed.

He inaugurated a government programme for providing state financial assistance to families of July

uprising martyrs and victims.

He said that you will hit them and they will hit back, then there will be no end to this. You have demanded justice and the government will complete the trial," he said, adding that justice cannot be served in hurry.

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চুক্তি এ রিমিট্যাঙ্গ পাঠান  
প্রিয়জনের প্রয়োজনে...  
যেকোনো সাথা থেকে রেমিট্যাঙ্গ প্রহণ করলেই  
পাবেন সরকার নির্ধারিত ২.৫% প্রোদান  
সাথে আরও আরও নিশ্চিত আকর্ষণীয় পুরস্কার  
\* শর্ত প্রযোজন

অনলাইনের মাধ্যমে পুরালী ব্যাংকের সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখা হতে ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদান করা হয় (কেবলমাত্র জমা ও উত্তোলন)

## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER 13 years on, justice remains elusive

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

A 73-year-old mother, Saleha Monir, has sought justice for the last 13 years, but it remains a far cry for them.

Ever since journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Rumi were killed on a fateful February night in 2012, the investigators could not complete the probe in the sensational double murder case till yesterday, according to the court documents.

The victims' families expressed their frustration, citing it as 13 years of failure on the part of the investigators.

"We always want justice. But where are we getting justice," Saleha, mother of Sagar, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"There is a big one behind the killings. So, it was not disclosed in the past. If any thieves or robbers did it, it might be disclosed soon," she said.

"I told them [investigators] one thing – do not use the excuse of theft or robbery. I will not accept that..." she also said.

"We are in the dark. There is no hope or expectation. The PBI has taken over the investigation. They came to meet us. Let's see how far they go and what they do," added Saleha.

Rumi's brother Nowsher Alam Roman, who filed the double murder case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on February 12, 2012, now wants to keep faith in the investigators after the fall of Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5 last year.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Exposed cables lie across the side of this footpath, posing a risk to pedestrians. The photo was taken in the Bakshi Bazar area yesterday.

Canada to help return laundered money

Canadian int'l dev minister tells CA

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



Canada does not want corrupt and plundered money in the country, said Canada's Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen, during a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the latter's Tejgaon office yesterday.

Hussen assured cooperation in returning money laundered from Bangladesh over the past decade, according to a regulator instead of a consultant.

In its 351 page final report, submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on February 5, the commission said, "Under Article 116 of the existing constitution, the Supreme Court's role is merely consultative. Necessary amendments are required to empower the Supreme Court as a regulator instead of a consultant."

Article 116 currently says, "The control (including the power of posting, promotion, and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the President and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court."

law or ordinance to establish the secretariat, amending the Rules of Business, 1996, and formulating rules and guidelines for its operations.

The report also recommended

## Amend Article 116, form SC secretariat

Recommends Judiciary Reform Commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Court."

The commission emphasised that the Supreme Court secretariat is vital for achieving judiciary's independence and effective separation from the executive. It proposed enacting a separate

constructing a dedicated building for the Supreme Court secretariat, which would have two units: the Supreme Court unit and the judicial unit. These units would oversee functions such as transfers, promotions, disciplinary measures, budget management, development planning, and supervising daily court activities. The commission also stressed incorporating information technology into the judicial system.

Further decentralisation measures were proposed, including establishing permanent High Court benches in divisional cities and civil and criminal courts at the upazila level.

Additionally, the commission suggested curbing the president's power to pardon convicts, reducing mobile courts' authority to only impose financial penalties, and creating an independent criminal investigation agency through new legislation. It also recommended a law to prevent the filing of false cases.

To ensure transparency, the commission proposed introducing

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## ROW OVER BOOK

Cops shut down stall at Boi Mela  
Chief adviser condemns attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday temporarily shut down a stall at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela following an altercation over books by feminist writer Taslima Nasrin.

The incident took place around 6:15pm at the stall of Sabyasachi Publication in the Suhrawardy Udayan.

Witnesses said a group of people gathered in front of the stall around 6:15pm and demanded the removal of Taslima's books. At that time, a person inside the stall protested the matter, leading to a heated exchange. At one point, the two sides started shouting slogans.

Later, police went to the spot and covered the stall with a tarpaulin.

The Sabyasachi stall

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## TEACHER CANDIDATES

Police swoop on protesters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police used batons, tear gas, water cannons, and sound grenades yesterday to disperse protesters staging a sit-in at Shahbagh, demanding reinstatement of their cancelled appointments as assistant teachers in government primary schools. Despite the police action, protesters partially blocked the intersection for over four hours, causing severe traffic congestion in nearby areas. Traffic resumed at Shahbagh after 4:30pm.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Ensure six-month paid maternity leave for all women  
Demand speakers at rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday urged the government to implement legal reforms ensuring six months of paid maternity leave for all women, eliminating disparities across government, private, and labour sectors.

They also demanded that maternity benefits be calculated based on total monthly earnings.

The demands were made at a protest rally titled

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This mango orchard has been coated in the layer of dust, owing to the pollution in the area. Dust pollution continues to be a menace in the capital. The photo was taken from the Chat Bari area of Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## No more politics under AL, BCL: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League, as a political party, will have to face legal consequences for its activities, said Information Adviser Nahid Islam yesterday.

"We have stated that the Awami League and the Chhatra League will no longer be able to engage in politics in Bangladesh under this ideology and name. This is our commitment to the martyrs [of the July uprising]," he said.

Nahid was addressing an event titled "Heroes of Dhaka University", organised by the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement at the Teacher-Student Centre of Dhaka University.

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In Remembrance of the

Late Mrs. Hasna Abedin

Founder and Former Chairperson

American International University-Bangladesh

On her 8th Death Anniversary  
February 11, 2025

Her kindness and warmth brought us together, and her legacy continues to inspire. She will always hold a special place in our hearts. May the Almighty bless her with eternal peace in Jannah.

- AIUB Family

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-BANGLADESH

where leaders are created

## 13 years on, justice

FROM PAGE 3  
"We want the identity of the killers to be disclosed through a fair investigation. We hope the incumbent government cracks the real mystery of this incident at least," Roman told this newspaper.

We now see some glimmers of hope after the new investigating agency took charge of the probe. There is a time frame of six months to submit the report. How optimistic we are about getting justice will be understood from that report," he said.

Sagar Sarowar was a news editor at Mastranga TV and his wife Meherun Rumi was a senior reporter at ATN Bangla.

They were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, at their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

Their only child Mahir Sarowar Megh, only five at the time, was in the apartment.

After the killings, eight suspects -- Kamrul Islam alias Arun, Abu Sayeed, Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, Palash Rudra Paul, Anamul Haque alias Humayun Kabir and Tanveer Rahman Khan -- were arrested. Tanveer and Palash are now out of jail, while the others are behind bars.

### THE CASE

After the case was filed, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station was tasked with the investigation, which was handed over to the Detective Branch (DB) of police three days later on February 16, 2012. The DB conducted an investigation till April 18 that year. The case was

transferred to Rab in April 2012. The force conducted the probe till November 3 last year.

The next day [November 4 last year], PIB took over the charge of investigation into the case following a High Court order. On October 23 last year, a four-member task force was formed to investigate the case where the chief of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) was made the convener.

The task force has been asked to submit its report to the High Court within six months after completing the investigation.

After taking the investigation charge, the PBI appealed to a Dhaka court to interrogate Maj Gen (sacked) Ziaul Ahsan, former Additional Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police Mashirul Rahman and accused Humayun Kabir in connection with the case between January 8 and February 10 this year. The court granted their applications.

Contacted, Investigation Officer Azizul Haque, an additional SP of PBI, said yesterday, "As the investigation is ongoing, we cannot disclose any progress at this moment."

However, wishing not to be named, a PBI official told The Daily Star they had interrogated over 50 people in connection with the case.

On January 27 this year, the court set March 2 for submitting the probe report.

Today, Dhaka Reporters Unity will organise a protest rally on its premises, seeking justice.



Participants at a press conference at BPGMEA conference room yesterday, ahead of the 17th International Plastic Fair-2025 which will be held at the International Convention City Bashundhara, Dhaka from February 12 to 15.

## No more

FROM PAGE 3

Nahid said, "The fight is not over yet. Fascist collaborators from various places are attempting to make threats. We want to remind you not to forget the July spirit. The essence of July is not over. If even the slightest attempt is made to show aggression, we will resist you with double the strength. We will move Bangladesh forward, carrying the spirit of July."

Talking about the role of Dhaka University teachers, Nahid, who has been serving as a spokesperson for the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said, "For the past 15 years, a section of the teachers has been busy proving themselves as collaborators of fascism."

On the other hand, some teachers stood with us, showing their spine," he said, adding that they would move forward but would not forget the events of the past.

He also urged signing the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) to boost trade and investment

## Canada to help return laundered

FROM PAGE 3

"We are working hard to eliminate corruption, as it exists everywhere," he told the Canadian minister who arrived in Bangladesh yesterday on a two-day visit.

According to Transparency International Bangladesh, US \$12-15 billion has been siphoned out of the country annually over the last 15 years.

During the meeting, Hussen reaffirmed Canada's support for Bangladesh's interim government and reform efforts. They also discussed the upcoming general election and the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Hussen emphasised Canada's support for democratic reforms, human rights, and fair elections.

He also urged signing the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) to boost trade and investment

between the two countries.

In response, Prof Yunus invited Canada to relocate manufacturing factories to Bangladesh, leveraging its young workforce.

According to a statement of Canadian High Commission in Dhaka, bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$3.5 billion in 2023, with potential for expansion in sectors like clean technology and aerospace.

Prof Yunus also requested faster visa processing for Bangladeshi students. Hussen clarified that visa cuts were not specific to Bangladesh and assured that legitimate students are always welcome.

During a separate meeting with Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, the Canadian minister discussed strengthening bilateral ties.

Touhid highlighted

## Police swoop on

FROM PAGE 3

Witnesses said protesters began gathering at Shahbagh around 11:00am and staged demonstrations by noon. Around 2:00pm, police intervened with force, including baton charges and tear gas. Female officers were seen removing women protesters, but many continued their sit-in.

Police eventually cleared the road by 4:30pm, pushing demonstrators towards the National Museum, where they continued their protest as of filing this report.

"We had been protesting peacefully since midday when police suddenly attacked us," said Mustafa Kamal, a protester from Narayanganj, claiming around 50 people were injured and several detained.

Four individuals, including two protesters, sought treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"The government recommended our recruitment but then cancelled it. We belong in classrooms, not on the streets," said another protester, urging authorities to overturn the verdict and finalise their appointments.

Shahbagh Traffic Assistant Commissioner Mehedi Hasan said police action caused protesters to split and gather on either side of the road, worsening traffic congestion.

Protesters claimed the recruitment process, conducted in three phases, had seen appointments made in the first two phases. However, no decision was taken for the third phase, affecting 6,531 candidates included in the

final merit list.

The High Court on February 6 scrapped the government's decision to appoint these candidates, ruling that their recruitment was based on the now-abolished 84 percent female quota system. "We urge the authorities to resolve this issue immediately," read a statement from the protesters.

### MATS STUDENTS PROTEST FOR FOUR-POINT DEMANDS

Meanwhile, students of Medical Assistant Training Schools (MATS) held a sit-in at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday to press for four demands, including recruitment to vacant 10th grade positions and creation of more job opportunities.

The protest, organised by the General MATS Student Unity Council, began at 6:00am and continued until 4:00pm.

Ahmad Ullah Mansur, a council coordinator, said, "We will wait 72 hours. After that, we will announce our next course of action."

Other demands include abolishing the Health Professionals Board, forming a Medical Education Board, providing higher education opportunities aligned with the MATS curriculum, and renaming MATS to Medical Institute.

The health ministry issued a statement urging students to remain patient and focus on their studies.

Meanwhile, Delwar Hossain, inspector (operation) of Shahbagh Police Station said, 29 protesters were detained from the spot.

## Ensure six-month paid maternity

FROM PAGE 3

"11-Point Demands, Including 6-Month Maternity Leave, Sexual Harassment Policy, and Trade Union Rights," organised by the Outraged Women Community at the capital's Shahbagh, in front of the National Museum.

Speakers noted that a new labour law ordinance is being drafted, with recommendations from the Labour Commission, Women's Commission, and Tripartite Consultative Committee (TCC).

They stressed the importance of addressing inconsistencies in existing laws and prioritising women's rights in labour regulations while implementing necessary revisions to safeguard the rights.

They highlighted that despite long standing demands, six months of maternity leave is yet to be

ensured. Given the physical challenges women face in labour-intensive and professional sectors, they called for special care and urgent action.

