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141 ex-DCs now in govt crosshairs

BAHARAM KHAN

The government yesterday forced 22 more officials into retirement, raising the number of disciplined bureaucrats to 67 for their questionable role as deputy commissioners in the 2014 and 2018 sham elections under the Awami League regime.

These 67 officials are on a list of 208 former DCs; many of the remaining 141 are also likely to be punished.

On Wednesday, the public administration ministry placed 33 officials on special duty. Previously, it did the same to 12 other former DCs. Special duty in this context is perceived to be a disciplinary measure.

The ministry is currently reviewing the records of the officials on the list, and most of them are likely to face punishment, according to officials with knowledge of the developments.

Mokhles Ur Rahman, secretary at the ministry, said disciplinary actions will be taken in phases. Those who were DCs during the 2024 election will face action in the last phase.

"The actions will send the current DCs a message that they should work during the upcoming election without fear," he told reporters yesterday.

Those forced to retire yesterday include Zakia Sultana,

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus pays homage to the language martyrs with a floral wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar shortly after midnight on International Mother Language Day.

PHOTO: PID

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The youth ready to lead the world

Yunus says at Ekushey Padak ceremony
BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the country's young generation wants to build a new Bangladesh and lead the world too.

He said this while conferring Ekushey Padak 2025.

"We are now stronger, more energetic and more creative than ever before. The dreams of our young generation are more courageous than the dreams of any generation in the past," he said at the award distribution ceremony at Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

"The young people want to create a new Bangladesh... They want to take the lead in creating a

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INSIDE A FALLEN DICTATOR'S PALACE

A walk through the relics of power and paranoia

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ZYMA ISLAM

It took the Ansar members guarding the Gono Bhaban quite a few tries before they could locate the keys and unlock the main gate of what was the most strictly guarded citadel inside the capital until only six months back.

Gone are the days when Special Security Force officers armed with assault rifles used to shoo away pedestrians trying to use the pavement flanking the thick boundary walls of the premises.

Even the ominous brass nameplate at the entrance is gone -- hauled away for resale the day of the proverbial storming of the "palace".

A person new in the city would hardly recognise it as having once been the



central command centre of an elaborate autocracy.

Upon entering through the gates, the first thing one would see is a pile of damaged, charred vehicles, an emblematic reminder of the public's intense anger towards Sheikh Hasina. A massive collection of heavy wood furniture and household items stood collecting dust in front of the entrance of the house like a garage sale gone wrong -- all items too large to be taken away on the day taxpayers lay claim on their money's worth.

The first room inside is a large hall where the former prime minister held her infamous press conferences from where she had rung her regime's death knell by calling the protesters "razakars". Only those able to shower her with flowery praises were allowed inside this room. It is mentionable that The Daily Star was not allowed to enter the Gono Bhaban or cover any of her programmes for over a decade, and we were never given an official explanation.

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AMAR EKUSHEY-20

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.

The seed of independence

AHMAD ISTIAK

"Amar bhai er rokte Rangano ekushey February, Ami ki bhulite pari? Chhele-hara shoto maa er osru Gora e February, ami ki bhulite pari?" (Tainted with the blood of My brother is February 21. Can I forget?)

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Star INTERVIEW

Inferiority complex hinders practice of Bangla

The three-part book, "Purbo Banglar Bhasha Andolan O Tatkaleen Rajneeti", by **Badruddin Umar** is considered a key document of Language Movement history. The renowned researcher, writer, theorist and communist leader recently discussed the 1952 movement, the use of Bangla and different other matters with Star's **Ahmad Istiak**.

TDS: Why have you added the politics of that time in your book on the Language Movement?

Umar: Look, the Language Movement was never a spiritual, cultural or singular movement. Since it was a political movement from the beginning, I felt that its history would not be complete without highlighting the political context of the time.

TDS: You mentioned two phases of the movement in your book. The first in 1948 and the second in 1952. What differences have you noticed between these two phases?

Umar: Although the goal and objective were the same, there were vast differences between the two stages. The movement of 1948 was limited to students and

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Reports of attacks on minorities exaggerated
Says BGB chief in New Delhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzaaman Siddiqui yesterday said the issue of border fencing was extensively discussed during a meeting with his Indian counterpart in New Delhi.

"The fencing issue was discussed at length in the meeting. We've requested a joint inspection wherever there are issues," Siddiqui said during a joint media appearance with India's Border Security Force (BSF) DG Daljit Singh Chaudhary at BSF headquarters, where the three-day talks concluded.

This was the first high-level meeting between the border security forces of the two countries since the fall of the Awami League-

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Bangladesh's Towhid Hridoy thanks the almighty as Taskin Ahmed approaches the batter to congratulate him on his maiden ODI ton in their Champions Trophy Group A game against India at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Hridoy's 118-ball 100, however, went in vain as India won the contest by six wickets. Courtesy of Shubman Gill's unbeaten 129-ball 101, India chased down the Tigers' 228 all out with 21 balls to spare.

PHOTO: AFP
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2 shot dead in 'gunfight' with jt forces in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed allegedly in a gunfight between crime suspects and the joint forces in the capital's Mohammadpur area early yesterday, marking the first such incident since the fall of the Hasina regime.

They were identified as Miraz Hossain, 25, and Md Jummon, 26. Both had criminal records, according to police and family members.

The incident harks back to the practice of extrajudicial killings during the Awami League rule and before.

Jewel Rana, additional deputy commissioner of Mohammadpur zone police, said the shootout took place during a raid at Chand Udayan by the joint forces.

The team, which included members of the army and police, had gone there acting on a tip-off.

The Inter-Services Public Relations, in a press statement, said, "Based on the information that a group was preparing to mug people in Mohammadpur's Chand Udayan, a joint forces team conducted an operation at the location around 12:30am on Thursday."

"During the operation, the joint forces members took position on either side of an alley when the criminals suddenly opened fire on them from the roof of a one-storey building. The team immediately retaliated in self defence and managed to detain five people with weapons."

It added, "Upon searching the house, they recovered two bodies from the roof. They also seized a pistol, four rounds of bullets, and a machete from those detained ... The detainees were handed over to Mohammadpur Police Station for legal action."

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A walk through relics of power and paranoia

FROM PAGE 1

Six months on since her ignominious ouster, the empty walls now harbour graffiti saying things that would have been considered punishable by death if she were still in power.

All quarters used by Hasina had thick bulletproof walls, with reinforced concrete peeking through the spaces where protesters had torn down the plaster. Hasina, who survived multiple assassination attempts, was so paranoid about her safety that her Awami League government even passed the "Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Family Members Security Act", a law guaranteeing state provided protection to her and her extended family. But in the end, it was not a bullet that ended her tenure.

The labyrinthine corridors of the massive house now are a pitch-black trip hazard, while the broken glass now carpeting the floors crunch with each step. In many of the rooms, the ceilings still carry empty chandelier holders, but the broken windows provide respite, allowing sunlight to stream in. As dusk falls, the house goes dark.

Although the 2.75 acre Gono Bhaban is quite literally named "People's Residence," none of Bangladesh's premiers except Hasina has ever lived in it, since its construction in 1973 by her father

on the severity of the offences," said one point.

The recommendation makes it evident that the document was from the last week of July, when six student coordinators, including Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud were in DB custody.

"In order to control the ongoing law and order situation, some ministers may be temporarily relieved from their duties," recommended the document.

The document also recommended the appointment of Lt Gen (retd) Md Akbar Hossain, former director general of Directorate General Forces Intelligence, as a coordinator to handle the whole crisis.

There is currently an arrest warrant for Akbar, issued by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on January 6, 2024.

The document also recommended the government to step up "strict surveillance" and remove and block "objectionable" content being spread by different pages and profiles.

It also recommended the former PM to instruct Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit to crack down on hundi networks that were being used to finance the movement.

Another document found crumpled under the debris contained a list of six people who were identified for Hasina as being "financiers and instigators". The list contained

the same year. Former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed gave Tk 1.42 lakh on January 11, 2018.

The second page shows how 28 reserved seat lawmakers together gave Tk 2.44 crore to the AL coffers.

A torn page from what appeared to be a gift register showed Hasina receiving two luxury pens, two decorative tumblers, and a decorative storage box during her Japan visit in 2016.

On the ground floor, a room -- the in house medical centre -- was littered with pill cases and tablet strips.

Among the heaps of documents lying on the floor, two Covid-antibody test results stood out: the patient's name field read "Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister, People's Republic of Bangladesh". The antibody results dated February 1 and August 18, 2023, stated that Hasina tested positive for Covid twice.

The documents littering her rooms entangled with beige socks and hairties left behind revealed one other thing -- the extent to which Hasina kept the common citizens under surveillance.

In the aftermath of the storming of the Gono Bhaban, people found that she had been tapping the phones of influential members of society, the transcripts of which were found in her bedroom. Others found that she had been maintaining a logbook of

Many documents were seen containing allegations against her party's grassroots leaders. An official letterhead of Bangladesh Supreme Party containing a list of the 10 candidates provided by the party for 2024 dummy election was also spotted.

The torn pages on the floor make it evident that other than party activities, Hasina's interests mostly swung in two directions -- her father, and BNP.

She was obsessed with her father. Her rooms still hold heaps of pages of manuscripts of films, plays and books about her father, as well as printouts of diplomatic cables and telegrams from 1971 lying entangled with pairs of synthetic beige socks.

On the other hand, her quarters housed a myriad of documentation about BNP.

An intelligence agency report found in the trash on the floor briefed Hasina about the three day blockade programme that was called by the BNP from October 31, 2023, and recommended possible steps that the government could take.

The report recommended beefing up surveillance in areas dominated by BNP and Jamaat. It suggested that the government conduct drives to search their homes and establishments, and arrest and round up members with cases against them.

It also urged the government to

hand-painted tree with birds.

The room with the pink walls had piles of documents about autism, Putul's area of expertise. A discarded box of a Lego set for girls lay in the mess, while the bathroom still had some female toiletries like a broken pink razor. Tellingly, a large Chanel gift box lay flattened on the floor.

In the next room with the blue wall, Joy's business cards lay on the floor next to a crumpled blue shirt from Hugo Boss. The documents in the room contained laws and regulations about tower companies, project papers about expanding fibre optic connections and statements of stock market transactions at the New York Stock Exchange. The stock statements from 2010 were signed and attested by the Bangladeshi embassy in the US, and are in the name of a man called Mohammed Aminul Hoque.

Joy's pet project, mobile financial services Nagad, was led by a man with the same name. Bangladesh Bank filed a Tk 645 crore embezzlement case against him and others on February 5.

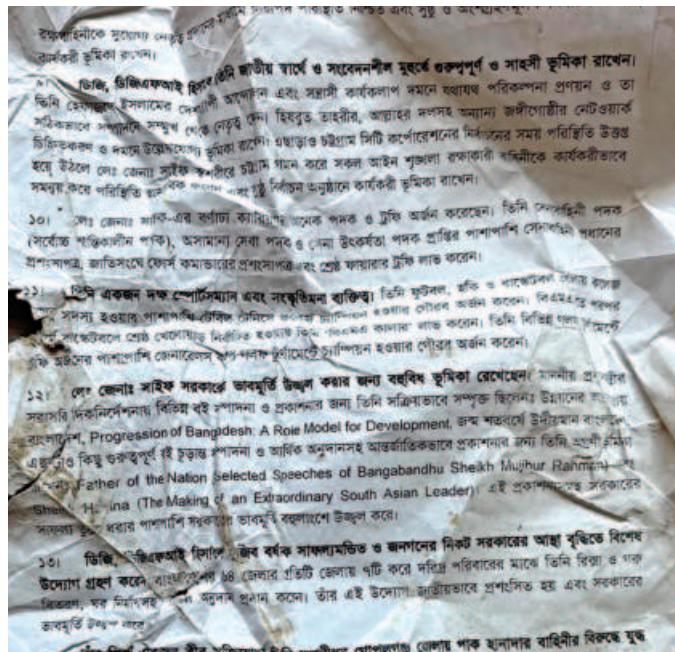
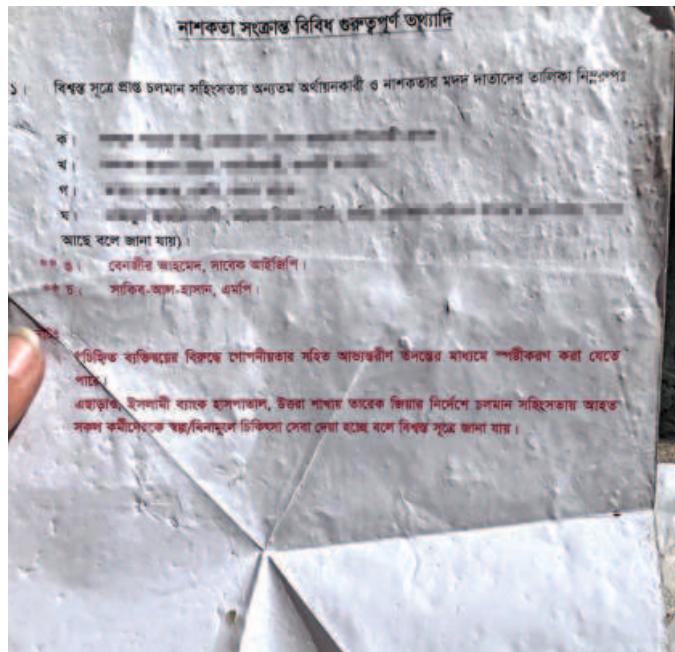
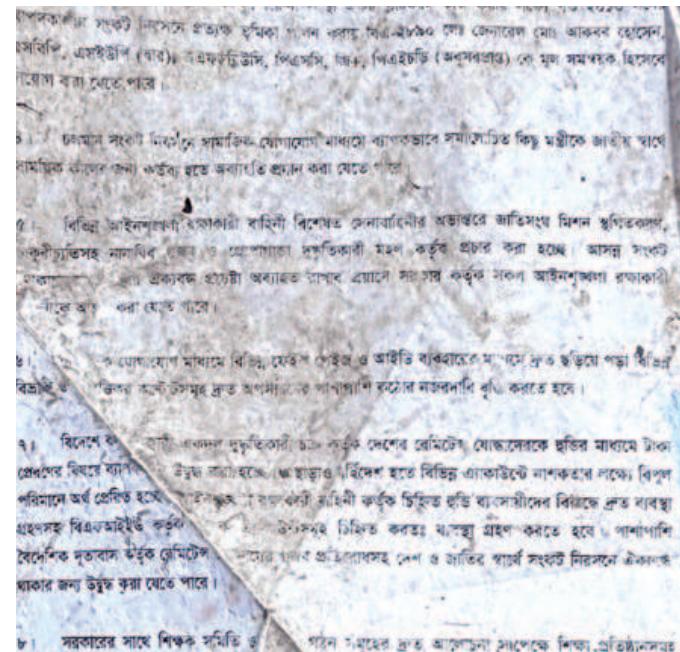
His reading materials also included a report by the Sampadak Parishad criticising the Digital Security Act.

Radwan Mujib's business cards were found in the adjacent room. This room contained meeting minutes of Centre for Research and Information



Once a central command of Sheikh Hasina's brutal dictatorship, the post-August Gono Bhaban, **above**, is now all but in ruins. Below are some documents that offer, among other things, insights into how her government sought to keep citizens under surveillance.

PHOTO: STAR



Sheikh Mujib.

Khaleda Zia, Ziaur Rahman, and HMRshad all used their cantonment residences while serving at the country's helm.

Infamously, Hasina had leased it for Tk 1 (yes, Tk one) in 2001, just a few days before the end of her government's tenure as part of the now-repealed "The Father of the Nation's Family-Members Security Act". Hasina stayed there even after her tenure had ended and former chief justice Latifur Rahman-led caretaker government had assumed office on July 15, 2001. She only left Gono Bhaban on August 16, 2001, following huge political pressure from the opposition camp. At the time, she repeatedly claimed that her utility connections were cut off.

Amid the thick layer of dust, animal faeces and broken glass carpeting the floors lies scores of crumpled-up documents that offer a rare glimpse into the life and mind of the person who had turned the country into a mindless dictatorship.

During her last days inside the house, Hasina was concocting ways to thwart the July uprising, according to documents found in the house during our visit on February 8.

An intelligence agency document found in her bedroom contains an 11-point action plan to counter the movement against her 15-year regime.

Point number nine of that action plan recommended quickly sentencing the protesting students and student coordinators under the speedy trial act.

"Take quick legal action against the Anti-discrimination Student Movement activists in DB (detective branch) custody and the general students detained in mass-arrests in the speedy trial tribunals, depending

on the names of two bank heads, one businessman, and one man who was said to be a close associate of Tarique Zia and a friend of additional inspector general of police (IGP) Monirul Islam". Monirul, now said to have fled the country, also headed the Special Branch of the police, which is the police's intelligence agency.

