

Maintain law and order with a firm hand

Yunus asks DCs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus has asked the deputy commissioners to be firm in maintaining law and order and do everything necessary to curb the prices of essentials.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the DC Conference 2025 at the Chief Adviser's Office yesterday, he said law and order is the top priority. "We must not fail there."

All 64 DCs are attending the three-day conference, the first since the interim government took office in August last year.

Prof. Yunus also asked them to protect the rights of women, children and minority communities.

"The whole world watches how we behave with them [minority communities].... I am not saying this out of that fear. It is our duty to provide security to all citizens.... It does not matter what ideology or political belief one holds. The government is for all the people."

Prof. Yunus added that he urged the minority communities not to demand anything as a minority group. "Rather, place your demands as citizens."

CHIEF ADVISER TO DCs

- No police verification for passports
- Make birth registration easier
- Protect women, minority communities
- Improve civil admin-police coordination

At the annual DC conferences, the discussion should be about how each DC had performed in terms of maintaining law and order, controlling the prices of essentials, and combating extortion, he said.

A system of ranking should be there to create a competitive environment, he said, adding that the ones who top the list might get an award.

"One [of you] will be the 64th. That person will try not to be at the bottom of the list any more.... This [process] creates enjoyment and competition."

Besides the routine tasks, the DCs also have to think creatively to solve problems. "Talk about how you used innovative thinking."

As the government is a team, the police and civil administration should improve coordination, he said.

He then asked the DCs to visit at least a few primary schools every year and talk to the teachers, so that the visit made a lasting impact.

PASSPORT, NID, BIRTH REGISTRATION

"Obtaining a passport is a fundamental right. We have made a rule ensuring that police verification is no longer needed. There is no need for such harassment. The government's job is not to create obstacles."

The general public must be informed that police verification is no longer required for passports.

He then said the process of birth registration must be simplified.

"Every citizen should be able to obtain a birth certificate at any time. We must ease the difficulties through the use of innovative capabilities."

People, both young and old, need national IDs and passports. In case they do not have birth certificates,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Dhaka, Delhi for addressing challenges

Touhid, Jaishankar meet in Muscat

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain and Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar yesterday acknowledged the challenges facing bilateral relations and stressed the need for joint efforts to address them.

The discussion took place during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat, Oman, according to a press release issued by the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

"Both sides recognised the challenges the two neighbours are facing in terms of bilateral relations and discussed the necessity to work together to address those," read the release.

During the meeting, Touhid underscored the importance of initiating discussions for the renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty.

He also emphasised the need for convening the Saarc Standing Committee meeting and requested India's support on the matter.

Both sides expressed optimism that various border-related issues would be addressed during the upcoming meeting between director generals of Border Guard Bangladesh and Indian Border Security

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Amid roaring water cannons, a protester stands defiant, fist raised high, voicing her demands in the capital's Shahbagh yesterday. Police used batons, water cannons, tear gas, and sound grenades to disperse those demonstrating for the reinstatement of 6,531 assistant teachers in government primary schools. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

JULY UPRISING PARTY Discord brewing over member secretary post

Nahid, all set to be convener, may quit govt in a few days

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

With Adviser Nahid Islam almost certain to be the convener of the new political party being floated by the July uprising activists, differences of opinion have emerged among the leaders over the member secretary post, the second-highest role in the party hierarchy.

So far, Jatiya Nagorik Committee Convener Nasiruddin Patwary, Member Secretary Akhter Hossen, Joint Convener Ali Ahsan Zonaed and Chief Organiser Sarjis Alam, and Students Against Discrimination Convener Hasnat Abdullah are leading the race for the new party's member secretary post.

Nahid, information and ICT adviser, may quit the government within four to five days, said sources close to him.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Nagorik Committee, the citizens' platform launched after the uprising, is now split into three groups over the top posts of the new political party's convening committee, said insiders.

One consists of leaders of Students Against Discrimination, who had been previously involved with Gonotantrik Chhatra Shakti and Chhatra Odhikar Parishad.

Those previously affiliated with leftist politics form the second faction and the third comprises former members of Islami Chhatra Shibir, at least three leaders of the civic platform told this newspaper, requesting to be anonymous.

The first faction within the Nagorik Committee is supporting Akhter, while Adviser Mahfuj Alam, who plays a key role in the policymaking of the Nagorik Committee, wants Nasiruddin to be the new party's member secretary, the sources said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

'ILLEGAL WEALTH'

ACC sues
Mazumder,
3 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against Nazrul Islam Mazumder, the chairman of NASSA Group and former chairman of EXIM Bank, for allegedly amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 781.31 crore.

The anti-graft body has also filed three separate cases against former Awami League lawmaker Maj Gen (Retd) Shubib Ali Bhuiyan and his family members for illegally acquiring assets worth Tk 8.85 crore and over suspicious bank transactions amounting to Tk 321.61 crore.

ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain confirmed this development in a regular press briefing yesterday in front of the ACC headquarters in Segunbagicha.

Akhter said Nazrul Islam Mazumder has been accused of corruption, irregularities, embezzlement, and illegal wealth accumulation. By abusing his position, he allegedly acquired

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Mazumder holds assets worth £43m in UK: BFIU

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Nazrul Islam Mazumder, chairman of Nassa Group and a close associate of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, holds assets worth £43.23 million or about Tk 656 crore in the UK, according to the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit.

Mazumder owns five properties worth £37.95 million in the upmarket neighbourhood of Kensington in London and two properties valued at £5.28 million in the Isle of Man, a self-governing British Crown dependency in the Irish Sea, found the BFIU, the government agency responsible for investigating money laundering, suspicious transactions and cash transaction reports.

However, details on how Mazumder, who served as the chairman of the private bank owners' forum Bangladesh Association of Banks for 17 years, amassed this wealth abroad remain unclear.

Under existing regulations, Bangladeshi businesses can invest abroad, but only with prior approval from the Bangladesh Bank.

No evidence has been found indicating that Mazumder obtained such approval for his overseas investments.

To date, 20 business entities have received approval from the BB to invest abroad, but Nassa is not one of them.

Following the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, the BFIU launched investigations into various irregularities, including money laundering, loan fraud and embezzlement of government and depositors' funds by over a dozen business groups.

As part of the initiative, the BFIU has sought information from authorities in Singapore, the US and the UK regarding money laundering and overseas wealth accumulated by the business groups.

The financial intelligence units of the three countries have provided relevant information to the BFIU. The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the proceedings.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Border killing, fencing high on agenda

BGB-BSF annual meet starts in New Delhi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 55th border conference at the director general level between the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) will commence today in New Delhi.

This year's conference will focus on various issues, including killings, detentions and abductions of Bangladeshi by BSF, BGB said in a release yesterday.

The four-day conference will also discuss measures to prevent smuggling of various types of drugs, weapons, ammunition, and other prohibited items from India into Bangladesh.

Additionally, the conference will address the prevention of illegal border crossings, particularly efforts to stop forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals from entering Bangladesh through the Indian border, in violation of international boundary laws, the press release added.

Other key topics of discussion include halting the construction of unauthorised structures, including barbed-wire fences within 150 yards of the border; establishing a proper water treatment facility to remove waste from four canals flowing from Agartala towards Akhaura; opening the mouth of Rahimpur Canal to connect with the Kushiyara River in Zakiganj; exchanging information on the possible locations and activities of regional armed separatist groups; and ensuring the effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) for improved border management and conflict resolution.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



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Shojon extends mental health care beyond class boundaries

RBR

Shojon, a Bangla word, when roughly translated means a dear one, or maybe a near one. With the promise to hold your hands in your darkest times -- like a loved one, SHOJON is a mental health service, an initiative of the SAJIDA Foundation.

After the July uprising, this tele-counselling platform has changed its initial agenda from ensuring mental health care for poor and ultra-poor individuals for a nominal fee, to an expanded program with increased human resource capacity to help any individual, irrespective of class hierarchy, sustaining mental distress, particularly in the aftermath of the revolution. And that too, free of cost. Their service window is open till as late as 10:00pm.

"Shojon's work frame has three tiers, with the first one being done by a lay counsellor, one who is empathetic and non-judgemental. Tier two is referred counselling sessions by professional counsellors, this service is currently free of cost. Then, if need be, tier three is their psychiatric service. The tier three service, however, is not free, but Shojon has partnered with organisations to provide this support at a minimum fee," says Amena Akter, a lay counsellor of two and half years at Shojon.



"Initially, we charged Tk 200 for the service and depended on incoming calls mostly. However, with this new approach, we make more outgoing calls to reach the distressed. To address the national crisis of the need for mental health support, the organisation initially provided tele-counselling through its Shojon platform, reaching 500 individuals from a list provided by July Smriti Foundation (JSF) and Students Against Oppression (SAO)," she added.

"We almost reached out to 1,900 plus students and 500 of them needed tiers two or three support," says Farjana Sharmin, head of programme, Mental Health, Sajida Foundation. Using the insight from Shojon's tele-

counselling support, it was found that many protesters and family members of the deceased had symptoms of trauma and grief, which signify the necessity for more structured and accessible mental health services. This realisation led SAJIDA Foundation to establish an in-person Trauma Counselling Centre, with the help of the Government of Bangladesh, to provide trauma-focused counselling support, particularly for those injured during the movement, bereaved families, and affected bystanders. The trauma counselling centre is planned to start in four locations across Bangladesh. However, it is presently operational at the Narayanganj 300 Bed Hospital and NITOR.

Many students who joined to bring in the change are now in hopeless

situations -- bullet-ridden, with eye wounds, or amputated due to late treatment which led to infection. They are in a vulnerable mental state, financially doing poorly as well, and some are not able to avail the government's financial help.

"These are ordinary students and regular people like tea sellers and rickshaw pullers, who are not under any political banner. They hold a grudge against the late treatment, and delayed recovery. It's a complex and traumatic scenario that these ordinary students and people are in after August 5," says Farjana, who is the first one to receive or make calls to people from the list provided.

Affordability and availability are key to Shojon's reputation, and they are investing in bringing mental health services to people's doorstep, so that they realise and develop service-seeking behaviour. Shojon also addresses all kinds of trauma, regarding regular relationship issues plaguing one's mind like love, marriage, family, parents, financial stress.

If one cannot make the call due to monetary constraints, then they call them back to provide mental health treatment, ranging from primary care to long term intervention, such as counselling/psychotherapy and psychiatric support from psychologists and psychiatrists. The helpline number is 09612-119900, and its service remains open every day from 8:00am to 10:00pm.

RUBBER PLANTATIONS 25 workers abducted in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

At least 25 workers were abducted by unknown people from various rubber plantations in Lama's Fasiakhali area in Bandarban yesterday, said locals and garden owners.

The incident took place in the Goyalmar area of Fasiakhali around 10:00am.

Md Shahjahan, one of the plantation owners, said, "At least 12 of them are workers of my garden."

Talking to The Daily Star, he said the rest of the victims were kidnapped from other gardens.

Members of the army, police, BGB, and local representatives are coordinating the rescue efforts, which is challenging due to the area's geographical challenges, the UNO added.

"Some unknown people called me by phone in the afternoon and demanded Tk 6 lakh in ransom for the release of my 12 workers," said Shahjahan.

He also said that unidentified people sent letters to all the rubber gardens in this area demanding ransom.

The workers are residents of Ramu and Eidgah in Cox's Bazar district and Naikongchhari in Bandarban district, said locals.

Lama Upazila Nirbahi Officer Moin Uddin confirmed the incident and said they are yet to identify the suspects.

Members of the army, police, BGB, and local representatives are coordinating the rescue efforts, which is challenging due to the area's geographical challenges, the UNO added.

Contacted, Bandarban Superintendent of Police Md Shahidullah Kauser said he was on leave but is now on his way to Bandarban. The identities of the abductors remain unknown and joint forces are carrying out operations.

A member of Fasiakhali Union Parishad, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star that a week ago, leaflets demanding Tk 50,000 in extortion from each rubber plantation were found hanging in the Lama Fasiakhali-Naikongchhari border area.

Earlier on January 14, three workers were abducted and on February 1, seven lumberjacks were reportedly abducted from Bandarban's Lama upazila, according to media reports.

The abducted individuals were later released after paying a ransom.

Maintain law and order with a firm hand

FROM PAGE 1

they face hassles, he said, urging the officials to solve the problem.

He then asked the officials why land registration was not done online even though a system was there to do so.

"Why isn't it being implemented? Where is the problem?"

Prof Yunus said that he was hurt being termed the chief guest at the conference. "I don't want to act like a guest. I want to work as a captain [of the team]."

FIGHT CORRUPTION

Addressing a programme hosted by Bangladesh Administrative Service Association at Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre last night, Prof Yunus said corruption was destroying Bangladesh.

"If we cannot get out of this, there will be no progress."

There are vast potentials like the young demographic and natural resources, but corruption remains the biggest obstacle, he said.

Stating that Bangladesh's ranking in terms of corruption was among the worst in the world, he said, "We lack integrity and discipline, which makes it impossible to achieve our goals."

He urged the DCs to free the country of graft.

"We cannot establish ourselves

ACC sues Mazumder, 3 others

FROM PAGE 1

Tk 781.31 crore worth of assets through bribery and corruption, which are inconsistent with his known sources of income. A case has been filed against him under Section 27(l) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004, and Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

In the three cases against ex-MP Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, his wife, Mahmuda Akhtar, and his son,

as a respectable nation unless we rid ourselves of corruption," he said, adding that expanding online services could prevent corruption.

The international community wants to see the end of corruption in Bangladesh because it hinders trade and business relations.

Getting rid of corruption is not an impossible task, he said, citing examples of other countries.

Principal Secretary Siraz Uddin Mia, Dhaka DC Sharif Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Chattogram DC Farida Khanom, and Panchagarh DC Sabet Ali also spoke at the event.

The participants are set to make 353 proposals at 34 working sessions.

ESTABLISH NEW ECONOMIC ZONE

BSS reports, Prof Yunus stressed the need for establishing a new economic zone involving Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

"The process has begun. This process should be accelerated so that the economic zone could be established."

Finance Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Law Adviser Dr. Asif Nazrul, Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam, Cabinet Secretary Dr Sheikh Abdur Rashid, and BASA President and LGRD Secretary Nazrul Islam also spoke at the event.

Mohammad Ali, have also been accused.

According to the case statement, Shubid was accused of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 6.59 crore. Additionally, suspicious transactions amounting to Tk 181.42 crore were found across his 22 bank accounts.

Mahmuda Akhtar was accused of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 1.83 crore. Additionally, suspicious transactions amounting to Tk 36.32 crore were found across her 12 bank

accounts.

Mohammad Ali, was accused of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 42.53 lakh. Additionally, suspicious transactions amounting to Tk 103.74 crore and \$10,328 (Tk 12.60 lakh) were found across his 25 bank accounts.

Responding to a reporter's question, Akhtar said, "We are investigating a number of business entities. You will be notified when the inquiry is completed."

Nepal and Bhutan are landlocked countries and the seven sisters of India have no seaports, he said, adding if the new economic zone could be established, all the neighbouring countries will be able to explore immense trade potential.

DCs push to override local reps' powers

FROM PAGE 1

They made the proposal at the three-day "DC Conference-2025," which began in Dhaka yesterday.

Around 345 proposals from DCs of all 64 districts and divisional commissioners of eight divisions will be discussed at the conference, which is set to conclude tomorrow.