The speakers also urged the proper implementation of sexual harassment prevention policies and grievance cells in workplaces and called for the inclusion of women experts, beyond factory and employer representatives, in investigation committees.

Additionally, they urged the rewriting of Section 332 to replace "woman" (mohila) with "female" (nari) in all relevant sections.

They also called for ensuring the national minimum wage and legal recognition for all men and women workers, both formal and informal.

The demands also include relaxing conditions for forming trade unions and safeguarding freedom

of expression.

They also called for establishing effective day-care facilities at workplaces and affordable canteens and laundries in communities, recognising women as agricultural and fisheries workers, and enacting laws to protect domestic workers and prevent harassment of sexual minorities.

Furthermore, the speakers demanded implementing measures to safeguard migrant women workers and provide necessary training for their labour market participation, while ensuring fair treatment for all workers.

The rally was attended by Seema Das Simu, president of Outraged Women Community, along with Rowshan Ara of Naripokkho, BILS Director Kohinoor Mahmud, and Labour Commission member Tasleema Akhter, among others.

The demands also include relaxing conditions for forming trade unions and safeguarding freedom

of expression.

Rizwana acknowledged that a river cleanup is a time-consuming process but stressed the importance of persistence.

"Saving the Buriganga from pollution is making the impossible possible, as the oxygen level in its water is less than zero," she said.

She highlighted the presence of heavy metals like chromium, antibiotics, and 2-3 metres of polythene deposits at the riverbed.

"We are in talks with the Asian Development Bank and other development partners to save these rivers," she added.

Stressing the need for improved waste management at municipal and union levels, Rizwana said, "We have already initiated the removal of 4,500 outdated buses to curb air pollution. Decentralising governance and delegating waste management responsibilities to local governments is crucial."

Air Commodore Md Mahbubur Rahman Talukder, chief waste management officer of DSAC, noted that the city corporation has introduced a "health card" initiative for sanitation workers. He underscored that without adequate financial and

The event was presided over by BLAST honorary executive director Sara Hossain.

Panelists included

## Govt working to clean 4 major

FROM PAGE 5

Ishrat Shabnam, country director of Practical Action Bangladesh; S Hasanul Banna, senior lawyer at Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association; Ayub Karam Ali, chairman of Bridge Academy and Mohammad Sirajul Islam, senior academic coordinator at BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). The dialogue was moderated by BLAST adviser Ahmed Ibrahim.

Lessons from union-level waste management initiatives could provide solutions to existing challenges, they said.

Additionally, they stressed the importance of awareness campaigns, housing facilities for sanitation workers, and employment opportunities through coordinated government and private sector efforts.

Participants also recommended converting abandoned land into agricultural fields through proper waste disposal, reviving dying rivers affected by liquid waste, and incorporating community service into the legal system as part of probation measures.

The event was presided over by BLAST honorary executive director Sara Hossain.

Panelists included

## Amend Article 116

FROM PAGE 3

judges. It recommended fixing the number of Appellate Division judges at seven, raising the retirement age of judges from 67 to 70, setting the minimum age for judges at 48, and increasing the number of judges in both higher and lower courts.

Moreover, the commission proposed reducing the jurisdiction of mobile courts run by judicial magistrates to only impose financial penalties, not prison sentences.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Natore PWD Division, Natore

Phone: 0771-66873, Fax: 0771-61026

E-mail: cc\_nator@pwd.gov.bd

Memo No: 25.36.6900.320.18.24.120.537

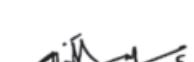
Date: 10-02-2025 Eng.

### e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works mentioned below:

Tender ID No	Last selling date and time	Opening date and time
1072841, 1072840	24-Feb-2025 17:00	25-Feb-2025 12:00

- This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no office/hard copies will be accepted.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))



Amit Kumar Dev  
Executive Engineer  
Natore PWD Division, Natore.

### LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION

#### STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION

#### Company Matter No. 146 of 2025

Md. Aminul Haque ..... Petitioner

-Versus- Sea Pearl Beach Resort & Spa Ltd. and others ..... Respondents

Notice is hereby given for all concerned that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing of the application, the Hon'ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to admit the application on 29.01.2025.

Anyone desiring to oppose the matter may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through an authorized lawyer for hearing. A copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary charges.

(Mostafa Mosharraf Hossain)  
Advocate  
Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Room No. 307 (Annex Extension Building)  
Supreme Court Bar Association  
Shahbag, Dhaka-1000

D-8

### POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC

(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahanul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212

[www.powergrid.gov.bd](http://www.powergrid.gov.bd)

Date: 10 February 2025

Ref No: 27.21.0000.101.43.000.25.719(1)

### Notice

JOY MURDER PLOT  
Mahmudur  
Rahman  
acquitted

BSS, Dhaka

A court yesterday acquitted daily Amar Desh editor Mahmudur Rahman in a case lodged for attempting to abduct and murder the son of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Sajeeb Wazed Joy in the US in 2015.

Dhaka 4th Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Tarique Aziz pronounced the judgment, allowing an appeal of Mahmudur Rahman against his conviction and sentence in the case.

The appellant was present during the pronouncement.

A Dhaka court on September 29, 2024, sent Mahmudur Rahman to jail as he surrendered before the court and pleaded for bail in the case. He was granted bail on October 3, 2024.

He filed the appeal against his conviction and sentence on December 12, 2024, and the court, on January 23, after holding a hearing on the matter had set yesterday for judgment.

The court of Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Asaduzzaman Nur on August 17, 2023, convicted and sentenced five people including veteran journalist Shafik Rehman and Mahmudur Rahman to seven years imprisonment.

Mahmudur was tried in absentia.

Police on August 3, 2015, filed the case with Paltan Police Station and on February 19, 2018, filed a charge sheet against the five.

A total of 12 witnesses including Joy testified in the case.

# HABIGANJ HILLS Illegal sand mining wreaking havoc



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Illegal sand extraction from hilly areas in at least 10 unions under Chunрагhat upazila of Habiganj has been causing severe damage to the local environment and infrastructure.

Locals claimed several groups of sand traders are engaged in a competition to extract sand and soil illegally by razing hills in different areas within the upazila, including Gadhachhara of Kalinagar union and areas near Panchhari Eco Resort and Lalchand Tea Garden in Shankha union.

Despite ongoing administrative efforts, these activities continue unchecked, they said.

The sand lifters are not only damaging hills but also encroaching on local forests and waterbodies, deploying excavators in almost every location to mine sand.

Nazrul Islam, chairman of Shankhola Union Parishad, said illegal sand extraction is severely damaging roads and bridges, and the issue has been reported to the authorities concerned.

He said locals are largely unable to protest, as influential individuals are involved in the illegal trade.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok's Habiganj unit, called for strict measures to prevent this illegal activity.

According to local authorities, whenever a drive is conducted in an area, the sand lifters somehow receive prior information and shift their activities elsewhere.

Seizing sand-lifting equipment during these drives has had little impact on stopping the illicit activities. Although some individuals have been arrested, they were later released on bail and soon resumed sand extraction.

Around 20 to 25 excavators operate in different areas, each with a team of 20 to 25 men engaged in sand extraction. Dump trucks are then used to transport the sand to other locations. Over a hundred truckloads of sand are mined and transported from the area daily, with at least 15 to 25 truckloads coming from Lalchand Tea Garden alone.

Mofazzal Hossain, manager of Lalchand Tea Garden, said their guards have been instructed to be more vigilant against sand lifters.

Chunрагhat Upazila Assistant Commissioner (Land) Mahbub Alam attributed the crisis to the remoteness of the area and a shortage of manpower in law enforcement. Mohammad Robin Mia, upazila nirbahi officer of Chunрагhat, said mobile courts are regularly conducted against sand extraction, with fines and jail terms imposed on those found guilty.

CID collects  
evidence from  
Dhanmondi 32

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Crime Scene Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department collected evidence from Dhanmondi 32 yesterday morning.

A 10-member CID team reached the site around 8:00am and left the area around 10:00am after inspection.

A team from Dhanmondi Police Station was deployed to assist them.

Md Selim, an inspector of the CID team, told reporters on the spot, "We are collecting all types of evidence available there. After analysing those, we will be able to say about the evidence."

Ali Ahmed Masud, officer-in-charge of the police station, said the evidence collected by the CID team includes a piece of bone, a dress, and a pair of shoes.

On Sunday, fire service officials drained water from the basement of a building adjacent to the demolished residence of Bangabandhu, addressing speculation about the existence of secret detention centres, commonly referred to as Aynagar.

They confirmed that the space was intended for an elevator in the basement.

People visiting the site yesterday said they found a piece of bone from the area.

The protest and subsequent demolition

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2025  
MAGH 28, 1431 BS

The Daily Star

5

Govt working to  
clean 4 major rivers  
Says Rizwana Hasan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has initiated a working plan to clean the polluted waters of four major rivers -- Buriganga, Turag, Balu and Shitalakkhya -- that surround the capital, said Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday.

"We are taking steps to clean the rivers and hope to implement the initiative based on the availability of resources," she said while addressing a dialogue at the CIRDAP auditorium as the chief guest.

The discussion, titled "Reforming Waste Management and Ensuring the Right to a Healthy Environment", was organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



## Cops shut down stall

FROM PAGE 3

has been at the centre of discussion since Sunday when multiple posts on social media called for the demolition of a book stall at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair, alleging that it was promoting atheism.

Shahbagh Police Station Inspector (operations) Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star that they took a person into their custody.

He did not disclose the person's identity, saying that further details would be provided later.

Prof Mohammad Azam, director general of Bangla Academy, confirmed that the police closed down the bookstall in the evening to maintain law and order.

He said a meeting of the book fair organising committee under the Bangla Academy was ongoing regarding the incident.

"After hearing about the incident, we spoke with the law enforcement agencies. A Bangla Academy taskforce is working on the matter. Action will be taken

based on its observations," he added.

Meanwhile, leftist student organisations, including Bangladesh Chhatra Union and Biplobi Chhatra Maitri, brought a procession from the Bangla Academy stall to the Sabyasachi stall protesting its closure.

At a brief rally in front of the stall, they called for security for the stall and demanded its reopening by Tuesday.

They said, closing book stalls is equivalent to hindering freedom of speech or expression.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has strongly condemned the recent mob attack on the bookstall, calling it an affront to the rights of Bangladeshi citizens and the country's laws. In a statement, he denounced the violence, emphasising that it goes against the open-minded spirit of the book fair, which honours the language martyrs of February 21, 1952, according to the CA's press wing.

## জুবিলী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

খোকসা শাখা

খোকসা, কুষ্টিয়া।

বিষয়ঃ খোকসা নিলামের মাধ্যমে সম্পত্তি বিক্রয় বিজ্ঞপ্তি।

সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ০৫/০৬/২৪ তারিখের মাহামান হাইকোর্ট বিভাগের কেম্পানি বেকেরের আলেশ বলে, জুবিলী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর পক্ষে উহার অবসায়ক এবং অতিরিক্ত অবসায়ক, নির্দেশ ছক মোতাবেক দুই (তারিখ ১ ও ২) টি হাবু সম্পত্তি খোকসা নিলামের মাধ্যমে বিক্রয় করাবে। এই লক্ষ্যে খোকসা নিলামে অবশ্যিক জন্য নিম্নে বর্ণিত শর্তদিতে আঞ্চলিক ক্ষেত্রগত কে আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে। হাইকোর্ট নিযুক্ত একজন অতিরিক্ত/ডেপুটি রেজিস্ট্রার খোকসা নিলাম প্রিচালিত হচ্ছে। আগামী ২২/০২/২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ শনিবার মুসুর ০১:৩০ ঘটিকায় জুবিলী ব্যাংক লিমিটেডে, খোকসা শাখা, খোকসা, কুষ্টিয়া অফিসে নিলাম অনুষ্ঠিত হচ্ছে।

### শর্তাবলী

০১. নিম্নের ছকে বর্ণিত ১ম ও ২য় তারিখে ব্যাংক এবং জায়গাসহ স্থাপনা (অবহাব সম্পত্তি ব্যতিরেকে) ও ২ নং তারিখসিলের স্থাবর ভূ-সম্পত্তি নিলামের/বিক্রয়ের উদ্দেশ্যে তাকে হাবু করে আছে।

০২. আগামী ১৫/০২/২০২৫ হতে ২১/০২/২০২৫ তারিখ সকাল ১০টা হতে বিকাল ৫টা পর্যন্ত জুবিলী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, খোকসা শাখা অফিসে ডাক গ্রহণের জন্য নাম ৫,০০০ পাঁচ হাজার টাকা মাত্র) টাকা (অক্ষেত্রেও গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে) জমা দিয়ে টোকেন গ্রহণ করতে হবে এবং প্রাতিটি টোকেনের বিপরীতে সর্বাধিক

তিনি (০৩) জম নাম ৫,০০০ পাঁচ হাজার টাকা এলাকায় প্রাচৰণ করতে পারবেন। নিলামে অবশ্যিক তারিখে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

০৩. নিলামে অবশ্যিক তারিখে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে। সর্বদাতাকে তার প্রাচৰণ করতে হবে।

০৪. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে। ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

০৫. নিলামে অবশ্যিক তারিখে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে। এ বাপারে কোনো সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হলে অতিরিক্ত অবসায়ক এবং জুবিলী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর হিসাবে ১০% টাকা নিলামস্থলে হাইকোর্টে নিযুক্ত অতিরিক্ত/ডেপুটি রেজিস্ট্রার এর নিকট জমা দিতে হবে।

০৬. সকল ডাক প্রদানকারীর নিকট গ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।

০৭. নিলামে অবশ্যিক তারিখে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

০৮. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

০৯. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

১০. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

১১. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

১২. নিলাম ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে কেবলমাত্র ক্ষেত্রে নিলাম করতে হবে।

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২

## Exclusive 'Rickshaw Girl' screening to be hosted for rickshaw pullers

Bongo, the digital content partner of *Rickshaw Girl*, is hosting a special screening for 100 rickshaw pullers, honouring their struggles and resilience. The screening will take place today at 4pm at Joy Cinemas in Keraniganj, with appearances from the film's director Amitabh Reza Chowdhury and cast members.