The document also contained two surprising names -- former police chief Benazir Ahmed and cricket superstar and former AL lawmaker Shakib Al Hasan. The document recommended a covert investigation against the two.

The document also pointed out that Islami Bank Hospital's Uttara Branch was giving free treatment to all the injured "upon the orders from Tarique Zia".

In one corner of Hasina's bedroom, The Daily Star found a page about what Islam says against killing people.

A line in the page read: "If a person takes one life, it is as if he has killed everybody." Another line stated, "The Prophet (pbuh) described killing humans as the worst crime, and called it a "kabira" (cardinal) sin. He said, 'To Allah, the destruction of the whole universe pales in comparison to the murder of one believer.'

It is an irony that so many people were killed -- at least 1,400 -- on her watch during the uprising, the UN Fact Finding Report says citing testimonies of some of her inner circle.

Another document extracted from the floor contains a list of donations made by different Awami League lawmakers to the party fund.

Former railways minister Zillul Hakim topped the list, transferring Tk 50 lakh to the party fund on March 21, 2015. Former lawmaker Md Qamrul Islam gave Tk 20 lakh in

members of the armed forces who were politically different from her.

Her rooms still contain pages upon pages of reports on her party members, and government employees (including a glowing report of a former intelligence agency chief who is currently being prosecuted by the ICT). A full list of the candidates that passed the written tests of the 32th Bangladesh Civil Service exams was found, along with the admit cards of



Scan the QR code for footage of Gono Bhaban.

many candidates.

Various documents scattered around the Gono Bhaban premises bear testimony that Hasina's surveillance using the state apparatus was pervasive -- state bodies, private organisation, cultural activists, even private citizens were all being watched by the "Big Sister".

Even her own party colleagues were not outside the massive cobweb of surveillance.

Several documents were seen containing area-wise descriptions of infighting within the party, and constituency-wise briefs about the popularity of her party candidates.

establish police checkpoints in Dhaka city's entry points and establish full control of all going in and out.

"BNP wants a 'dead body' to make this movement successful, so they might try to kill one of their activists," said the report.

The report added that Western diplomatic channels in Bangladesh were trying to convince Jatiya Party's GM Quader to join BNP's movement.

It also said that BNP was conveying false statements to the United Nations, international human rights organisations and the different Western embassies in the capital about the situation of the country to get their "sympathy".

Hasina's collection also included meticulous documentation of oppression and abuse faced by religious minorities and her party's men during 2003-2006 when BNP was in power, with details of individual cases. We also found a letter from the wife of 30 year old truck driver named Mehedi Hasan from Faridpur who had suffered 64 percent burn injuries and perished later when blockaders set fire to his truck in 2013. Hasina also collected photos of victims who suffered burn injuries during that blockade.

Just as Hasina's reading habits gave a glimpse into her mind, the documents left behind in the other rooms of the living quarters offer a peek into who the inhabitants might have been.

Her daughter Saima Wazed Putul, her son Saejeb Wazed Joy and her nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiqi Bobby all seemingly stayed with Hasina, at times, and also shared their rooms with Hasina's grandchildren.

All three rooms had one wall painted in different colour -- pink, blue and yellow -- and each had a

(CRI), AL's research wing. The yellow wall in the room was sprayed with graffiti saying "Victory to Democracy 2024". A photo card containing Tulip Siddiq's annual report for 2022 was seen on the second floor.

The residential quarters opened into a large living room for the family. A broken children's slide lay on the floor outside the living room. An ornate sofa lies torn and battered -- its pillows were taken away by protesters on August 5. Heaps of newspapers from July litter the ground, with the most recent one dating back to August 3, 2024, two days before Hasina fled to India. The family read The Daily Sun, Financial Express, Jugantor, Janakantha, Bonik Barta, The Daily Ittefaq and Naya Digaanta.

The balcony of the living room still holds planters, their inhabitants shrivelled and dead from six months of neglect.

But outside, as spring creeps in, the grounds are thriving. The moat surrounding two sides of the premises from where Hasina often caught massive catfishes may no longer have its larger residents but the lake is very much alive with aquatic fauna awaiting the first rain of the season.

As the lawnmowers lie broken and discarded to a side, the grass grows knee-high. The flowering shrubs -- ixora, bougainvillea and yellow elder -- are a riot of colour, without having received a drop of water since Gono Bhaban's army of gardeners fled on August 5. The large Krishnachura (Poinciana) tree that had stood sentry beside the gate, which now lies battered on the ground, is bursting with new leaves. Green and blue-tailed parrots reign supreme.

Spring has sprung.

141 ex-DCs now in govt crosshairs

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senior secretary at the industries ministry; Kamrul Hasan, secretary at the disaster management ministry, and Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, a secretary who had already been on special duty.

In another development, Dhananjay Das, joint secretary of the public security division, was suspended yesterday on charges of opposing the July uprising and spreading falsehood about the interim government.

A few DCs, who worked impartially in the 2014, 2018 and 2024 elections, will not face harsh punishments. Initially though, all of them will be made Officers on Special Duty (OSD), sources said.

Contacted, Obaidur Rahman, additional secretary (recruitment, promotion) of the ministry, said, "There is a growing perception that officials often face no consequence for misconduct. This leads to more corruption and irregularities.... The strict actions will let current officials know that they must fulfill their responsibilities with integrity."

A senior official, requesting anonymity, said the departure of 200 or so officials would not affect civil service because there are more officials than needed.

The three national elections held under the AL regime were marred by widespread irregularities.

The last general election, held on January 7, 2024, was boycotted by the BNP and several other parties. In many places, AL leaders ran as independents to make the polls appear participatory.

In 2018, opposition parties alleged that ballot-stuffing took place the night before the election.

Transparency International, Bangladesh, said ballot-stuffing took place in more than one centre in 33 of the 50 constituencies it had surveyed.

In the 2014 election, also boycotted by the BNP, 153 out of 300 lawmakers got "elected" without needing any vote because they were the only ones running for office in their constituencies.

YESTERDAY'S FORCED RETIREMENTS

As per the service act, an official who has been in service for 25 years or more can be ordered to retire.

Additional secretaries ordered to retire yesterday are Abu Saleh Firdaus Khan, Masud Karim, Kamrun Nahar Siddiqui, Umme Salma Tanjia, Rabbi Mia, Suvash Chandra Biswas, Mohammad Moklesur Rahman Sarkar, Shafiq Arif, Enamul Habib, Foyez Ahammad, SM Alam, Humayun Kabir, Shafiq Farzana, Abdul Awal, Tofayel Islam, Sawkat Ali, Tammoj Das, Hamidul Haque.

Wahidul Islam was ordered to retire as a joint secretary and Ahmed Kabir as deputy secretary.

Meanwhile, six trainee assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) from the 40th BCS have been dismissed, said a notification from the Public Security Division.

They are Ashrafuzzaman, Manas Kirtaniya, Shantu Roy, Sohel Rahman, Kazi Faizul Karim, and Sanjib Deb.

The notification did not mention why they were being dismissed.

On October 20 last year, the government suspended the passing-out parade of the trainee officers of the 40th BCS. On November 19, the graduation ceremonies for trainee ASPs and trainee sub-inspectors (SIs) at the police academy were postponed.

Six migrants drown off Turkey's Aegean coast

AFP, Istanbul

Six migrants drowned while another 27 were rescued by the coastguard when their boat started sinking off the western coast of Turkey, the interior minister said on Wednesday evening.

The incident took place before dawn just south of the seaside resort of Izmir in the waters separating the Turkish coast from the Greek island of Samos, which lies just 15 kilometres (nine miles) away.

"The bodies of six lifeless illegal immigrants were fished out of the water," Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya wrote on X, adding that the coastguard had rescued 27 others, one of whom was detained on suspicion of smuggling.

Last month, seven migrants drowned in the same stretch of water.

Shipwrecks are very common on the short but perilous route between the Turkish coast and the nearby Greek islands of Samos, Rhodes and Lesvos that serve as entry points to the European Union.

Nation honours language heroes

President, chief adviser pay homage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus have paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Language Movement, marking the Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day.

One-minute past midnight, the president laid a wreath. Prof Yunus paid his tributes around 12:10am after the president left the Shaheed Minar premises.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan received them upon arrival.

After paying tributes, they stood in solemn silence for a while as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the language heroes.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed with other judges paid their tributes and then the advisers to the interim government, foreign diplomats, invited guests and high-ranking military and civil officials, Dhaka University teachers also paid their tributes at the alter.

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A group of women paints graffiti on the street in front of Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday in preparation for International Mother Language Day. Marking the day, the nation will pay homage to language martyrs at the memorial today.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Dhaka's law and order situation quite stable'

Says DMP chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law and order situation in Dhaka remains normal, with only a few isolated incidents, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali yesterday.

"There have been no significant crimes apart from a few isolated incidents. Overall, the law and order situation in Dhaka is quite stable," he told journalists yesterday morning while discussing the security measures at the Central Shaheed Minar on the occasion of February 21.

He mentioned one significant incident, which took place in Uttara recently and went viral on Facebook. He said all five involved individuals have been arrested. Police successfully handled the situation.

When asked if the presence of top criminals out on bail posed any security threat on February 21, the DMP chief said, "The crime or operational areas of these criminals are one thing, but the floral tributes at Shaheed Minar are entirely different. They have no interest in this... We are aware of those who are out on bail, we are tracking them, and they are already cornered."

DEVIL HUNT
492 more held across the country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces arrested 492 more people across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday afternoon as part of the "Operation Devil Hunt", according to the Police Headquarters.

With the latest arrests, the number of arrestees is now 6,849. Additionally, 1,260 others, who were either accused or wanted in previous cases, were also arrested in the last 24 hours.

Law enforcers also recovered two pipe guns and two sharp weapons.

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

Analysing reports from some districts, this newspaper found that many of the arrestees are 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.

RISE IN CULEX POPULATION Mosquito menace continues

HELEMUL ALAM

Despite a drop in dengue cases due to the winter chill, city dwellers continue to suffer from an alarming rise in mosquito infestations, with authorities failing to take effective measures to control the surge in Culex mosquitoes.

Experts warn that without immediate intervention, the Culex mosquito population will keep increasing until March.

They also stressed the importance of targeting Aedes mosquitoes during this period by identifying dengue-positive households and launching pre-emptive mosquito control drives.

Residents across the capital are struggling to cope with the mosquito menace.

Saiful Alam, a resident of Mirpur-12, said it has become nearly impossible to sleep at night without a mosquito net or repellent. "I often have to use mosquito repellent even during the day just to protect myself," he added.

Sabakat Sabris Sami, an HSC candidate from East Shewrapara, said, "Mosquito numbers have increased dramatically recently. We have not seen any anti-mosquito drives in our area for

ISSUES

- ④ Residents struggling due to mosquito infestation
- ④ No visible anti-mosquito drives in many areas
- ④ Mild winter contributing to increased mosquito numbers
- ④ Authorities criticised for lack of proactive measures
- ④ Aedes mosquito hotspots remain unidentified



weeks." Md Kamal, a resident of Dhaka Lane in Gondaria, echoed him. Entomologist Kabirul Bashar said, "Cleaning drains and waterbodies and applying larvicide simultaneously is the key to controlling mosquitoes. However, simply applying larvicide without cleaning the drains will not yield results."

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said, "There is no specific body to take effective measures against mosquitoes. If we can eliminate breeding sites such as canals, stagnant waterbodies, and lakes, we can solve 70 percent of the problem."

He said last year's failure to control Aedes mosquitoes resulted

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- ④ Clean drains, waterbodies before applying larvicide
- ④ Identify, eliminate mosquito breeding sites
- ④ Set up dedicated mosquito control authority
- ④ Improve surveillance to locate mosquito hotspots
- ④ Continue anti-mosquito drives in critical areas

in a nationwide dengue outbreak. "If the authorities locate and destroy Aedes mosquito breeding clusters now, it will be much easier to control their population during the peak season," he said.

Meanwhile, entomologist Monzur A Chowdhury highlighted the importance of tackling Aedes mosquitoes during the winter lull.

"The number of Aedes mosquitoes has decreased due to the cold weather. This is the perfect time to identify dengue-affected households and conduct extensive anti-mosquito drives around them to eliminate breeding sources and adult mosquitoes," he said.

DNCC Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Imru-al-Quais, speaking at a programme at Nagar Bhaban, said apart from their regular anti-mosquito drives, they have their own surveillance system to control Aedes mosquitoes.

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Metro rail staffers call off work abstention

STAR REPORT

After receiving assurances from the authorities yesterday, a section of metro rail staffers decided to call off their planned work abstention which was set to begin today.

In a press release yesterday, the staffers announced the suspension of their protest. A metro rail official later confirmed the statement's authenticity.

Faruque Ahmed, the newly appointed managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the agency which operates the metro rail, also verified the development to The Daily Star.

DMTCL has committed to finalising the service rules within 30 days. Additionally, 50 percent of the outstanding arrears will be paid next month, with the remaining balance to be settled soon, he said.

On Monday, a section of metro rail staffers warned they would abstain from work starting Friday if the authorities failed to finalise their service rules within three days.

According to the press release, the staffers decided to suspend their plan out of respect for International Mother Language Day, which falls on Friday, and in response to assurances from the MD.

'Judges should disclose wealth every 3 years'

Recommends Judiciary Reform Commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Judiciary Reform Commission has proposed 11 recommendations, including a provision requiring judges of the Supreme Court, lower courts, and their officials to mandatorily disclose their wealth statements every three years to ensure transparency and prevent corruption in the judiciary.

The commission handed over its 351 page final report to the chief adviser on February 5.

The reform body, led by Justice Shah Abu Nayem Monirul Rahman, recommended that the property details of supporting officers and employees of the SC and subordinate courts be published on the websites of the SC and district courts every three years.

It proposed the installation of complaint boxes at the SC against its judges to the Supreme Judicial Council. It also recommended providing dedicated email addresses for the public to file complaints electronically.

Additionally, the commission suggested forming a three-member primary committee, consisting of SC judges, to investigate corruption allegations against judges in subordinate courts.

It has suggested similar complaint boxes and e-mail addresses for officers and employees of all the courts.

The committee will examine the received allegations

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

BDR MASSACRE Commission records 37 testimonies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Independent Investigation Commission, formed to re-investigate the 2009 BDR massacre, has so far recorded the testimonies of 37 individuals in 41 working days since December 24, regarding the incident.

Among the 37 individuals who have testified so far, there are three lieutenant generals, two major generals, five brigadier generals, four colonels, four lieutenant colonels, seven majors, two captains, seven BDR members, and three victims' family members.

The commission has already sent letters to the foreign ministry to establish communication with certain foreign embassies to reach former army chief general (retired) Moeen U Ahmed, ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and others residing abroad.

Maj Gen (retd) ALM Fazlur Rahman, the commission chief and former director general of the then-BDR (now BGB), shared the developments at a press conference at the BRTC building in the capital's Science Laboratory yesterday.

He said former army chief general (retired) Moeen U Ahmed is crucial for obtaining detailed information about the incident.

The commission has already sent letters to the foreign ministry to establish communication with certain foreign embassies to reach Moeen, ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and others residing abroad, he said.

Fazlur said, "I cannot reveal the names of those embassies being contacted to bring back fugitives."

When asked about Moeen, who is now based in Florida in the US and has shared his version of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Seize flats, freeze bank accounts of SK Sur, his family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to confiscate two flats and a piece of land and freeze 39 bank accounts of former Bangladesh Bank deputy governor SK Sur Chowdhury and his family members over allegations of corruption.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Nazmul Hussain, who is leading the inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

The court also asked the ACC to freeze bank accounts of Sur's wife Suparna Sur Chowdhury and their daughter Nandita Sur Chowdhury.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir moved the application on behalf of anti graft body.

These bank accounts have Tk 3,98,64,040.

The immovable property seized includes a flat in the name of SK Sur in the capital's Segunbagicha, whose deed value stands at Tk 44,17,700, and a flat measuring 4,400 square feet in the name of Suparna Sur in Dhanmondi, whose deed value stands at Tk 1.25 crore.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A group of students browse books at the Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday. They ventured into the fair after finishing classes and were excited to finally have time to pick up a few books. As the Boi Mela draws to a close, with February 28 being the last day, more and more people have begun flocking to Suhrawardy Udyan.

Secretariat entry policy formulated

BSS, Dhaka

The government has formulated "Bangladesh Secretariat Entry Policy, 2025" aimed at checking entry of unwanted persons and controlling vehicles into the secretariat to ensure a congenial atmosphere for work.

"In line with the current world, the Bangladesh Secretariat Entry Policy, 2025" was issued after discussions with the stakeholders in the perspective of the changing situation," said a notification of the home ministry signed by its Senior Secretary Nasimul Ghani.