Shariatpur's DC proposed appointing the UNO as the chairperson of the upazila-level family planning department's recruitment committee, a post currently held by the upazila parishad chairman.

Rangamati and Pirojpur DCs, on the other hand, suggested handing over the chairmanship of the upazila disaster management committee to UNOs -- another post presently held by the upazila parishad chairman.

Additionally, the Faridpur DC proposed placing the recruitment and transfer of upazila parishad employees under the authority of DCs.

Currently, the UNO serves as the head of the recruitment committee for these employees, while the upazila chairman issues the appointment letters.

Additionally, DCs have proposed various benefits for government employees at both the district and upazila levels.

The DCs of Rajshahi and Jashore suggested creating a position for cooks at the UNO's residence. Notably, upazila chairmen do not have any such privilege.

The Mymensingh DC proposed constructing multi-storey buildings for government employees at the district and upazila levels, increasing housing loans for employees, raising the medical allowance for government staffers to Tk 5,000, and increasing the "educational

assistance allowance" for their children from Tk 500 to Tk 2,000.

Meanwhile, the Gopalganj DC proposed introducing mobile phone and internet allowances for field administration employees.

Madaripur's DC suggested including circuit houses and DC offices under the Key Point Installation security category, particularly as DC offices in several districts were attacked during the July uprising.

Additionally, the DCs of Bandarban, Khagrachhari, and Rangamati proposed increasing the hill tracts allowance for government employees working in the three hilly districts.

A hill tracts allowance is an extra payment given to government employees who work in remote areas.

Meanwhile, Bandarban's DC proposed placing the transfer and posting of additional deputy commissioners under the authority of divisional commissioners. Currently, this responsibility falls under the public administration ministry.

Pabna DC Mohammad Mofizul Islam proposed formulating a policy to regulate the fees charged for various purposes by government and private educational institutions within an academic year, as well as setting guidelines on how these collected fees should be spent.

In his proposal, he argued that this would "ensure financial transparency in educational institutions" by preventing arbitrary fee collection and ensuring a standardised fee structure.

Additionally, the policy would mandate specific guidelines for expenditure, ultimately benefiting students and parents.

The DC of Magura proposed introducing a transfer system

for teachers of private secondary schools, saying it would enhance professionalism and efficiency among teachers.

Additionally, the DCs of Satkhira, Mymensingh, Manikganj, Pabna, and Rangamati have put forward multiple proposals regarding the development of madrasa-based education.

DCs of Gopalganj and Joypurhat, along with Sylhet's divisional commissioner, have proposed introducing a ration system for all levels of field administration employees.

They said that, like various law enforcement agencies, administrative staffers also work tirelessly to implement government decisions during times of crisis.

They further pointed out that while civilian employees of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Department of Narcotics Control receive ration benefits, field administration employees do not.

The Joypurhat DC also proposed allocating risk allowances for district administration employees, while Satkhira's DC suggested increasing allowances for additional responsibilities.

A "risk allowance" for administration employees would typically refer to financial compensation for those exposed to potential risks in their work.

Meanwhile, several DCs made various public welfare-related proposals, such as formulating a policy for e-rickshaws (easy bikes) operating nationwide, abolishing the railway's quota for dependents, establishing Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division and ACC offices in all districts with adequate manpower, and expanding the scope of operations under mobile courts.

Discord brewing

FROM PAGE 1

Akhter is facing opposition from the faction belonging to former Chhatra Shakti leaders as he had a "personal rivalry" with Mahfuj since the inception of Chhatra Shakti, the sources added.

On the other hand, the former Shibir activists are trying to bring Zonaed, former president of Shibir's Dhaka University unit and member of Jatiya Nagorik Committee's executive body, into the second in command position of the new party.

The leftist faction wants Anik Roy, former general secretary of Chhatra Shakti's central committee, in a key position.

"As the new political party aims to be inclusive, people with diverse opinions are part of it. Shibir wants its former leaders to take leadership roles. While the leftists initially wanted Akhter as a leader due to his long history of doing politics, they no longer support him," a member of the Jatiya Nagorik

Committee told this newspaper.

The civic platform has held a series of meetings in the last few weeks over the issue, but could not reach a conclusion as of now.

Sources said the Shibir led faction demanded Zonaed as the member secretary of the new political party and at least four posts out of the top 10 posts.

They even threatened to quit Jatiya Nagorik Committee and form another organisation if their demands were not met.

As they did not get a "positive signal" from other key policymakers, the faction boycotted a meeting of the platform's central executive body at its office yesterday afternoon, the sources said.

Some student leaders were seen taking to social media on the issue.

"I joined the anti-fascist politics through Akhter Hossain. His love for the country and its people has always

inspired us. On the Dhaka University campus, he has always stood up against the terror of Chhatra League without any hesitation. As a conscious citizen, I stand by Akhter Hossain. Don't conspire against anyone," Abdul Hannan Masud, the chief organiser of Students Against Discrimination, wrote on Facebook.

Mirza Galib, former president of DU Chhatra Shibir, wrote on Facebook, "The Nagorik Committee should have worked to create a unified political platform involving all the youth associated with the uprising ... There should be proper participation of madrasa students and Shibir members ... But unfortunately, it seems that the Nagorik Committee is failing to create a democratic and inclusive environment."

The Daily Star tried to reach Nasiruddin, Akhter, Zonaed and Sarjis several times, but they did not respond to phone calls and texts.

Mazumder holds assets worth

FROM PAGE 1

The BFIU has forwarded its findings to the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further action.

In response to the findings, the BFIU has ordered the freezing of Mazumder's and his family's bank accounts.

Mazumder was involved in trade-based money laundering amounting to Tk 16,000 crore, according to the BFIU.

Of the sum, Tk 4

চুক্তি এ রিপোর্ট প্রমিটেড পাঠান
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Π

Tackle graft in edn sector

Wahiduddin Mahmud tells DCs; instructs them to resume stalled projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud has instructed deputy commissioners (DCs) to closely monitor irregularities and corruption in the education sector.

He also asked them to focus on forming management boards for private educational institutions.

"Retired government employees, teachers, dignitaries and respected local figures should be included in those committees so that teachers do not face problems in recruitment or work. The DCs have also been asked to resist political pressure in this regard," he said while talking to reporters after a discussion on the first day of the DC Conference 2025 in Dhaka.

Mahmud said that private school and college management boards face significant challenges, including political influence. While administrators were initially appointed to oversee these boards, the workload of DCs and UNOs made the process unsustainable.

A new circular from the education ministry now mandates that school

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus with a group of DCs after inaugurating the three-day Deputy Commissioners' Conference at his office in Tejgaon yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Shaheen Anam gets prestigious UK award for social work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), has been awarded an honorary MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by the United Kingdom, the British High Commission in Dhaka said on its verified Facebook page yesterday.

The award has been given in recognition of her exceptional contributions to social justice, inclusion, and gender equality in Bangladesh, the post added.

The award acknowledges Shaheen Anam's unwavering dedication to justice and equality, as well as her leadership in championing the rights of marginalised communities.

Through her tireless efforts, she has

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

EFFECTIVE CLIMATE POLICYMAKING Gender data gaps a major barrier

Speakers tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite Bangladesh's increasing vulnerability to climate change, the absence of gender-disaggregated data remains a significant barrier to effective policymaking, experts said at a conference yesterday.

During disasters, women face increased household burdens and insecurity while their income also declines.

However, there is no specific data on the violence they experience due to climate change. Gender considerations are often overlooked in development efforts, depriving women of their fundamental rights.

The remarks came at an event, titled "Women Leading the Way: Influencing Policy and Collaborative Climate Action", organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation and funded by the Embassy of Sweden, at a city hotel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement gender-sensitive policies for disaster-affected areas

Ensure dedicated budget allocations for women empowerment

Include women's perspectives in climate policymaking

Foster collaboration among all stakeholders on gender issues

"We always make broad statements that women are more affected by climate change, but we do not discuss the underlying reasons behind it. We do not collect disaggregated data based on region and specific needs, which

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Women must be decision-makers in politics: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women should be actively involved in decision-making rather than mere participants in politics, said leaders of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement yesterday.

Speaking at a rally under the banner "Women of July" in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh, they called for greater female leadership in politics and demanded a ban on Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League for alleged mass killings during the uprising.

The rally was organised by the women's wing of the Nagorik Committee.

Nagorik Committee spokesperson Samantha Shermeen said women have played a crucial role at every stage in Bangladesh's 53-year history of political struggle.

"In the political party that emerges after July, we want to see women's leadership at the local level. Women must be ensured a place in policymaking," she said.

Nusrat Tabassum, a key coordinator

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

TEACHER CANDIDATES
Water cannons, batons used to disperse protesters



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police charged batons and used water cannons, tear gas shells, and sound grenades in front of Shikha Bhaban yesterday afternoon to disperse protesters who demand the reinstatement of 6,531 assistant teacher appointments in government primary schools.

The law enforcers took action around 4:00pm. Many have been injured but they stayed on the road despite the police action.

The protesters began a rally at 9:00am in front of the National Museum at Shahbagh, where demonstrators from various parts of the country had gathered.

At approximately 3:30pm, the teachers marched towards the Secretariat, but police intercepted them in front of Shikha Bhaban.

According to Sanjeedul Alam, a teacher from Tangail, law enforcers baton charged the male

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

JULY UPRISING
Many media acted as mouthpieces for authorities
Says Shafiqul Alam



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh experienced "terrible journalism" during the July uprising, where several media outlets labelled student protesters as "terrorists and militants", indirectly legitimising their killings, said Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday.

Speaking at a discussion titled "Fascist Narratives in Media: Revisiting July 1-36", organised by the platform "We Want Fascism-Free Media", he commended journalists who upheld ethical standards despite immense pressure from the government.

"During the July movement, many media outlets, undeterred by threats, maintained professional journalism. However, there were also outlets that acted as mouthpieces for the authorities," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
ক্রেডিট কার্ড

অজস্র সুবিধা
একসাথে আপনার হাতে

প্রযোজন, ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংকের যে কোন শাখা, টেলিমার্কেট ও ফার্ম ট্র্যাকে যোগাযোগ করুন অথবা ডায়াল করুন

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দিন-রাত 24 ঘণ্টা যে কোন ফোন থেকে

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- এয়ারপোর্ট লাউঞ্জ ব্যবহার
- মিট এন্ড গ্রিট
- মিক এন্ড ড্রপ
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ATM Withdrawal-সহ
আরও অনেক সেবা

ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী

Illegal parking worsens Khulna's traffic woes

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Unregulated parking of vehicles has become a major factor contributing to worsening traffic congestion in Khulna city.

In several busy intersections, parking lanes have been marked directly on the roads, leaving only a narrow portion for vehicular movement and causing severe traffic gridlocks.

During visits to affected areas such as Moilapota Mor, located between Khulna City Medical College and Ahsanullah College, in front of Baitun Noor Market near New Market, and at Dak Bungalow Intersection on Old Jashore Road, it was observed that around half of the road's space is being used for parking.

Along KDA Avenue, MA Bari Road, and the Hadis Park area, at least 10 clinics and diagnostic centres, as well as 15 banks and corporate offices, are situated on both sides of the roads, yet there are very few designated parking facilities.

Consequently, half of the road remains occupied by illegally parked vehicles.

From KDA Avenue to Sat Rasta Mor, similar issues persist, with many portions of the road taken up for parking motorcycles.

Asaduzzaman Babu, a bookshop owner in Moilapota Mor, said with Khulna's roads already narrow, allocating a significant portion for illegal parking has further reduced their width, severely disrupting

traffic movement.

"During peak hours in the morning and evening, the situation becomes worse. Commuters heading to work or returning home are forced to spend extra time stuck in traffic," he added.

Golam Rosul, a private bank employee, said most commercial

arrange proper garage and parking facilities instead of using the roads. They called for building multi-storey modern parking plazas to accommodate vehicles.

They alleged that instead of preventing illegal parking, police personnel allow it in exchange for money.



buildings lack dedicated parking facilities, which forces vehicles to park on the streets.

Mahbubur Rahman Munna, general secretary of the Nirapad Sarak Chai's Khulna city unit, demanded immediate action against illegal parking on roads.

The city residents, including civil society members, said every commercial building owner must

Contacted, Shofiqul Islam, deputy commissioner (traffic) of Khulna Metropolitan Police, declined to respond.

When approached, KMP Commissioner Md Julikar Ali Haider sent a text message indicating a willingness to discuss the matter further: "Please visit my office at your convenience. We can share our observations and experiences."

Tackle graft in edn

FROM PAGE 3

management committee members must hold at least a bachelor's degree, while college board members must have a master's degree. "This measure aims to shield the management process from political interference," he added.

Addressing stalled infrastructure projects, he said DCs have been instructed to find ways to resume work halted due to contractors fleeing after receiving payment.

"Some contractors vanished without completing their jobs, and with no local representatives in place, DCs have been empowered to appoint new contractors for public welfare projects," he said.

Previously, local political leaders played a key role in project selection, but that dynamic has shifted. DCs have now been tasked with identifying essential

local projects, such as road repairs and school building reconstruction, and submitting proposals to the relevant ministries or directly to the planning ministry.

Mahmud acknowledged that many teachers are not receiving their allowances and that school inspectors often harass them. He stressed the need for better oversight, as both parties bear the responsibility.

He assured that students would receive their textbooks by the end of February and that steps were being taken to clear outstanding payments for teachers.

"The funds available for retirement benefits are highly insufficient. At least Tk 6,000-7,000 crore is needed, which cannot be allocated within a single year's budget. A dedicated fund will be created by issuing bonds," he said.

FROM PAGE 3

prevents us from taking appropriate measures," said Dilruba Haider, programme specialist at UN Women.

"Moreover, when allocating resources to tackle the impacts of climate change, women's needs are not taken into account," she added.

UNDP gender team Leader Sharmin Islam said, "Thirty percent of women's earnings go towards coping with the impacts of climate change, while financial constraints become a barrier to addressing the health issues women face due to climate change and disasters, posing a significant challenge to women's empowerment."

"To reduce the additional burden on women, it is essential to increase the knowledge and awareness of the men

in their households," she said.

Dr Mohammad Imran Hasan, head of Climate Justice and Natural Resources Rights at Oxfam in Bangladesh, said if the existing gender gaps were addressed, economic growth could be 40 percent higher.

Attending the event as chief guest, Sharmeen S Mursid, adviser to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, said, "Specific plans must be made through policies for areas severely affected by disasters, and separate budget allocations must be ensured for this purpose."

"Our analysis and understanding of climate change have expanded, but we have not progressed in a structured manner. We have been working on climate issues for a long time, but the efforts have been disjointed. We talk about fairness, but it is not reflected in budget allocation. As a result, significant gaps remain," she explained.