The film, adapted from Mitali Perkins' novel, follows Naima, a young artist who takes up rickshaw pulling after her father, the family's sole breadwinner, falls ill. Starring Novera Rahman, Champa, and others, the Bangladesh-US production highlights the realities of rickshaw pullers.

Following its theatrical run, *Rickshaw Girl* will premiere on Bongo's OTT platform from February 12, expanding its reach to wider audiences.



### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

#### Dhaka Sessions with Sovvota and The Band

Dhaka Sessions, in collaboration with Graam Cha, presents *Sheeter Adda* featuring Sovvota and The Band live. Led by vocalist Karishma Sanu Sovvota, the band includes Rahin Haider (saxophone), Raquib Mahmud (guitar), Samiul Wahid (drums), and Alistair Sarkar Raj (bass).

DATE: THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13  
TIME: 7:15PM-9PM  
VENUE: 128 GRAAM CHA, GULSHAN 1



## NEWS

### Corruption pervades every level of admin

FROM PAGE 12  
The report said that under a centralised and undemocratic governance system, many officials received undeserved promotions and benefits, ultimately becoming enablers of authoritarian rule.

The commission said although 26 commissions and committees were formed over the past 50 years to reform public administration, the traditional bureaucratic system remains unchanged, with centralised authority still prevailing.

It recommended that all public representatives, including ministers and members of parliament, as well as government employees, are put under obligations to submit their wealth declarations annually. These wealth records should be made publicly accessible online to ensure transparency and allow public scrutiny.

It suggested strengthening the existing National Integrity System (NIS), a measure that was introduced in 2012 to prevent corruption in the administration. The NIS, however, was never fully implemented.

### PECE, similar tests should be scrapped

FROM PAGE 12  
primary education has expanded quantitatively, but the quality of education remains disappointing. Significant weaknesses persist in students' learning outcomes.

"Post pandemic learning loss, unsatisfactory levels of foundational literacy and numeracy, lack of remedial education, inadequate training on student friendly and inclusive teaching methods, weak assessment for learning, and the absence of school accountability in ensuring children's education are major obstacles to achieving quality education."

For the NSA-based system, Manzoor said assessments for pre-primary to second grade students will be age-appropriate, with a focus on continuous evaluation.

"Schools will conduct periodic and annual exams to assess students' competencies against grade level expectations."

As an immediate recommendation, the report prioritised improving Bangla and math skills, proposing that 60-75 minutes be allocated daily for each subject in the class schedule.

"Furthermore, schools should have the flexibility to adjust their routines, provided the total learning hours remain unchanged, to meet all students' learning

needs," the report said.

It also called for at least 50 percent of primary schools to adopt a single-shift system within five years under the Fifth Primary Education Development Programme, with all schools making the shift in 10 years.

Additionally, the report stressed the need for a teacher student ratio of no more than 1:30 in each classroom.

It highlighted that many government primary schools, which offer education up to eighth grade, lack the necessary infrastructure, with inadequacies in both the number and competence of teachers.

"The justification and feasibility of defining the primary level up to eighth grade remain questionable. Enrolment of students in the sixth grade at these schools could be stopped immediately."

Addressing student attendance in remote areas, such as chars and haor regions, it was suggested that schools collaborate with local communities to arrange transportation, with the option of floating or mobile schools where necessary.

It also recommended prioritising the recruitment of teachers for vacant positions; appointing para teachers; providing remedial education; and constructing essential infrastructure, including accommodations, in those areas.

Reform Implementation Commission, recognising that the reform is a continuous process.

It proposed the development of a "generic roadmap" to guide the implementation of reform decisions. It stated, "The Cabinet Division will formulate a generic roadmap for the public administration reform program."

The commission, in its report, suggested that various ministries and divisions should prepare their respective reform programs and submit them to the Permanent Reform Commission through the Cabinet Division.

The Permanent Commission will then review these proposals and make recommendations to the government. Once approved, the relevant ministry will instruct its subordinate offices and agencies to implement the necessary reforms, said the report.

It suggested the establishment of an "Innovation Lab" to encourage new reforms in public administration and policy development. It proposed utilising institutions such as the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) to facilitate this initiative.

Shafiqul later died while undergoing treatment at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, Bogura, and Apel died while undergoing treatment at Gaibandha General Hospital.

"Relatives of Shafiqul and Apel alleged that both men had died due to brutal torture while in the custody of joint forces," said the report.

A total of 83 individuals died in prison in 2024, and 63 of those deaths happened when Sheikh Hasina was in power.

"The authoritarian Sheikh Hasina regime imprisoned many people in order to suppress the political opposition. When the quota reform movement began, the number of

inmates increased significantly. The inmates inside overcrowded prisons faced a shortage of food, living space, bathrooms, showers, and access to medical care," said the report.

The report stated that on September 8, 2024, a man named Elahi Sikder died in custody. He had been arrested on September 3 on charges of attacking members of the army. The report quoted doctor Jibitesh Biswas of Gopalganj General Hospital as saying that Elahi Sikder's body had multiple injuries.

On September 10, members of joint forces in Gaibandha arrested Mosharaf Hossain Sweet, chairman of Saghata union and president of Awami League's Saghata unit, and his associates Shafiqul Islam and Sohrab Hossain Apel.

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inmates increased significantly. The inmates inside overcrowded prisons faced a shortage of food, living space, bathrooms, showers, and access to medical care," said the report.

Several BNP leaders died as prisoners as those associated with opposition parties were deprived of access to medical care, it added.

On January 2, 2024, Kamal Hossain, a BNP leader, died in Bagerhat District Jail. On January 28, another BNP leader named Abdus Sattar died in Satkhira Jail, while on February 8, Monoarul Islam, a BNP leader of Gongachora subdistrict, died in Rangpur Central Jail.

On February 14, a 16-year-old teenager named Maruf Ahmed was allegedly tortured to death while imprisoned at Gazipur's Tongi Juvenile Development Centre.

A total of 293 people were killed in political violence throughout the year, and of them 90 died between August 9 and December 31, 2024, the report finds.

"It is to be noted that between August 6 and 8, when there was no government in the country, at least four people were killed and nine injured in political violence," it said.

After the fall of Hasina's government, there have been allegations against leaders and activists of the BNP of

## It's a miracle that I'm alive: Saif Ali Khan

After a terrifying encounter with an intruder inside his own home, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan has finally broken his silence. In an interview with Indian outlet *Bombay Times*, the actor recounted the harrowing night.

Saif described how an intruder, armed with knives, broke into his son Jeh's room at 2am. Acting on instinct, he wrestled the attacker, unaware that he was being stabbed. His house help Geeta, helped him escape, and the actor was rushed to Lilavati Hospital with his son Taimur.

"Yes, I have stitches—25 here, 30 there. The slashes on my palm could have severed an artery, but they didn't. It's a miracle my hands are functioning. I don't know how he missed my carotid and jugular—it's not possible to cut someone's neck the way mine was cut and not kill them," he exclaimed.

Despite the ordeal, Saif refuses to let fear dictate his life, "My life isn't changing. It was a mistake—a burglary attempt gone terribly wrong. And honestly, that poor guy's life is more screwed than mine," he concluded.

## Restored version of 'Jibon Theke Neya' to screen in Australia

A restored version of Zahir Raihan's classic *Jibon Theke Neya* will be screened in Australia, an initiative led by Tanim Mannan, founder of BongOZ Films. With permission from Raihan's family, he remastered the film into 2D, enhanced its audio, and added subtitles for international audiences.

Tanim retrieved the film from the Bangladesh Film Archive and preserved its Digital Cinema Package (DCP) for future screenings. "Given its relevance today, I felt it was important to improve its quality and make it available for cinema screenings. Now, anyone who wishes can release it in theatres. That's why I've prepared the DCP,"

Tanim shared.

Australian audiences can watch the remastered version on February 23 at Campbelltown's Dumaresq Street Cinema, with another screening planned for February 21 to honour Zahir Raihan. The 1970 classic, featuring Khan Ataur Rahman, Anwar Hossain, and Razzak, among others.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

attacking Awami League leaders and activists, looting and breaking into their homes, and committing arson, it stated.

Leaders and activists of BNP are allegedly taking illegal control over markets, fish bazaars, shrimp markets, public land sand extraction sites, and other establishments that were being controlled by Awami League leaders as part of an extortion-based political economy," said the Odhikar report.

The report went on to say that BNP and AL have even joined hands in places to take control of sand extraction sites.

The report further stated that leaders and activists of the BNP and its affiliated organisations were also accused of attacking and looting the homes of general people and businessmen for refusing to pay bribes, as part of the shifting control over the system of extortion.

"The president of Chhakra Dal's Narsingdi district unit is accused of attacking the chambers of the president of the Bar Association of the district. Jubo Dal and Jubo League leaders were accused of jointly attacking and looting the office of the Jugantor's Chattogram Correspondent Abed Amiri. Leaders and activists of Jubo Dal and Krishak Dal attacked a Victory Day celebration of the citizens' platform in Barisal," noted the report.

## Touhid likely to meet Jaishankar

FROM PAGE 12  
relations," a diplomatic source in Dhaka told The Daily Star last night.

After the political changeover in Bangladesh, India on several occasions complained of repression against minorities, especially the Hindus. Bangladesh has repeatedly said the accusations were inflated, and majority of the attacks were political in nature, not religious.

Dhaka has complained of misinformation about Bangladesh in the Indian media and protested the statements of Hasina via social media, saying that those statements were inciting instability in Bangladesh.

There was also tension over India installing border fences within the 150 yards of the international borders at several places along the Bangladesh-India border.

After the demolition of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhamondi 32, Bangladesh foreign ministry summoned Pawan Badhe, the Indian deputy high commissioner in Dhaka, to lodge a strong protest against Hasina's statements.

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## I love seeing people with books in their hands: Mamo

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Zakia Bari Mamo recently starred in Vicky Zahed's web film *Ondhokarer Gaan*, alongside Mosharraf Karim and Shahnaz Sumi. The project premiered on January 8 on the OTT platform Binge, and has been met with much acclaim.

*Ondhokarer Gaan* has received great appreciation, and the entire credit goes to director Vicky Zahed. He has done an outstanding job, putting in immense effort and care," she said.

Praising her co-star Mosharraf Karim, Mamo remarked, "Mosharraf Karim is a phenomenal actor. I always enjoy working with him, and this time was no different. I often wonder—how does he act so brilliantly?"

Following the release of *Ondhokarer Gaan*, the actress has been involved in a documentary project.

Discussing her current engagements, Mamo shared, "At the moment, I am focusing on some personal projects. I have been reading books and spending my time differently. I also visited the book fair and bought quite a few books."

When asked about her experience at the book fair,

she shared, "I always enjoy visiting the book fair, and this year was no exception. So many people are attending, but I wonder—what if everyone who came also bought books? That would be even better. I wish I could see everyone with books in their hands!"

This year, she collected a short story collection by Shahaduzzaman, books by actresses Sushoma Sarkar and Shanare Devi Shanu, and novels by Sadat Hossain and Alvi Ahmed.

Mamo also expressed her deep admiration for Humayun Ahmed. Having made her acting debut in *Daruchini Dwip*, a film based on one of his stories, she won the National Film Award for her performance. "He is one of my all-time favourites. He built a vast readership, and even today, countless people still read his books. The new generation continues to buy his works. To be honest, he instilled the habit of reading in so many people. His writings are very special to me."