In accordance with the "Bangladesh Secretariat Entry Policy, 2014", the government formulated the policy in the interest of maintaining security and discipline, it said.

The home adviser has requested all concerned to follow this policy properly to provide overall security to the Bangladesh Secretariat.

Academic

FROM PAGE 5
Pathology, Physiology, CCU, Gastroenterology Department and Dental Unit, are facing disruption due to lack of teachers.

They raised demand for immediate appointment of teachers against the vacant posts in all departments of SBMC.

The students warned of stricter programme unless their demands are met.

"At least 250 students are admitted in each batch, but there are no teachers for more than half of them. There are only six professors against 50 professor posts. As such, we are being deprived of quality education," said Arifat Rahman, a final year medical student of the college.

The SBMC authorities said at least 173 of the total 334 approved posts are now lying vacant. Although the ministry provided six teachers one day ago, it hardly had any impact on resolving the ongoing crisis.

The college administration also admitted that the ongoing microbiology examination has suffered due to the present situation.

SBMC Principal Faizul Bashir said the matter has been reported to the ministry concerned, and efforts are on to resolve the crisis promptly.

Company Cars For Sale

Name: Honda Accord 2011, Color: Black, CC: 1997, Registration: Jul 2011, Fuel Type: Octane, Total KM: Less than 120,000, Company Used Condition, All Papers are up to date. We only sale car to company not any individual. All the papers including Trade license, Tax certificate must be updated for the company. Asking for your reasonable bid for the above car for purchase. You can directly call Cell: 01713022601 or e-mail to zameen@mitsui.com for further details. Bid submission deadline is Mar/22, 2025. Name Transfer fee will be borne by the buyer. We will only contact with the highest bidder and no further clarification/explanation will be given to any bidder.

Modern full-furnished House for Urgent Rent

A beautifully interior decorated 3100 Sqft house in third floor with all required utensils and eminities for urgent rent in Uttara, Sector 4, Road-10, house-20 (flat A2 & B2), 4 bed room with attached toilet and veranda, one living, one drawing, one dining, store room, english bar kitchen with 24 hours security system and guards with standby generator, lift, Two car parking and other facilities. All the bed room has LED TV, AC, Fridge, washing Machine, Hotwater facility etc. Ph: 01326-724616 (Inspection on request)

BARISHAL REGION
Capsicum cultivation gaining ground

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The commercial cultivation of capsicum is getting popular in the Barishal region, presenting new agricultural opportunities for local farmers. Originating from South America, this fruit, also known as bell pepper or sweet pepper, is a favoured culinary ingredient and is rich in antioxidants.

Capsicum is being cultivated across Meherdiganj, Hija, Muladi, and Sadar upazilas of Barishal, as well as Amtoli, Taltoli, and Patharghatta upazilas of Barguna, Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur, and Char Passion and Monpura upazilas of Bhola.

The plants bear fruit twice a year, allowing farmers to harvest twice after planting the saplings once. During a visit to Loraipur Char under Barishal Sadar upazila, it was observed that capsicum has been cultivated on 76 hectares of land in Barishal division in the 2023-24 fiscal year.



other winter vegetables, watermelons, and melons.

Muhammad Ibrahim, a farmer from Bhola Sadar upazila, said, "These lands on shoals are ideal for capsicum cultivation due to ample sunlight, easy access to water, and fertility of soil."

Shamsu Mia, a farmer from Barishal Sadar, pointed out the high costs associated with capsicum cultivation.

"It costs Tk 6.7 lakh to cultivate it on per bigha of land. But the price we get for our crop is much less compared to our investment."

The wholesale price is usually Tk 80-90 per kg, while the retail price goes up to Tk 120-160."

GMM Kabir Khan, a horticulture expert from the Department of Agricultural Extension in Barishal, said a total of 1,353 tonnes of capsicum were produced on 76 hectares of land in Barishal division in the 2023-24 fiscal year.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Participants at the dialogue on "Inclusive Banking for Persons with Disabilities" at the office of Team Inclusion Bangladesh in Bank Town, Dhaka on February 15. Among them are disability rights advocate Sahana Sharmin, Monash University Associate Professor Shahriar Abu Zafar, and Prime Bank professionals Kazi Reshad Mahboob, Nishat Mobashera Khan, and Patwary Tanvir Rahman Siddique.

LAND SHARE SALE

BASHUNDHARA RIA, SOUTH FACING, LAKESIDE PLOT BY 40 FEET ROAD, PLOT-2247 (SOUTH), BLOCK-M.DHAKA-1212
CONTACT: 01815206790

Nation honours

FROM PAGE 3

Afterwards, the area was opened to public. People from all walks of life walked barefoot, with flowers in hands and humming "Amar Bhaiyer Rokte Rangano Ekushey February" to recall the supreme sacrifice of the language heroes.

Meanwhile, since around 11:30pm to midnight yesterday, some 40-50 people with black flags gathered near the Shabu Mandir intersection, demanding that the president is not allowed to pay tributes at the Shaheed Minar.

On this day in 1952, students and people in Dhaka took to the streets in protest against the then Pakistani government's denial of Bangla as the national language and imposition of Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar and a few other brave sons of the soil were killed in police firings on this day when students came out in a procession from the Dhaka University campus breaching section 144 to press home their demand for the recognition of Bangla as a state language of then Pakistan.

Their supreme sacrifices inspired the nation to fight for its rights and ultimately to clinch independence.

The day is a public holiday. On the day, the national flag will be remained at half-mast in all educational institutions, government, semi-government and autonomous offices and private buildings across the country.

National dailies published special supplements marking the day and TV channels will air special programmes on the occasion.

Seize flats, freeze bank

FROM PAGE 3

The letter states that a three-member probe team was formed to investigate the allegations against SK Sur of evading government revenue, acquiring illegal assets, transferring and converting money through irregularities and corruption.

"The ACC came to know from a reliable source that they [SK Sur and family] may have transferred the said property before filing a regular case. If the said property is transferred, the investigation into the allegations against them will be hampered. So, an order is needed to prevent them from doing so," said the ACC in the application.

"Our family continued efforts to have my mother's expulsion order rescinded, including recent petitions submitted to the Mymensingh divisional commissioner. The acknowledgment of her contribution to the Language Movement, even posthumously, remains a long-standing demand from our family," Ahad said.

"My mother's story is not just one of personal sacrifice but also of perseverance. Despite the obstacles she faced, including being denied further education and subjected to social and familial ostracism, she continued to serve

of this country will not tolerate it," he said.

He raised the issue of enforced disappearances, recalling that BNP leaders Saiful Islam (Hiru) and Humayun Kabir (Parvez) had been missing for 11 years since they were abducted from Laksam.

"Like them, around 700 BNP members were forcibly disappeared. During the recent movement, around 2,000 were shot dead -- 800 of them were BNP members."

Fakhrul also warned against undermining the Liberation War of 1971. "No one should ever belittle 1971 -- just as no one should disrespect the 2024 movement. The people

should not be allowed to do so," he said.

"Do not push the nation into uncertainty. Announce the election date and give the people a roadmap."

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MEDICAL COLLEGE Academic activities at a standstill

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Barishal

Academic activities at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barishal have come to a standstill after students announced a complete shutdown on February 17 protesting the ongoing crisis of teacher at the college.

The protesting students yesterday blocked the Band Road in front of the medical college for an hour from 12:00pm, disrupting vehicular movement and causing traffic gridlock.

They also burned a notification on the recruitment of six teachers in the college.

The students said SBMC is currently facing major challenges in providing quality education due to an acute shortage of teachers. Currently, academic activities at most departments of the college, including Medicine, Microbiology, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Students of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barishal blocked Band Road in front of the college yesterday, demanding a solution to their ongoing teacher shortage.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

A forgotten hero of the Language Movement

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The nation will observe International Mother Language Day today, and pay tributes to the heroes of our Language Movement.

Yet, question remains, do we remember all our language heroes? Have they all been recognised by the state for their valour and contributions?

Like Saleha Begum, a hero of the Language Movement in Mymensingh, who passed away on August 19, 2004, without receiving any state recognition for her contributions.

Even, her expulsion from Mymensingh Muslim Girls High School for her leadership and involvement in the movement was not revoked.

The incident of Saleha's expulsion from the school for joining a procession and hoisting black flag on February 21, 1952, has been mentioned in page 124 of "Ekusher Smriti", a book published by Prothoma Prokashon.

Saleha's daughter Syeda Farida Akther, and son Syed Shakeel Ahad, spoke to this correspondent about the life and struggles of her mother.

Born in Pirojpur sub-division on September 24, 1935, to AM Ashraf Ali, the then sub-registrar of the sub-division, and Monirunnesa Khatun, Saleha was the third of five siblings.

She continued her studies in Mymensingh under patronage of her maternal uncle, CA Mannan, who was an officer of Forest Department in the district.

In 1952, during the Language Movement, the Rashtrabhasha Chhatra Sangram Parishad organised protests against the killings of students in Dhaka.



Saleha Begum

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER Navigability crisis disrupts boat services



S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Boat travel on the Brahmaputra is being severely disrupted due to a navigability crisis, causing immense suffering for passengers travelling from Kurigram's Mogolbasa, Jatrapur, and Chilmari Ramna River Port to Roumari, Rajibpur, Jamalpur, and Gaibandha's Sundarganj.

According to locals and boatmen, the crisis has persisted for the past month, yet no initiative has been taken by the authorities to resolve the issue.

Chars have emerged across vast stretches of the Brahmaputra riverbed, narrowing the river's width and altering the navigation route, which has increased travel distances.

Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of the Kurigram Water Development Board, said the water level has dropped due to a lack of upstream flow.

"Resolving the crisis is not possible without planned dredging, a responsibility that falls under the jurisdiction of BIWTA authorities," he said.

As the water level continues to

decrease in the waterway north of Chilmari's Ramna River Port, submerged chars have caused significant navigation problems at Ramna River Ghat, as well as in several unions of Ulipur, Roumari, and Rajibpur upazilas, said locals.

Sabed Ali, a trader at Jorgach Haat in Chilmari upazila, said additional time and cost are making it difficult to transport goods to the market on time.

Boatman Javed Ali said in the Mantola Char area, south of Jorgach Haat, the river water has receded by nearly one kilometre. In that section, passengers are often forced to step into the water and push the boat by hand to continue their journey.

Around 50 passenger boats operate on these routes daily, all struggling with the same issue.

Contacted, BIWTA's Deputy Assistant Engineer Md Kamruzzaman said a survey on the river is currently underway to assess the navigability issue. He said once the survey is completed, dredging work will be carried out to restore navigability.

19 more fishers abducted by Arakan Army

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Cox's Bazar

The Myanmar based armed rebel group Arakan Army yesterday abducted 19 Bangladeshi fishermen along with their four fishing boats from Naf river estuary when they were returning to Teknaf in Cox's Bazar.

The incident took place near Shah Porir Dwip (island), Gholar Char (shoal), and Naikkhangdia areas.

Earlier on February 10, the Arakan Army abducted four fishermen, who have not been released yet.

Abdul Jalil, president of a local boat owners' association in Teknaf, said, "Two of our fishing trawlers with nine fishermen on board were taken away by Arakan Army while returning to Teknaf. We urge the government to intervene."

Abdur Gafur, general secretary of Majarpara Boat Terminal in Shah Porir Dwip, said 10 more fishermen on two other boats were also abducted by Arakan Army men.

Contacted, Teknaf upazila nirbahi officer Sheikh Ehsan Uddin said, "We received the news at noon. We heard that the fishermen had trespassed into Myanmar territory, from where the Arakan Army abducted them."

"We have informed the matter to the BGB and efforts are on to bring them back," he added.

DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2025

FALGUN 8, 1431 BS

The Daily Star

5



'Stop creating chaos in name of reforms'

Fakhrul calls for
immediate nat'l polls

STAR REPORT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the interim government to hold the national election without delay, arguing that ordinary people do not understand reforms.

"Common people don't understand reforms. They care about two meals a day, basic clothing, and a roof over their heads. So stop creating chaos in the name of reforms. Hold the election immediately. Please give the people peace," Fakhrul said while addressing a rally at Laksam Stadium in Cumilla.

The rally was organised by BNP's Laksam upazila and municipality units, along with Monohorganj SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Cancel expulsion order: CU students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Expelled female students of Chittagong University yesterday placed a seven-point demand, including withdrawal of their two-year expulsion order and resignation of the proctor.

They announced the demands at a press conference in front of CU's administrative building around 3:00pm.

They also expressed concerns that the existing probe committee is not working impartially, and insisted that a new, neutral committee be formed.

On February 13, CU's Board of Residence, Health, and Discipline decided to expel these students over allegations of physically assaulting an assistant proctor and engaging in acts of religious defamation.

Rojatul Jannat Nisha, a Criminology Department student, demanded immediate resignation of the proctor and withdrawal of their expulsion orders.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Man stabbed to death in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A man was stabbed to death in an attack by miscreants in Khulna's Sonadanga area yesterday morning.

The deceased, identified as 26-year-old Al Amin, of Hijla village in Chitalmari upazila of Bagerhat, was employed as a salesman for mobile operator Banglalink, said Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sonadanga Police Station.

The incident occurred around 11:00am near Delta Building, where Al Amin was riding his motorcycle on his way to work.

Four individuals on two motorbikes attacked him from behind, stabbing him with sharp weapons, the OC said quoting witnesses.

After Al Amin fell from his motorcycle, locals rescued him and rushed him to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries while receiving treatment.

As of last evening, no case was filed in connection with the incident.

Man dies in road crash 2 days before wedding

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

A groom and his friend were killed after a truck ran them over in Habiganj's Shayestaganj upazila on Wednesday night, just two days before his wedding.

The deceased are Tanvir Shoeb, 23, and his friend Shah Alam, said Dilip Kant Nath, officer-in-charge of Shayestaganj Highway Police Station.

The OC said Tanvir's wedding was scheduled for today.

He along with his friend was returning home from Nurpur area after giving marriage invitations on Wednesday evening.

When they reached Kathaltoni on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway, another motorcycle hit their bike from behind. As they fell on the road, a Sylhet-bound truck ran them over.

Tanvir died on the spot while Alam on the way to a hospital, he said.



Two workers lay asleep atop this pile of bamboo which has been tied on top of a moving pickup truck. Such disregard for safety measures could lead to an accident at any moment. The photo was taken from Doyel Chattar yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BUS ROBBERY ON HIGHWAY 3 days on, police yet to take case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three days have passed since the robbery on board a moving bus on Dhaka-Tangail highway on February 17 night, but no case has yet been filed in this connection.

Allegedly, police from different stations have been declining to take any case, claiming that the incident did not take place in area under their jurisdiction.

According to police, on Monday night, some 8-10 armed men boarded the bus of Unique Road Royals Paribahan after it reached Tangail, and took its control along with some others who previously boarded the bus in Gazipur's Chandra area.

They then looted the belongings of the passengers and got off the bus at a secluded spot.

The next morning, when the bus reached Baraigram in Natore, the passengers stopped the bus and informed the matter to local police station.

Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Natore's Baraigram Police Station, said they did not take the case as the passengers of the bus mentioned Tangail's Mirzapur as the place of the occurrence. "I informed the Tangail district police control room about the incident," he said.

The OC also said as the passengers suspected involvement of the bus staffers in the robbery incident, police detained bus driver Bablu Ali, 30, supervisor Suman Islam, 33, and helper Mahbub Alam, 28.

Later, the three were shown arrested and sent to jail through a local court.

This correspondent could not contact any of the passengers of the bus.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

The youth ready to lead the world

FROM PAGE 1
new world. They are ready to lead. Boys are ready, girls are ready".

He said the country's new generation wants to build a "new civilisation of their dreams" by breaking the shackles of self-destructive civilisation.

The chief adviser said the main goal of their civilisation will be to ensure equal rights of every person to all the resources of the world, to ensure that all have opportunity to dream and realise it, to develop human life in such a way that the existence of the world and the living of all lives are not disturbed in any way.

Young generation ready to lead the world: CA

Congratulating the Ekushey Padak winners, he said the nation is particularly grateful to the recipients as they were the guides of the nation.

Recalling the contribution of the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives in the 1952 language movement, 1971 Liberation war and 2024 July uprising and the injured of the uprising, Prof Yunus said: "We got a new Bangladesh through the uprising of students-workers commoners on August 5 last year."

Through this victory, he said, an opportunity has come before all to build a new Bangladesh.

About the significance of Amar Ekushey, the chief adviser said amid the changing circumstances in the country, this year's Amar Ekushey has come before all with a new significance.

Terming the Ekushey February an everlasting record of Bangalees' self-identity, he said in this February, 1952, the student community stood up against the unjust decision imposed by their Pakistani rulers on the issue of the state language.