"We must view all of our work through a gender lens. If we want to make our future resilient and sustainable,

"আইনগত বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

এতদ্বাৰা সৰ্বস্বত্বান্বেলোৱে অবগতিৰ জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ট্রাইজেন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং লিঃ এৰ লেবোৱ ও লেবোৱ মূল্য বৃক্ষি ও হাইকোর্টেৰ বিজ্ঞয় ১৩ বিলিউন এবং ৩১ নং কোর্টে যাহাৰ মামলা মুৰ ৬/২০২৫, কোল্পনীৰ পক্ষে বাসী বাস্তুপ্রস্তুত পৰিবেকলক মো: আৰিফুল ইসলাম ও বিজ্ঞানী এত ক্ষমতাপূর্ণ(আৰ জে এস)। বাসী ৫০০ শ্ৰেণীৰ পৰিবেকল ৫০০০ শ্ৰেণীৰ ও শ্ৰেণীৰে মুল ২০০০০ টাকা পৰিবেকল ২০০০ টাকা কৰাৰ জন্য হৰামানী হাইকোর্টে আৰ্জি জানান। উল্লেখিত আৰ্জিৰ আৰ্জি খালিকে ০৭ দিনৰে মধ্যে যোগাযোগেৰ জন্য অনুমোদন কৰা পেল। নতুনৰ কোনো অকৰীৰ আপত্তি আহ্বনন্বোধ হৈব।

ঠিকানা: ৪২২, এন্ডেন্স ভৱন, বালাদেশ সুৰীয়া কোর্ট, ঢাকা মোহাইল নং: ০১৭১০৮১০২৩০

বাড়ি বিক্রয়
উক্তৰা ১১ নং সেকৰেৰ গোড় নং- ৫ ও ১৪ তে, ৫ ও ৩ কাঠাৰ উৰুৰ নিৰ্মিত ৬ তাৰা আৰাসিক, এবং মিৰপুৰ-১৩ নং সেকৰানে ৮.২৫ কাঠাৰ উপৰে ৭ জো বাস্তুপ্রস্তুত বিজ্ঞ বিজ্ঞয় হৈ।
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STATUTORY NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION (ORIGINAL STATUTORY JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 180 OF 2025
IN THE MATTER OF :
An application under Sections 81(2) and 85(3) read with section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.
AND
In the Matter of
Mrs. Masuda Kabir, shareholder & Managing Director of Jing Ling Chinese Restaurant Ltd., having its registered Office- at 149/1, Road No.4/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Ensure

FROM PAGE 5

National Telecommunication Monitoring Center (NTMC), and other repressive forces that were allegedly used to suppress protests and target dissent during the AL's rule.

Writer Barnaali Saha, a member of the network, said human rights violations during the uprising were orchestrated under the direct supervision and coordination of the then-political leadership and security forces.

The network called for the immediate filing of charges and a transparent trial under the ICT to hold the perpetrators accountable.

The group also urged the interim government to seek the extradition of Hasina from India to face trial in Bangladesh for her alleged role in the crimes.

Azfar Hussain, associate professor at Grand Valley State University in the US, said they called for an end to the protection of Hasina in India, as she is accused of internationally recognised crimes against humanity.

He demanded that India cease providing her refuge and ensure her return to Bangladesh to face justice.

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 17

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-25	12-45	4-30	5-57	7-15
JAMAAT 6-00	1-15	4-45	6-01	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Many media acted

FROM PAGE 3

Alam highlighted that this issue extends beyond just a single month, as a group of journalists has been manipulating narratives surrounding significant events in the country since 2009, thus solidifying authoritarianism, strippling citizens of their rights, and justifying violence.

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SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Hasina, he said.

The discussion included six proposals to enhance media freedom and security, such as ensuring a fear-free working environment for journalists, abolishing government censorship, and establishing a professional code of conduct.

They called for an independent constitutional commission to oversee media activities free from government interference, ensuring transparency in media ownership and funding sources, and amending cybersecurity laws to prevent misuse against journalists.

He emphasised the importance of documenting the role of each journalist and media outlet, stating that the media's involvement in significant events over the past 15 years will be analysed and researched.

However, he insisted that such initiatives must be led by independent, private organisations to ensure transparency and accountability.

Joynal Abedin Shishir, convener of "We Want Fascism-Free Media", delivered the welcome speech, condemning political manipulation in the media.

He urged the public to boycott journalists who collaborate with the government.

Plabon Tariq, spokesperson for Nirapad Bangladesh Chai, commended The Daily Star for recently admitting mistakes in its reporting, emphasising the need for media to operate within a system of checks and balances.

Abu Sadik Kayem, publications secretary of Islami Chhatra Shibir, expressed concern over how major events have been distorted over the past 16 years, stating that there have been attempts to label movements and politicise initial attacks.

He also said journalists have played a crucial role at the grassroots level.

Other speakers, such as Abbas Uddin Noyon, Mahbub Alam, Mohiuddin Mahi, echoed concerns about media bias, censorship, and political pressure.

Some cops

FROM PAGE 5
those places would become the grounds for another uprising.

Sarjis said their new political party would be inclusive of people from all backgrounds.

He said Nahid Islam, a key figure in the movement, had been asked to step out of power and take on a crucial role for the people.

He alleged that certain groups were attempting to create division by spreading misleading information about leadership appointments.

He alleged "Killer Hasina" fled the country out of fear but continues to incite unrest from abroad.

Sarjis urged all to carefully assess their leaders, asking them to recognise who stood by them during difficult times and who remained absent, only to return now claiming to support them.

He called for unity to bring about real change. He also advised people against blindly following any leader, urging them instead to engage in logical criticism.

Illegal brick

FROM PAGE 5
Forest officer Kazi Tarikur Rahman confirmed that these saw mills are unauthorised.

Md Jahangir Alom, vice-president of the Pabna District Brick Kiln Owners' Association, said there are over 200 brick kilns in the district, of which only 32 use coal, while the rest burn wood in violation of environmental regulations.

According to the Pabna district administration, there were 165 registered brick kilns in the district as of 2020, but only 24 have updated their licenses, while the rest continue to operate illegally.

Md Insaif Ali, an official of the Pabna district administration, said in most cases, licenses cannot be issued due to a lack of necessary legal documents and environmental clearance.

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		From	To	
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Ensure extradition, trial of Hasina Demands Network for Democratic Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Network for Democratic Bangladesh, an activist organisation comprising pro-July uprising expatriates, has called for the trial of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and all individuals responsible for crimes against humanity during the movement.

The group demanded accountability for human rights violations, enforced disappearances, killings, corruption, and money laundering under the previous Awami League-led regime.

In a virtual press conference yesterday, members of the organisation also called for the disbandment of the Rab,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Election only way to restore democracy Says Fakhrul

UNB, Thakurgaon



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said holding free and fair elections is the only way to restore democracy in the country.

"There is no alternative to democracy. There is no alternative to elections for institutionalising democracy. Democracy can be freed only through elections," he said.

Fakhrul made the remarks while inaugurating the Zia Memorial Football Tournament at the Thakurgaon Government Boys High School ground in the afternoon.

"We have gone through a terrible time for the last 15 years. The previous illegitimate fascist government, like a monster, destroyed all our institutions...," Fakhrul added.

The BNP leader described last year's student-led mass uprising as a political earthquake that shook the nation, paving the way for the emergence of a new Bangladesh.



A total of 92 identified illegal brick kilns in four upazilas using wood in 120-foot chimneys, with 39 in Pabna Sadar, 46 in Ishwardi, six in Faridpur, and one in Shantia upazila, contributing to environmental pollution. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The saw mills set up to supply wood to the brick kilns are unauthorised.

KAZI TARIKUR RAHMAN
Forest officer

Illegal brick kilns run rampant in Pabna

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

More than 150 illegal brick kilns are operating across nine upazilas of Pabna district, causing severe environmental damage.

Many of these kilns are burning wood instead of coal, leading to extensive pollution.

The Department of Environment recently identified 92 kilns in four upazilas that have been using wood in 120-foot chimneys, with 39 in Pabna Sadar, 46 in Ishwardi, six in Faridpur, and one in Shantia upazila.

Among these, 13 have even set up illegal saw mills to supply wood for their operations.

Md Abdul Gofur, assistant director of DoE in Pabna, said a report has been sent to higher authorities regarding this issue while the district administration continues conducting mobile court drives.

Despite the strict prohibition on using timber as fuel under brick manufacturing regulations, most brick kilns maintain large stocks of wood collected illegally from various districts without permission from the forest department, said Kazi Tarikur Rahman, district forest officer in Pabna.

Md Shantu Bishwas, owner of Bishwas Bricks in Ishwardi's Lakshmikunda area, said burning wood is more profitable than coal.

He said using coal increases the cost of manufacturing 1,000 bricks to Tk 10,000, whereas burning wood keeps it at Tk 6,500, making it necessary for kiln owners to opt for wood to sustain their businesses.

He said around 50 brick kilns operating in Lakshmikunda union are all using wood and that some kilns have set up saw mills to process large pieces of wood without legal permission.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Shaheen Anam

FROM PAGE 3

helped create opportunities for countless individuals, challenged societal norms, and paved the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

The UK government has been a long standing partner in these efforts, working closely with MJF to drive meaningful change.

Under her leadership, MJF has played a vital role in empowering women, children, and vulnerable groups, ensuring they have access to justice, education, and economic opportunities, the High

Commission said.

In her reaction, Shaheen Anam said, "I am deeply honoured to receive this award, which reflects the FCDO's recognition of our efforts to uphold the human rights of marginalised communities.

Over the years, MJF has supported movements for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and untouchable communities, empowering them to raise their voices and demand justice."

Women must

in local government elections. "With elections approaching, more women representatives must be included," he said.

He stressed that women should not only take part in politics but also be involved in decision-making within the political party the committee plans to launch.

"Women are still being oppressed and denied their rights. When they raise their voices, they face mob justice. We strongly condemn this," he added.

Arpita Shyama Das, a participant in the movement, said, "Not only do women know how to protest, but they can also lead."

Nagrik Committee member secretary Akhter Hossen said, "The atrocities committed in July and August have been detailed in a United Nations report. Unless these perpetrators of crimes against humanity are brought to book, the safety of neither men nor women can be ensured."

He accused Hasina of continuing to issue provocative statements while in exile in India. "Through diplomatic efforts and international pressure, she must be brought back to Bangladesh and held accountable," he added.

Nagrik Committee convener Nasiruddin Patwari called for greater female participation

of the movement, said since the July uprising, women's visibility in politics has declined.

She said even a seasoned politician like Khaleda Zia faces sexist remarks about her appearance and character. "We are facing similar bullying because women are merely included in the political process, but their active participation is not ensured anywhere," she said.

"Women are still being oppressed and denied their rights. When they raise their voices, they face mob justice. We strongly condemn this," he added.

Joint convener Sarwer Tusher also spoke at the event.

Water cannons

FROM PAGE 3

protesters at that point.

Female protesters were targeted with water cannons as they attempted to advance, he said.

Despite police action, many gathered near the High Court around 4:35pm, said Abdullah Al Mamun, another protester.

The candidates have been continuing their demonstration for the 11th consecutive day, demanding cancellation of the High Court order that scrapped their recruitment.

They have come from different parts of the country and some even brought children with them.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT (HED)
NOAKHALI DIVISION, hed.noakhali.gov.bd

Memo No. 45.02.2075.261.00.000.25-09

Date : 16/02/2025

e-Tender Notice (05/2024-2025) (OTM)

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Packages from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' branches up to Particular date and time specified on the Tender Notice.

Tender ID	Procurement Nature	Last Date & Time for Tender Document selling	Last Date & Time for Tender proposal Security Submission
1076587	Works	02/03/2025 17:00 PM	03/03/2025 12:10 PM

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System. The procuring Entity reserves the Right to accept or reject any or all Tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

(Sarker Md. Delwar Hossain)
Executive Engineer
HED, Noakhali Division
e-mail: hedxennoa@yahoo.com

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মোবাইল: ০১৭০১-১৬৮৮৬৪৪।
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স্মারক নং- ৮-পিডি/বিড়লা/পিডিএসডি/চট্ট: জেল (২য় পর্যায়)/২০২৫
তারিখ: ১৬/০২/২০২৫ ইং।

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এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আজ দশের আওতায় নিম্নবর্ণিত কাজটি গবেষণাতত্ত্বী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের e-GP Portal এর মাধ্যমে আইবান করা হয়েছে, যা উত্তোলিত পোর্টেলে পাওয়া যাবে। e-GP Portal এ নির্বক্তব্য যে বেন আওয়া ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে বিস্তারিত জানার নিমিত্ত উক্ত ওয়েবসাইটে www.eprocure.gov.bd ভিত্তিট করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

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01	1075912	Internal Carrying Under PDSD, Chattogram Zone (2nd Phase), BPDB, Chattogram. (RDPP Package No- WD-39, Lot-4)	Date: 23/02/2025 Time: 12:00	Date: 16/03/2025 Time: 12:30	Date: 17/03/2025 Time: 11:00

(স্কেলার মোঢ় শামাইদ্দিন)
পরিচিতি নং-১-১২০০
প্রকল্প পরিচালক
বিদ্যুৎ বিতরণ ব্যবস্থা
চট্টগ্রাম জেল (২য় পর্যায়)
বিড়লা, চান্দেলী।

'Some cops, judges patronising killers' Alleges Sarjis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj



Jatiya Nagrik Committee chief organiser Sarjis Alam yesterday alleged that certain police officers and judges are patronising criminals in exchange for benefits.

Speaking at a discussion titled "Your Vision of a New Bangladesh" in Sonargaon yesterday, he claimed that numerous allegations have surfaced regarding political groups that once opposed fascism but are now protecting these individuals in return for money and power.

He said some police officers and judges continue to provide cover for these criminals in exchange for various favours.

Addressing the upcoming elections, he said it must be the most transparent election in Bangladesh's history. He said if one party were to win all 300 seats while others secured none, they would accept it, provided the election upheld the spirit of the revolution.

However, he warned that if any force attempted to manipulate votes or influence polling centres,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

OPERATION DEVIL HUNT 389 more arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces have arrested 389 more people across the country as part of the Operation Devil Hunt in the last 24 hours until yesterday afternoon, according to the Police Headquarters.

This brings the total number of arrests under the operation to 4,790 as of yesterday afternoon.

Besides, 751 others, who were either accused or wanted in previous cases, were also arrested during the same period.

During the drive, law enforcers recovered a local pipe gun and a machete.

The government launched the operation on February 8 to restore law and order following the attack on "students and people" in Gazipur.

Analysing reports from some districts, this newspaper found that the arrestees are mostly members of the Awami League and its associate bodies. Many are accused in cases filed after the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5.

In Dhaka, police arrested four leaders of Awami League and Chhatra League, the now-banned student wing of AL, in cases filed over attacks during the July uprising.

A look inside FAHMIDA NABI'S DIARY

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Renowned singer Fahmida Nabi, known for her illustrious musical career, has stepped into a new role at this year's Amar Ekushey Boi Mela (Ekushey Book Fair). The National Film Award-winning artiste, born into a celebrated musical family, has embraced a fresh identity as a writer, with her book *Fahmida Nabi's Diary*. Her debut book is now available at the Shabdoshilpo stall at the fair—a milestone she finds both exciting and fulfilling.

Following the book's release, Fahmida Nabi has made two appearances at the fair. On the first day, she attended its unveiling ceremony, and later, she returned to interact with readers and sign autographs.

Talking to The Daily Star, the artiste



couldn't help but exhibit excitement. "The reception has been phenomenal. My close ones are collecting copies, visiting the fair, and even asking for my autograph. Readers, too, are embracing the book with so much warmth—it has been an absolute delight."

Speaking about the day of the book launch, she shared, "The crowd that day was massive! Journalists, readers, writers, lyricists, well-wishers—everyone was there. It was a beautiful gathering."

On the publishing process, Fahmida expressed her gratitude, stating, "Sharifur Rahman, my publisher, put a lot of care into this book. From proofreading to the production process and the cover design—everything was handled great," she conveyed.