A d d r e s s i n g whether there is a shortage of strong narratives, she admitted, "Yes, there is a crisis of good stories. We must prioritise quality storytelling."

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



## It's a miracle that I'm alive: Saif Ali Khan

After a terrifying encounter with an intruder inside his own home, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan has finally broken his silence. In an interview with Indian outlet *Bombay Times*, the actor recounted the harrowing night.

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PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

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## Trump aiming to bring Iran 'to its knees'

Says Iran's president

AFP, Tehran

Iran's president yesterday accused his US counterpart Donald Trump of seeking to bring the Islamic republic "to its knees" as the country marked the 1979 revolution that toppled the shah.

The revolution removed a pro-US government in Iran, and the subsequent hostage-taking of American diplomats in Tehran ushered in decades of hostility between the United States and Iran.

This year's celebrations carry additional weight following Trump's return to the White House. During his first term, Trump pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" against the Islamic republic.

In the morning, people gathered in public spaces across Iran, accompanied by pop songs and patriotic ballads, to celebrate the anniversary of the overthrow of shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

In Tehran, they headed to the symbolic Azadi tower, whose name means



Destroyed buildings are pictured near Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Palestinians have no right of return under Gaza plan: Trump

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump said Palestinians would have no right to return to Gaza under his US takeover plan, describing his proposal in excerpts of an interview released yesterday as a "real estate development for the future."

Trump told Fox News Channel's Bret Baier that "I would own it" and that there could be as many as six different sites for Palestinians to live outside Gaza under the plan, which the Arab world and others in the international community have rejected.

"No, they wouldn't, because they're going to have much better housing," Trump said when Baier asked if the Palestinians would have the right to return to the enclave, most of which has been reduced to rubble by Israel's military since October 2023.

"In other words, I'm talking about building a permanent place for them because if they have to return now, it'll be years before you could ever -- it's not habitable."

Trump first revealed the shock Gaza plan during a joint news conference with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, drawing outrage from Palestinians.

The US president pressed his case for Palestinians to be moved out of Gaza, devastated by the Israel-Hamas war, and for Egypt and Jordan to take them.

In the Fox interview -- which was scheduled to be broadcast yesterday after the first half was screened a day earlier -- Trump said he would build "beautiful communities" for the more than two million Palestinians who live in Gaza.

"Could be five, six, could be two. But we'll build safe communities, a little bit away from where they are, where all of this danger is," added Trump.

"In the meantime, I would own this. Think of it as a real estate development for the future. It would be a beautiful piece of land. No big money spent."

Trump stunned the world when he announced out of the blue last week that the United States would "take over the Gaza Strip," remove rubble and

unexploded bombs and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

Netanyahu on Sunday praised Trump's proposal as "revolutionary", striking a triumphant tone in a statement to his cabinet following his return from Washington.

The reaction from much of the rest of the world has been one of outrage, with Egypt, Jordan, other Arab nations and the Palestinians all rejecting it out of hand.

The criticism was not limited to the Arab world, with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Sunday labeling the plan "a scandal," adding that the forced relocation of Palestinians would be "unacceptable and against international law."

Trump, however, repeated his insistence that he could persuade Egypt and Jordan, both major recipients of US military aid, to come around.

"I think I could make a deal with Jordan. I think I could make a deal with Egypt. You know, we give them billions and billions of dollars a year," he told Fox.

## 343 more held across country

FROM PAGE 12  
were also seized.

The government said this is a police-led operation, with the army and other forces providing assistance.

In another development, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said several committees have been formed to ensure that no innocent person is harassed during the operation.

"Only those involved in criminal activities will be arrested in Operation Devil Hunt. Even law enforcement officials will not be outside the purview of the operation.

It will continue until the country is free from devils," he said while speaking to reporters after a meeting with law enforcement agencies at the Office of Deputy Commissioner, Rajshahi.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the chief adviser yesterday evening, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said there should be no repetition of "previous incidents" during Operation Devil Hunt and that no innocent person should be harassed.

In a statement, Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader

yesterday alleged that "ghost cases" are being filed during Operation Devil Hunt.

He claimed that the operation is being used to suppress opposition voices, particularly his party.

"Our party is facing repression. Numerous false cases have been filed against our leaders and activists. Many are being arrested, and they are not even being granted bail."

Quader also alleged that their party's political activities, including meetings, rallies, and processions, are being obstructed.

Earlier, the home adviser

said the operation will target those who attempt to destabilise the country, break the law, and engage in criminal activities.

### ARRESTS

Analysing reports from some districts, The Daily Star found that the arrests are mostly members of the Awami League and its associate bodies.

Many of them are accused in cases filed after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5.

In Gazipur, at least 100 people, mostly AL leaders including a former MP, were arrested.

ওয়েস্ট জেন পাওয়ার ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (ওজেপাডিকেলি)

West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited (WZPDCL)

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, ভোলা বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ, ওজেপাডিকেলি, ভোলা

তারিখ: ১০-০২-২০২৫ ইং

### পুনঃনির্মাণ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। মন্ত্রনালয়ের নাম	: বিদ্যুৎ জ্বালানি ও বর্ণিত সম্পদ মন্ত্রনালয়।
২। সংস্থার নাম	: ওয়েস্ট জেন পাওয়ার ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানি লিঃ।
৩। দপ্তরের নাম	: ভোলা বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ, ওজেপাডিকেলি, ভোলা।
৪। কাজের নাম	: ভোলা বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের আওতাধীন চরক্ষণশন ও মন্ত্রুল বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের বিদ্যুৎ কেন্দ্রের ভাড়ারের অক্ষেত্রে (অব্যবহৃত) মালামাল।
৫। দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	: খোলা দরপত্র (OTM)
৬। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞাপনের শেষ তারিখ	: ০৪/০৩/২০২৫ ইং (অফিস চলাকীলীন সময়।)
৭। দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ০৫/০৩/২০২৫ ইং তারিখে খোলার সময় প্রায় দুই মিনিট। খোলার সময় প্রায় দুই মিনিট। একে দরপত্র অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করে।
৮। বিশেষ নির্দেশিকা	: ক) কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শনালো বাতিল করে নি যে কোন দরপত্র অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল অথবা গ্রহণ করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে। খ) অন্যান্য শর্তবদী ওজেপাডিকেলি'র ওয়েব সাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।

ফোন-০২৪৭৮৯৩৩৩০৫

Web: www.wzpdcl.gov.bd

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(মোঃ ইউসুফ)

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী

ভোলা বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ, ওজেপাডিকেলি, ভোলা।



Dhaka South City Corporation

Office of the System Analyst, ICT CELL

Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka.

Date: 9.02.2025

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited through e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by System Analyst, ICT CELL, Dhaka South City Corporation for the Procurement of following package, which will be available at e-GP website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) from date: 10-Feb-2025, 15.00

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Ref. No. & Package no.	Name of Works	Last Selling date and Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	Tender ID 1072543 Ref. & Package no. DSCLICT/2024-2025/001/01_1	Yearly 1500 Mbps bandwidth Supply to Dhaka South City Corporation Head Office, Zonal Office(1-10), 75 Ward Offices 03 water pumps, 03 Hospitals and 10 Wireless Towers including maintenance works.	25-Feb'2025 15.00	25-Feb'2025 16.00

This is an online Tender, Where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To Submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Md. Abu Taiyeb  
System Analyst, ICT CELL  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka.

## Remove bottlenecks in the supply chain

Govt must plan ahead to tackle sudden shocks

Since taking office six months ago, the interim government has undertaken several initiatives to bring inflation under control, attempting to provide some relief to ordinary people struggling with a cost-of-living crisis for several years now. However, while these measures have had some impact—slightly easing inflationary pressure—their full effect has yet to be felt, largely due to an inefficient supply chain that is riddled with obstacles that continue to drive up the prices of essentials, as a government report has found.

The report, prepared by the Finance Division, highlights structural flaws in the supply chain that prevent consumers from fully benefiting from inflation-control measures. Among them are market manipulation, middlemen intervention, insufficient storage facilities, and weak market monitoring. These issues are deep-rooted, requiring sustained, long-term solutions to ensure effective market regulation and inflation control, the report states.

Maintaining ample food stock to meet national demand and offset any unanticipated crisis is also important. Of course, there are natural causes that may hamper food production and storage. For instance, last year's floods in the eastern part of the country affected Aus and Aman rice production, leading to a shortfall in this fiscal year's target. Or consider the recent outbreak of late blight disease in the northern districts of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, triggered by cold weather and dense fog, affecting potato cultivation. However, human-induced disruptions play a far more damaging role in our food market.

Think of the artificial crises that are often created. The Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission revealed on Sunday that the ongoing shortage of edible oil in kitchen markets is entirely artificial, as leading refiners confirmed no actual supply shortage. Time and again, we have seen how unscrupulous traders have hoarded essential food items to create artificial crises and drive up prices. This manipulation extends to other imported goods as well. The Finance Division report has recommended conducting special mobile courts at the district level to monitor and curb price manipulation. However, while this may be effective in the short term, a long-term solution requires overhauling the system to eliminate such exploitative practices. One way to do this is by setting up a direct supply system where farmers can sell their produce to the government or other market authorities without the help of middlemen.

With Ramadan only a couple of weeks away, kitchen markets are bound to heat up. We urge the government to be prudent in managing this situation. To fully realise the benefits of its inflation-curbing policies, it must put effective measures in place to remove the bottlenecks from the supply chain, making the system efficient and consumer-friendly.

## We need a pro-citizen public administration

Public servants should aim to serve, not rule, citizens

A survey conducted by the Public Administration Reform Commission has revealed widespread public dissatisfaction with the country's public administration. According to the survey, conducted on over one lakh people, a staggering 80 percent of respondents believe the administration is not public-friendly, while 66 percent feel civil servants behave like "rulers." Moreover, 96 percent believe the public administration lacks transparency and accountability, 69 percent say it has lacked neutrality over the past 15 years, and 84 percent feel reforms are essential. These findings are as eye-opening as they are alarming, and we hope that they will be taken into account by the authorities as the country awaits a major overhaul of its public administration.

Other findings of the survey are equally troubling. For example, a significant percentage of respondents have reported experiencing discourteous behaviour from government employees, believed that receiving services without paying bribes is impossible, and faced harassment while seeking services. Furthermore, many have also identified political interference and corruption as key obstacles to making the administration people-friendly.

Reforming the public administration has been long overdue in the country. Since independence, there have been at least 16 commissions and committees that proposed measures for an efficient, merit-based, and service-oriented civil administration. But most of these recommendations were ignored largely due to opposition from bureaucrats as well as a lack of political will. In particular, under the Awami League's rule for more than 15 years, corruption and irregularities within the administration reached unprecedented heights. We observed how public officials blatantly violated service rules by running "side businesses" and engaging in corruption. Even the government itself encouraged corruption, as highlighted last year when the public administration ministry proposed relaxing a rule requiring civil servants to submit wealth statements every five years. Meanwhile, the public continued to suffer from inadequate services.

Now that an opportunity for reform has finally arrived, it must not be wasted. As the Public Administration Reform Commission has submitted its report to the chief adviser—outlining short-, medium-, and long-term plans—these should be discussed properly with all relevant stakeholders so that greater public interests are served through reforms. While removing discrimination among different cadres should be a priority, the ultimate goal must be to build a public administration that is transparent, corruption-free, service-oriented, and truly people-friendly. Simply put, public servants should serve the people, not the other way around.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Hosni Mubarak steps down

On this day in 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepped down after nearly 30 years in power, following mass demonstrations that were part of the pro-democracy uprisings known as the Arab Spring.

# EDITORIAL

## Why do we need so many universities?



### MACRO MIRROR

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#### FAHMIDA KATUN

Despite having 171 universities, higher education in Bangladesh faces several challenges as the quality of education in many of these institutions remains substandard. Though public universities are subsidised, they fail to meet international academic standards, affecting their global rankings and the employability of their graduates. Many private universities, too, have questionable educational standards, although some offer innovative programmes. It is perceived that some private universities "sell" degrees rather than provide quality education. There is a significant mismatch between the academic outputs of universities and the actual demands of the labour market. As a result, many graduates fail to secure employment that matches their qualifications. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2022 indicates that the unemployment rate is highest among those with tertiary education; it is 12 percent compared to 8.78 percent and 2.82 percent among those with higher secondary and secondary education, respectively.