They established Bangla as the state language by pouring their blood on Dhaka streets, Prof Yunus said, adding that an incredible awakening of Bangalees' sense of self-governance was created through the 1952 language movement.

Later, the chief adviser conferred the Ekushey Padak upon the winners.

Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Roshid and Cultural Affairs Secretary (Routine Duties) Md Mofidur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

A total of 13 eminent citizens, a four-member team of Avro keyboard, and Bangladesh Women's National Football Team were awarded Ekushey Padak-2025, the country's second highest civilian award, for their contribution to various fields.

Former BB governor Atiur, 22 others sued

FROM PAGE 12
entities under the AnonTex Group through fraudulent means, ACC director general (prevention) Akther Hossain told the media.

Earlier, the ACC investigated the same incident of money embezzlement and closed the case in 2022, citing a lack of evidence against the accused.

The other accused are former BB deputy governor Abu Hena Mohammad Razi Hasan; former BB assistant director Ismat Ara Begum; former Janata managing director Abdus Salam Azad; former Janata directors Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Md Imdadul Haque, Nagibul Islam Dipu, RM Debnath, Md Abu Naser, Sangita Ahmed and Nitai Chandra Nath.

Janata's former deputy general manager Azmul Haque, former assistant general manager Ajay Kumar Ghosh, former manager (Industrial Loan-I) of Janata Bhaban corporate branch Md Golam Azam, executive engineer (SME Department) Md Shahjahan, Md Emdadul Haque, former DGM Md Abdul Jabbar, former DMD Md Golam Faruk, and former deputy MD Omar Faruk are also accused.

Suprabh Spinning MD Md Anwar Hossain and director Md Abu Talha are among the accused.

According to the case statement, the duo took a Tk 297.38 crore loan from Janata through fraud and forgery, laundering the funds in collusion with the other 21 accused.

Despite no actual factory or structure existing on the mortgaged land, the duo overvalued the land and property at Tk 609.8 crore and with the assistance of other accused, obtained a loan of Tk 297.38 crore, which was subsequently embezzled.

AnonTex Group Chairman Younis Badal has been charged with embezzling Tk 50.5 crore out of a sanctioned loan of Tk 180 crore in favour of Suprabh Spinning by keeping the money in the accounts under his AnonTex Group.

Despite knowing about violations of rules, the Janata board approved the loan.

Atiur Rahman, Ismat Ara Begum and Abu Hena Mohammad Razi Hasan assisted the loan applicant by abusing power and violating banking rules despite the loan application being for a new and relatively unknown businessman.

Reports of attacks on minorities exaggerated

FROM PAGE 1

led government on August 5 last year.

Bangladesh has a 4,096-kilometre-long border with India.

Responding to a question, the BGB chief said there was no discussion on revising the India-Bangladesh border treaty, which was agreed upon in 1975. "This issue was not within the purview of this meeting," he said.

He also said the Bangladeshi delegation raised objections to fencing in certain areas along the border and expressed optimism that these issues would be resolved in the future.

When asked about reports of attacks on minorities in Bangladesh following the student-led mass uprising against the Sheikh Hasina regime, Maj Gen Siddiqui dismissed them as "exaggerated." He assured that authorities had taken steps to protect minority communities.

"Reports of attacks on minorities in Bangladesh are exaggerated. We received several requests from minority groups who were afraid, but the BGB assured them of support," he said.

Meanwhile, BSF DG Daljit Singh

Chaudhary said infiltration along the international border has significantly declined since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, 2024.

At the biannual meeting in New Delhi, the BGB raised concerns over border killings.

According to a BSF press release issued yesterday, both sides emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to uphold human rights and reduce border violence. They agreed to enhance joint patrolling, increase vigilance, intensify public awareness campaigns, implement socio-economic development programmes, and share real-time intelligence to ensure effective border management to stop casualties along the border.

"The BSF is already following a non-lethal policy along the border," the press release stated.

Addressing attacks on BSF personnel by transborder criminals based in Bangladesh, the release mentioned that both forces agreed to work together to minimise such incidents. Measures include increasing coordinated patrols, particularly during late-night and

early-morning hours in vulnerable areas, and educating border communities on the sanctity of the international boundary.

The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) to curb cross-border crimes, human trafficking, and illegal crossings. They pledged to share real-time intelligence and reports on traffickers and to remain extra vigilant against such crimes, aiming for a crime-free India-Bangladesh border.

Both countries also agreed to support victims of human trafficking by facilitating their rescue and ensuring their swift rehabilitation in accordance with the law.

The delegations acknowledged the progress made in strengthening bilateral cooperation. They expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the conference and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace and stability along the border.

As per a provisional agreement, the next DG-level conference will be held in Dhaka in July this year at a mutually suitable time.

The seed of independence

FROM PAGE 1

The tears of a hundred
Mothers, who lost their sons,
Flow through February.
I forgot?

These words stand as witness to a turning point in history – an eternal reflection of the bloodstained chapter in the fight for Bangla as state language.

The first two lines came to Abdul Ghaffar Choudhury, a student of Dhaka College, upon witnessing the body of language martyr Rafiquddin Ahmed in Dhaka Medical College. He had gone there to visit the students who were injured in police firing on February 21, 1952.

Ghaffar completed the poem the very next day.

In 1953, it was published as "Ekusher Gaan" (Song of the 21st) in the anthology Ekushey February, edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman. The poem, later transformed into a song, became synonymous with the Language Movement – an anthem without which the Shaheed Dibosh (Martyr's Day) has become unimaginable.

WHAT UNFOLDED ON FEBRUARY 21

From the early hours, students and locals began gathering in the Amra Tal area at Dhaka University, and a meeting, presided over by Gaziul Haque, began around 10:00am.

There, Abdul Matin, convener of the DU's Rashtorbhasha Sangram Parishad, and Gaziul spoke in favour of violating the Section 144 order, and the students, divided into several groups, complied.

Police responded with teargas shells, and students retaliated with brickbats and stones in front of the Medical College Hostel. Several of them were arrested.

A session of the East Bengal Assembly was scheduled to begin at 3:30pm. As students began marching toward the Constituent Assembly, police again charged batons and lobbed teargas shells.

The students retaliated, forcing the law enforcers to retreat momentarily. However, police soon began firing indiscriminately from the Medical College Hostel gate, the university's playground, and towards the Medical College gate.

Rafiquddin Ahmed, a student of Jagannath College, thus became the first martyr of the 1952 language movement.

Several others were injured and later died. University student Abul Barkat succumbed to his injuries that night, while Abdus Salam, a worker at the Secretariat, died from gunshot wounds on April 25.

As soon as the news of police firing on students reached the legislature, Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish immediately walked out of a session and rushed to Dhaka Medical College. That evening, the Chhatra Sangram Parishad, with Golam Maola as the convener, met at the Medical College Hostel.

A nationwide strike was observed, while the local administration of some districts towns imposed Section 144.

But as soon as the news of police firing on students spread, outrage erupted across the country. Almost immediately, students and public took to their respective streets.

That very night, students in Rajshahi and Narail built Shaheed Minars – monuments in memory of the Language martyrs, while ailing Chattogram poet Mahbub ul Alam

Following day, another full-scale protest was observed. That night, the students of Medical College, under the guidance and design of Said Haider, built a monument in remembrance of the martyrs – the Shaheed Minar.

On February 26, the monument was officially inaugurated by Abul Kalam Shamsuddin. But that same day, police and military personnel destroyed it. The Sarbodoliya Kendriya Kormi committee was the first to decide observing February 21 as Shaheed Dibosh.

In 1954, pressure from the Muslim League led the Pakistan government to grant Bangla the status of state language of East Pakistan. This recognition was later included in Pakistan's Constitution of 1956.

However, by then, much had already changed. In essence, the Language Movement marked the beginning of Pakistan's eventual downfall.

A caretaker of the house – known as Julhas's house – where the duo was found dead said he heard noises of people running and multiple gunshots after midnight.

"Later, the army informed us that two bodies were on the rooftop and I had to be a witness."

Some locals told this correspondent that an army patrol was ongoing around 10:00pm. After 12:00am, the army used megaphones, instructing people to stay indoors while asking some to surrender.

Miraz's mother, Surma Begum, told AFP, "The military could have arrested them and locked them up. Why did they kill him?"

Previously, under the AL government led by Sheikh Hasina, law enforcement agencies – mainly police and Rab – faced accusations of extrajudicial killings in the name of "crossfires", "shootouts", or "gunfights".

Such incidents, however, significantly declined after December 10, 2021, when the United States imposed human rights-related sanctions on Rab and several of its top officials.

Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir, senior coordinator of rights body Ain O Salish Kendra, said, "The law enforcers must conduct raids with caution so there is no loss of lives. For long years, we saw thousands of extrajudicial killings, which had no impact on the law and order situation. Excessive force has yielded nothing."

He also confirmed that his son had

It is necessary to learn English, but first of all, one must know Bangla well.

TDS: Why have we failed to make Bangla acceptable at all levels? What were our limitations?

Umar: Besides our mindset, the rulers have a big responsibility here. It didn't happen because the rulers didn't want it, although we have a great opportunity in front of us. Bangla was officially recognised as a state language in 1956 after the 1952 Language Movement. But it was like we forgot everything after independence. Now most of the shops in our country are given English names.

The Bangla Language Propagation Act was enacted in 1987. It is not even implemented. Again, before implementing that law, we have to create opportunities. Our ruling class or we did not create a favourable environment for it. Now, not only the upper class, but also the middle

class send their children to English medium schools. Because we have not been able to maintain the standard of education in Bangla medium schools.

Take the case of Dhaka University. How much research is done there every year? Even with the little money that is given, no research is done. Teachers are promoted without any research. No government has agreed to accept Bangla at all levels because they think it will make it difficult for them to plunder. There is no second example of how we have failed to accept Bangla as the language of all levels despite being 98 percent Bangalees in an independent country.

TDS: You and others in your generation practised mindfulness in Bangla for a longtime. Why the current generations could not continue that?

Umar: The practice of Bangla that existed in the 60s has largely ended. By practice, I mean research, exploration of the language. The practice of knowledge has disappeared in this country. And the practice of education has been lost. The people of this country have no idea what higher education, high standards of education are. They think that the quality of education will increase if colleges are converted into universities! Another thing is that no one can ever reach the top by being separated from their own language and forgetting their own history.

TDS: Where do we actually stand in practising Bangla in literature now? Do you see any crisis here?

Umar: Those who do literary work in our country now are like mediocres. That's why no big-name writers are produced here. There is a book fair in the country, where thousands of books are published. But out of these thousands of books, maybe a maximum of 100-150 books are worth reading. The rest are not worth reading. The publishers themselves told me that garbage is being published in the name of books. This is how it is going on. Many people are writing. But just writing won't do; you have to see what they are writing. All the books are being published with colourful covers. Everyone now buys books just by looking at the cover, there is nothing inside. Yet to protect the publishing industry, the government has banned the sale of books from other countries. The government has limited the book fair to only Bangladeshi writers and publishers, condoning stupidity and the low quality of literature. If it had been opened to the world, books from other countries, quality books of world literature, could have come here. Bangla literature would have benefited from this. But the country's intellectuals, writers and publishers consider it a threat. That is why there is never a demand to free the book fair.

However, in Europe, people learn more than one language besides their own. And they also practise literature in that language. When there is an exchange between languages and cultures, each language prospers. And here, Bangla is isolated from all languages. As a result, the development of the language is not happening and we do not see any possibility of the improvement and development of human thought.

(NB: An excerpt from the interview is published in the print edition. To read the full interview, visit The Daily Star's website.)

'Rebuilding the Nation' concert to celebrate the spirit of July Uprising

A massive open-air concert titled *Rebuilding the Nation*, under the banner of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement (SAD), is scheduled for tomorrow at the Sher-E-Bangla Nagar in Agargaon, Dhaka, the former venue of the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF).

The concert, inspired by the spirit of the July Uprising, will feature performances by renowned rockstar Nagar Baul James and popular bands including Artcell, Chirkut, Shonar Bangla Circus, Bengal Symphony, Bangla Five, Cryptic Fate, and Kureghor, among others.

The concert aims to unite the youth for change through music. At a February 19 press



conference, organisers announced an expected attendance in the hundreds of thousands, with preparations underway for the open-to-all event.

THE ANTHEM OF DEFIANCE

How 'Amar Bhaiyer Rokte Rangano' came to be

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

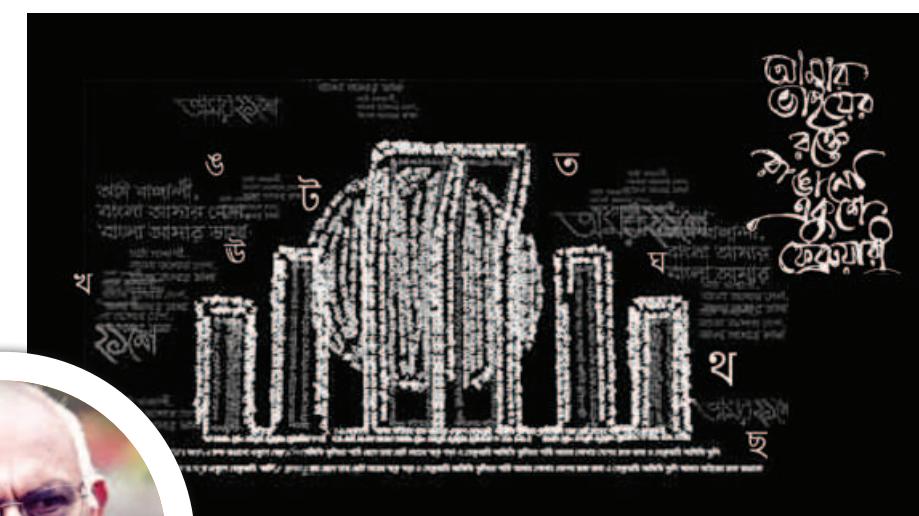
On this very day on February 21, 1952, the streets of Dhaka became a battlefield, soaked with the blood of young martyrs, who stood resolute in the face of oppressive authority, demanding the right to speak their mother tongue, Bangla. It was a day that would carve itself into the collective memory of the Bengali people—a day when the language movement claimed its sacred place in history, and shaped the identity of the country, as a nation.

It was in the shadow of that fateful day that legendary lyricist and poet Abdul Gaffar Choudhury, then a young student and translator, found himself in the hospital, stepping carefully over the bodies of the wounded, as the echo of gunfire was still ringing in his ears. The scene before him was unimaginable: in the sterile quiet of the Dhaka Medical College outpatient ward, the lifeless body of Rafiq Uddin Ahmed lay sprawled on the cold floor, a symbol of the unyielding spirit extinguished in the struggle for something as simple and as profound as words of a certain language.

In that haunting moment, Abdul Gaffar Choudhury was struck by a sorrow so deep it seemed to bleed from his very bones. Looking at the martyr, he felt an inexplicable connection—Rafiq, though a stranger, was his brother, his kin, someone whose sacrifice transcended the individual and became the essence of a cause. It was in this gut-wrenching grief that the first two lines of what would become an anthem of the movement rose within him, words as raw as the blood that soaked the ground outside:

"Amar bhaiyer rokte rangano Ekushey February, ami ki bhulite pari?"

The weight of the tragedy settled in



PHOTOS: COLLECTED | VISUAL: DOWEL BISWAS

Choudhury's heart, but so did a fire—an urgency to immortalise the day, to give voice to the bloodshed, the tears, the unwavering demand for justice. Yet, as he

shared these lines with his friend Syed Ahmad Hossain, the poet was reluctant to let the words escape too quickly. It was not the kind of poem that could be written casually, standing on a crowded street corner. But Hossain's persistence was relentless, urging him to capture the poem before it slipped away like so many fleeting thoughts.

Choudhury, in the chaotic aftermath of the protests and amid the uncertainty of curfews and shutdowns, found himself on a journey through the alleys of Dhaka, desperately clutching his words. In the solitude of his temporary residence, the poem began to take shape. The verses seeped out, a testament to the violence and beauty of a people united by language, a people whose loss would never be forgotten.

Though the poem was still not finished, it was shared, quietly at first, with a handful

of students, distributed in leaflets that captured the anger and sorrow of a nation in mourning. The words spread like wildfire through the city, rising against the heavy hand of oppression.

As the song found its voice, it was embraced by the people as something more than just a memorial—it became the pulse of a revolution. The iconic tune composed by Altaf Mahmud, and later immortalised in films and performances, carried the weight of those who had given everything.

In 2006, BBC Bangla ranked it as the third greatest Bengali song of all time, a recognition of its earnest impact on the Bengali identity.

Through the years, the poem's legacy has only deepened, transcending generations and borders, carried in translations, and echoed in the hearts of those who hear it, no matter where they are in the world.

In this simple yet profound song, the words of Abdul Gaffar Choudhury continue to remind us: Can we ever forget?