Reflecting on her newfound identity as a writer, Fahmida expressed her excitement. "I am thoroughly enjoying everything about it. Whatever I do, I strive to do it well. Just like artistes who dedicate themselves completely to their craft, I have approached writing with the same commitment," she exclaimed.

On experiencing the thrill of holding her own book for the first time at the book fair, she recalled, "I was silent for a moment. It felt different, an indescribable joy—definitely a happy feeling."

with dedication. I'm truly thankful to Shabdoshilpo Publications."

She also shared a heartfelt moment, expressing, "A young woman who bought

my book remarked on Facebook that reading it felt like I was telling her my story. That really touched me. Some have even said I've portrayed a positive perspective on society. Honestly, I just wanted to share thoughts that we all can connect with."

The singer claims to be receiving an overwhelming response for her book, with readers purchasing it both from the fair and online. "Some people couldn't make it to the fair, but they are still purchasing the book online. Those who have been encouraging and inspiring me to write, all this time, are now actually reading it. That, of course, feels great," she conveyed.

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Sharon Stone in talks for 'Euphoria' Season 3

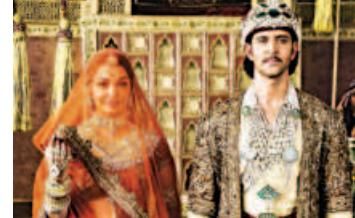
Sharon Stone is in discussions to join the highly anticipated third season of HBO's *Euphoria*, as per official sources.



The Academy to mark 17 years of 'Jodhaa Akbar' with special screening

Ashutosh Gowariker's historical romance *Jodhaa Akbar* celebrated its 17th anniversary on February 15. The film portrays the epic love story between Mughal Emperor Akbar and Rajput princess Jodhabai, starring Hrithik Roshan and Aishwarya Rai. To commemorate this milestone, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will host a special screening of the film in March 2025.

While an official date is yet to be confirmed, speculation suggests it will take place around



the 97th Academy Awards, scheduled for March 3, in the same city.

Gowariker expressed his heartfelt gratitude to fans for keeping the film alive 17 years after its release.

the 97th Academy Awards, scheduled for March 3, in the same city.

Aurthohin is set to deliver a solo concert that aligns with the technology-driven future of the world. The concert titled *Aurthohin 2027: A Cyberpunk Odyssey* promises an innovative experience inspired by the popular video game *Cyberpunk 2077*.

Aurthohin 2027: A Cyberpunk Odyssey will be a solo show by the band, spanning four hours, and is scheduled to take place on February 28 at Aloki Auditorium in Tejgaon, Dhaka. The event is being jointly organised by Get Set Rock and Assen Buzz.



The concert will commence at 6pm with gates opening to concertgoers at 4pm. However, the ticket prices have not been announced yet, but advance ticket sales will soon be available on the Get Set Rock website.

NEWS

Dinajpur stands up to tough resistance

FROM PAGE 12

The movement, however, gained momentum in Dinajpur as the students resisted the Biharis and Muslim League's opposition to Bangla as a state language. The protests resulted in an all-out strike on March 3, 1948. Students from various educational institutions actively participated in protests and demonstrations.

According to Mozammel Biswas's book *Dinajpure Bhasha Andolan*, the students of Surendranath College campaigned for another demonstration slated for March 11, as part of the programmes announced centrally from Dhaka. They distributed leaflets and made announcements by using loudhailers.

To suppress the movement, police arrested several student leaders, including Nurul Huda mirza, MR Akhbar Mukul and Dabirul Islam. The authorities also imposed Section 144, limiting public gathering in the town.

On March 11, a general strike was observed. The students of Surendranath College, joined by the public, brought out a protest procession and marched on the main roads. A massive clash broke out when the police baton charged the protesters and made more arrests.

In 1952, when the government declared Urdu as the state language of Pakistan on January 27, the streets of Dinajpur were filled with protesters.

According to Ahmed Rafiq's book *Bhasha Andolan: Teknaf Theke*

31-point BNP charter will rebuild nation

FROM PAGE 12

He said, "Nearly two and a half years ago, we presented our 31 point plan before the people. This plan outlines how we will move forward from the damage caused by the Awami League government."

Tarique, who joined the event virtually from London yesterday, said that as the party is being re-organised, the nation must be rebuilt.

"... The people of Bangladesh have seen that whenever possible the BNP has worked for their welfare. Even if we could not achieve everything we intended, we did our best. BNP is the party that has always stood by the people."

He urged party leaders and activists to prepare for a national reconstruction effort, emphasising the need to reform the education, economy, agriculture, industry, and healthcare sectors.

"We must ensure a strong foundation for future generations, rebuild the economy, support farmers, strengthen industries, and improve the healthcare system so that marginalised people get medical services."

Tarique alleged that various quarters are spreading propaganda at home and abroad to defame the BNP, saying, "We'll face them politically."

Describing the BNP councillors present at the council as soldiers of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia, Tarique said, "You represent two leaders whose priority was always Bangladesh and its people. The nation is looking at BNP for leadership, hoping that, as in the past, this party will guide the country forward."

Aman Ullah Aman, adviser of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, inaugurated the council at Narail Government High School ground at 11:00am.

Later, the second session of the event was held at Shilpakala Academy Auditorium, where voting took place for the posts of district BNP president, general secretary, and organising secretary.

[Our Bagerhat correspondent contributed to this report.]

Bangladesh needs to look for new sources

FROM PAGE 12

for improving aid effectiveness, but it is not working."

"We need to go for sustainable approaches, instead of depending on foreign funds. Sometimes, depending on foreign aid is humiliating."

A major share of foreign aid is used for consultants and foreign nations of the respective donor countries, according to Chowdhury.

The UN agencies too have high overhead costs when they operate projects with foreign funds, he said.

"We have long been raising our voice

for improving aid effectiveness, but it is not working."

"We cannot deny the role of foreign funding in Bangladesh's development, but often times the foreign aid-based projects are on an ad hoc basis and do not help sustainable development, said Mohammad Abu Eusuf, a professor at Dhaka University's department of development studies."

As the aid is declining, it is high time that the government focuses on some fundamentals. These include promoting entrepreneurship on a massive scale and training youths for employable jobs.

BRTA revokes 'ill-planned' directive

FROM PAGE 12

The drivers place the blame on vehicle owners, claiming they charge more than the fixed Tk 900 daily deposit, forcing them to ignore the metered fares.

In 2022, the BRTA initiated a revision of both the fare and deposit rates, considering the rise in gas prices and inflation. However, the effort failed as worker and owner representatives could not reach a consensus, a BRTA official said.

After the political changeover in August last year, the new leadership of CNG workers repeatedly urged the authorities, including the BRTA, to ensure that CNG owners adhered to the government-fixed deposit of Tk 900, according to BRTA and transport organisation sources.

On January 26, BRTA Director (Engineering) Sitangshu Shekhar Biswas wrote to the DMP Commissioner, urging legal action against any owner charging drivers above the fixed deposit rate.

According to Section 35(l) of the Road Transport Act 2018, an owner may face up to six months in jail or a fine of Tk 50,000 for not adhering to the fixed deposit amount, the letter stated.

A copy of the letter was forwarded to the Road Transport and Highways Division, the Home Ministry, police headquarters, and the Labour Directorate.

Following this, CNG owners pressured the BRTA, arguing that if drivers did not adhere to government-fixed fares, owners should not be expected to provide vehicles at a Tk 900 deposit, especially given inflation and rising gas prices.

The BRTA director subsequently wrote another letter to the DMP commissioner on February 10,

"Let's have a comprehensive market of our workforce both at home and abroad. Then, we train them accordingly and support their employment. This will radically change our economy," Eusuf added.

An alternative to foreign funding for NGOs could be the funds allocated by the corporates as corporate social responsibilities (CSR).

Corporates often use CSR funds for their own foundations or trusts as there is no clear policy on the use of CSR funds, Jashim Uddin said, suggesting a robust policy on CSR funds for its best use.

According to Section 35(3) of the Road Transport Act 2018, a driver may face up to six months in jail or a fine of Tk 50,000 for overcharging, the letter stated. A copy of the letter was forwarded to the same offices.

Golam Faruk, General Secretary of the Bangladesh CNG-run Auto-Rickshaw Light Vehicles Transport Workers Federation, alleged that owners charge between Tk 1,200 and Tk 1,600—far above the set deposit rate. He added that the cost of living had significantly increased since the government last revised the fare rate nine years ago.

"We've been demanding that the government revises the fare rate, but the BRTA suddenly issued the directive without any consultation with us," he told this correspondent yesterday.

Barkat Ullah Bhulu, Convener of Dhaka Mohanagar CNG-run Auto-Rickshaw Owners Okhya Parishad, said they had been demanding an increase in the deposit rate since 2018, as gas prices had risen sharply.

A sub-committee was formed in 2022 to review both the fare and deposit rates, he said, adding that the committee submitted its report, with all members except one workers' association representative agreeing to the proposal. However, the then government delayed taking action on the issue.

He claimed that the BRTA issued the January 26 directive targeting owners due to pressure from the workers' association.

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INTERNATIONAL

Russian strikes hit Ukraine power plant

46,000 people in Mykolaiv left in freezing cold; US moving ahead with Russia on peace talks

AGENCIES

Russian drone strikes have damaged a thermal power plant in Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine overnight, leaving 46,000 consumers without heating as temperatures plunge below freezing, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said yesterday.

"This was done deliberately to leave people without heat in sub-zero temperatures and create a humanitarian catastrophe," Shmyhal said on the Telegram messenger app.

Russia attacked Ukraine with 143 drones overnight but Ukrainian military said it had shot down 95 of them while 46 did not reach their targets, likely thanks to the use of electromagnetic countermeasures that disrupt drone attacks.

At least one person was injured in the drone attacks that also damaged houses in the Kyiv region. Five apartment buildings and several shop and office spaces were damaged as a result of falling drone debris, reports Reuters.

France to host a summit of European leaders today to discuss the Ukraine war and European security.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed the situation in Ukraine on Saturday, as well as the removal of "unilateral barriers" set by the previous US administration, Moscow said.

US and Russian officials will meet in Saudi Arabia in the coming days to start talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine, a US lawmaker and a source familiar with the planning said. However, Ukrainian officials will not attend Russia-US talks expected to be held in Saudi Arabia in the coming days, the BBC has learned.

European leaders on Saturday also scrambled to force their way to the table for any talks on the Ukraine war. France said yesterday it would host a summit of European leaders today to discuss the Ukraine war and European security.

In Munich, Nato chief Mark Rutte said Europe had to come up with "good proposals" for securing peace in Ukraine if it wanted to be involved in US-led talks. Rutte also said he would head to Paris today to take part in the meeting of the European leaders.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Saturday that Europe "must take on a greater role in Nato" and work with the United States to "secure Ukraine's future".



Palestinians mourn at a hospital after an Israeli strike killed three policemen, according to the Hamas-run interior ministry, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Lebanon blocks Iran planes after US warnings Hezbollah calls for reversal of decision

AFP, Beirut

Lebanese militant group Hezbollah yesterday urged the Lebanese government to reverse a decision blocking Iranian flights from landing in Beirut, following US warnings.

The Iran-backed group said in a statement that it "demands that the government reverse its decision to ban Iranian planes from landing at Beirut airport and take serious measures to prevent the Israeli enemy from imposing its dictates."

A Lebanese source told AFP on Saturday that Lebanon had denied permission for Iranian flights to land twice this week, after the United States warned Israel might strike the airport.

The first incident occurred on Thursday, when Lebanese authorities



sent word to Iran that a Beirut-bound flight should not take off.

"Through the Americans, Israel informed the Lebanese state that it would target the airport if the Iranian plane landed in Lebanon," the source said. "The American side told the Lebanese side that Israel was serious about its threat," the source added.

STABBING ATTACK
Austria says suspect likely inspired by IS

REUTERS, Villach

The Syrian asylum seeker suspected of carrying out a deadly stabbing rampage in the Austrian town of Villach is believed to be a follower of Islamic State (IS) who was radicalised online, authorities said yesterday.

A 14-year-old boy was killed in Saturday's attack and five other people were wounded, police said at a press conference.

Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said the 23-year-old Syrian man arrested soon after the attack had been rapidly radicalised on the internet and that the IS flag had been found in his apartment.

Touhid yesterday laid emphasis on facilitating maritime connectivity and reducing trade barrier to ensure a brighter, more prosperous future for all nations of the Indian Ocean and beyond.

"We need to facilitate maritime connectivity, reduce the trade barriers," he said when speaking at a plenary session titled "Strengthening Maritime Supply Chains: Overcoming Disruptions and Enhancing Resilience" at the IOC.

The adviser said that Bangladesh places strong importance on maritime cooperation for facilitating the efficient movement of goods, services and people, for advancing food security, energy security, water cooperation, disaster risk reduction and providing fair access to global public goods.

The adviser pointed out that global economy, food security, and energy supplies are at increasing risk due to vulnerabilities at key maritime routes.

Border killing

FROM PAGE 1

The conference will also focus on enhancing bilateral relations and fostering mutual trust and goodwill, the release said.

The DG level talks is taking place amid tensions between the BGB and BSF, over the constructions of barbed-wire fences within 150 yards of the border.

On January 29, the home adviser said that Bangladesh will speak in a "different tone" during the border conference between the BGB-BSF DG-level talks.

A 14-member Bangladeshi delegation, led by the BGB Director Major General Mohammad Asifuzzaman Siddiqui, will participate in the conference.

The Bangladeshi delegation will include senior BGB officials as well as representatives from the Chief Adviser's Office, the Ministry of Home Affairs, External Affairs.

The Indian delegation will include senior BSF officials along with representatives from India's Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs.

BSF is likely to raise the issue of attacks on its personnel by "armed miscreants" from Bangladesh, reports our Delhi correspondent.

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Shipping, the Land Record and Survey Department, and the Joint Rivers Commission.

On the other hand, a 13-member Indian delegation, led by the BSF Director General Daljit Singh Chaudhary, will take part in the conference.

The Indian delegation will include senior BSF officials along with representatives from India's Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs.

BSF is likely to raise the issue of attacks on its personnel by "armed miscreants" from Bangladesh, reports our Delhi correspondent.

The talks, which were originally scheduled to be held in November last year, would focus on resolving the impasse over proposed construction of single-row fence by India to close gaps along Indo-Bangladesh border.

BSF recently had to suspend erection of the single row fence within 150 yards of the border at two points - in Malda and Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal after BGB raised objections.

The border conference will formally conclude on February 20. The Bangladeshi delegation will return home on the same day following the conclusion of the conference.

exposes administrative failure."

The former students demanded a fresh and impartial investigation.

PROCTOR CLAIMS MIX-UP

Proctor Prof Tanvir MH Arif told The Daily Star that the decision to punish the students followed a thorough investigation.

"They were found guilty. The [probe] committee, headed by Prof Ismat Ara Haque, submitted its report, and all of them were given time to defend themselves."

About his Facebook post, he said his use of the term "honey trap" did not refer to any female students or any women.

"I have 20 years of experience as a teacher and have witnessed many governments and people who have changed their stances for personal benefits. I used the term about them. Yet, being in a responsible position, I should be more conscious of my choice of words, and I have apologised and given an explanation," he said.

They also called for action against students who entered the dorm premises on February 5 and journalists who allegedly filmed female students without their consent and made offensive remarks during the argument, reports our staff correspondent from Chattogram.

Sumaiya Shikdar, a student of marketing, said when male students attempted to break into the Sheikh Hasina hall, the university administration failed to intervene.