Underinvestment in education, along with the consistently low government funding in the tertiary sector, creates a significant barrier to improving the quality of higher education in the country. Between FY2016 and FY2024, government expenditure on tertiary education has remained at around one percent of the total revised budget of the respective fiscal years, according to ministry documents. Insufficient funding has limited the universities' ability to enhance their academic offerings and invest in infrastructure, technology and faculty development.

While this is the state of education quality, the students of Government Titumir College are demanding an upgrade of their institution to the university status. For several days, they protested and blocked roads in the capital city pressing their demands, which caused public suffering. The education adviser was adamant that he would not take any hasty decision under pressure. He also mentioned that half of the public universities in Bangladesh have been established during the past seven years, although

it takes years to set up a university.

Under the circumstances, the students' desire to convert a college into a university raises a critical question: will such a move improve the quality of higher education, or will it be a mere cosmetic change that risks deterioration of academic standards further?

Merely converting colleges that lack high education quality into universities will not resolve the fundamental issues facing the education sector. Changing the status of a college to a university does not automatically



Some colleges are demanding an upgrade to university status even though the education quality of many tertiary institutions in the country remains low.

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

elevate its academic standing or enhance the prospects of its graduates to obtain jobs. Some of the world's most prestigious tertiary education institutions still have the terms "college" and even "school" in their names, and that does not diminish their reputation. In fact, many of these colleges and schools are world leaders in education and research. In the US, graduates of many liberal arts colleges are sought after by leading companies and graduate programmes because of the colleges' academic excellence and high reputation. Neither the students nor the recruiters have any qualms about the term "college."

Turning colleges into universities is not a sustainable solution and

could ultimately harm the country's higher education landscape. Instead, the government should focus on comprehensive reforms that emphasise quality, innovation, and employability to ensure that the country's higher education system meets the global standard. Policymakers need to adopt a more pragmatic approach, focusing on improving the academic environment in the existing colleges rather than upgrading them to universities. Quality should be prioritised over

the number of students or facilities. Physical campuses of the merged universities will still exist, but will operate under one university. In the case of private universities, the government can set some minimum thresholds for educational outcomes with specific deadlines. Those who fail to meet the minimum educational standards can be subject to merger with others. Students will benefit from the quality and reputation of the institution.

Therefore, the government should invest in improving the infrastructure, recruiting qualified faculty members, and ensuring modern, research-driven curricula in the existing institutions to transform colleges into centres of excellence. Strong governance, innovative teaching, effective research, and active involvement of the faculty and students in academic development are vital. Collaborations with international institutions, faculty development programmes,

Some of the most pressing issues that have continued to afflict Bangladesh's higher education system for years include inadequate government funding, outdated curricula, a shortage of qualified faculty members, and political interference affecting academic freedom. Unhealthy and violent student politics on campuses further undermine the academic environment. Besides increased government funding, improved access to technology and systemic reforms to improve education quality are required to ensure that the workforce is adequately prepared for the demands of both the domestic and global labour markets. A merit-based recruitment system for university teachers, safeguarding of academic freedom, and operational autonomy of universities to protect them from political interference should be part of the reform.

Improving the quality of higher education also requires a long-term vision and a willingness to adopt best practices from successful models. By learning from the experiences of other countries, Bangladesh can take meaningful steps towards building a modern, competitive higher education system that meets the needs of its students and the broader economy.

and expanding research funding are crucial for enhancing the quality of education in these colleges. A robust accreditation system to evaluate the quality of both colleges and universities is needed to maintain standards and ensure that students receive the education they deserve.

The key to improving higher education is not in the number of universities but in creating institutions that provide students with a transformative learning experience. A radical step by the government could be the merger of similar educational institutions and universities that complement each other, to strengthen their academic capacity and improve competitiveness. This will not reduce

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

## Women in STEM can revolutionise the industry



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#### RAIDA A. K. REZA

Growing up, the stars would fascinate me. Tiny specks of light were always there, behind the clouds, above the foggy winter nights, sometimes complementing the moonlight. I could make up patterns from the stars, and I would observe that these patterns would come back to the same spot even when they were scattered.

Patterns were comforting to me; they provided me with a sense of constant continuity. I was also curious as to why things happen the way they do, from trying to mix toothpaste with *alta* to mimic the texture of lipstick, to trying to mix salt with a bunch of random things just to see what happens.

As a child, my mind was filled with fascination for the ways of nature. I looked for answers and found Bernoulli's answers to dancing atoms, Doppler's theories to why a siren from a moving train doesn't sound the same everywhere, how stars are balls of fire, and how we can find through science the answers to interconnectivity between everything.

However, I was never too keen on looking at the people behind the theories or the inventions. I was happy to learn, and eventually, I decided to pursue a career in science. As I went from high school to university to pursuing science professionally, I

noticed that my peers went from being a mix of men and women to being mostly men. Often, at meetings with engineers, I was the only woman in the room. In some places, they would think my opinion mattered less, in others my opinion was too important.

Looking back, all the scientists that I looked up to were men. Of course, there were women like Marie Curie and Rosalind Franklin, but they were overshadowed by the men that were always talked about. Historically, we never gave proper credit to women's contribution in science.

Additionally in design, crash dummies were modelled on the average male body for decades, leading to higher injury rates for women in car accidents. Even products used exclusively by women are not tested with the female body in mind. For example, sanitary pads and tampons are tested using water or saline, which do not match the viscosity, clotting or absorption properties of real menstrual blood.

Examples like this exist because of the lack of female representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines all over the world, with brown and black women rarely being celebrated. Female representation in STEM is crucial

for driving innovation, addressing societal challenges, and ensuring that diverse perspectives are integrated into scientific and technological advancement. When women, especially women of colour, are included in scientific research and technological development, they bring unique lived experiences and perspectives that can fundamentally transform how problems are understood and solved. Studies from organisations like McKinsey consistently show that gender diverse leadership correlates with more comprehensive sustainability reporting and proactive climate risk management, leading to substantially higher commitment and environmental and social governance strategies.

Female leadership in tech companies correlates with more robust ethical frameworks. Companies with women in key tech leadership roles are more likely to develop comprehensive algorithmic bias detection systems and implement inclusive design principles. Their teams consistently produce technologies that demonstrate greater consideration for diverse user experiences and are considerate of potential societal impacts.

Moreover, increased representation helps dismantle systemic barriers and creates role models for future generations. When young girls, particularly girls of colour, see scientists, engineers and technologists who look like them achieving remarkable things, it expands their perception of what's possible.

Our collective future depends on transforming STEM disciplines into truly inclusive spaces. For students and early-career professionals, this means actively seeking mentorship,

challenging existing structures, and creating supportive networks that amplify marginalised voices. Educational institutions must redesign recruitment, retention, and advancement strategies to genuinely support women's participation in STEM. Corporate and research leaders must move beyond what seems like symbolic or token diversity initiatives by implementing concrete mechanisms that include transparent hiring practices, equitable promotion pathways, meaningful leadership opportunities, and organisational cultures that value diverse perspectives fundamental to innovation.

Policymakers and funding agencies must prioritise research grants, scholarships, and support systems specifically designed to remove barriers for women in STEM. Investment in these areas is strategically imperative for technological and scientific advancement.

In today's world, where growing population thinks gender issues are considered funny or perceived as useless, it is important that we create equitable future for girls, where they are safe, thriving, and do not have to face the hardships of their predecessors.

Individual action is powerful. Whether you're a student, professional, educator or leader, commit to one tangible step: mentor a young woman in STEM, challenge discriminatory practices, amplify women's achievements, and support initiatives that create more inclusive scientific spaces. Our collective future of innovation depends on unleashing the full potential of every talented individual, regardless of gender or background.

# In defence of secularism



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SEЛИM RAIHAN

The Constitution Reform Commission, in its report submitted to the interim government last month, has proposed that secularism be replaced with pluralism as one of the fundamental principles of the constitution. Though the word "pluralism" seems amiable to represent the diversity of voices within society, it is almost impossible to put into practice effectively due to the lack of any formal framework for implementation. Ironically, the state has to be intrinsically secular to become a quintessential pluralistic society.

Secularism, as a basic tenet of the national identity of Bangladesh, was recognised after the Liberation War. However, this has increasingly been challenged over the past few years, which raises questions about the country's level of commitment towards religious pluralism, democracy, and social harmony. As the country makes its sociopolitical

journey, the reaffirmation of secularism is quite instrumental in guaranteeing inclusive development, peace, and democratic stability.

Bangladesh was born out of a long struggle for linguistic and cultural identity and democratic rights, which led to the war in 1971. The drafters of the 1972 constitution envisioned a secular state where citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliation, would enjoy equal rights and freedoms. But subsequent political developments, including constitutional amendments and policy shifts, growing influence of religion-based parties and elements, rejection of secularism by some dominant political parties, and diminishing significance of leftist politics, have gradually undermined the commitment to secularism. This also coincided with the inclusion of religious elements in governance and political rhetoric, often at the cost of communal harmony.

Secularism, as a basic tenet of the national identity of Bangladesh, was recognised after the Liberation War. However, this has increasingly been challenged over the past few years, which raises questions about the country's level of commitment towards religious pluralism, democracy, and social harmony. As the country makes its sociopolitical

Though secularism was one of the main planks of the 1972 constitution, the Awami League itself strayed far from its real essence over the past one and a half decades. It used a perverted form of secularism to silence opposition voices. This aberration also served to undermine the founding ideals by which the nation was anchored, and further eroded trust within society. The erosion of

about ensuring the equal treatment of all religious communities and the separation of religion from state affairs. At its core, it guarantees that no religion is privileged over another in the governance of the state. This principle upholds freedom of belief, prevents discrimination, and fosters a sense of national unity that transcends religious divides.

In a country like Bangladesh,

a secular and inclusive polity strengthens Bangladesh's diplomatic and economic prospects. Countries that uphold religious neutrality and pluralism are often seen as stable and attractive for investment and international cooperation.

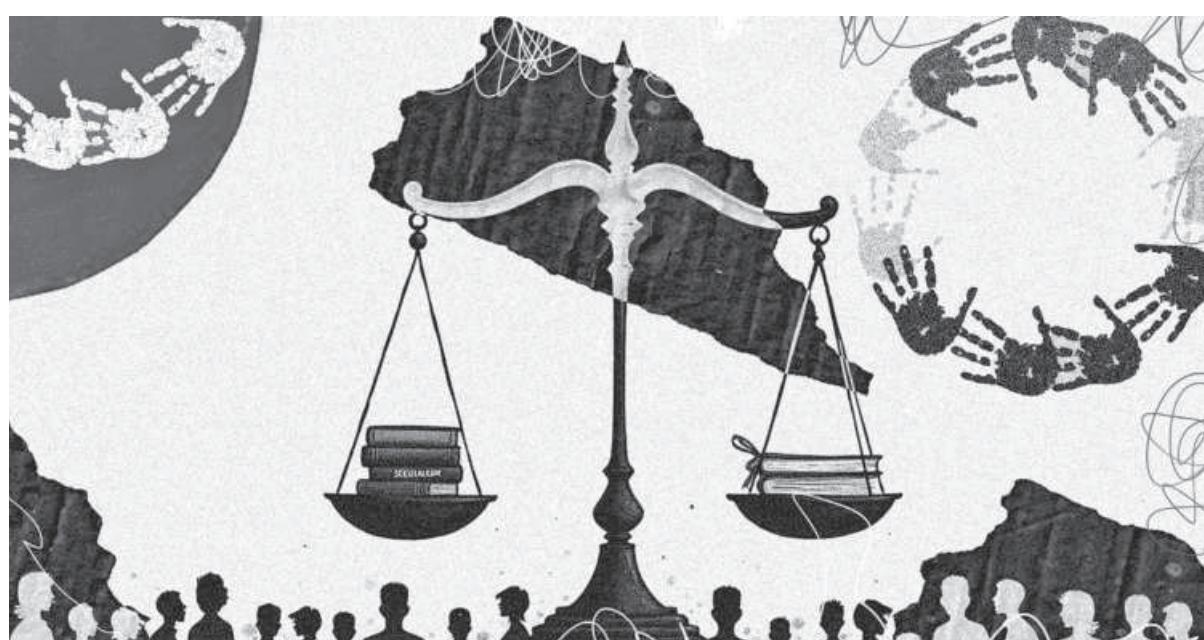
Some would argue that pluralism—a principle that accommodates multiple religious and cultural traditions—could

Moreover, pluralism assumes that there is a balance of power among the different religious groups, which is not always the case in reality. Unless the state is secular to ensure religious neutrality, there will always remain a strong chance of domination by the majority or religiously based political influence. While pluralism is one of the essential social values, it needs to supplement—and not substitute—secularism as a basic principle for governance in Bangladesh.

Moreover, having a fixed state religion is contradictory to both pluralism and secularism. True pluralism requires a secular foundation where no religion is given preferential treatment in the constitution or governance.