This article is based on a piece originally written by Ahmad Istiak and published in *The Daily Star* on February 21, 2023.

'Peyarar Subash' wins Hiralal Sen Award 1431



Nurul Alam Atique's film *Peyarar Subash* has been honoured with the prestigious Hiralal Sen Award 1431 at the Amar Bhashar Chalchitra Utsab, organised by the Dhaka University Film Society (DUFFS). Shamol Shishir received the award on behalf of the director from Habiba Rahman, assistant professor at Dhaka University.

The festival nominated four films for the award, including *Kajol Rekha*, *Nakshi Kanthar Jamin*, and *Priyo Maloti*. *Peyarar Subash* received the Best Editing Award, while *Kajol Rekha* won Best Screenplay, *Priyo Maloti* earned Best Sound Design, and *Nakshi Kanthar Jamin* was honoured with Best Cinematography.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Sheeter Adda': Krishnokoli o Gaaner Dol live

Dhaka Sessions, in collaboration with Jatra Biroti, presents *Sheeter Adda* featuring Krishnokoli o Gaaner Dol.

Tomorrow, the celebrated artiste Krishnokoli will perform her popular tracks, including *Nai Hoye Jai, Ichchhe Moton*, and *Bondhu Tomar*, among others. The event has been designed to immerse the audience in an evening of soulful music.

Date: Saturday | February 22
Time: 7:15pm-9pm
Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani



NEWS

SC restores appointment

FROM PAGE 16
by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, delivered the verdict after hearing arguments on the appeals.

With this verdict, the 1,137 cadres can join service with seniority in 90 days, appellants' lawyers Md Salahuddin Dolon and Mohammad Shishir Manir told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Public Service Commission's (PSC) lawyer Muhammad Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan said his client may take necessary steps after receiving the full text of the verdict.

Barrister Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal also appeared for the candidates while Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque represented the state during the hearing of the appeals.

On September 1, 2007, during the tenure of the caretaker government, the PSC, cancelled the first viva voce results of 27th BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examinations on charges of gross irregularities, including question leaks and corruption. A total of 3,567

Sylhet MC College student beaten up by 'Shibir activists'

FROM PAGE 16
Islamia, a student organisation.

Mizanur is also an activist of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Talking to reporters, Juned Ahmed, a master's student of the college's Bangla department, who was present during the attack, said two days ago, Riyad commented on a post regarding a recent incident at Kuet, stating that those who engaged in disorderly conduct in the past and those doing it now are the same.

"Around midnight, a total of 12 to 13 Chhattri Shibir activists entered our room and started questioning Riyad about his comment," said Juned, also assistant organising secretary of the college unit of Talamiz.

During the altercation over the issue, the Shibir men began beating Riyad with iron rods, he said.

Juned said the college unit secretary of Chhattri Shibir arrived at the scene during the attack.

"Under his directive, the attackers took away our mobile phones and money," said Juned. "Riyad is now receiving treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital," Juned said.

Denying the allegation, Jawhar

candidates passed that oral examination.

Challenging this decision, several candidates filed a writ petition with the HC.

Following the petition, an HC bench led by Justice Abdur Rashid on July 3, 2008, declared the PSC's decision to cancel the first oral examination legal.

After the HC verdict, the oral test was held for the second time.

Candidates who failed the second test filed another writ petition with the HC in 2008 challenging the legality of the second viva voce.

Following this petition, an HC bench headed by Justice Miftah Uddin Choudhury on November 11, 2009, declared the second oral examination illegal and ordered the government to appoint those candidates who passed the first oral exam.

The verdict also said the people who joined the service on the basis of the second oral exam would remain in service, and the seniority of the writ petitioners would be determined

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After holding a hearing of the review petitions, the Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed on November 7 last year allowed the petitioners to move appeals before this court against its July 11, 2010 judgement.

In continuation of the legal proceedings, the Appellate Division concluded the hearing on the appeals on February 19 and delivered the judgement yesterday.

After holding a hearing of the review petitions, the Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed on November 7 last year allowed the petitioners to move appeals before this court against its July 11, 2010 judgement.

They also found evidence that he had an enmity with some people," he said.

Hasan's grieving wife Jhinu Akter said, "My husband left home around 10:00pm after some people called from outside. More than an hour later, we started searching for him and found him unconscious in a parked three-wheeler at Chowdhury Haat Bazar," she said.

The family then took him to Chattogram Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, she added.

"There were severe injury marks on his head and body," Jhinu said.

She said Hasan used to be a Jubo League activist, but he had not been active in the last few years.

MC College Principal Prof Abul Anam Md Riaz said, "Neither the dormitory superintendent nor was I aware of the attack at night. I visited the injured student at the hospital after learning about it this morning."

A probe committee will be formed to investigate the matter and take necessary actions, he added.

Mohammad Saiful Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said a dispute arose among dormitory students over a Facebook post, leading to a scuffle. However, since the original Facebook post has been deleted, verifying the details is difficult.

"No formal complaint has been filed yet, but we are looking into the matter," added the police official.

Denying the allegation, Jawhar

according to law.

However, after hearing three appeals filed by the government, the Appellate Division, headed by the then Chief Justice Mohamad Fazlul Karim (now deceased), on July 11, 2010, upheld the HC verdict that cancelled the first oral examination of the 27th BCS.

At the same time, the apex court also scrapped the HC verdict delivered on November 11, 2009.

Three separate review petitions were then filed with the Appellate Division challenging the verdict delivered by this court on July 11, 2010.

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Trump orders halt to federal funding for undocumented migrants

FROM PAGE 16
AFP, WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order aimed at identifying and eliminating federal funds being used for undocumented migrants, the White House said.

The order "directs Federal departments and agencies to identify all federally funded programs currently providing financial benefits to illegal aliens and take corrective action," according to a White House fact sheet issued on Wednesday.

No formal complaint has been filed yet, but we are looking into the matter," added the police official.

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DEPORTATION FROM US 100 migrants moved to Panama jungle facility

REUTERS, Panama City

A group of nearly 100 migrants deported from the US to Panama last week has been moved from a hotel in the capital to the Darien jungle region in the south of the country, Panama's government said on Wednesday.

In a statement, Panama's security ministry said of the 299 migrants deported from the US in recent days, 13 had been repatriated to their countries of origin while another 175 remained in the hotel in Panama City awaiting onward journeys after agreeing to return home.

The migrants have been staying at the hotel under the protection of local authorities and with the financial support of the United States through the UN-related International Organization for Migration and the UN refugee agency, according to the Panamanian government.

Rights groups fear for migrants' safety if they are returned to violent or war-torn countries

The migrants include people from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, according to Panama's president, Jose Raul Mulino, who has agreed with the US to receive non-Panamanian deportees.

The process has been criticized by human rights groups that worry migrants could be mistreated and also fear for their safety if they are ultimately returned to violent or war-torn countries of origin, such as Afghanistan.

BJP's Rekha Gupta sworn in as new Delhi CM

AFP, New Delhi

A member of India's ruling Hindu nationalist party was sworn in yesterday as chief minister of Delhi after an election landslide handed it control of the capital for the first time in decades.

Rekha Gupta, 50, of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata



Party (BJP) is the fourth woman to serve as chief minister of the sprawling megacity of more than 30 million people.

The BJP is in government nationally but has not controlled the local legislature in Delhi since 1998, so its sweeping victory taking more than two-thirds of seats in the February 5 polls was both symbolic and strategically important.



Supporters of South Korean leader Yoon Suk Yeol attend a rally near the Central District Court in Seoul yesterday, as the ousted leader became the country's first sitting head of state to stand trial in a criminal case.

PHOTO: AFP

INTERNATIONAL

Iran executed 975 in 'horrifying' 2024 escalation Say human rights groups

AFP, Paris

Iran executed at least 975 people last year in a "horrifying escalation" of its use of capital punishment, two human rights groups said yesterday.

Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) and French group Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) said the figure was the highest since IHR began recording executions in Iran in 2008.

The figure "reveals a horrifying escalation in the use of the death penalty by the Islamic republic in 2024," they said in a joint report, accusing Iran of using the death penalty as a "central tool of political oppression".

"These executions are part of the Islamic republic's war against its own people to maintain its grip on power," IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam said.

"Five people were executed on average every single day in the last three months of the year as the threat of war between Iran and Israel escalated."

Last year's figure represented a 17 percent increase on the 834 executions recorded in 2023, the report said.

Of the 975 people executed, four people were hanged in public and 31 were women, also the highest figure for the past 17 years.

Human rights groups, who say that Iran is the world's most prolific executioner after China, accuse the authorities of using the death penalty to sow fear among the public, particularly after nationwide protests broke out in 2022.

93 bodies found in mass graves in Libya

AFP, United Nations

A total of 93 bodies have now been recovered from two mass graves found in Libya during raids on human trafficking networks, the United Nations said Wednesday.

One mass grave was found on February 7 on a farm in Jakharrah in northeastern Libya, and a day later another mass grave was discovered in Kufra in the southeast, with a total of 93 bodies found, the UN under secretary general for African affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, said during a Security Council meeting.

She did not give a breakdown of how

many bodies were found at each site.

Ten days ago Libyan authorities reported the discovery of 28 bodies of sub-Saharan migrants in the mass grave in Kufra near a site where they were allegedly detained and tortured.

These authorities said the grave was found after a raid on that human trafficking site, where authorities freed 76 sub-Saharan migrants.

The raid targeted "a gang whose members deliberately deprived illegal immigrants of their freedom, tortured them and subjected them to cruel, humiliating and inhumane treatment," the Libyan attorney general's office said.

Trump's support for Taiwan 'very strong' Says Taiwanese official

AFP, Taipei

US support for Taiwan is "very strong", Taipei's security chief said yesterday, as the self-ruled island seeks to head off President Donald Trump's threats of hefty tariffs on its semiconductor chips.

The United States is Taiwan's most important backer and biggest arms supplier, but Trump's recent warnings of chip taxes and criticisms of Taipei has raised concerns about his commitment to the island's territory.

Taiwan lives under the constant threat of an invasion by China, which claims the island as part of its territory. Trump has previously accused Taiwan of stealing the US chip industry and suggested it should pay the United States for its defence.

Speaking at a security forum yesterday, Taiwan's National Security Council chief Joseph Wu praised the United States for providing defence equipment to Taiwan, training its soldiers and boosting its international presence.

Six elephants dead after being struck by train in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan passenger train derailed yesterday after smashing into a family of elephants, with no passengers injured but six animals killed in the island's worst such wildlife accident, police said.

The express train was travelling near a wildlife reserve at Habarana, some 180 kilometres east of the capital Colombo, when it hit the herd crossing the line before dawn.

The train derailed, but there were no casualties among the passengers, police said, adding that wildlife authorities were treating two elephants who survived the crash.

Videos shot after the accident showed one elephant standing guard over an injured youngster lying beside the tracks, with the tips of their trunks curled together.

Killing or harming elephants is a criminal offence in Sri Lanka, which has an estimated 7,000 wild elephants, with the animals considered a national treasure. Two baby elephants and their pregnant mother were killed in a similar accident in the same area in September 2018.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
Patuakhali.

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Date: 20-02-2025

e-Tender Notice - 21/2024-2025

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SL No	Package No	Tender ID	Name of Scheme	Document last selling Date and Time	Procedure Method
1	IPCP/PATU/G ALAC/P/24-25/76.16	1073987	1. a) Improvement of Adarshogram (Ashrayan) Jame Mosque Ashrayan Pond Under Galachipa Upazila, Dist: Patuakhali [Area= 0.870 Acre). (b) Construction of 01 Nos. Ghatis of (13.00 m X 4.00 m X 3.90 m) Size at Adarshogram (Ashrayan) Jame Mosque Ashrayan Pond. 2. a) Improvement of Naya Kanda Khash Pond (at Pakshia) Under Galachipa Upazila, Dist: Patuakhali [Area= 0.985 Acre). (b) Construction of 01 Nos. Ghatis of (13.00 m X 4.00 m X 3.90 m) Size at Naya Kanda Khash Pond (at Pakshia) Under Galachipa Upazila, Dist: Patuakhali [Area= 0.574 Acre). (c) Construction of Walkway (Beautification).	09-Mar-2025 17:00	LTM
2	IPCP/PATU/G ALAC/P/24-25/77.17	1073988	1. a) Improvement of 9no Ward Char Kaphalbera Surat Khan Bari Jame Mosque Pond Under Galachipa Upazila, Dist: Patuakhali [Area= 0.18 Acre). (b) Construction of 01 Nos. Ghatis of (11.50 m X 4.00 m X 3.30 m) Size at 9no Ward Char Kaphalbera Surat Khan Bari Jame Mosque Pond. 2. a) Improvement of Char Kajol Islamia Dikhil Madrasa Pond Under Galachipa Upazila, Dist: Patuakhali [Area= 0.574 Acre). (b) Construction of 01 Nos. Ghatis of (13.00 m X 4.00 m X 3.90 m) Size at Char Kajol Islamia Dikhil Madrasa Pond. (C) Construction of Walkway (Beautification).	09-Mar-2025 17:00	LTM

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(Md. Hossain Ali Patuakhali Executive Engineer LGED, Patuakhali

e-mail: xen.patuakhali@lged.gov.bd

GD-481

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বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গবেষণার এরিয়া	অর্থবছর	প্রকল্প অর্থিক অনুদান	অন্যান্য
টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জালানি, জালানী দ্বৰ্কতা ও সংরক্ষণ, Low Carbon Technology, Waste to Energy.	২০২৪-২০২৫	প্রায়লিঙে ভিত্তিতে আন্মানিক ২০,০০,০০০/- থেকে ৩,০০,০০০/- (দুই থেকে তিন লক্ষ) টাকা।	১. গবেষণার ফলাফল বাংলাদেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রক্ষেপণে টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জালানির উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেড) এর ২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরের বাস্তুটের গবেষণা অনুদান খাতার ৩২৫৭১০.০ অর্থনৈতিক কোডে বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থের মাধ্যমে টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জালানীর উন্নয়ন ও সম্প্রসারণ বিষয়ে প্রযোগিক গবেষণা কার্যকলাপ পরিচালনার জন্য দেশে অবস্থিত (সরকারি ও বেসরকারি) গবেষণা মধ্যে থেকে উপরোক্ত গবেষণা প্রস্তাব করা যাচ্ছে।
শর্তাবলী:			২. গবেষণার ফলাফল বাংলাদেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রক্ষেপণে টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জালানির উন্নয়ন ও সম্প্রসারণে অবদান রাখতে হবে।

GD-480

ত. আশুরায়ুল আলম
মুসারাত মির্জা (মাতি ও গবেষণা)
স্রেড, বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

20.02.2025

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer

Natore PWD Division, Natore

Phone: 0771-66873, Fax: 0771-61026

E-mail: ee_nator@pwd.gov.bd

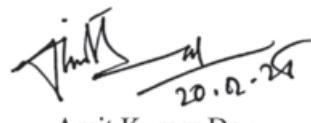
Memo No: 25.36.6900.320.18.24.120.572 Date: 20-02-2025 Eng.

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1072841	03-Mar-2025 17:00	04-Mar-2025 12:00

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Amit Kumar Dev
Executive Engineer
Natore PWD Division
Natore.

WEST BANK REFUGEE CAMP

Israeli fire kills 3 Palestinians

Hamas transfers bodies of four Israeli hostages to Red Cross

REUTERS

Three Palestinians were killed on Wednesday evening by Israeli forces in the al-Faraa camp near Tubas in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian state news agency WAFA reported.

Security forces told WAFA the three people were killed after the Israeli military fired bullets and shells at their home.

The Israeli army said in a statement that the three people were "wanted terrorists who sold weapons for terror purposes". They said two other individuals were detained.

Wednesday's incident comes as Israel continues with a weeks-long offensive that has demolished houses and torn up vital infrastructure in refugee camps in the West Bank.

Meanwhile, Hamas yesterday handed over the bodies of four hostages taken in Gaza during their October 2023 attack, with the Palestinian group saying they include the Bibas family.

This is the first release of dead hostages under a fragile ceasefire under which living hostages have been exchanged for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.



Rescuers work at the site of a residential building damaged during a Russian airstrike in Kherson, Ukraine, yesterday. The Ukrainian military said it shot down 80 drones and 78 were "lost," likely due to electronic countermeasures.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Britain, France eye 'reassurance force' for Kyiv

Say UK media reports as European powers fear Trump could end Ukraine war on terms favourable to Moscow

AFP, London

Britain and France are spearheading attempts to create a European "reassurance force" of fewer than 30,000 troops to protect Ukraine after any ceasefire deal with Russia, UK media reported yesterday.

The idea comes as European powers fear that US President Donald Trump could end the three-year war on terms favourable to Moscow, without providing security guarantees to Kyiv.