When female students sought the vice chancellor's help, the proctorial team members arrived, scolded them, and called them "agents of fascists", leading to an altercation, she said.

Campus journalists did not identify themselves and started filming, ignoring requests not to do that.

Jannatul Mawa, Umme Habiba Bristy, Maisara Jaham Esha, and Rowjatul Jannat Nisha were present at the press conference.

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MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES DIRECTOR OF WORKS AND CHIEF ENGINEER (AIR) INVITATION FOR TENDER

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence		
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services		
3. Procuring Entity Name	DW & CE (Air), Dhaka Cantt		
4. Tender Name	Project Works under Works Programme of Bangladesh Air Force for the financial year 2024-2025 (As per SI No.14)		
5. Invitation for Tender No.	09 of 2024-2025/E-4 Dated: 13 February 2025		
6. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)		
7. Source of Funds	Govt. of Bangladesh (GOB)		
8. Tender publication date	17 February 2025		
9. Tender last Selling date	03 March 2025 (During Office hours)		
10. Last date of Tender submission	04 March 2025 upto 1200 hours		
11. Tender opening date and time	04 March 2025 at 1230 hours		
12. Name & Address of the Tenders selling, receiving and opening Tender documents	DW & CE (Air), Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka-1206.		
13. Eligibility of Tenderer	a. MES Enlisted Contractors 'Class' as below. b. Contractors enlisted in other Govt departments may also participate in tenders of the work on receipt of security clearance from DGFI.		
14. Description of works	Location	Class	Price of Tender Document (Non refundable) in the shape of Pay Order in favour of DW&CE (Air)
a. Provision of External Electric supply line for Remaining works of under Construction BOQ (10 Storey) at Officers Mess area BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore (Last Phase).	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 2,51,000/- 09 (Nine) months
b. Provision of External Water supply line for Remaining works of under Construction BOQ (10 Storey) at Officers Mess area BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore (Last Phase).	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 52,000/- 09 (Nine) months
c. Provision of Fire Fighting system for Remaining works of under Construction BOQ (10 Storey) at Officers Mess area BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore (Last Phase).	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,90,000/- 12 (Twelve) months
d. Provision of Fire Fighting system for Construction of 1x72 Airmen Type Qtr (10 Storey with 14 storied foundation, Each floor 8 Unit) including ancillary works at BAF Base Kurmitola.	BAF Base Kurmitola	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,98,000/- 12 (Twelve) months
e. Provision of Fire Fighting system for Construction of 10th to 13th floor over under Construction 9th floor with remaining works of 1x72 Airmen Type Qtr (10 Storey with 14 storied foundation) including ancillary works at BAF Base Kurmitola (Last Phase).	BAF Base Kurmitola	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,41,000/- 12 (Twelve) months
f. Provision of Street Light for Construction of 1x72 Airmen Type Qtr (14 Storey with 14 storied foundation) including ancillary works at BAF Base Kurmitola.	BAF Base Kurmitola	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 13,000/- 06 (Six) months
g. Provision of External Water supply line for Construction of 1x72 Airmen Type Qtr (10 Storey with 14 storied foundation, Each floor 8 Unit) including ancillary works at BAF Base Kurmitola.	BAF Base Kurmitola	'C' & 'D'	Tk. 1,30,000/- 09 (Nine) months
h. Construction of Water Reservoir for under construction BOQ (10th storied) at Officers Mess area at BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 91,000/- 05 (Five) Months
i. Construction of RCC Road/Hardstanding for under construction (14 storied foundation) 1 x 104 Warrant Officers Type Qtr at BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore (Group-I).	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 1,36,000/- 04 (Four) Months
j. Construction of RCC Road/Hardstanding for under construction (14 storied foundation) 1 x 104 Warrant Officers Type Qtr at BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore (Group-II).	BAF Base Birsreshtha Matlur Rahman, Jashore.	'D' & 'E'	Tk. 1,36,000/- 04 (Four) Months
15. Contact Details	Tel: 9836520, e-mail: dwceair@gmail.com		
16. Special Instructions	a. Tenderers shall submit copy of valid Enlistment letter & security clearance with application on company letter-head when purchasing Tender. b. Detailed requirements are mentioned in Tender Data sheet of Tender documents. c. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the Tenders.		

আই এস পিঅর/বিমান/১১

১৬/০২/২৫

GD-444

Taiwan detects 24 Chinese military aircraft

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan said it detected 24 Chinese military aircraft near the island yesterday as a Canadian warship passed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

It was the first Canadian naval vessel to transit the waterway this year, Taiwan's foreign ministry said, and came days after two US ships made the passage.

The United States and its allies regularly pass through the 180-kilometre (112-mile) Taiwan Strait to reinforce its status as an international waterway, angering China.

Beijing has never ruled Taiwan, but it claims the democratic island as part of its territory and has threatened to bring it under its control by force.

Dhaka, Delhi

FROM PAGE 1
Force in New Delhi, said the ministry release.

The two leaders also exchanged views on other bilateral issues of mutual interest and concern, the ministry stated.

Reflecting on their last meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2024, they noted that since then, the two nations have engaged in multiple bilateral dialogues, including the Foreign Office Consultations at the Foreign Secretary level in Dhaka on December 9.

Besides, they recalled Bangladesh energy adviser's participation in the India Energy Week events in New Delhi from February 10 to 11.

Adviser Touhid also held meetings with the second minister of foreign affairs of Brunei, the vice minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam, and the deputy minister of foreign affairs of Tanzania on the sidelines of the IOC.

Time to set aside partisan interests

Building consensus on key reform proposals is the main challenge

We welcome the initiation of the official process to build consensus on the proposals submitted by six key reform commissions, with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus calling it the start of the "second phase" of the interim government. Earlier, when four of the six commission reports were submitted, Prof Yunus took a similarly upbeat view of it alluding to a "new chapter" for the nation. Indeed, the first meeting of the National Consensus Commission, attended by some 100 representatives from 26 political parties and alliances, was all about reaffirming the commitment to state reform in line with the spirit of the July uprising, as well as determining the process of consensus building. At the end of this process, there will be a charter based on discussions with political parties and civil society, which will serve as a roadmap for executing the reforms.

The significance of undertaking this process properly cannot be overstated. Prof Ali Riaz, co-chair of the seven-member consensus commission, has stated that dialogues will be held with all political parties individually and in groups, including "unofficial discussions." He also signalled that even though the commission has been given six months, their goal is to reach consensus as soon as possible. Summaries of the six reports have already been shared with political parties for review and feedback. Reportedly, there will be a methodical approach to collecting feedback. One participant at Saturday's meeting told *Prothom Alo* that mention was made of a website where the reform proposals would be published and political parties can mark "yes" or "no" on each, ensuring transparency and accountability in the process.

That said, we think it is important that the reform proposals are categorised based on feasibility and urgency. For example, certain proposals—such as improving electoral integrity, ensuring transparent governance, or curtailing the prime minister's powers—already enjoy broad consensus. Others—such as constitutional amendments or restructuring key institutions—may require prolonged deliberation and public endorsement. It is also essential to separate short-term, easily implementable reforms from those requiring long-term structural changes. However, the greatest challenge will be in reaching consensus on the most critical reforms. This is where political parties must demonstrate their commitment by prioritising national interests over partisan agenda.

Unfortunately, consensus-building has historically been fraught and elusive in Bangladesh's politics. When the BNP secretary general refers to a "minimum consensus" as a baseline for wrapping up this process, leading to the next elections, it further raises questions about its success. We, therefore, urge political parties to engage in the reform dialogue with the sincerity and compromise it demands, because without political buy-in and constructive engagement, even the most well-intentioned reform initiatives may falter. They must rise above their differences, partisanship, and adversarial postures for the sake of a "new Bangladesh" that truly reflects the aspirations of those who fought and sacrificed during the July uprising. The ball is in their court now.

Replace broken medical equipment

Poor services at Barishal hospital must be addressed

The sorry state of the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in Barishal, where a number of diagnostic machines have remained out of order for more than half a decade, is deeply concerning. SBMCH is the only fully-fledged hospital not just for the people of the six districts of Barishal division but also for patients from other southern districts such as Sandwip, Hatiya, and Gopalganj. However, instead of receiving subsidised diagnostic and medical services at this public facility, they are forced to pay for medical tests and treatment at nearby private clinics and diagnostic centres.

According to a report by *Banik Barta*, the only MRI machine at the hospital has been out of service for eight years. As a result, patients needing MRI scans are forced to go to private clinics where the cost ranges from Tk 5,000 to Tk 25,000—which is often beyond the means of poor patients. Other essential medical equipment, including three ultrasonogram machines and eight X-ray machines, have also been non-functional for several years. Even common eye surgeries cannot be performed because the hospital's LASIK laser machine has been out of service for seven years, while the phaco machine for cataract surgery is also currently broken. It is beyond comprehension why the hospital authorities have not replaced or repaired these machines despite their prolonged dysfunction. There are allegations that a syndicate of hospital staff and doctors benefits from this situation, referring patients to private facilities in exchange for commissions.

Following the ouster of the Awami League government, many doctors and officials who were affiliated with the party and benefited from the regime's corrupt practices were removed from public hospitals, including SBMCH. However, corruption is so deeply rooted in our health system that its eradication is yet to be achieved. In SBMCH's case, we hope the new hospital management will be able to identify and dismantle the syndicate profiting from the "broken-machine business." They should urgently replace the faulty and broken machines so that patients can receive care at the public hospital at subsidised rates. Finally, we hope the healthcare reform commission will recommend effective measures to ensure greater accountability among doctors and hospital staff and eliminate corruption from the sector.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

China invades Vietnam

On this day in 1979, China invaded Vietnam following a series of anti-Chinese, pro-Soviet manoeuvres taken by Vietnam in its bid to bolster its ties with the Soviet Union, rather than with China.

EDITORIAL

What the media opinion survey tells us



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Department of Political Science and Sociology
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S M REZWAN-UL-ALAM

The interim government recently conducted a survey across the country to determine how people here feel about the media. The National Media Opinion Survey, a first of its kind in Bangladesh, was conducted during the first week of January by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) at the request of the Media Reform Commission. More than 45,000 families from all 64 districts participated and were asked what they thought about the media. The BBS used a strict sampling method to examine how people reach, interact with, trust, and believe the media is independent.

The survey showed an interesting fact: teachers are trusted sources of information; over 42 percent of the respondents said they were their most trusted sources. Rural teachers enjoy more trust (nearly 45 percent) than their urban counterparts (just over 34 percent). This proves that teachers still hold considerable influence over the general population in Bangladesh. This finding, along with others from the survey, shows that Bangladesh still has trouble making sure that the media is open, honest, and free to access for everyone.

The survey findings indicate a significant shift in media consumption patterns in Bangladesh, with mobile phones emerging as the most widely used platform to access media content. As many as 59.28 percent of the respondents said they accessed media on their mobile phones, with rural usage slightly higher at 61.93 percent compared to 52.85 percent in urban areas. Women appear (66.99 percent) to be relying on mobile phones for media access more than men (54.33 percent).

The survey also sheds light on public trust in social media. Among digital platforms, Facebook is ranked as the most trusted, with 31.36 percent of respondents considering it a reliable source of information, followed by YouTube at 16.5 percent. Other social

media platforms lag significantly in terms of public trust.

The poll shows a worrying trend for newspapers in Bangladesh: less than 27 percent of respondents said they read newspapers, with urban readers (35 percent) relying more on newspapers than their rural counterparts (less than 25 percent). Men (nearly 34 percent) read newspapers more than women (over 20 percent). Most newspaper readers (37.61 percent) still prefer the print version, while only 2.58 percent readers still read the digital version.

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Online grooming and the fight to protect our children



Noora Shamsi Bahar
is senior lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University (NSU), and a published researcher and translator.

NOORA SHAMSI BAHAR

Grooming of minors by paedophilic adults seems to be an overlooked yet pressing societal anomaly, especially with children's increased access to the internet. Despite their fair share of boons, social media platforms and messaging apps harbour a safe haven for predators that prey on innocent victims and exploit their trust in the most sinister ways. We have periodically seen incidents happen across Bangladesh that raise concern over this issue.

Grooming is a calculated process through which predators establish emotional connections with minors, often masquerading as a friend, mentor or admirer. Through the art of deception and sophisticated manipulation tactics, the child—who, more often than not, is a female—is moulded to be a puppet, dancing to the tunes of the puppet-master, driving the child to think and act in ways that serve the evil purpose of her groomer—usually male. The defenceless victim is made to believe that her predator is a chivalrous knight in shining armour, saving her, the damsel in distress, from difficult circumstances with the purest of intentions. These predicaments could be the feeling of being unloved

at home due to the birth of a younger sibling or due to parents' outbursts, anger management issues, and harsh punishment methods. They can also be the feeling of inadequacy at school or deep rooted insecurities, the feeling of loneliness due to not having friends as a result of being a victim of bullies, etc, all of which are significant challenges in a child's life, making them more vulnerable and therefore an easy target.

In most cases, victims are led to believe that they are engaging in consensual relationships, often under false promises of marriage. The victim is made to keep the predator's paedophilic conduct a secret, because the world will supposedly conspire against them and tear them apart. In other cases, these deviants may threaten or gaslight their victims into silence who are unable to recognise the abuse for what it is. Since minors cannot legally consent, such exploitation constitutes a grave violation of their rights. Tragically, many victims don't come forward due to fear, shame or trauma, allowing the cycle of abuse to continue unchecked.