Despite its constitutional commitment to secularism, Bangladesh has faced persistent challenges such as extremism, political opportunism, and social intolerance. To reinforce secularism, political leadership must unequivocally support policies that protect religious freedom and prevent discrimination. Educational curricula should promote values of tolerance and coexistence, while civil society must actively engage in advocacy to counter divisive narratives.

Secularism is not merely an ideological stance; it is a necessity for a cohesive and forward-looking Bangladesh. As the country aspires to achieve upper middle-income and developed status, maintaining an inclusive and secular political framework will be essential for sustainable progress. Defending secularism is, therefore, not just about preserving history, but about securing the future of Bangladesh as a prosperous and harmonious country.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

secular principles, especially under the aegis of the very party that once claimed to be the guardian of these values, highlights the pressing need for a recommitment to true secularism to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their beliefs, are treated with fairness and equality.

Secularism, contrary to the belief of some people, is not about the rejection of religion; rather, it is about ensuring the equal treatment of all religious communities and the separation of religion from state affairs. At its core, it guarantees that no religion is privileged over another in the governance of the state.

This principle upholds freedom of belief, prevents discrimination, and fosters a sense of national unity that transcends religious divides.

with its rich history of interfaith harmony, secularism is the bulwark against extremism and sectarianism. It ensures that all citizens have equal rights and opportunities. Secularism also supports the idea that religion is a personal matter, and should not interfere with the functioning of the state.

Additionally, in a rapidly globalised world, maintaining

replace secularism in Bangladesh. While pluralism encourages diversity and respect for different faiths, it does not adequately offer the structural neutrality that secularism does. Pluralism, if not undergirded by a secular framework, may still allow religious norms to seep into state affairs, thus raising a risk of undermining equal treatment for all citizens.

partnerships can be encouraged, too.

Additionally, this platform will support all forms of organised training programmes of the government agencies, research organisations and NGOs, and can be the hub of agricultural transformation, from individual level to group or community level, giving a better bargaining power to the producers for better prices on their investment.

If this works at the upazila level, an extended platform at the district level can be developed to ensure faster market access from where produce can be transported to other markets.

In many advanced countries, innovation platforms exist, which enable interaction among producers and customers, allow different stakeholders to come and share information, ideas and resources, and play a significant role in creating opportunities for entrepreneurial activities to begin, shape up policies and regulations, and develop supporting infrastructure for entrepreneurial activities. Bangladesh may not be an advanced country yet and may have a number of challenges, but it is possible to develop a platform like this that can bring a fundamental change in the lives of the marginal farmers—if, and only if, we can turn this idea into practice.

## Circular agricultural innovation platform can benefit farmers and consumers



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SABRINA LUTHFA

In Bangladesh, farmers do not get fair prices for their harvest and consumers do not get access to quality food at reasonable prices, both because of the existing dysfunctional marketing channel, which includes many layers of value chain actors who are commonly known as middlemen. To address this issue, developing a circular agricultural innovation platform can help both farmers and consumers to avail fair market prices. This can be actualised only if we can create an agricultural ecosystem and a supporting infrastructure for the platform.

Innovation is not necessarily something novel; rather, it is something that creates value for consumers. In the agricultural sector, innovation can be producing quality foods, higher yield, vertical farming, precision agriculture that increases soil quality and productivity, faster delivery to the consumer end, storing, processing, preparing and marketing of quality foods at reasonable prices to consumers, etc. An innovation platform is a virtual place that enables value creation. This platform brings together producers, consumers, and other stakeholders—for example, distributors, processing organisations, policymakers, regulatory authorities, etc—and helps them identify common problems and market needs while also creating opportunities for new stakeholders to emerge. For instance, consumers demanding organic foods would necessitate organic feed for poultry, organic manure for soil, and delivery with a low carbon footprint. Entrepreneurs can find opportunities to fulfil these necessities by establishing sustainable companies.

In sustainable development literature, circular economy is defined as a regenerative system for which the main principles are: to eliminate waste and pollution; to extend the life of the products through reuse, recycling, repair, and remanufacture; and to use renewable resources to replenish the ecosystem. In simpler words, in a circular economy, waste and resources are recycled, recreated, reconstructed, and reconfigured into new products to achieve zero waste.

opportunities by establishing sustainable companies.

The platform will be self-sufficient and self-sustaining as the stakeholders would benefit each other within a circular economic system. The stakeholders will be connected through a virtual platform, a web account, and/or a smartphone application to carry out

to work in the outlet, a trainer, a processing centre manager, social business investors, and researchers from different fields of agriculture, marketing, and engineering to help build the ecosystem to make the platform functional.

Firstly, upazila storage and food processing and packaging facilities will be developed where farmers will

store their produce, process them, and package them. For example, they can wash, dry, and pack them, set a price, and make them ready for dispatch to other locations.

Secondly, there will be auction-based marketing of products from the outlet, so the profit from the produce at this centre will go directly to the farmers. Farmers will be able to upload information and photos of their produce on the app. Retailers and individual customers can contact the farmers directly through this app, unless they use their contract farmers while also having direct access to the produce at the outlet.

As we know, when supply is abundant, it decreases the bargaining power of the producer since consumers have options to choose from. Hence, farmers can produce certain items to maintain the demand and supply balance by the agricultural officers.

Now, the most important part of this platform is to use the wastes of the post-harvest and pre-market processing of products through recycling. This can create opportunities for entrepreneurs to start recycling companies. This platform can encourage entrepreneurial activities in food processing, green fertiliser, green pesticides, energy, recycling, and the waste sector. Public-private



A circular agricultural innovation platform would connect farmers and consumers without too many value chain actors.

For example, cow dung can be used to produce organic manure, which can then be used to fertilise lands for crop production, or food waste can be used to create compost or rice husk ash, a byproduct produced by burning rice grain husks that can be used to produce energy to power a manufacturing facility. These examples show that circular practices are not new in Bangladesh.

However, over the last few decades, organic practices have been replaced by more non-organic ones. Thus, developing a circular agricultural innovation platform would connect farmers and consumers without having too many value chain actors competing with each other, ensuring fair prices for farmers and better value for consumers. It will ensure zero waste by coordinating the exchange of resources among different value creators, e.g. farmers, poultry and fish harvesters, green fertiliser and pesticide companies, seed and food processing centres, recycling centres, groceries, and consumers. It can also enable national and international actors to contact the farmers directly without the intervention of any middlemen.

If the model succeeds, this can be scaled up. The platform will need a smartphone application developer, an IT and website manager, outlet managers, employees

the activities. This application would be used to increase production and promote and market fresh and processed food items to consumers.

There must be a physical platform as well in the form of an outlet, storage, processing, and packaging facility connected with this virtual platform. Farmers will bring their produce to the outlet to sell at market prices. They can leave their produce at the storage, processing, and packaging centre located close to the outlet that can be delivered to faraway markets. The physical platform must be owned by the farmers collectively. Owning the centre will increase the bargaining power of the farmers, reduce the power of different levels of *arotdar* (warehouse agents), and create a competition with large food processing companies/retailers. Consequently, it will force innovation and quality enhancement, encourage consumers to buy from the "nearby" market, and in the process will also help reduce carbon footprint.

How will the platform function? Initially this platform should be developed covering a small area, including some villages under one upazila. If the model succeeds, this can be scaled up. The platform will need a smartphone application developer, an IT and website manager, outlet managers, employees

**EDCL ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED**  
395-397, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka-1208

**PRESS TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Ref.: EDCL (Dhaka)/PUR/PT/ S.S perforated baskets/2025/37      Date: 10/02/2025

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from the reputed Suppliers/Local Manufacturer/Workshop/ Organization for Supply of following item at EDCL, Dhaka on urgent basis:

Name of the Item	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Schedule	Last date of Closing & Opening
S.S perforated baskets --- 50 (Fifty) pcs. For Sterile section under the Production Department at EDCL, Dhaka Plant. (Details as per Tender Schedule)	TK.2.5% of quoted amount	Tk.1,000.00/set (Non-Refundable)	Closing : 24/02/2025 at 12.00PM Opening : 24/02/2025 at 12.30PM

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

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

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

(e" X 8)

**General Manager (CC)**  
**Procurement Department**  
**For: Managing Director**

# LIFELONG LEARNING

## Staying relevant in the age of AI

ZARIF FAIAZ

The rise of AI isn't a distant phenomenon confined to Silicon Valley boardrooms; it's here, woven into the fabric of Bangladesh's economy. Jobs once considered secure are evolving or disappearing while new roles, unimaginable a decade ago, are emerging at breakneck speed. In this shifting landscape, the question isn't just how AI will change the job market, but how we, as individuals, will adapt. The answer lies in embracing a mindset that is as dynamic as the technology itself: lifelong learning. This is not just a buzzword; it's the key to survival and success in a world where staying still means falling behind.

Artificial intelligence has become both a catalyst for progress and a source of disruption in the global job market. On one hand, it automates routine tasks, enhancing productivity and efficiency across industries. On the other, it threatens traditional roles, particularly those that rely heavily on repetitive tasks. A study by the International Monetary Fund predicts that AI will affect four in ten jobs globally, with advanced economies feeling the brunt of this transformation. However, AI is not merely a force of disruption; it also

underscores the urgent need for workers to adapt through continuous learning and skill development.

In this context, lifelong learning emerges as not just a personal choice but an economic necessity. It is the process of continuously acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout one's life to remain relevant in an ever-changing job market. Unlike traditional education, which often ends with a degree, lifelong learning is an ongoing commitment to personal and professional growth. It enables individuals to adapt to technological shifts, meet evolving job requirements, and seize new opportunities created by AI and other innovations.

The journey of lifelong learning begins with embracing continuous education. This doesn't necessarily mean enrolling in formal degree programs, although that remains an option. Online platforms like Coursera, edX, and Udemy have democratised education, offering courses in AI, data science, and other emerging fields. These platforms provide flexible learning opportunities, allowing individuals to acquire new skills at their own pace, regardless of geographical location or financial constraints. In Bangladesh, initiatives like government-supported digital learning platforms are helping bridge the gap, bringing high-quality education to urban and

by leveraging AI itself as a learning tool. AI-powered educational technologies can personalise learning experiences, adapting to the unique needs and preferences of each learner. These tools identify knowledge gaps, recommend tailored resources, and provide real-time feedback, making learning more efficient and engaging. In Bangladesh, the adoption of such technologies in schools and training centers is gradually transforming traditional education models, fostering a culture of continuous learning from an early age.

Networking also plays a vital role in lifelong learning. Engaging with professional communities, attending industry conferences, and participating in online forums provide valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange. In Bangladesh, the growing presence of tech hubs, co-working spaces, and professional associations creates vibrant ecosystems where individuals can collaborate, share insights, and stay informed about industry trends. These networks often serve as incubators for innovation and can lead to mentorship opportunities, partnerships, and career advancement.

Interdisciplinary knowledge is another cornerstone of lifelong learning. The convergence of AI with various sectors—such as healthcare, finance, agriculture, and education—has created new fields of study and career paths. For instance, understanding how AI can optimise agricultural practices in Bangladesh can lead to breakthroughs in food security and sustainability. Similarly, combining expertise in finance with knowledge of AI-driven analytics opens doors to roles in fintech, a rapidly growing industry in the country.

While the responsibility of lifelong learning largely falls on individuals, organisations and governments also play crucial roles in fostering a culture of continuous development. Companies must invest in employee training and development programs, recognising that a skilled workforce is essential for maintaining a competitive edge. This includes offering workshops, funding certifications, and creating learning-friendly environments that encourage curiosity and experimentation.

Government initiatives are equally important. Policies that promote education reform, support vocational training, and facilitate public-private partnerships can create an ecosystem where lifelong learning thrives. In Bangladesh, programs like the a2i initiative aim to leverage digital technologies to enhance education and workforce readiness, ensuring that the population is equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing job market.

Despite these efforts, several challenges persist. Access to quality education remains uneven, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure and resources are limited. Economic barriers also hinder many from pursuing further education, as financial constraints often force individuals to prioritise immediate income over long-term skill development. Moreover, there is a need to raise awareness about the importance of lifelong learning, as traditional mindsets may view education as a phase rather than a continuous process.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Expanding internet connectivity, providing financial support for education, and creating community learning centers can help bridge the gap. Public awareness campaigns highlighting success stories of individuals who have benefited from lifelong learning can inspire others to follow suit.

Lifelong learning is not just a strategy for individual career growth; it is a national imperative for economic resilience and social progress. In an age where the only constant is change, the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn will define the future—not just for individuals, but for the entire nation. The future belongs to those who are willing to adapt, and in the age of AI, that adaptation begins with a simple yet powerful commitment: to never stop learning.