The UK-France proposal -- attributed to unnamed western officials -- would likely focus on air and maritime defence, with "minimal" forces on the ground and none near the eastern frontline, the Guardian newspaper said.

The Times reported that a so-called US backstop in the form

of "air cover" would be essential to the plan, which would seek to deter Russia from violating any agreement.

"The area we have a significant advantage over Russia is in the air

President Volodymyr Zelensky has previously called for a western deterrence force of more than 100,000 personnel to help secure a lasting peace.

Russia told the US in talks Tuesday that it opposed any Nato member sending troops to Ukraine as part of a ceasefire. France and the UK are two of the main players in the western military alliance.

Trump has sent shock waves around Europe by saying he is ready to resume diplomacy with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war, over the heads of European countries and Kyiv.

The new US administration has expressed sympathy for some of Moscow's demands, including over territory captured from Ukraine since 2014 and Russia's insistence that Ukraine does not join Nato.

Zelensky called for a deterrence force of more than 100,000 personnel to help secure a lasting peace

and in (our) ability to respond to flagrant abuses of a ceasefire," the Financial Times quoted a western official as saying.

It is unclear whether the considerations would satisfy Kyiv or be acceptable to Moscow. Ukrainian



University students march during an anti-government protest called 'Indonesia Gelap' (Dark Indonesia) against recent budget efficiency policies, near the presidential palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS



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LAW REVIEW

A Penal Code for the 21st century?



As we have been discussing extensive reforms to the existing laws, it is hoped that the government will consider updating the Penal Code 1860 to address contemporary challenges of the 21st century and improve efficiency.

DR. HASSAN FARUK AL IMRAN

The Indian Penal Code 1860 (IPC) used to form the core of criminal law in India. However, in recent years, the Government of India deemed it necessary to review the country's existing criminal laws to modernise, 'decolonise', and strengthen the criminal justice system. Consequently, the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* (BNS) 2023, also referred to as the *Indian Justice Code* 2023 was enacted in 2023.

A comprehensive discussion of all sections of the BNS 2023 is beyond the scope of this write-up, hence, our focus will be on some key provisions that provide significant insights for legal researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

The BNS comprises only 358 sections, a significant reduction from the 511 sections of the IPC. Notably, the new code prioritises offences against women and children, murder, and offences against the State. To address organised crimes, terrorist activities, and gang rape effectively, new provisions have been introduced in the Indian Justice Code, 2023.

A 'child' has been defined under section 2(3) of the BNS as any person below the age of 18

years. The pronoun 'he' is now inclusive of all genders—male, female, and gender-diverse as per section 2(10). The definition of 'movable property' has been revised under section 2(21) to include both tangible and intangible property. Furthermore, offences such as attempt, abetment, and criminal conspiracy which were previously scattered across different chapters, are now consolidated under Chapter IV of the BNS 2023.

A significant innovation in the BNS is the introduction of 'Community Service' as an alternative punishment for certain minor offences, replacing imprisonment in specific cases. Examples include drunken misconduct in public (section 355), public servants unlawfully engaging in trade (section 202), and first-time theft involving stolen property valued below 5,000 rupees, provided the offender restores the property (section 303(2)).

The BNS increases fines for 83 offences and extends imprisonment for 41 sections. The term 'imprisonment for life' has been clarified as imprisonment for the remainder of a person's natural life in various provisions (sections 64, 65, 66, 70). For causing death by a rash or negligent act, the maximum penalty

has been increased to five years imprisonment under section 106(1). However, if the death is caused by a registered doctor, the punishment is capped at two years. In hit-and-run cases, drivers who cause death through rash and negligent driving and flee without reporting the incident face imprisonment of up to 10 years and fines.

The BNS also introduces a new category of culpable homicide related to 'mob murder' in section 103(2). When a group of five or more individuals commits murder based on race, caste, community, sex, language, or similar grounds, each member is punishable with death or with life imprisonment, and a fine. Other new offences include organised crime (section 111), petty organised crime (section 112), and Terrorist act (section 113).

Sexual offences receive particular attention in the BNS. For instance, having sexual intercourse under false pretences—such as promises of marriage or employment, or through concealment of identity—is now a criminal offence under section 69. In the domain of property offences, the new category of 'snatching' (section 304) has been added, broadening the definition of theft. Theft becomes snatching when property is forcibly or suddenly seized from a person or from their possession.

Pertinently, certain colonial era provisions have been removed. These include, but are not limited to, sections 124A (sedition), 497 (adultery) and 377 (unnatural offences) of the IPC. Terms such as 'lunatic', 'insane', and 'idiot' have been replaced, and colonial remnants such as 'Queen' and 'British-India' have been eliminated.

The BNS received the President's assent on 25 December 2023 and came into effect on 1 July 2024. While it is too early to evaluate its full impact, this new code is expected to align with the needs of the 21st century and enhance the delivery of justice. As we have been discussing extensive reforms to the existing laws, it is hoped that the government will consider updating the Penal Code 1860 to address contemporary challenges of the 21st century and improve efficiency.

The writer is Associate Professor, School of Law, Independent University, Bangladesh.

LAW ADVOCACY

The urgency of introducing anti-grooming law

MD. TAWSIF MOTTAKI CHOWDHURY

On February 2, eleven-year-old Subah vanished from Mohammadpur, startling the entire country. The episode went viral as netizens started to voice their support for her rescue on social media. Fortunately, law enforcement stepped in quickly rescuing her from Naogaon where she had travelled to with an adult named Momen. They communicated with each other on the well-known social networking site Tiktok. This is an illustration of grooming, which is the term used to describe how an adult manipulates a child.

The Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse released by the Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children ("Terminology Guidelines") in Luxembourg in 2016, defined grooming as "the process of establishing/building a relationship with a child either in person or through the use of the Internet or other digital technologies, to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person". However, this case raises a critical legal issue—Bangladesh currently has no specific law criminalising grooming, leaving a dangerous loophole that child predators can exploit.

Many developed nations (US, UK, EU, Canada, Norway, Australia etc.) have recognised the seriousness of the issue and have enacted laws to criminalise such behaviour, preventing the abuse that may follow. However, in Bangladesh, the absence of specific enactment means that the act of grooming itself cannot be considered crime unless it is too late, making prevention difficult.

In the United Kingdom, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides a clear legal framework to combat



child grooming. Section 15 of the Act criminalises the communication by an adult with a child under the age of 16 with sexual intent as well as the act of meeting with the child after engaging through online or offline communication. The law provides a maximum penalty of up to 10 years in prison, ensuring that offenders are prosecuted even before physical abuse occurs.

In the United States, 18 US Code § 2422(b), also known as the 'Coercion and enticement provision' prohibits any attempt to persuade, induce, or lure a minor into sexual activity. Similarly, PROTECT Act (2003) also targets sexual exploitation of children and imposes severe penalties ranging up to life imprisonment strengthens the protection even more. These provisions ensure the criminalisation of the preparatory acts that facilitate child exploitation under federal law.

Australian Criminal Code 1995 under section 474.27 categorises both online and offline grooming as criminal offenses. In Australia, communicating with a child under 16 for sexual purposes is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

Similarly, under Section 172.1(l)(b) of the Criminal Code of Canada any act by an adult to communicate with a child under 16 years of age with the intent of facilitating sexual exploitation or abuse. The law imposes severe penalties, including imprisonment up to 14 years, ensuring that individuals engaging in grooming behavior are prosecuted before they can cause harm.

Bangladesh, however, still lacks a dedicated anti-grooming law. In Bangladesh, the Penal Code, 1860 under Sections 375 and 376 criminalise rape but do not include preparatory acts such as psychological manipulation or trust-building, which are the elements of child grooming. It means that law enforcement can only take action after an offense like rape has already been committed, rather than preventing it through legal intervention at an earlier stage.

Similarly, the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain, 2000, contains punishment for child sexual abuse, without addressing the psychological manipulation or grooming leading to the abuses. The newly introduced Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024 too does not contain any provision that explicitly defines and criminalises the act of online grooming or predatory behavior targeting minors through social media, messaging platforms or other digital media. This legal gap exposes Bangladeshi children to manipulative tactics used by predators, making it imperative for lawmakers to introduce clear legislation that defines, criminalises, and punishes grooming before it escalates to abuse. These laws, as it appears, are reactive rather than preventative, leaving a critical loophole where abusers can groom minors without facing prosecution unless physical harm occurs.

The case of Subah is a wake-up call for Bangladesh. The government must take immediate actions introducing anti-grooming laws to protect the children from the acts of online grooming. It is necessary to introduce clear legislation that defines, criminalises and punishes grooming before it escalates into abuse.

The writer is student of law, University of Chittagong.

WELFARE VISION

Improving our elderly well-being framework

RAFEA KHATUN

According to UN demographic predictions, the percentage of the global population over 65 has almost doubled, rising from 5.5% in 1974 to 10.3% in 2024. This percentage is expected to increase even further, reaching 20.7% between 2024 and 2074. Although developed countries have the largest percentages of elderly individuals, developing countries are witnessing a rapid growth of their elderly population that is five times that of many Western industrialised nations. Among these countries, South Asian developing countries are demonstrating strong evidences to join as an active member in the ageing countries club.

Bangladesh, as a new addition to this 'club', is facing multi-faceted problems—socio-economic, cultural, legal and



Should the long-lasting taboo on formal institutional elderly well-being be broken now? Can the elderly well-being be better catered through a for-profit social business model which will be financially and administratively self-sufficient and sustainable? All these thoughts will provoke the multi-disciplinary research for establishing sustainable elderly well-being scheme in our country.

political. However, Bangladesh is still failing to place sufficient importance on this issue in its political agenda. As a recent initiative, the political parties are promising to increase social safety networks and securing various socio-economic services for the elderly people to gain political popularity among the general public.

Regulating elderly well-being in Bangladesh takes place through four approaches. These approaches are

informal familial and community approaches; state-oriented legal and institutional approaches; voluntary charitable approaches; and lastly, private approaches. The informal familial approaches are declining for multiple reasons, including socio-economic transitions, changes in family patterns, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, and the fading away of social values among the 'new generations'. On the other hand, voluntary charitable old homes are

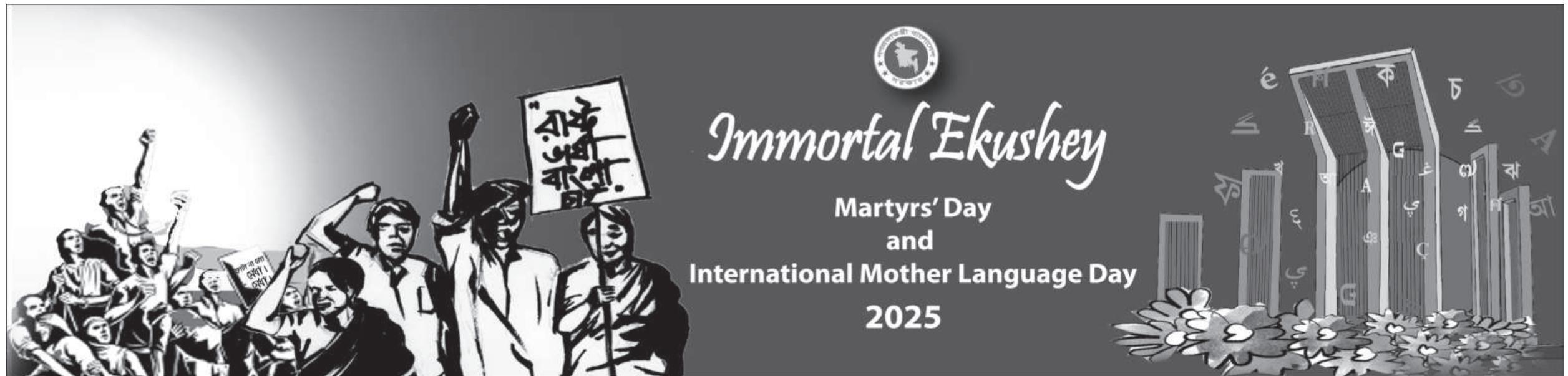
mostly financially and administratively inadequate in serving the rapidly increased elderly population of this country. These existing shortfalls oblige the acceleration of the fourth approach—the private approach, which include various private organisations such as private nursing homes, private old care homes, private hospitals, etc. However, this fourth approach is profit-driven and oftentimes beyond the capacity of common people.

The public legal regulatory approach focuses on some substantive laws, such as The Maintenance of Parents Care Act 2013 and some policy initiatives, such as the National Policy on Older Persons 2013, the National Health Policy 2011, etc. Besides these, there are some social safety schemes in operation, such as old age allowances, vulnerable group feeding card, etc., which arrange some monetary and other essential support from the government funds. However, these initiatives and legal benefits often never reach those who are in need of it the most. The above

complexities in various existing regulatory approaches for elderly well-being created some unavoidable problems in ensuring a sufficient and sustainable well-being scheme for the older people in Bangladesh. In these scenarios, we need to ask ourselves if we should think of a new mechanism for ensuring elderly well-being in Bangladesh.

Should the long-lasting taboo on formal institutional elderly well-being be broken now? Can the elderly well-being be better catered through a for-profit social business model which will be financially and administratively self-sufficient and sustainable? All these thoughts will provoke the multi-disciplinary research for establishing sustainable elderly well-being scheme in our country.

The writer is PhD Candidate, School of Law, University of New England, Australia and Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Jagannath University, Bangladesh



Immortal Ekushey

Martyrs' Day
and
International Mother Language Day

2025

♦ Special Supplement

♦ Art & Design : Department of Films & Publications (DFP)

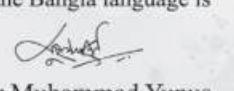
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Message

CHIEF ADVISOR
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH

21 February 2025
08 Falgun 1431


Professor Muhammad Yunus

On the occasion of great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day, I pay tribute to people of all languages in the world, including Bangla. Since 2000, Bangladesh and UNESCO have been jointly observing this day in a befitting manner. "Make Languages Count for Sustainable Development" as this year's UNESCO topic is justified.

The Bengali nation, which had endured centuries of enslavement and domination, achieved its first victory in its struggle for independence on February 21, 1952. The language movement holds special significance in the history of the Bengali nation's liberation movement. The groundwork for the establishment of a democratic, language-based, non-communal state structure was established by this movement. On this day, Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, Abdus Salam, Rafiquddin Ahmad, Shafiqur Rahman, and many others sacrificed their lives to protect the dignity of their mother language, Bangla.

In 1956, Bangla was granted the status of a state language, and February 21 was declared Martyrs' Day and a public holiday. On November 17, 1999, UNESCO recognised February 21 as 'International Mother Language Day.'

The Interim Government established through the July Uprising is working consistently to defend the dignity of the nation and its languages, which are essential to growth and prosperity. It is also working to ensure that the Bangla language is used in information technology. Textbooks in the mother languages of various ethnic groups, including Braille books, are being distributed free of charge.

Greetings and congratulations to everyone on great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day 2025. I wish success to all the programmes undertaken on this occasion.

Ekushey February and the New Bangladesh

Professor Mohammad Azam

1
The politico-cultural activities of at least five previous years had a role behind the historic incidents that took place in Dhaka on 21 February 1952. Detailed documents could be obtained about the participation of the country's regions in the central programme of 21 February. Undoubtedly, this movement could take place due to the large-scale activism and support of the mass-people of Bangladesh, especially the huge segment of middle-class citizens. Badruddin Umar has presented detailed background of this movement based on adequate information and data in his 3-volume book titled 'Language Movement and the then Politics'. Based on that, it can be said that the incidents of Ekushey (twenty-first) February were in fact a consolidated expression of the varied political spirits and realities of the people living in this land.

The language movement achieved swift results. The Bangla language became the key ingredient of political demands during the 1954 election. Bangla was recognized as the principal state language of Pakistan in the first constitution of that country. Later, the language movement was reborn in a new shape during the movement for autonomy. Bangla became the most important symbol during the cultural and political developments during the 1960s. Therefore, the constitutional recognition of Bangla as the state-language after the independence of Bangladesh was not a matter of fresh decision-making. This decision was inevitable as a continuation of the events that occurred during the previous two decades.

2

Many people are found to express concerns about the state of Bangla language in the month of February. This is not bad. This anxiety is necessary. The sorry state of Bangla language in Bangladesh cannot be visualised through the naked eye. It is also not comprehended through listening. This is because, the population overwhelmingly speaks a single language. As a result, Bangla is heard everywhere. But one cannot but become apprehensive when the terrible state of Bangla language is observed at aristocratic spots like the educational institutes, legal domain, offices and courts. As a consequence, those who become conscious about Bangla language at least in the month of February deserve commendation.