It is high time for parents to take an active role in protecting their

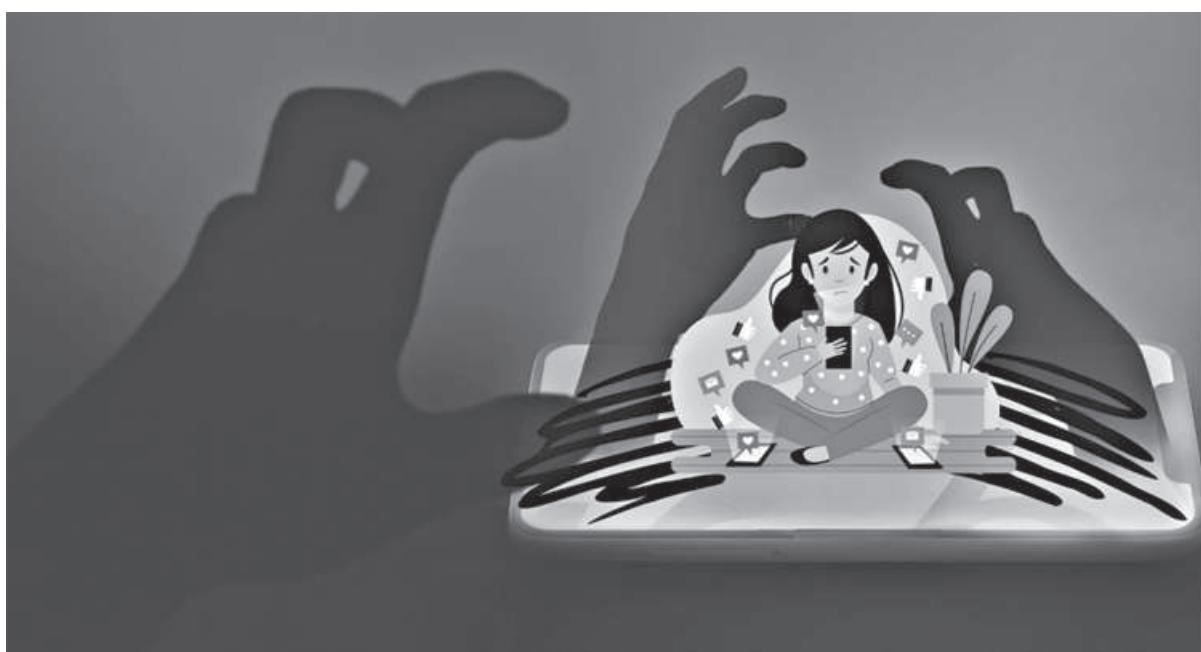
children from the predators that lurk in the shadows of a virtual realm, and this can only be ensured through frank, open, and non-judgemental communication, giving children a safe space to share uncomfortable encounters and educating them on the dangers of interacting with strangers on the internet. Needless to say, implementing reasonable

Instead of focusing on symptomatic treatment, it is important to eliminate the root cause of the ailment itself. These are medical terms, but I like to view the crisis as an epidemic. Sustainable change would require competence to assess problematic patterns, based on qualitative and quantitative data as well as through observation, that have led to this crisis. These sensibilities will allow advocates to initiate a

the ordeal, and to be aware that something has gone fundamentally wrong for some children to have been pushed into a scary rabbit hole. It would require competence to assess problematic patterns, based on qualitative and quantitative data as well as through observation, that have led to this crisis. These sensibilities will allow advocates to initiate a

During goal-setting, perhaps the following can be taken into consideration: i) schools should integrate age-appropriate education on cybersecurity, consent, grooming awareness, etc into the curriculum; ii) the education ministry can source materials (printed or audio-visual) on the topic, which schools can use effectively; iii) stakeholders should plan and execute campaigns at school premises, which must include the involvement of parents, e.g. organising workshops for parents, where they are educated on how to speak to children about predators and how to detect the red flags; and iv) regular monitoring of the effect of the implemented programmes can be done through feedback loops from teachers, parents, and student surveys conducted by school authorities.

We must stop pointing fingers at child victims and shaming them, which worsens the problem by enabling paedophiles and predators. In fact, when we as a society shift the blame to the reprehensible groomers, victims will feel less ashamed or afraid to report their abusers. Survivors may then have the courage to speak as ambassadors at school premises, during various awareness campaigns. Besides punishing the perpetrators to ensure justice, it is important to root out the problem through the joint efforts of parents, educators, school administrators, the education ministry, other stakeholders, and the community at large, so that together, we can build a protective environment where children can grow without the looming threat of exploitation.



FILE VISUAL: MAHIYA TABASSUM

restrictions on the usage of social media and signing them up for after school programmes and extracurricular activities or helping them pick up new hobbies can help mitigate exposure to potential threats.

would necessitate a commitment to eliminating obstacles that come in the way of the well-being of pre-teens and teenagers who are prone to becoming prey to predators. It is important for stakeholders to empathise with children who have been through

journey towards common, action-oriented goals. The co-labouring process of stakeholders will also allow the identification of the loopholes in the school system and curriculum, so that immediate preventive measures can be taken.

To solve Dhaka's commuting crisis, prioritise improving public transport

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The challenges that commuters face while travelling in Dhaka is nothing new. With nearly 2.4 crore of residents, the city has been experiencing crippling traffic that caused a loss of more than 80 lakh work hours daily in 2023. It also costs commuters an average of \$4 daily in lost productivity and exacerbates air pollution, posing significant public health risks. The issue stems from a significant gap between an underfunded public transport system and the soaring number of private vehicles. The elevated Dhaka metro rail transports about three lakh passengers daily, but this capacity is inadequate for the overall demand, underscoring the urgent need to enhance public transport infrastructure in the capital city. The current piecemeal solutions have failed to rectify this imbalance.

Dhaka's commuting crisis stems from an overreliance on private vehicles and a lack of awareness about rail-based public transport. A city its size should allocate 25 percent of its land to roads, but it only dedicates seven to

eight percent, with a mere three percent for public and heavy vehicles. This discrepancy leads to severe mobility challenges. The rising number of private vehicles exacerbates the problem. In 2024, Dhaka recorded 62.6 lakh vehicles, including 45.8 lakh motorcycles, while only 1,516 new buses were registered during the same time frame. This imbalance has led to chronic traffic congestion, with vehicle speeds plummeting to just seven kilometres per hour.

The public transport system suffers from inefficiencies primarily due to a limited coverage that leaves many peripheral neighbourhoods without direct bus access. The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) indicates that Dhaka needs 7,043 buses and minibuses on 110 routes, but only 4,500 are operational—two-thirds of the required fleet. This gap leads to longer wait times as buses operate irregularly. Furthermore, the ageing and poorly maintained buses have frequent breakdowns and delays. Bus stops and terminals are often in disrepair and lack basic amenities, undermining service reliability and safety.

The rise in private vehicle ownership is fuelled by economic growth, urbanisation, and cultural shifts favouring personal transport. As car ownership rises, Dhaka's limited road infrastructure struggles to accommodate the increasing number of vehicles, leading to chronic congestion. Commuters spend 46 minutes every two hours daily in traffic. This inefficiency worsens environmental issues, too, as idling vehicles contribute to

air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Dhaka's public transport infrastructure inadequacy is exacerbated by poor integration of land use planning and transport development. Transport authorities like the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) and the BRTA deal with challenges such as insufficient staffing, lack of skilled personnel, and poor inter-agency coordination. These systemic issues hinder effective decision-making and the implementation of essential transport projects. Additionally, vested interest groups influence the allocation of funds, leading to inadequate investment in public transport. Resources are often dispersed, resulting in fragmented development efforts that fail to address the city's comprehensive transport needs. Ongoing mass transit projects such as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) have not kept pace with population growth and traffic demands, continuing the reliance on private vehicles. Current policies also fail to address the environmental impacts of rising vehicle emissions and air pollution, and measures are lacking to mitigate these challenges.

From a social welfare standpoint, public transport offers affordable mobility for all, reducing income and location-based disparities. This aligns with redistributive policy theories as investing in public transport can yield greater societal benefits than prioritising private vehicle ownership. Public transport systems are also more

efficient, accommodating more passengers per vehicle, thus decreasing the number of vehicles on the road and enhancing travel efficiency. It generally costs less than owning a private vehicle, which involves expenses like fuel, maintenance, and parking. For many low-income households, public transport is a less burdensome option for daily commutes, leading to an improved quality of life and greater economic stability.

Public transport is vital for promoting environmental responsibility as well. By reducing the number of private vehicles, it helps lower traffic congestion, pollution levels, and carbon footprints. With the adoption of eco-friendly technologies, such as electric buses and trains, modern public transport systems are further minimising their environmental impact.

Significant improvements to the public transport system are essential for reducing car ownership and usage in Dhaka. Model predictions indicate that households with two cars could see ownership decline by 5.88 percent and usage decrease by 15.22 percent, resulting in a 15 percent reduction in emissions and fuel consumption. To achieve this, Dhaka must prioritise investment in a robust public transport system, expand operational routes to alleviate pressure on the system, and reduce reliance on private vehicles. A comprehensive study to identify underserved areas and expand service accordingly can significantly improve accessibility.

The Institute for Transport and Development Policy recommends upgrading

the bus fleet and infrastructure to enhance accessibility, traffic flow, and emissions reduction. Introducing newer, more efficient vehicles can improve reliability and safety, while dedicated bus lanes, improved bus stops, and better traffic management systems can streamline operations and encourage public transport use. Policies to discourage private vehicle use are equally critical. Implementing congestion pricing, as successfully demonstrated in cities like London, Stockholm, and Singapore, can mitigate traffic by imposing fees on vehicles in high-demand areas.

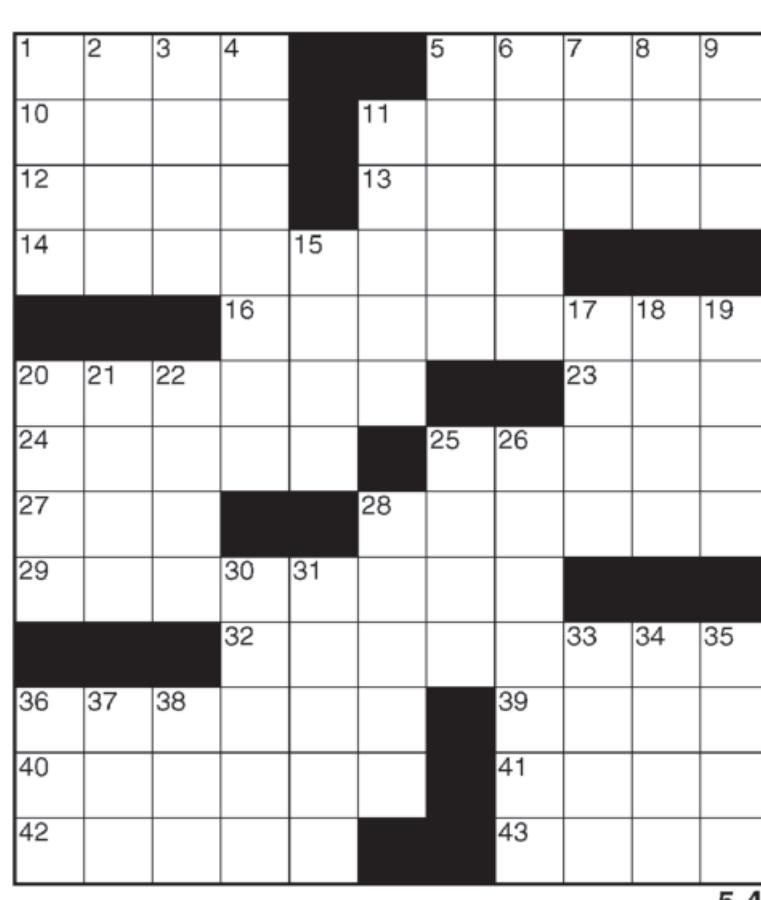
Public awareness campaigns are vital for shifting perceptions of public transportation. Many commuters in Dhaka view buses as unreliable and overcrowded. Highlighting the economic and environmental benefits of an improved system can encourage greater public transport usage and reduce dependency on private vehicles.

Addressing Dhaka's public transport challenges requires a comprehensive approach that emphasises coordinated planning, institutional capacity-building, and increased investment in infrastructure. By prioritising public transportation, upgrading infrastructure, and regulating private vehicle use, the city can develop a more equitable, efficient, and sustainable transportation system. Future road network performance can be further enhanced through initiatives like updating and implementing the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for the Greater Dhaka Area (GDA).

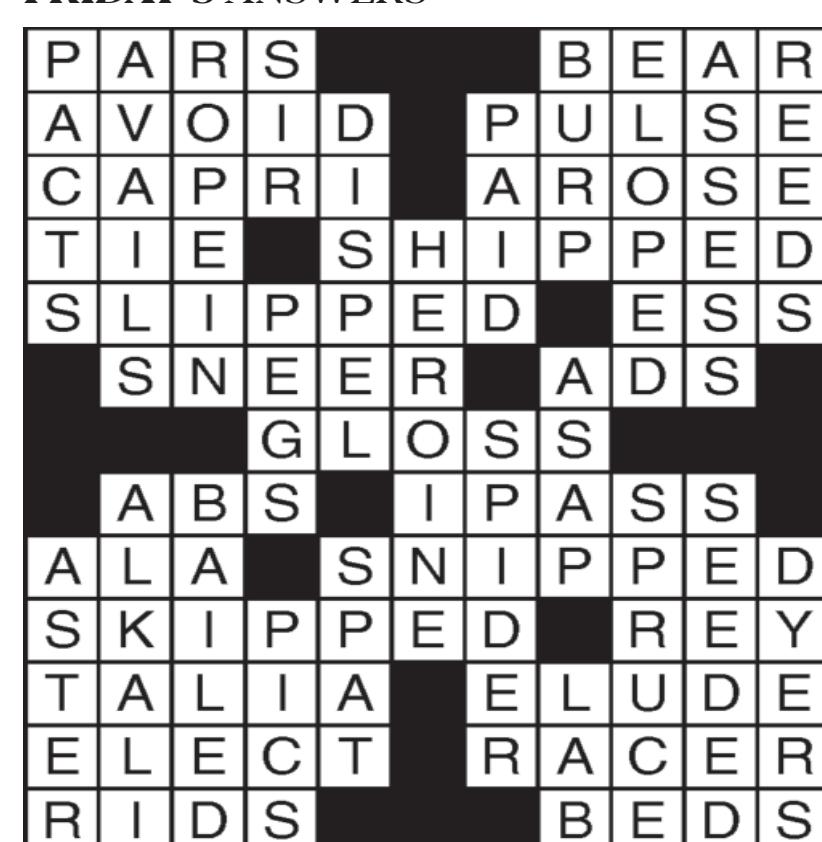
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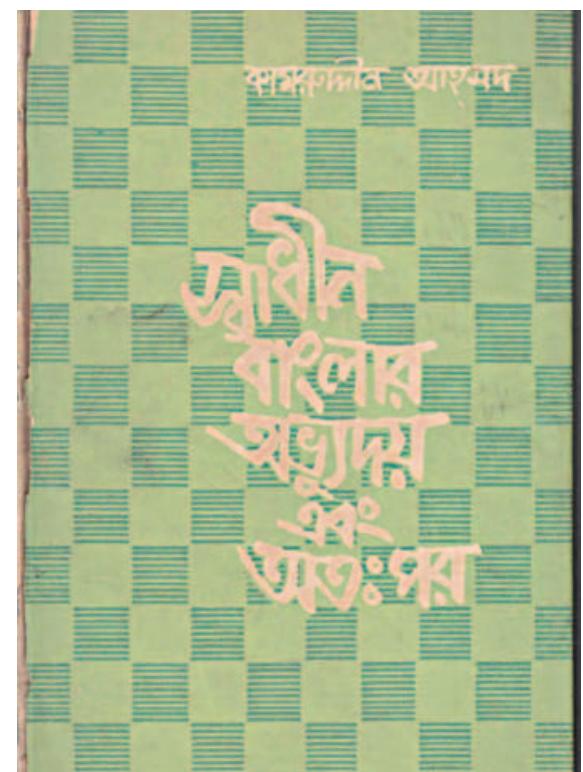
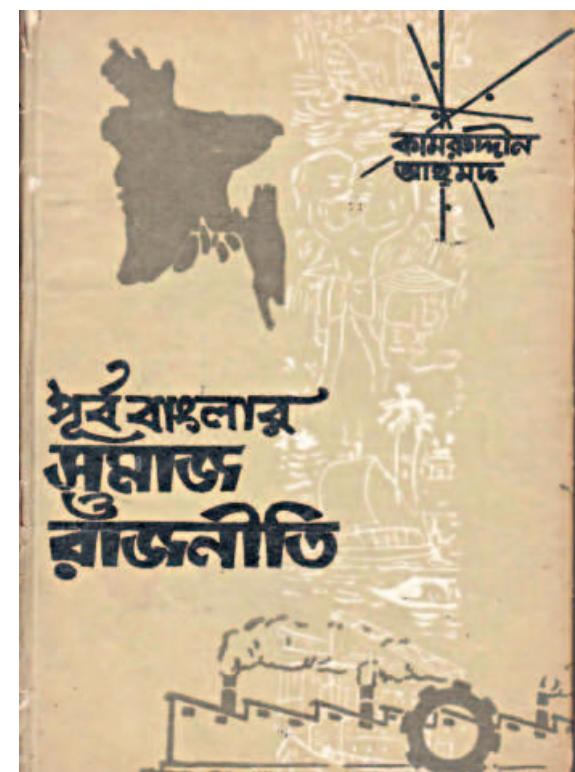
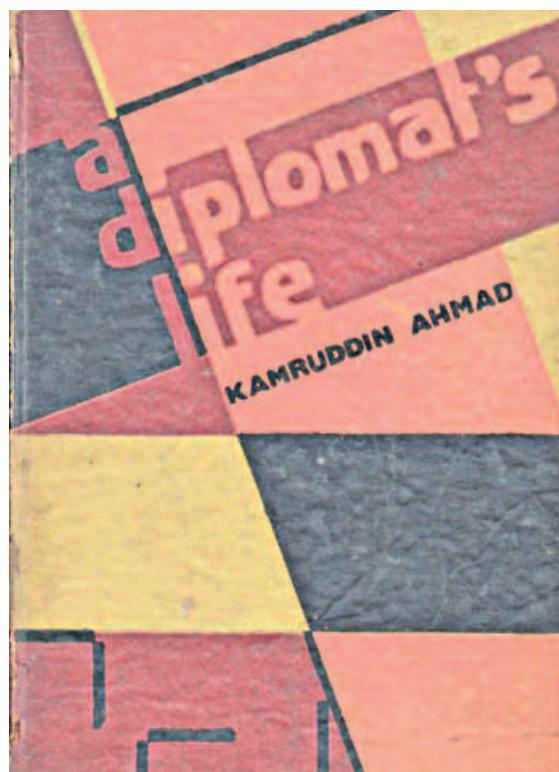
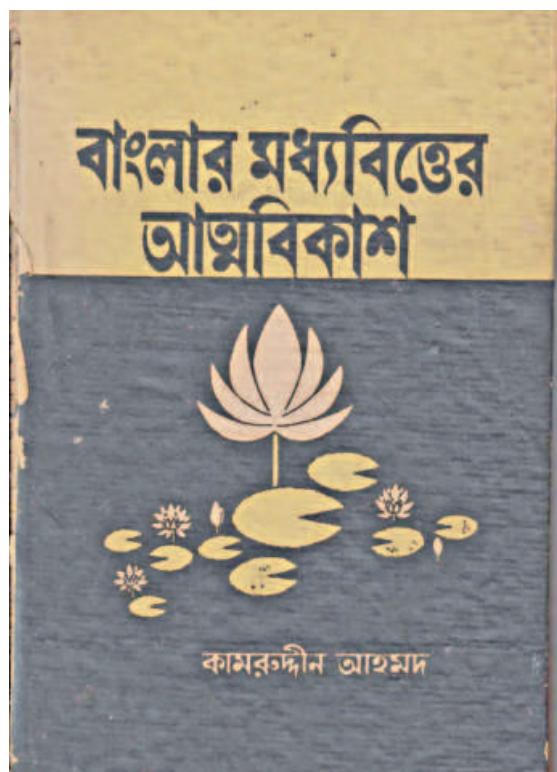
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- 26 Horse restraint
- 27 Libertine
- 28 Battery
- 29 Second drink
- 30 Ring islands
- 31 Alley targets
- 32 Price additions
- 33 "Get lost!"
- 34 District
- 35 Splendor
- 36 General Bradley
- 37 Peru's capital
- 38 Doesn't go to bed
- 39 Sly one