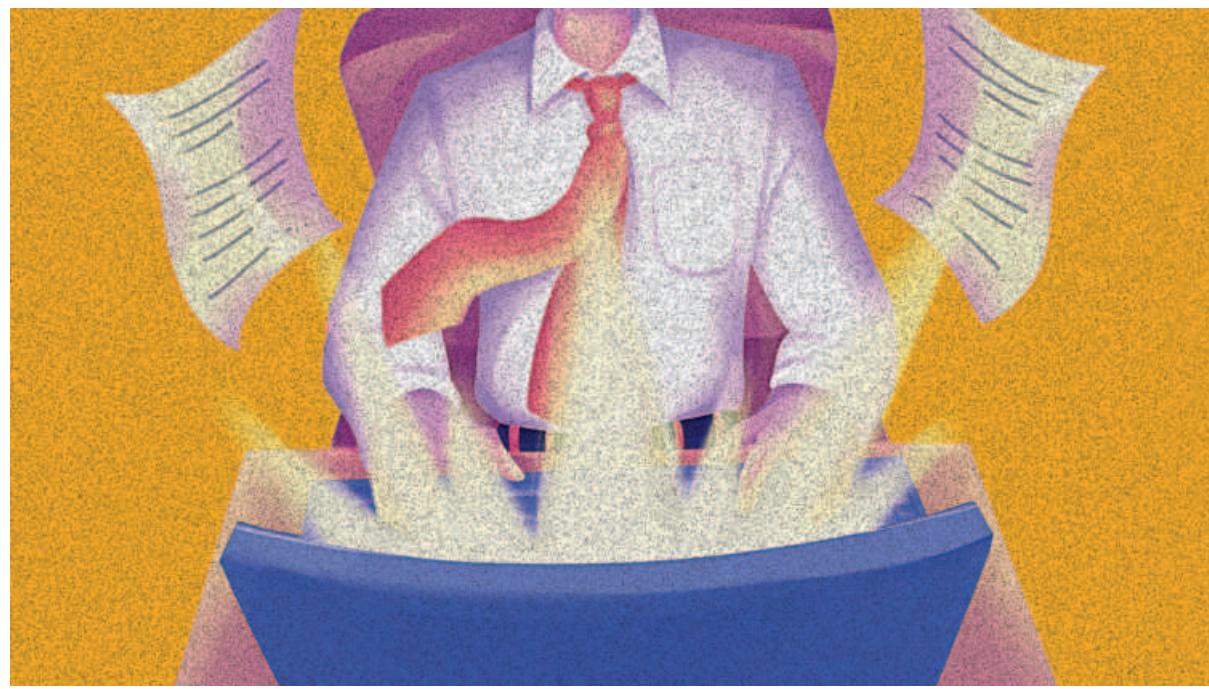


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

creates new opportunities. The World Economic Forum anticipates that while AI may displace certain roles, it will simultaneously generate around 97 million new jobs by 2025, especially in areas like data analysis, machine learning, and digital marketing.

In Bangladesh, the impact of AI is slowly becoming apparent. The ready-made garments (RMG) sector, which accounts for nearly 80% of the country's export revenue, is experiencing a technological shift. AI-driven automation is enhancing efficiency in supply chain management, forecasting demand, and optimising inventory control. This transformation reduces costs and waste, allowing Bangladeshi manufacturers to remain competitive in the global market. Moreover, AI is impacting customer experiences through personalised fashion design and predictive analytics, catering to consumer preferences with unprecedented accuracy.

Yet, the flip side of this technological advancement is equally significant. The integration of AI threatens jobs, particularly among low-skilled workers who are vulnerable to automation. A study conducted by the Access to Information (a2i) Program in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) suggests that up to 60% of jobs in Bangladesh's apparel sector could be automated by 2041. This potential displacement

rural learners alike.

Developing technical skills is critical in an AI-driven economy. Proficiency in programming languages such as Python, an understanding of machine learning algorithms, and data analysis capabilities are highly sought after in the job market. Recognising this demand, educational institutions in Bangladesh are expanding their curricula to include courses on AI, robotics, and advanced data analytics. These programs aim to equip students with the skills needed to thrive in technology-centric roles, preparing them for careers that didn't exist just a few years ago.

However, technical expertise alone isn't enough. As machines become increasingly capable, the human qualities they can't replicate—creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and adaptability—are gaining prominence. These soft skills are essential for navigating complex work environments, fostering innovation, and leading diverse teams. They complement technical knowledge, enabling individuals to apply their skills effectively in real-world scenarios. For example, while an algorithm can analyse vast datasets, it takes human insight to interpret the results in meaningful ways and make strategic decisions based on that analysis.

The process of lifelong learning is further enriched

## Nokia CEO Lundmark to be replaced by Intel AI chief Hotard



AFP

Finnish telecommunications equipment giant Nokia announced on Monday that chief executive Pekka Lundmark would step down and be replaced by Justin Hotard, the head of AI and data centres at US chip-maker Intel.

Lundmark, who has served as Nokia's CEO since 2020, will leave his position on March 31, the company said in a statement.

"I want to move on from executive roles to work in a different capacity, such as a board professional", said Lundmark, who has a career of more than 20 years of leading listed companies.

Justin Hotard currently serves as the executive vice president of Intel and as the general manager of the company's artificial intelligence and data centre group, according to Intel's website.

Hotard has previously "held several leadership roles at large technology companies" for more than 25 years, such as Hewlett Packard and NCR Corporation, Nokia said.

He will take over as Nokia CEO on April 1.

## How to identify and brand your most marketable trait

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

Let's be real: the job market is crowded. Everyone's got a degree, a resume, and a LinkedIn profile. So, how do you stand out? The secret isn't just about having skills—it's about knowing which one is your 'superpower' and making sure everyone else knows it too.

Think of it like this: your standout trait is your personal brand's signature move. It's the thing people remember you for, whether it's your knack for solving problems, your ability to connect with people, or your expertise in a specific area. And once you've nailed it, you can weave it into everything—your resume, your LinkedIn profile, even how you introduce yourself at networking events.

### Step 1: Figure out what makes you shine

The first step is all about self-reflection. Start by asking yourself: What do I consistently get praised for? Maybe it's your creativity, your leadership skills, or your ability to stay calm under pressure. If you're not sure, ask the people who know you best—your colleagues, friends, or mentors. Sometimes, others see our strengths more clearly than we do.

A 2023 Forbes article on marketable skills highlights the importance of looking at your past wins to spot patterns. What strengths kept showing up in those moments? Similarly, a 2023

article on career platform Indeed states the importance of understanding how your skills translate into the real world. In other words, it's not just about what you're good at—it's about how that skill makes you an asset.

### Step 2: Zero in on your standout trait

Once you've got a list of your strengths,

your talent for building relationships, or your expertise in a niche area. Whatever it is, this is your secret sauce—the thing that makes you, you.

### Step 3: Turn it into your personal brand

Now that you know your standout trait, it's time to use it for your own good. Start



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

it's time to narrow it down. What's the one thing that truly sets you apart? According to a Harvard Business Review article on self-awareness, combining self-reflection with feedback from others can help you pinpoint that golden trait. Maybe you can think outside the box,

by crafting an elevator pitch that sums up your unique value in a few sentences. For example: "I'm a project manager who specialises in turning chaotic workflows into streamlined processes, saving teams time and money."

LinkedIn's official blog post on

## JOBS SPOTLIGHT

BRAC

University

Assistant Manager,  
Office of the Registrar

Deadline: February 22

## Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree in Information Systems, Computer Science, Business Administration, or a related field from a reputed university with excellent academic credentials.

Minimum experience: 3 years

CARE

Bangladesh

Program Associate  
- Knowledge  
Management

Deadline: February 19

## Eligibility:

• Bachelor's degree in Disaster Management, Geography, Social Science, or a related field from a reputed university.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years

Embassy of  
DenmarkHead of  
Communications and  
Political Officer

Deadline: February 24

## Eligibility:

• University degree in political science, law, journalism, or related fields with prior experience in communications, policy analysis, international development etc.

Minimum experience: 5 years

British High  
Commission

Education Adviser



Deadline: February 17

## Eligibility:

• Demonstrable track record of delivering education outcomes at an expert level through strong capability in education technical competencies.

Minimum experience: 7 years

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



"Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work."

ARISTOTLE

self-branding suggests weaving this narrative into every piece of professional communication. Your resume, cover letters, LinkedIn headline, and even your social media posts should all reinforce the same message. Consistency is key—when people see the same story everywhere, it sticks.

### Step 4: Live your brand

Branding isn't just about what you say—it's about what you do. If your standout trait is your leadership skills, look for opportunities to lead projects or mentor others. If it's your creativity, share your ideas and solutions openly. And don't forget to keep learning and growing. The more you develop your skills, the stronger your brand becomes.

### Why this matters

When you know what makes you exceptional and you communicate it clearly, you're not just another candidate—you're a memorable, compelling professional. You become the person people think of when they need someone with your specific skills. And that's how opportunities start coming your way.

So, take some time to reflect, gather feedback, and define your standout trait. Then, own it. Share it. Live it. Because when you know what makes you unique, you're not just building a career—you're building a brand that stands out in every room you walk into.

## Concerns over Tigers' CT preparations

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's preparations going into a major event has often come under scrutiny and this time ahead of the Champions Trophy, concerns are being raised about how prepared the team is going into the tournament.

The cricketers have just finished playing the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and international cricket will be wrought with higher degree of challenges. Many of the players are yet to return to training, especially players from the Fortune Barishal franchise that clinched back-to-back BPL titles last Friday.

A look at what other teams who are set to play the Champions Trophy would put Bangladesh's preparations into further context.

New Zealand and South Africa are playing a tri-nation ODI series, also involving hosts Pakistan. England are preparing through a three-match ODI series away in India. Australia are set to take on hosts Sri Lanka in a two-match ODI series, having thrashed the Lankans in a two-match Test series.

Only Afghanistan and Bangladesh are going into the tournament without having played any ODIs in the last one month.

Nine days remain before Bangladesh open their Champions Trophy campaign against India on February 20 in Dubai and it was not a surprise that the Tigers' head coach Phil Simmons remained concerned.

"I agree that it is not the best preparation," Simmons told reporters before a training session in Mirpur yesterday.

"But they [cricketers] were playing white-ball cricket, which means that they are sharp skills-wise. We have to get their minds up to 50-over cricket in the next six or seven days. They have the skills. They are performing. It is about getting to that 50-over mentality now," he added.

Simmons also mentioned that his troops will up the ante in training in the coming days.

"We will have double practice sessions in the next couple of days. We bat and bowl in the morning, and then do the same under the lights. We are getting ourselves prepared to bat for 50 overs," Simmons said.

Shifting between formats has traditionally been a difficult prospect for the Tigers and when it comes to shifting to international cricket from BPL, the task certainly appears a lot steeper. The Tigers found out how difficult high scoring pitches are to get a result in during the ODIs against the West Indies in December last year while the last ODI World Cup also showed deficiencies in that regard.

Simmons felt that focus needed to shift fast so that they can be prepared for the India game in Dubai. "The first part of the preparation is about Dubai. Once we can get ourselves in the right frame of mind, and work on the right things for Dubai, I think we can start the competition well. We will get familiar conditions in Pakistan after that," he said.



Bangladesh batter Soumya Sarker fiddles with the ball alongside head coach Phil Simmons in the national team's training session at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The left-handed batter suffered an injury scare while batting when he got hit on his right-hand by a rising delivery bowled by Mrittunjoy Chowdhury but Bangladesh Cricket Board sources confirmed later in the day that there are no major concerns about the 31-year-old's participation in the upcoming Champions Trophy in Pakistan, starting on February 19.

## What to WATCH

SONY SPORTS 2  
Champions League  
Brest vs PSG  
Live from 11:45 pm  
Manchester City vs  
Real Madrid

Live from 2:00 am  
(Wednesday)  
SONY SPORTS 1  
Juventus vs PSV  
Live from 2:00 am  
(Wednesday)

## BFF signs contracts with 36 female footballers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday signed contracts with 36 players of the national women's football teams, confirmed a source within the BFF.

The federation has prepared contract papers for 55 footballers including 18 rebellious ones, who have been boycotting the national team's training camp under Peter Butler since January 29.

Out of a total of 55 players in the BFF camp, 37 players have been training under Butler for the upcoming two friendly matches in UAE against the hosts, which will be played on February 26 and March 2.

It could not be confirmed whether any of those 18 players signed the contracts, but the source informed that the contracts of 19 others in training are in process of completion.