Usually, two types of concerns are heard nowadays on the question of Bangla language. First, the practice of 'correct' Bangla has gone down drastically; especially those who write in the social media appear to be less conscious about language. Second, people prefer to use English; they randomly mix English words even while speaking or writing in Bangla. I am proposing in this write-up that this particular concern is a 'fake' one. At least, it is not a practical concern.

The main reason for using the term 'fake' is because, our use of language is merely the result of many other activities. Consequently, if we speak about 'language-pollution' and 'language-mixing' without paying attention to those activities, and consider it as our duty, then there is no other option but to term it as 'fake'.

The language that one becomes habituated with depends on the linguistic medium that one uses in education. Initially, people learn language unconsciously, later it becomes part of their upbringing. It can be said that people start to consciously practice language by means of writing. When the medium of instruction is not Bangla, then it is foolhardy to expect that someone would become an expert in that written language. Besides, there is an established view in society that the Bangla language is good for nothing, especially with regard to higher education. In this situation, none should be blamed if he tries to learn English and attempts to speak in that language. Under these circumstances, mixing of languages would naturally occur – the linguists have shown this repeatedly based on facts and statistics. Therefore, the anxieties expressed by the genteel segment of our society about the two problems with regard to our language have been a natural outcome of a varying state of affair. If their concerns were genuine, then they would have spoken about the language of instruction, as well as the reality and result of language usage in various institutional tasks. As they do not do that, there is no option but to become worried about their worries.

Now the question is: Why do people express these impractical concerns? The first reason is ignorance. Languages undergo change, and the new forms gradually get absorbed in the standard language; but most people do not keep track of these. They consider the language that they got habituated with during their childhood as the eternal form of that language. Consequently, they become worried. This can be termed as a kind of ignorance. On the other hand, people consider mixing of language as bad from the standpoint that language has a 'pure' form, and mixing harms that purity. This concept of a pure language is also a superstition. In reality, no language is either pure or impure. Language entails mixing. As a result, mixing of languages is a natural outcome – like the languages themselves. English is getting more mixed with the Bangla language because of the specific language scenario in Bangladesh, which has been pointed out earlier. Concerns about the spoken language is both baseless and meaningless. This is applicable for all languages of the world – more in some and less in others. These are undoubtedly fake concerns. Now the question arises, what are the genuine concerns? This is related to the state itself, which in turn is linked to the relationship between the state and its citizens; it is related to the long-term plans for erecting the future of the people. The reason why practical discussions on the Bangla language of Bangladesh have not started yet is because, we could not yet raise the discussion to the level of state-building. Let me explain with an example. Whatever the reasons behind the intense emotion we feel in Bangladesh concerning English usage, its visible and prime logic is related to development. But with the exception of a few countries like Singapore, there are only scant examples where development could be attained by using a second language. The use of own language in education is not deterring their development; neither is it hindering their emigration on a large scale with dignity and honour. Whether English or any other language, the language needs to be learned in a systematic way. Therefore, why has this view become so popular that is not felt anywhere else?

Becoming concerned about this should in fact be the real worry about Bangla language. If a state is to be built, if the people are to be turned into human resources through education – then all citizens, instead of only those who have the money to learn English language, should be brought under its fold. The dialogue on Bangla language will start when education becomes the ultimate goal of life – not settling in foreign lands by sending children abroad. We would realize then that the issue of preserving language-purity and the discussion on language-mixing are not only mere foams at the upper layer, they are also entertainment-oriented funny dialogues.

3

The language of any nation-state faces a deep crisis when it does not get a place in the formal or foundational spaces of the state. These areas are of three categories: official use, legal use, and educational use. The use of Bangla in the aristocratic offices of Bangladesh is very limited; The use of Bangla in the elitist courts is so rare that if one writes a verdict in Bangla, then it becomes a publishable news. As for education, it can be said that even the solvent middle-class children do not study in Bangla language anymore. This last aspect is more disastrous; because, through this, a generation is being groomed who would not even consider using Bangla language in those two domains.

The status of Bangla in higher education is in fact an appropriate reflection of the state of Bangladesh. You may claim that Bangla exists in the realm of higher education in Bangladesh – at least partially. It can even be said by relying on available figures that a majority of children are pursuing education in Bangla medium. The medium of instruction implies the language spoken in classes, used in answer-sheets and text-books. In that respect, the language of engineering and medical education was never Bangla, similar to the private universities. In Dhaka University, one could use Bangla in examinations at most of the departments; that scope remains even now. But the reality is that, writing answer-sheets in Bangla is now being discouraged. As a result, Bangla faces a crisis of non-existence despite its presence. If this reality is not made clear or cleaner, no discussions would be fruitful.

This state of affair in higher education is playing a deterministic role in primary and secondary education as well. The students of Bangla medium cannot cope much with the efficiency and cultural requirements of university classes; this kind of logic in fact creates a justification for adopting English from beforehand. The upper middle-class and affluent segments of Bangladesh society used to study in English medium even earlier on. Almost two decades have elapsed since the launching of English version education by the government. Consequently, only those who cannot buy English medium study in Bangla medium.

The question is, how could this situation prevail for such a long time? And why do we feel that it serves our purpose? What I want to emphasize is that, such a country in the world is very rare that could develop through education in a foreign language. The only example may be India, but the linguistic scenario in India is quite different from that of Bangladesh. Those who allude to this comparison or example resort to an erroneous assessment. But India is usually cited during discussions on this topic in Bangladesh because other examples are not readily available. Therefore, although not being run in an efficient manner, why does this practice of English continue in Bangladesh? In straightforward language, the reason is – we are not really imparting genuine education.

But what does that imply? What does the dearth of education actually mean? Then what do we do in schools-colleges-universities? We actually supply skills in the name of education. We perform exactly those tasks that can be done through specific skills. The 20-year strategy paper of the University Grants Commission (UGC) speaks about this objective. But the medium of instruction was not considered in that strategy paper. This is because, they assumed that the medium of instruction was already English. And, supplying skilled labour to the international market has been mentioned as the principal objective of higher education in Bangladesh in that paper.

Therefore, the main reason why we feel that higher education is being run well here is because we are supplying trained workers to the international market; or we have at least considered it as the principal objective. However, the task is not being performed efficiently. Usually, our students have to be made qualified for entering the global market by obtaining another degree from the developed countries. And the higher educational institutions inside our country are grooming pupils mainly for our service sector. To simplify: the task is mainly that of selling commodities. Education through the English medium is considered fruitful due to these two factors – supplying workers for the service sector and the international market. It cannot be termed 'education'; it can at best be called 'instruction'.

It should be mentioned here that our state does not run on knowledge. Bangladesh lacks an education system that can generate knowledge for running the statecraft. We borrow all technologies for running the state from abroad. Consequently, we do not need to realize the reality that we lack 'education'. Another truth is that, a majority of our children belonging to the middle and upper classes feel that Bangladesh does not have any future. They, therefore, have to travel overseas. Consequently, English medium education helps them in advancing their cause.

Because of all these factors, it may appear to us that our English medium education is being run well. But we are actually learning 'medium' instead of 'education'. That is, English is being taught, but not any 'subject' by means of English. Therefore, work is progressing well overseas as well as in the service sector of the country. But in reality, this situation cannot be sustained. Our circumstances are changing, the financial condition is improving. But we need education. In fact, the skilled manpower required for running corporate offices is not being groomed by our education system.

If we need quality education, if we require knowledge-generating education, then we need such an education that will result in our system producing graduates who can manage the statecraft of Bangladesh effectively. In that case, we need to overhaul our education system. Many big changes will have to be brought about. The first in the sequence will probably be establishment of Bangla as the medium of instruction. For imparting education in Bangla, slow advances have to be made towards it in the light of present reality. That is because, I said before, Bangla is not really present in our education system. However, there is no possibility of getting acquiescence at the consumers' level if any revolutionary decision is taken. Social acceptance will have to be obtained through a gradual process. At the same time, the task of preparing Bangla for application in higher education should also continue in full gear.

Now, what initiatives should be taken? There is a strong presence of an entrenched superstition in our society – where Bangla and English are portrayed as rivals; removing this should be the principal priority. In fact, all of our able parents view this to be the case. It is a social fallacy, and dispelling this cannot be the job of an individual. An individual can hold any view, but the state is bound to respect that in a democratic manner. The state has to take effective measures for convincing people through practical initiatives by underscoring that two languages can function side by side in our working life. The reality has to be brought to the fore that people of the world learn second or third languages, which are applied for even creative or knowledge-oriented work. This should be the first task in the backdrop of the psychological reality prevalent in Bangladesh.

Secondly, the use of Bangla should be started right away in higher education without waiting a single day for preparation of text-books and vocabularies in Bangla. It should be particularly reminded that vocabulary or terminology is not an issue for Bangla or English. This realization is rare even among the academics. Actually, terminology is a matter to be addressed by relevant subjects or disciplines. And terminologies should be prepared by the practitioners of relevant disciplines based on their direct experiences as well as practices. Therefore, the work should commence right away without wasting any time for vocabulary or language, at least partially, as it is not possible to introduce the whole thing in Bangla overnight or all of a sudden.

By expanding through a gradual process, the situation will have to be brought to such a state when students of higher education in both private and public institutions are able to read, write, and answer examination questions in both Bangla and English. The students who are born outside the country and those who are not Bangalis or Bangladeshis can be kept outside this initiative. Higher education in Bangla and English should be compulsorily and effectively established for the children of Bangali parents who were born and brought up in Bangladesh, which should continue for a long time until we have the capacity to accept Bangla as the lone medium of education. Therefore, our goal for the moment should be the attainment of bilingual capacity by our children after receiving higher education.

We shall have to advance quite far in the third stage. If we really want to enter the realm of higher education, we shall have to deal with the research level, and that research has to be done in Bangla. Another thing should be reminded here: it is often said that people like Satyen Bose had practised science in Bangla. It is not true. What they did was presenting the flavour or essence of science in Bangla. It is only another kind of literature. Practicing science in one particular language and presenting the flavour of science are not the same thing. The practice of science in Bangla is truly academic sense has never happened. The scientists have occasionally publicised their own or other people's research among the public in simple language. We have mistakenly termed this as practice of science in Bangla. For real practice of science, use of Bangla in writing dissertations for higher degrees should be made compulsory. Writing of dissertations in Bangla alongside those in English should be ensured. This is possible only through sufficient financial allocations. If this is not done, then it is impossible to ensure the aristocracy and effectiveness of Bangla language. Through the weight of this aristocracy, the bogus discourses observed from the highest to the lowest echelons of education could be eliminated forever.

4

The people of Bangladesh from the upper to the lower classes are obsessed with an intense love for English because of their infatuation for 'development'. This is, however, the reality all over the world. But there is a basic difference between us and the countries whose education systems appear to be acceptable and who have truly achieved progress. In those countries, the infatuations of individuals, families, or parties do not become the driving force for national education policies or systems. The national language becomes the carriers of education there. The state also makes sufficient arrangements for the learning of second or third languages. The situation is opposite in our case. Here, arrangements are made for forgetting the first language simply for facilitating the learning of English. The students are learning second or third languages abundantly across the globe alongside receiving education in their first language. But we are sacrificing our education only to learn the English language.

It is in this context that the history of state-language movement has become a necessary excuse for us. That could materialise due to the all-pervasive cultural voyage emanating from Ekushey February. The whole month of February has become important because of this day; and its practicality has assumed a different shape over the past few decades centring on the holding of Ekushey Book Fair. The love for Ekushey in the collective mindset of middle-class people appear to have played a major role behind this popularity of the book fair. February has become the month of language in our public discourse as well as bookish language. This language is Bangla. Consequently, a culture and tradition has evolved for discussing about the Bangla language centring on Ekushey February in the larger domain of mass media. A culture of presenting theoretical cum applied discourses on building a 'democratic' and 'developed' Bangladesh has also been built over a long period centring on February.

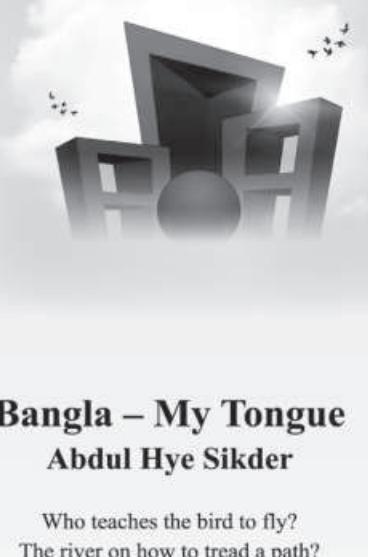
The first stage in building a democratic country is the use of people's language in all public domains including education. A huge segment of citizenry become victims of being viewed differently through the use of a language that has been learned by a few people. The culture that has been built for reviewing the language and the state in the month of February has generated huge opportunities for holding discussions on urgent issues of state-building.

The excuse of 21 February for introducing Bangla in all strata of society is not at all sufficient. But it is possible to advance the effective discourses for building a democratic and developed Bangladesh by utilising the culture of urgent and appropriate discussions centring on our language. That may be an essential step for the flourishing of our democracy and advancement. □

Writer : Director General of Bangla Academy

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed

21 February
International Mother Language Day


Bangla – My Tongue
Abdul Hye Sikder

Who teaches the bird to fly?
The river on how to tread a path?
The thorns of wood remain awake
For guarding the flowers!

Who taught the kitten
To find the milk?
Why do the birds sing forever
At daytime and nighty hours?
Why does the moon bloat and shrink?
The foams fall on the sea?
The pitcher of the blue hue
Tilts in a lake of the sky!

Procession of stars at night,
Light all around at daytime,
Whenever the sun shakes or frets
Colours change from white to black.

The path of good and bad
Are not always smooth –
The days are only made
By spilling the blood from heart.

Please call injustice an injustice
Tell oppression to go away
Please march in a procession
To bring smile to mother's face.
Light up the lamp of freedom
Grow the garden of flowers,
Giving up life for one's country
Can bring true contentment.

Who taught the embroidered quilt?
The display of gentle affection?
Who fills up the open field
With the song of human love?

Returning to this empty heart
Who has brought back hope?
The answer in one word –
Bangla – my tongue.

My tongue is Lalon Fakir
My tongue is river
My tongue is sorrow and mirth
The flow of life forever.
Harmony and affection
Fill my heart,
The world's conqueror –
My tongue – a sun-draped home.

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed



Upholding the legacy of Ekushey

We must do better in preserving our linguistic heritage

As we observe the 73rd anniversary of the historic Ekushey February, we humbly recall the sacrifices of the martyrs and all those who fought to secure Bangla in its rightful place. The Language Movement of 1952 catalysed the assertion of our national identity in what was then Pakistan and became a forerunner to subsequent movements—the emergence of self-rule consciousness in the 1954 provincial election, the student movement of 1962, and the 1969 uprising—all of which ultimately culminated in our glorious Liberation War of 1971. The supreme sacrifice of the Language Movement's martyrs became a symbol of inspiration for sustaining our self-consciousness and dignity as a nation.

However, despite commemorating Ekushey February for more than 70 years, the unfortunate reality remains that we have yet to fully examine or articulate its significance as a nation. The use of Bangla in all aspects of life is still not firmly established. Translation works from other languages into Bangla often remains subpar. Original writing in Bangla is largely confined to literature, while scientific and other scholarly works are frequently written in English instead of Bangla.

Despite historical research clearly demonstrating the importance of the mother tongue in ensuring national cohesion, Bangla is not being properly used in all aspects of life. In fact, one could argue that Bangla, as the official language of Bangladesh, has suffered neglect at all levels. Thus, it is high time we, as a nation, reflected deeply on the use of Bangla and restore it to its rightful place.

Although the High Court Division issued a ruling on February 17, 2014 mandating the use of Bangla at all levels, offices, and forums in the country—and despite the existence of the Bangla Language Implementation Act, 1987—Bangla continues to face serious neglect. Admittedly, this is not a matter that can be resolved solely by a judicial decree or an act of parliament. It must be internalised by all of us and ingrained in our collective psyche.

Let us reiterate in the strongest terms that this should not come at the expense of learning other languages. English, in particular, remains essential due to its international significance. However, our great forefathers, who were experts in Bangla, were also highly proficient in English. So why can't we follow in their footsteps?

Additionally, while Bangla remains the official language, Indigenous languages continue to be spoken in our country—albeit barely. There is hardly any initiative to preserve these languages, many of which are on the verge of being lost forever. Let's not forget that Ekushey was such a monumental event that it has been immortalised through global recognition as International Mother Language Day, of which today is the silver jubilee.

In its true spirit, we must ensure that Bangla and all other mother tongues spoken across this country receive the respect they deserve.

Restore trust in electoral system

Those who abetted election rigging should be held accountable

We welcome the government's decision to take disciplinary action against officials involved in election rigging during the ousted Awami League (AL) regime. According to a report in this daily, 45 former deputy commissioners, now serving as joint secretaries, have been made officers on special duty (OSD) for election manipulation. Meanwhile, 22 former DCs and a joint secretary have been sent into compulsory retirement for their role in the 2014 and 2018 elections. Additionally, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will likely be requested to open investigations against around 50 more former DCs.