FRIDAY'S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO
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A selection of Kamruddin Ahmad's major works.

KAMRUDDIN AHMAD

A visionary political thinker we must remember

"I believe in the politics of men, but not party politics. I have never been tempted by power. I remain a student of politics forever, but I never became a political leader."

IQRA L QAMARI

In a quiet neighbourhood of a once lush green residential area of Dhamondi, I grew up in a three-storied house that dates back to the year 1957, listening wide-eyed to stories of a man deeply involved in Bangladesh's struggle for sovereignty and democracy. It is hard to come up with a title that befits Kamruddin Ahmad. Having played different roles throughout his lifetime—politician, historian, writer, diplomat, language activist, or trade unionist—he crafted himself into whatever the country needed him to be at that point in time, in the quest for liberty. Yet, despite his vast contributions, his name is seldom mentioned in mainstream discussions of Bangladesh's political history. At a time when Bangladesh is at a crossroads—grappling with the remnants of authoritarianism while striving for meaningful reforms and principled leadership—his vision and unwavering commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and historical documentation offer lessons that remain strikingly relevant today.

Born on September 8, 1912, in Sholagharpur village in Munshiganj District, Kamruddin Ahmad demonstrated early academic brilliance and intellectual curiosity. He studied at Barisal Zilla School and B.M. College. His initial hostel days were carefree and full of youthful exuberance, but they quickly turned somber after he lost his doting mother in 1929, severing all ties with his family. He moved to

teacher at Armanitola Government High School in Dhaka but soon found his calling in politics. Initially, he was aligned with the Muslim League, supporting its political vision, but after the partition of 1947, he shifted his allegiance to the Awami League, believing it better represented the aspirations of Bengalis. However, disillusioned with party politics, he left and joined the diplomatic service. He served as Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata and later as Ambassador to Myanmar and Cambodia before retiring from diplomacy. By 1962, he had turned to legal practice while also remaining active as trade unionist. His involvement in politics was never a matter of personal ambition but rather a reflection of his dedication to justice and social reform.

“Party politics has never attracted me. I have never applied to any party for council membership in my life. I didn't even go to the polling station to cast my vote. As long as I have been associated with politics, I have done the politics of the country, but I was not a member of any party except for two years from 1955. I believe in the politics of men, but not party politics. I have never been tempted by power. I remain a student of politics forever, but I never became a political leader.”

He was a vital figure in the Sarba-dalika Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad, advocating for Bengali to be recognised as a state language. His efforts contributed to the foundations of the Language Movement, a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's history. According to Rash B. Ghosh, an Indian politician, “Various progressive political forces of East Bengal started mobilising support for making Bengali one of the state languages of Pakistan even before the emergence of the nation. For instance, some of the Bengali Muslim Leaguers formed the Gono Azadi League under the leadership of Kamruddin Ahmad in July 1947. In its manifesto, [he] clearly emphasised: ‘Bangla will be our state

insights into Bengal's socio-political developments and the ideological underpinnings of Bangladesh's independence. He meticulously documented the struggles of the people, the failures of political leadership, and the lessons that should be drawn from history. His writings serve as essential readings for anyone seeking to understand the history of Bangladesh beyond conventional narratives. Ahmad authored several books, including *A Social History of Bengal* (1957), *A Socio-Political History of Bengal, The Birth of Bangladesh, Purba Banglar Samaj O Rajneeti* (1976), *Banglar Madhyabitter Atmabikash* (two vols), *Swadhin Banglar Abhyuday Ebong Atapar* (1982), and *Banglar EK Madhyabitter Atmakahini*. His most popular books revolve around the theme of the Muslim middle class, where he observed the development of the Bengali Muslim middle class as a complex process and discussed the dilemmas of this class, their struggles, and their prospects. He writes, “One of the characteristics of the Bengali middle class was that they were divided. On the one hand, they had tradition, and on the other hand, they had the desire to modernise.”

Now, more than four decades after his demise, even his magnum opus of books is all but forgotten.

this man has contributed to the sociopolitical fabric of this nation. One can only assume how unaware most of the younger generation is about him, which is dismal, given the state of affairs in the country and how impactful his philosophies and historically objective documentation of the political landscape could have been for those invested in the future of the country.

It is quite interesting that he removed himself from politics early on, having lost interest or not wanting to compromise his principles, yet he chose to be an avid observer and commentator. In the words of Professor Salimullah Khan, published in this daily a decade back, ‘Kamruddin Ahmad is a witness, a man of great introspection. He is a historian who writes in full spotlight of the other's gaze. A man who was himself involved in the political turmoil for more than a quarter of a century,’ he admits, ‘cannot pretend to be aloof.’ He nevertheless betrays objectivity of sorts: ‘I have, however, tried to be as objective as possible because I am conscious that I might become a source for future historians. It's not too much to say that he partly succeeded.’

The man dedicated his life to the betterment of this country not only professionally but also personally, making the ultimate sacrifice of losing his youngest son, Nizamuddin Azad, who fought in the Liberation War of 1971 as a member of the Mukti Bahini. The rebellious son, a student activist involved in a Communist Party group, was named after freedom itself—it was as if Kamruddin Ahmad had finally met his match in the family, and their fate was intertwined, with the father outliving his son.

In May 1971, Azad left home to join the guerrilla forces fighting for Bangladesh's liberation. In October 1971, the Pakistani Army arrested Kamruddin Ahmad, who faced the same brutality inflicted upon many intellectuals and political figures of

that Azad had never returned from the war. This devastating news marked a turning point in his life, and those who knew him say he was never quite the same again.

Kamruddin Ahmad remained a significant figure in politics and academia post-independence. As General Secretary of the Trade Union Federation, he tirelessly worked for labour rights and social justice. His tenure as President of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (1976–1978) allowed him to document and preserve Bangladesh's political and historical heritage. More than a politician, he was an intellectual force, a historian, and a mentor Bangladesh never fully recognized. As the country moves forward, revisiting his teachings and leadership could help build a more informed, progressive, and ethical political landscape.

In this moment of crisis, the country desperately needs leaders like him—those who champion democracy, social justice, and historical awareness. The absence of ethical leadership and intellectual discourse in contemporary politics makes Kamruddin Ahmad's legacy more pivotal than ever. His emphasis on historical awareness, democratic values, and political ethics could have helped provide a roadmap for the nation's future. His vision for Bangladesh was one where education, political consciousness, and justice shaped governance, and his ability to analyse political shifts and advocate for social reform is something today's leaders and young activists can learn from.

His son's sacrifice in the Liberation War stands as a testament to the values he instilled—proving that true patriotism is about service and sacrifice, not just rhetoric. His journey reminds me of the notion that even if you steer far away from politics, you make a political statement. To come across someone who was involved in the political landscape not to seek leadership or power, but to become a tour de force as a witness, thinker,



Kamruddin Ahmad (1912-1982)



Kamruddin Ahmad with his wife Jobeda Khanam.

the capital to stay with a paternal uncle while earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1934 and a Master of Arts in English in 1935 from the University of Dhaka, later pursuing law in the 1940s from the same institution.

Ahmad began his career as a

language. All necessary steps need to be taken immediately for making Bangla language suitable for all parts of Pakistan. Bangla shall be the only official language of East Pakistan.”

Apart from being a statesman, Ahmad was a prolific writer and historian. His books offer critical

Collecting dust on the bookshelves of my own house, despite being his granddaughter, I myself do not find the time to pick them up, despite my mother's incessant requests. Only a handful of researchers, academics, or intellectuals know about him or the extent to which

the time. His arrest was a reflection of the broader crackdown on those who resisted Pakistan's rule. He remained in jail until Bangladesh's victory, and on December 17, 1971, the morning after the Pakistani Armed Forces surrendered, he was finally released. However, upon his release, he learned

and historian is rare. Perhaps his way of politics is what the country direly needs right now.

Iqra L Qamari is a project development consultant, a writer, and Kamruddin Ahmad's granddaughter.

(L) Kamruddin Ahmad with Ho Chi Minh, the revolutionary leader and founding father of modern Vietnam, 1957. (R) Kamruddin Ahmad, upon his return from the United Nations in 1957, welcomed by Abul Mansur Ahmed. His youngest son, Nizamuddin Azad, stands beside him on the left.

the capital to stay with a paternal uncle while earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1934 and a Master of Arts in English in 1935 from the University of Dhaka, later pursuing law in the 1940s from the same institution.

Ahmad began his career as a

language. All necessary steps need to be taken immediately for making Bangla language suitable for all parts of Pakistan. Bangla shall be the only official language of East Pakistan.”

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IPL to begin on March 22

The money-spinning Indian Premier League will begin on March 22 with holders Kolkata Knight Riders to host Royal Challengers Bengaluru, India's cricket board said Sunday. Kolkata's iconic Eden Gardens will be the venue for the opener and the final on May 25 with 74 matches to be played across 13 venues in the 18th edition of the hugely popular T20 tournament.

Rebels to rejoin training as resolution nears

SPORTS REPORTER

The standoff between senior women's footballers and head coach Peter Butler has seemingly ended around 19 days after the rebellion, with 18 players agreeing to return to training after Bangladesh's two FIFA friendlies against the UAE.

"We have been in continuous negotiations with them, and I met them again today [Sunday]. The girls have agreed to return, but not immediately," said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's committee chairman Mahfuz Akther Kiran at a press briefing called on a short notice at the BFF House yesterday.

Bangladesh, without the 18 seniors, will leave for the UAE, after which the training camp will be closed until February 24. Kiran noted that the returning players also wanted a break. Before resuming training, discussions involving the women's wing, higher authorities, coaches, and team management will take place to resolve misunderstandings.

"There is no benefit if players and coaches are not satisfied. We will work towards a solution. The girls have assured me they will return and sign contracts, having realised their mistakes," she added.

The development provides relief to

the board, fans, and the players who have helped elevate women's football. It also paves the way for stars like Sabina Khatun, Monica Chakma, Ritu Porna Chakma, Sanjida Akter and Maria Manda to return. However, the matter is far from settled. Kiran has yet to discuss the situation with



Butler, who previously declared, "Either I stay, or they stay," may not be entirely receptive to the players' return. Getting back to basics, BFF must brief him on the nature of resources at his disposal while also ensuring the returning players understand the discipline required at this level.

"We must counsel the coach as we did with the players. We have to make the coach understand that team bonding is important. I think it [creating team bonding] will not happen within a day," admitted Kiran, who, however, downplayed the dispute as an "incident" rather than indiscipline, highlighting the players' disciplined upbringing at the BFF dormitory as key to their past success.

At the end of the day, the players' willingness to return is a step forward, but the onus is squarely on BFF to prevent another fallout. It must go beyond damage control and proactively rebuild trust, not just between the players and coach but also reflect on the communication gaps within its own ranks. Failing to set clear expectations and enforce accountability will only invite future disruptions, jeopardising the hard-earned progress of women's football.

The 18 senior players have continued their

'Won't be forced to work with disruptive players'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national women's football team's coach Peter Butler on Sunday said that he would not be forced to work with "disruptive players" after Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) earlier in the day claimed to have convinced the 18 rebel players to join training following a break.

BFF women's wing chairman Mahfuz Akther Kiran, in a press briefing, told reporters that the 18 players, who have been boycotting training under Butler, will return to training once the camp resumes after the UAE tour. She also said the players have agreed to sign contracts, but that will happen following discussions with the coaching staff, team management, and BFF's higher authorities.

However, asked whether she had spoken to Butler regarding the issue, the women's wing chairman said she was yet to do so.

When contacted for a comment on what Kiran said, Butler said he had no idea about what was being said, but expressed his opinion regarding the whole affair.

"I'm far from stupid and understand there is a game being played to protect certain individuals... Certain players within the 18, I admire their footballing abilities and (they) were coerced by certain individuals outside and inside the group, male and female," the British coach said in reply to a text message, without naming the individuals who might have coerced the players.

The 18 senior players have continued their

boycott of the British coach since he returned to Bangladesh on January 29, and media reports suggested the coach was especially reserved about a few certain senior players in the camp regarding their fitness and discipline.