Another source within the BFF said the BFF president Tabith Awal has promised the 18 rebellious players that if they signed the contracts, they would be confirmed places in the final squad but that they would have to secure their places in the playing eleven with their own performance.

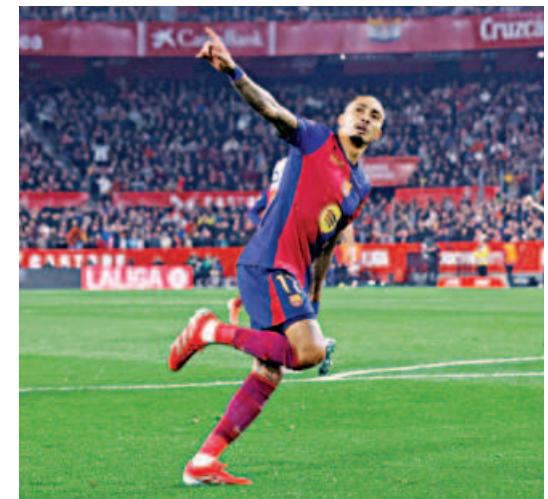


PHOTO: REUTERS

Barcelona winger Raphinha netted his 13th goal of the season as the Catalan giants romped to a 4-1 win away at Sevilla despite being reduced to 10 players in the LaLiga on Sunday. Barca striker Robert Lewandowski – the league's top-scorer – also found the net (extending his tally to 19) alongside Fermin Lopez and Eric Garcia to lift third-placed Barca to 48 points, one behind Atletico Madrid in second and two off leaders Real Madrid after the capital rivals drew 1-1 on Saturday. Lopez was shown red in the 62nd minute but Barca held firm to wrap up a victory that keeps them firmly in the title race.



you are, you can't disturb me mentally. But I didn't have that attitude two or three years ago like I do now. I think professional and personal life both matter a lot in staying organised.

DS: How hard is it to prepare when out of the national team?

MN: My regular job is to perform at the top level and always remain on the radar of the national team. When I was dropped from the national team, I should have been in the Bangladesh Tigers programme or any other camp. But I wasn't considered for anywhere. So what message did I get? Actually, when I performed at the top level and my performance wasn't valued, it raised questions about the quality of the domestic tournaments. But do you have anything better than the BPL or DPL in the country?

DS: Your strike rate was criticised before. Have you worked on it?

MN: Not only in this BPL, but I also batted with a good strike rate in the NCL T20 as well. I have been doing mind-training for the last three years. But it takes time to implement these things in your game. Apart from that, my family also helped me stay away from negativity. People will say both good and bad things about me, but I don't think much about that now.

## SHORT CORNER

### Djokovic says injury 'almost 100 percent healed'

Novak Djokovic said Monday his leg injury, which shattered his Australian Open dream, was "almost 100 percent healed" and he was ready to aim for his 100th ATP title in Doha this month.

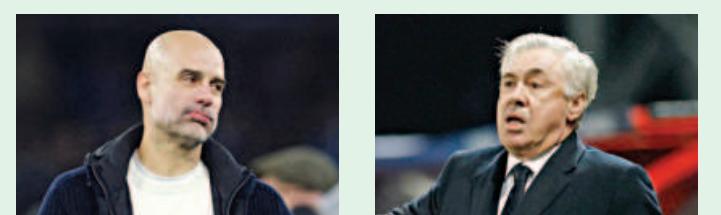
### Ireland beat Zim in one-off Test

Spinner Matthew Humphreys starred again in Bulawayo on Monday as Ireland wrapped up a 63-run win over Zimbabwe in a one-off Test.

\*\* Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

## City hope to show they are 'something special' against Real

AFP, Manchester



This will be the 13th time that Manchester City will lock horns with Real Madrid in the Champions League. City have won four while Real came out victorious on three occasions. Five matches ended in a draw.

Real Madrid have knocked out an English club out of the Champions League knockout stages 13 times.

Real are yet to win a Champions League game at Etihad. Los blancos have lost three and drew twice away at City.

City's only victories in the competition this season have come against Slovan Bratislava, Sparta Prague and Club Brugge.

This is the fourth time in a row that Man City and Real Madrid have been drawn against each other in the Champions League. Also City vs Real is just the fourth fixture in European Cup and UCL history to be played in four consecutive seasons.

In big matches this season, Real lost four, drew two and won none so far. (Atletico 1-1 Real; Real 1-3 AC Milan; Real 0-4 Barca; Liverpool 2-0 Real; Real 2-5 Barca; Real 1-1 Atletico)

which the City boss admitted was an advantage.

"When you finish 22nd (out of 24) you cannot ask any favour, you cannot ask anything that you didn't win," Guardiola said ahead of Tuesday's first leg at the Etihad.

"Always I believe what happens in football, normally you have to deserve it and we didn't deserve it."

City are currently in fifth spot in the Premier League and realistically out of the title race.

"I will not deny how I trust the players that gave us the incredible decade, all of us, winning a lot of things and playing at high standards and I know what we are capable of," he said.

"The team has something special and hopefully tomorrow we can prove it."

And defender Ruben Dias said he believes City can still achieve something "beautiful" this season.

"Since I have been here this is maybe the most difficult season so far, but I am a firm believer that in the most difficult scenario you can still achieve something beautiful," the Portugal international said.



Debutant Matthew Breetzke reached a unique milestone on Monday as the South African opener scored 150 -- the highest score by any batter in his first ODI -- to lift the Proteas to 304-6 against New Zealand in the second match of the tri-series, also involving Pakistan, at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. Breetzke also became the fourth player from his country to hit a century on ODI debut but his efforts were overshadowed by a brilliant [Inset] Kane Williamson century that helped the Black Caps win the game by six wickets and ensure a spot in the final of the competition. Williamson's 113-ball 133 is his 13th in ODI and first since his ton against West Indies in the 2019 ODI World Cup.



PHOTO: AFP

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## LAUNDERED MONEY

May take another 3-4 yrs to bring it back

Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recovering laundered money from abroad is likely to take three to five years, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday.

In its white paper on the state of the Bangladesh economy, the panel estimates that an average of \$16 billion was illicitly siphoned off from the country every year in the past 15 years.

The legal battle to bring back the money could take three to four years as the global standard for such recoveries is typically four to five years, he said while unveiling the monetary policy for the second half of the fiscal year.

"Our short-term goal is to identify and attach foreign-held assets within

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Ahsan H Mansur



A woman searching for anything left that could be salvaged after a devastating fire burnt hers and four other shanties at Jafar Colony in Chattogram city's Baluar Dighir Par area yesterday morning. A couple was killed, and three others were injured.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## PRIMARY EDUCATION

# PECE, similar tests should be scrapped

Advisory committee suggests introducing a practical assessment system instead

ARAFAT RAHMAN

A government-appointed advisory committee yesterday recommended scrapping the Primary Education Completion Examination and similar tests.

The committee, formed to improve primary and non-formal education, instead proposed a more practical assessment system based on the National Student Assessment (NSA), focusing on fundamental skills surveys.

Under this system, schools will be categorised by performance, using green, yellow, and red classifications.

Prof Manzoor Ahmed, convener of the nine-member committee, presented these recommendations at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital yesterday.

The goal, he said, is to assess and improve schools' learning standards and hold them accountable at the upazila level.

Manzoor explained that schools in the yellow and red categories will need to develop action plans to improve, with headteachers and upazila authorities responsible for ensuring progress.

The committee's report stated, "Over the past three decades,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Asst Teacher designation should be abolished.
- Bangla and mathematics should be prioritised.
- Teacher-student ratio should not exceed 1:30 in a classroom.
- Primary education cadre service should be created.
- Education Consultative Council should be formed.

Touhid likely to meet Jaishankar in Oman

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain and Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar may meet in Oman, on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Conference slated for February 16-17.

This would be the second foreign minister-level meeting between the two. The first one was held in New York on the sidelines of UN General Assembly in September last year.

The New Delhi-based think tank, India Foundation, is organising the Indian Ocean Conference that has emerged as the flagship consultative forum for countries in the region over regional affairs.

The meeting between Touhid and Jaishankar in Oman could help ease the Indo-Bangla relations that remained strained since deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India on August 5 amid a mass uprising, said diplomatic sources.

"The meeting will be an occasion to ease the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

# Custodial torture, deaths continue

Says Odhikar, reports 12 extrajudicial killings between Aug 9 and Dec 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the faces of those perpetrating custodial deaths and custodial torture in Bangladesh have changed since Sheikh Hasina's ouster, these heinous crimes continue to occur, according to Odhikar, one of the leading human rights organisations in the country.

From January 1 to June 30, 2024, six people were subjected to extrajudicial killings. Among them, four died due to torture. Of the four who died from torture, three were killed by police and one by Rab. The two others, one of whom was shot and the other beaten to death, were also killed by police," said its annual human rights report released yesterday.

From January to July 2024, members of law enforcement agencies caused forcible disappearance of 20 people, the report reads.

Among them, allegedly, the Detective Branch (DB) of police were behind the disappearance of nine individuals, the police enforced the disappearance of five, members of other law enforcement agencies in plainclothes caused three enforced disappearances, Rab two, and Rab and DB were jointly behind the disappearance of one person.

One of these victims has not yet returned, said the report.

During the July uprising, 1,581 people, including children, were killed as per estimates by the Students Against Discrimination and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, while the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs verified 834 deaths as of January 15, 2025.

"From August 9 to December 31, 2024, 12 individuals were reported to have been subjected to extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies," the Odhikar report said.

"Of the 12 victims, six were tortured by joint forces, and one died due to police torture. Three people were shot by joint forces, and one was shot by the police. Additionally, one person was beaten and pushed off a bridge by the police," it added.

The report went on to say, "The joint forces consisting of security forces and law enforcement agencies face allegations of conducting operations in plainclothes and being involved in torture and



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# Corruption pervades every level of admin

Says reform commission report, identifies politicisation as key reason for decline in efficiency

BAHARAM KHAN

Corruption has permeated every level of public administration, and as such, the provision of public services is hindered by bribery, favouritism, and nepotism, according to the Public Administration Reform Commission report.

The commission, in a section titled "eliminating corruption," underscored the need to depoliticise public services, emphasising that ensuring effective public service delivery requires eliminating "bias" and "partisan considerations."

"Due to the politicisation of the administration, the significance of merit and efficiency has diminished, and in many cases, recruitment, placement, and promotions are determined by political loyalty and flattery rather than competence," reads the report.

Led by Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, the reform commission submitted its full report to the Chief Adviser, Prof Muhammad Yunus, on February 8, outlining several recommendations to curb corruption in public administration.

The reform commission, however, does not specifically identify the reasons why corruption persists and why good governance has not yet been effectively established.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# OPERATION DEVIL HUNT 343 more held across country

Pistol, 11 bullets, 2 magazines recovered

STAR REPORT

Joint forces, as part of the ongoing Operation Devil Hunt, detained 343 more people across the country in the 24 hours between Sunday afternoon and yesterday afternoon, said Police Headquarters.

The government launched the operation on Saturday to restore law and order following Friday night's attack on "students and people" in Gazipur.

On Sunday, 1,308 people were reported detained. The PHQ did not provide any breakdown of the arrests.

Meanwhile, a foreign pistol, two magazines, 11 bullets, and six shotgun cartridges were recovered during Operation Devil Hunt yesterday. Three knives, three swords, one axe, 10 crude bombs, and four machetes

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

# TOMORROW OPENING

## INTERNATIONAL PHARMA & LAB EXHIBITION

16<sup>th</sup>

# asia PHARMA EXPO

Feb 12 to 14, 2025

Venue: Bangladesh China Friendship Exhibition Center (BCFEC)  
Purbachal, Dhaka

ENTRY FREE

Time: 10 am - 6 pm

Organizer:  
Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries  
Bangladesh Aushad Shilpa Samity

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NOTE: Entry for 18 years and above



Tents sheltering displaced Palestinians are erected in the yard of a secondary school in the north of Gaza City, which has been devastated in the Israeli offensive on the territory. The Photo was taken yesterday.

PHQ warns of action against those issuing threats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Headquarters in a statement issued yesterday warned of strict legal action against any anti-social force that threatens citizens.

Signed by Inamul Haque Sagar, AIG (Media & PR) of Bangladesh Police Headquarters, it said the police have noticed anti-social elements issuing various types of threats to people across the country.

"Issuing threats to any individual is a criminal offence under the law," the statement read.

If anyone is threatened, the police urge them to immediately dial 999 or report it to their police station.

The statement further added that Bangladesh Police is committed to ensuring the safety and security of every citizen and maintaining law and order in the country.

According to police sources, a group of leaders of Students Against Discrimination were threatened.

Instead of informing the police, they notified their top leaders, which resulted in disorder prompting the PHQ to issue the statement.