While Kiran said that she believes that the girls have realised their mistakes and the misunderstandings between the two parties, Butler was not ready to an entirely optimistic view of the development. Having already worked with 12 players from the original camp plus 25 more from the under-20 camp for the upcoming UAE tour, the 58-year-old Englishman implied he will not tolerate any indiscipline or disruption even if he works with the aforementioned rebel players.

"I will not be pushed or forced to work with disruptive players whilst we have such hardworking and humble players coming through the 20s," Butler said.

SPINNERS' TIME to step up in middle overs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are going into the ICC Champions Trophy without ace spinner Shakib Al Hasan and even though the pace battery has been firing, the Tigers would need their spin department to step up in the event.

The Tigers' spinners did not enjoy the best of outings in the ODI series in West Indies in December 2024 -- their last 50-over assignment before the Champions Trophy. The Tigers' spinners managed just six wickets between themselves in three matches as the hosts swept the series 3-0.

More acutely, the spinners struggled to find a grip on the game in the middle overs, where West Indies did the bulk of the scoring and also consolidated from early loss of wickets.

In the first ODI in St Vincent, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Rishad Hossain -- Bangladesh's two spinners in that game -- bowled 15 overs during the middle overs, bagging a wicket each.

West Indies slumped to three for 94 chasing 295 when Rishad bowled a relatively poor short ball but was rewarded for it with Keacy Cart's wicket. But from that point on West Indies put up three 90-plus stands to win the game.

Miraz had ended Shai Hope's 86-run knock in the 37th over but leaked 62 runs in nine overs, as both Tiger spinners were guilty of bowling too conservatively and paid for it at the hands of the West Indian batters.

The story would be repeated in the



third ODI when Bangladesh posted 321 for five and had brought in Nasum Ahmed as the third spinner to bolster the spin department.

Nasum made a crucial breakthrough in the Powerplay but was then taken for runs, unable to complete his quota and taken off the attack after just the 27th over, having conceded 56 off seven overs. Afif

Hossain had to fill in his overs and that did not work out either.

That same game, Rishad and Miraz bowled 13 overs between overs 15 to 40 and although the former bagged two wickets in the 34th and 38th over, there was a feeling that West Indies already had the measure of the spinners as both went for runs.

In the Caribbean, it appeared the spinners were struggling with both trajectory and length in flat surfaces. It remains to be seen how much help would be there in Dubai and Rawalpindi for spinners but whatever maybe the case, the spinners are bound to play a crucial as usually in the subcontinent, the slower bowlers provide breakthroughs during the middle overs.

Bangladesh's former spin bowling coach and now head coach of Bangladesh Tigers programme Sohel Islam felt that in the absence of Shakib, one of the three spinners in the side has to take on the leading role.

"Shakib has undoubtedly played a significant role [in middle overs] numerous times. Miraz is doing that too and Rishad has arrived along with Nasum. They will need a bit of time.

"They would have thought about these things in practice and during matches and realised that one of them has to take the leading role. Also, they have to think how they can get wickets, keep batters under pressure and bowl dot balls.

"Since they are sort of new to this role, they will need some time. But they are talented and have the skill and the ability to adjust very quickly," Sohel said.

Miraz is easily the most experienced out of the three spinners with 110 wickets in 103 ODIs. The onus will be on the spinners and especially on Miraz to provide breakthroughs if the Tigers want to make a big splash in the event.

Imranur needs to prove himself again for int'l meets

SPORTS REPORTER

England-based sprinter Imranur Rahman will not be considered to represent Bangladesh in international competitions until he proves himself in a special trial.

Imranur withdrew himself from the 48th National Athletics Championships, beginning on Monday at the National Stadium, and the Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) said that athletes from the championship will be considered for the upcoming international events.

"We have decided that we will select those athletes who will participate in the National Athletics Championship for the international meet," said BAF general secretary Shah Alam at a press conference at National Stadium yesterday.

Imranur won gold in 100m sprint four times for Bangladesh Army in the National Athletics Championship since making his debut in 2022. Since then, he represented Bangladesh in different international competitions.

Imranur, who recently underwent major surgery, also withdrew himself from the upcoming World Indoor Athletics Championships, scheduled to be held in Nanjing, China from March 21 to 23.

"Everything will be decided on the basis of the athletes' performance in the national championships. As he [Imranur] is not participating in the National Athletics Championships, we consider him sick or unable. So, how can we guess he will be able to compete in the World Indoor Athletics Championships," added Alam.

Alam also informed that if Imranur recovers within the next six months, he would have to go through a trial to be selected to represent Bangladesh at the international level.

Red cards leave LaLiga standings unchanged

AFP, Pamplona

Real Madrid dropped two points in a 1-1 draw at Osasuna on Saturday in which Jude Bellingham was sent off, but stayed top of LaLiga after Atletico Madrid, also down to 10 men following a red card, tied 1-1 with Celta Vigo later on the day.

The Spanish champions took the lead through Kylian Mbappe before the referee red carded England international Bellingham for dissent towards the end of the first half.

Ante Budimir levelled for hosts Osasuna from the penalty spot after 58 minutes as Carlo Ancelotti's side endured a third consecutive league match without victory.

Atletico Madrid, who had Pablo Barrios dismissed in just the seventh minute, were unable to capitalise and remain a point behind leaders Los Blancos, who have 51 from 24 matches. But Barcelona could leapfrog Atletico, who also played 24 games, and pull level with Real Madrid if they beat Rayo Vallecano on Monday.

Bellingham insisted he was expressing his frustration and not insulting referee Jose Munuera Montero. "There was no intent to



insult him, there was no insult," he told reporters.

Real began the game with a positive tempo but it changed when Bellingham was dismissed in the 39th minute.

Ancelotti said Bellingham should not have been dismissed.

"I think with Bellingham's red card (the referee) didn't understand the English well... I don't think it's something offensive," Ancelotti told reporters.

Meanwhile, Atletico's draw with

Celta was conditioned by Barrios' seventh-minute red card for a reckless high tackle on Pablo Duran.

Iago Aspas fired Celta ahead in the second half from the penalty spot but Atletico target man Alexander Sorloth rescued a point for the Rojiblanco.

"The team had gladiators again, playing 90 minutes with one fewer player is very tough," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone, who, unlike Real's Ancelotti, did not disagree with the decision to dismiss Barrios.



Liton's comeback quest begins

In a quest to return to the national team, Bangladesh batter Liton Das began training with Bangladesh Tigers programme in Mirpur yesterday. Liton, who was axed from the Tigers' Champions Trophy squad due to a string of poor performances, underwent training alongside the likes of Afif Hossain, Mahidul Islam Ankon, and Shamim Hossain under the guidance of the program's head coach Sohel Islam. Liton, who has struggled against the new ball, focused on getting this issue fixed in training. "Actually, these things were discussed with Liton before we began the practice session. We have talked about various things and how to make things smooth. He has been struggling momentarily but he was smooth before. So I felt that there was a need for adjustments in a few areas," Sohel told reporters yesterday. Sohel also informed that Liton and others are staying prepared for international matches while also readying themselves for the upcoming Dhaka Premier League, likely to begin on March 3.

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METERED CNG FARES BRTA revokes 'ill-planned' directive Decision follows drivers' protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) was compelled to withdraw its directive to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to take legal action against CNG-run auto-rickshaws for disregarding government set metered fares.

The decision came after many auto-rickshaw drivers abstained from work and blocked city streets for several hours since yesterday morning, causing immense sufferings to thousands of commuters.

In a hasty and poorly planned move, the BRTA attempted to enforce the fare system for CNG-run auto-rickshaws that was set nine years ago, without any review or necessary consultation with stakeholders.

In its immediate response, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passenger welfare platform, issued a statement saying, "By withdrawing the directive, BRTA has effectively left helpless passengers at the mercy of rampaging CNG drivers across the city."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



BATTLING FOR BREAD ... A woman struggles as chaos breaks out in front of a TCB truck on the capital's Abdul Gani Road as scores of people scramble to buy kitchen essentials at subsidised prices yesterday. As food cost continues to soar, the desperation among low-income families grows by the day.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

NGO FUNDING Bangladesh needs to look for new sources

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh needs to look for alternative funding sources to keep the activities of NGOs that support the marginalised communities as foreign aid for the development sector continues to shrink, experts said.

In 2020, the country received close to a billion dollars but the receipts have progressively shrunk. Last year, it received \$655 million in foreign aid for non-governmental organisations, down 11.6 percent year-on-year, according to the NGO Affairs Bureau, the government wing that regulates NGOs.

The need for alternative funding sources to continue with the development activities has taken on fresh urgency given Bangladesh's forthcoming graduation from the least-developed country bracket next year, the new Trump administration's move to suspend USAID programmes; and Switzerland's announcement of phasing out funding to Bangladesh after 2028.

The Trump administration's move had an immediate impact in Bangladesh, which received \$450 million for nearly 100 projects. Overnight, thousands of development professionals were staring at an uncertain future and millions were cut off from essential services.

For instance, icddr,b has sacked more than 1,000 of its staff, while all services save for emergency food supplies provided by US-funded NGOs in

Rohingya camps were suspended.

"The abrupt fund suspension is a serious concern," said AKM Jashim Uddin, director at the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh, the apex body of NGOs.

As of February 2, there are 2,498 registered NGOs, with 240 being foreign and the remainder domestic, according to the NGO Affairs Bureau. However, other estimates suggest 27,000 NGOs operate here.

"The NGOs work in the areas where the government has little intervention. In that way, the NGOs complement the government and play a vital role in the country's socioeconomic development," Jashim Uddin said.

Any government can change its policy on foreign aid.

"Our government needs to negotiate with the major development partners for more funding given the rising needs, but at the same time, it also should find alternative avenues of funding for the NGOs and help them become sustainable," he added.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director of COAST Foundation, an NGO that works in Bangladesh's coastal districts, suggested shifting to microfinance and enterprises for sustainability, citing the cases of BRAC and Grameen Bank.

BRAC has 13 commercial enterprises and Grameen Bank has at least 10 social

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

**US cuts 17
more projects
worldwide
\$29m Bangladesh
scheme among them**

STAR REPORT

The Elon Musk-led US Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has announced that it has taken new measures to save US taxpayers money by cancelling a slew of projects abroad, including one in Bangladesh.

In a bid to cut US government spending, the DOGE on X, also owned by Musk, on Saturday said it is cancelling a \$29 million funding intended for "strengthening the political landscape in Bangladesh".

In its latest bid to cut spending, DOGE cut funding to 17 projects, including the Bangladeshi one.

The DOGE announced that it has halted funding for 17 projects, worth millions of dollars, across various international aid programs and initiatives in countries including Bangladesh, Nepal, and India.

DOGE also cancelled project funding to other countries, including \$22 million intended for

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Israel praises Trump's Gaza 'bold vision'

Threatens to resume fighting if all hostages not returned; Israeli strike kills 3 Palestinian cops

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and the United States have a common approach to Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday, praising President Donald Trump's "bold vision" for the territory after talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Washington's top diplomat is on his first visit to the Middle East, a trip that comes after Trump made a widely-condemned proposal to take control of Gaza and relocate its more than two million residents.

"We discussed Trump's bold vision for Gaza's future and will work to ensure that vision becomes a reality," Netanyahu told reporters after their meeting, adding that the two leaders had a "common strategy" for the future of the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

The scheme that Trump outlined earlier this month, while Netanyahu visited Washington, lacked details. Trump said Palestinians had "lived a miserable existence" in Gaza and suggested the coastal territory could become the "Riviera of the Middle East", following redevelopment after more than 15 months of war.

Though Netanyahu welcomed the idea, foreign leaders have largely rejected it.

Netanyahu warned Israel would "open the gates of hell" in Gaza unless all hostages were returned, echoing Trump,

who said "hell" would break out if Hamas failed to release them.

Meanwhile, Hamas said yesterday an Israeli air strike killed three police officers near south Gaza's Rafah. Israel said it struck "several armed individuals" in south Gaza. It is at least the second Israeli air strike in Gaza since the ceasefire began.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

**"We discussed
Trump's bold
vision for Gaza's
future and will work
to ensure that vision
becomes a reality."**

Benjamin Netanyahu
Israeli Prime Minister

Rubio arrived hours after Hamas freed three Israeli hostages in Gaza in exchange for 369 Palestinian prisoners - the sixth swap under a fragile ceasefire which the United States helped mediate along with Qatar and Egypt.

Speaking alongside Netanyahu yesterday, he said: "Hamas cannot continue as a military or a government force... they must be eliminated." He is due to also visit Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.



31-point BNP charter will rebuild nation Says Tarique

STAR REPORT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has said if the party is voted to power, it will start implementing its 31-point charter to rebuild the country.

"Awami League suppressed the country's people for 16 years, and I believe that the real revenge against this suppression could be possible through implementing our 31-point charter," BSS reports quoting him.

Addressing the biennial council of Narail BNP yesterday, Tarique accused the Awami League government of damaging the country's economy, development, and electoral system.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

2nd phase of Ijtema ends

STAR REPORT

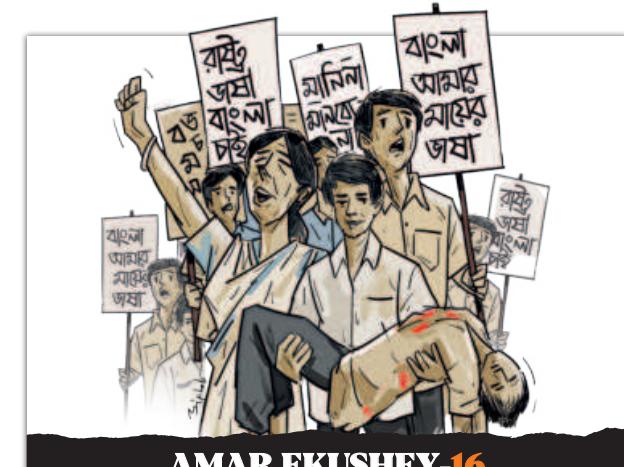
The second phase of Biswa Ijtema, one of the largest congregations of Muslims, concluded yesterday with Akheri Munajat (final prayers) on the banks of the Turag River in Tongi.

A large number of devotees from home and abroad raised their hands in unison, seeking world peace, divine blessings, and forgiveness for all of humanity, especially for the Muslim Ummah.

The three-day congregation, which began on February 14, was attended by followers of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi. The 30-minute Akheri Munajat, led by Maulana Yusuf bin Saad, commenced at 12:37pm and ended at 1:07pm.

Earlier in the day, after Fajr prayers, Maulana Morsalin delivered a sermon.

The first phase of the six-day Ijtema was held from January 31 to February 5, with two Akheri Munajats on February 2 and 5. Followers of Maulana Zubair Ahmed took part in that phase.



AMAR EKUSHEY-16

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.

Dinajpur stands up to tough resistance

AHMAD ISTIAK

The arrival of approximately 50,000 Urdu-speaking Biharis in Dinajpur, Parbatipur and Syedpur after the 1947 Partition created a new social dynamic.

When the student community in Dinajpur vehemently protested the Pakistan government's declaration that Urdu would be the state language, they faced opposition from the Bihari community and reactionary elements in the Muslim League.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Thousands of Muslim devotees raise their hands during the Akheri Munajat, or final prayers, seeking divine blessings for peace and prosperity for mankind as the second phase of Biswa Ijtema concluded yesterday on the banks of the Turag River in Tongi.

PHOTO: STAR