The unethical collaboration of government employees in election engineering is not only a breach of their service terms—their pledge to serve the nation, not the ruling party—but also a violation that, during the controversial national elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024, stripped citizens of their voting and democratic rights. The manipulation of these elections helped sow the seeds of fascism in the country, as it deprived citizens of their ability to hold the government accountable in any meaningful way.

For over a decade, Bangladeshis were unable to freely exercise their voting rights to elect representatives who would formulate policies in their best interests. Instead, election rigging rendered people powerless, allowing AL to gradually take complete control of all governance mechanisms—leaving no meaningful opposition even in parliament. As a result, more businessmen-turned-politicians became policymakers, and making self-serving decisions at the expense of national interests became a regular occurrence. Corruption became the norm, while transparency and accountability at every level of governance were eroded, further entrenching authoritarianism. This would not have been possible if national elections had been free and fair; even local elections were not spared from such manipulation.

While some bureaucrats may have been pressured to collaborate with AL in election rigging, many benefited from it. All those involved must be identified, and a thorough investigation should be conducted to determine the extent of their complicity, with penalties imposed accordingly. However, the entire process—from identifying those responsible to delivering justice—must be transparent and adhere to due process.

We also urge the government to implement the Election Reform Commission's recommendations to establish checks and balances that will prevent future election manipulation. No political government should ever again have the power or means to deprive people of their voting rights.

EDITORIAL

A new reality for free media

We must learn from the past



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is the editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

Before, when we spoke the truth, we were countered by the state and its agencies. Now, when we speak the truth, we are countered not by the state, but by lies, accusations without any proof, and tagging on the basis of hate narratives. Outrageous accusations are being made against legacy media without any evidence. In rare cases, when examples are cited, they are either false, taken out of context, distorted, or twisted to suit a predetermined goal. Thus, the media today is facing a new challenge in the post-truth era with an audience that is not used to such falsehood, half-truths and distortions, and as such is being victimised and misled.

I am heartened by a recent comment by the chief adviser's press secretary, Shafiqul Alam, for his emphatic assertion of the need for a free media for a country's advancement. He also stressed the necessity to examine the media's role in distorting objective journalism and upholding the fascistic policy and governance structure of the past regime. He repeatedly stressed that power must always be held to account, and invited all media outlets to scrutinise his own government's performance in the spirit of total independence and professionalism.

We would like to commend him for his stance and focus on two aspects of his remarks: the need to examine our past, and to chalk out a path for the media's unfettered and independent future journey.

As for the past, it is true that most newspapers did not challenge the dictatorial regime of Sheikh Hasina during her rule of over 15 years. They either vigorously supported it or hid the truth, deflected issues that deserved criticism, or distorted facts so that the public wouldn't feel negative about the regime.

There were a few of us who defied all threats—both public and undercover—and carried on speaking truth to power. In the case of this newspaper, the antagonism burst into fury when we invited Prof Muhammad Yunus as chief guest at our 25th anniversary celebration in 2016. In the presence of thousands of invited guests, including 22 editors from South and Southeast Asia, a drama was enacted by several Awami League (AL) ministers who publicly staged a walkout, shouting condemnatory remarks, accusing this writer of having insulted them when Prof Yunus appeared on the stage to deliver the keynote speech. This newspaper was accused of "launching" (whatever that meant) Prof Yunus and giving him a huge national and

international platform to work against the Hasina government. (Given her venomous remarks, relentless personal attacks, and fictitious cases against Yunus ever since, one can understand her fury against this newspaper and its editor.) From then on, we were her declared "enemy," and she treated us as such. The avalanche of cases started within hours of that event using my remark on a TV show as a pretext.

This newspaper's editor was charged in 84 cases, 16 of which were for sedition. Several times on the floor of parliament, the former prime minister termed *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo* "anti-state," "anti-Awami League," and

conferences or any of her functions. We were never allowed to cover her foreign trips or ask her questions as the head of the government. Over time, all her ministers, save one or two, started to avoid us, not allowing our reporters to talk to them and speaking against us whenever the occasion permitted. And all this while some 40 national and international businesses were asked not to give us any advertisement, abruptly reducing our revenue by 40 percent. This continued till the July uprising last year.

We are proud to say that *The Daily Star* never buckled, thanks to our staff, our board of directors, and the leadership.

The CA's press secretary also laid emphasis on examining not only the past, but also how media covered the events of July-August 2024, now popularly called the Monsoon Revolution. We welcome this decision and thank him for his praise that some media, in spite of severe threats, published prominently the number of students and general people being killed daily.

140 journalists have been accused of murder and cases have been filed against them on the basis of their reporting of the student-led mass uprising. Twenty eight journalists have been charged with crime against humanity. We strongly feel that the interim government's treatment of journalists has been sweeping, denigrating, and devoid of the sensitivity that this profession deserves. At this moment, we have the highest number of "murder-accused" journalists in the world. In this situation, how likely is it that the world will believe this government is handling the media fairly? Whatever criticism that this government has so far received from world bodies—Human Rights Watch (HRW), Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Reporters without Borders (RSF)—has mostly been for the way journalists are being treated.

It has been several months since the cases against journalists were filed. We know of no progress in terms of verification of the accusations. An eight member committee by the



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

"anti-people." Many AL MPs castigated this newspaper in parliament, accusing us of "indulging" in all sorts of "conspiracies." Even some non-AL MPs joined the castigation, demanding the closure of this newspaper and jailing of its editor. On one occasion, the former prime minister spoke for 21 minutes in parliament denigrating this newspaper's editor, casting doubt on his role as a freedom fighter and raising all sorts of false questions against him. A few years later, during the opening of the Padma Bridge, she falsely accused this writer of travelling to the US and meeting high-level State Department officials and the World Bank president to lobby for the cancellation of the WB loan, as part of Prof Yunus's alleged "efforts" (totally false) to scuttle the Padma Bridge project. For nearly 15 years, we were never allowed to attend the former prime minister's press

We also need to examine the politicisation of journalist unions. A special focus should be given on the role of the owners of media houses who used their outlets to eulogise the Hasina government for business purposes, get illegal bank loans, get lucrative contracts, retain untaxed profits, and indulge in money laundering. When directed by the owners, working journalists did not have much of a choice. We think the editors should have tried to prevent that—and failing that, they should have resigned.

Against all the laudable things that are being said about the freedom of media and the present opportunity to engage in independent journalism, we are sad to say that some very disturbing signs can still be seen that are posing a new set of threats against free press.

As of November 2024, as many as

interim government was formed to monitor harassment cases against journalists on October 27. No progress on this account has been reported till now. All this, while the accused journalists are unable to do their regular jobs, take care of their families, and in some cases pay for their children's education. They are also suffering from social humiliation and leading a life of constant fear, lest they be arrested. For any criminal or unethical action, a journalist must face the law as any other citizen. But everyone must be guaranteed the due process under the law, which is their constitutional right.

We appeal to the interim government, given all their professed commitment to free and independent media, to take an immediate look into the cases against journalists and bring them to an accepted legal standard.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Technology can play a crucial role in language preservation

Mathura Bikash Tripura
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Dr Susan Vize
is head of office and UNESCO representative to Bangladesh.

MATHURA BIKASHTRIPURA AND SUSAN VIZE

After championing International Mother Language Day to become recognised by the United Nations 25 years ago, Bangladesh became known globally as a land of many languages. The foundation of this movement was the demand for official recognition of mother tongues, including Bangla. This 25th jubilee year reaffirms the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism in fostering dignity, peace, and understanding.

Currently, Bangladesh officially recognises 50 Indigenous communities, each with its own linguistic heritage, collectively speaking approximately 41 native languages. These languages belong to four distinct language families. According to the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), a Category II institute of UNESCO, around 15 languages in Bangladesh face the

threat of extinction. Among them, Rengmitcha language is notable—only seven people currently speak this language. International Mother Language Day is an opportunity for us to reflect on and propose actions to address situations such as this.

Evidence suggests that mother tongue education supports cognitive development, improves communication skills, and improves educational performance. According to *Chakma Jati (Jatiya Chitra O Itibritta)* by Satish Chandra Gosh, education in the Chakma and Marma languages was introduced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in 1862, but was later discontinued. Despite several attempts over the years to revive language education programmes, they have all been short-lived.

The 1997 CHT Peace Accord reaffirmed the right of Indigenous children to receive education in their mother tongue. In 2012, the government took steps to introduce Indigenous language education under the National Education Policy. Since 2017, learning materials in Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo, and Sadri languages have been introduced at the primary level. However, the initiative has faced serious roadblocks due to lack of trained teachers,

inadequate evaluation of teaching materials, budget constraints, a shortage of language-based teachers, and the inactivity of committees formed to implement education in Indigenous communities. As a result, the programme has not progressed as expected.

It is crucial to take effective measures for the revival, development, and preservation of Indigenous languages. This includes effective implementation of primary education programmes in Indigenous languages, formulation of a national language policy, introduction of departments or institutes on Indigenous language and culture in universities, promotion of mother tongue practice among the youth, initiatives for language development through information technology, and establishment of Indigenous language cells in government institutions such as Bangla Academy, IMLI, and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

The use of technology is one way that we can work to support these efforts. This year's theme for International Mother Language Day makes it an important time to consider how to tackle the issues above using technology. A cheaper and more accessible way to provide language instruction could be using internet-based language modules. These are already in widespread use on commercial platforms.

Artificial intelligence is at the forefront of many current discussions on education, and is a tool that could be utilised to address barriers such as teacher shortage. More sophisticated tech solutions, including development of content in Indigenous languages, have also been proposed. But as we lack content in these languages, these are not quite within our grasp.

Technology also offers many opportunities for documentation and preservation. As several of Bangladesh's Indigenous languages are critically endangered, ensuring that we act now is important. Collecting recordings and partnering with tech companies that can provide tools to develop orthographies and transcribe these into written content could help preserve these languages.

No language should be allowed to become extinct. Language is central to our identity and part of our culture, and therefore central to social and emotional well-being. To preserve endangered languages, long term planning and collective efforts are essential. When a language dies, we lose invaluable treasures of its environment, culture, and history.

The uneven scale of reproductive responsibility



Mahiya Tabassum
is a member of the editorial team
at The Daily Star.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

In a society where access to basic menstrual health products is still a contentious issue, the recent controversy surrounding the shutdown of booths selling sanitary napkins at Amar Ekushey Boi Mela—following “complaints from religious groups”—highlights a deep-rooted stigma around menstruation in Bangladesh. Despite progress in gender rights, menstrual hygiene remains a hushed topic in the country, often confined to whispers within households. It would be quite rational to say that the recent incident is not isolated, but is part of a larger pattern perpetuating human rights concerns for women and girls across the country.

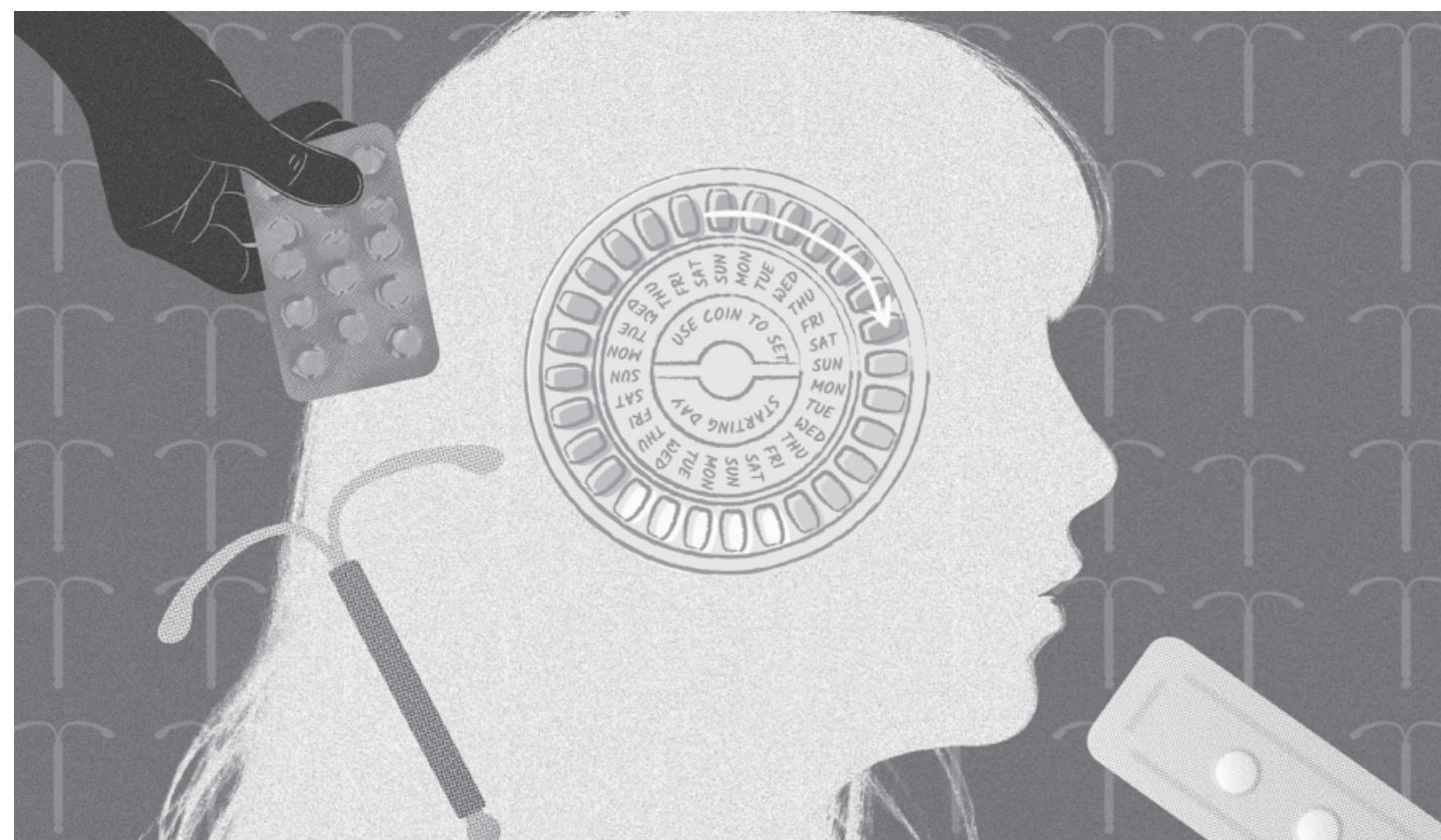
This stigma extends beyond cultural taboos, intertwining with economic disparities and gender-based discrimination. The silence around menstruation reinforces an uneven scale of reproductive responsibility, where women are expected to manage their periods discreetly while bearing the responsibility of family planning, along with the weight of societal judgement.

When Aasha (not real name) told her husband she was considering his sterilisation, his response crystallised a reality faced by millions of women across Bangladesh. “I don’t want to end the option of having a child again, it could have adverse health effects too,” he said, effectively placing the entire burden of contraception on his wife’s shoulders.

Aasha was devastated. The couple had decided beforehand that they didn’t want any more children and had been using modern methods to avoid pregnancy. But it was not a foolproof method; condoms for example, have a relatively high failure rate—about 14-15 percent. And when she conceived—twice—she took over-the-counter abortion pills the first time. The second time, she had to undergo a clinical procedure for abortion performed in legally dubious circumstances.

“Had heavy bleeding, my head would spin, I had blackouts, and I was listless and tired all the time. So, I told him that sterilisation would be better than taking these blighted pills or using condoms,” the 27-year-old, a mother of two, told this writer over the phone from her home on the outskirts of Pirojpur district, in the southwestern region of Bangladesh.

Aasha’s story is not unique. It reflects a broader pattern in the country where,



While women have access to a wide array of contraceptive options, men’s options have remained unchanged since the 1960s.

VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

despite six decades of scientific advancement in contraception, women continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for family planning.

A recent review of 10 years of Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics from 2014 to 2023, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), reveals that the use of birth control methods decreased in 2023, the lowest since 2015, and stands at 62.1 percent. The 2023 report only provides the results; it does not clarify why and where the use of contraception has fallen. Moreover, it also reveals a troubling scenario: while modern contraceptive use among women has fallen to what it was eight years ago, the gender disparity in contraceptive responsibility remains stark.

The numbers tell a clear story. In 2023, oral contraceptive pills remained the most common choice, used by 35.5 percent of

privatisation of contraceptive access. According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2022, 60 percent of modern contraceptive users now rely on the private sector—a significant increase from 42 percent in 2011. This shift has created a two-tier system where access to family planning increasingly depends on economic status. The commercialisation of contraception has made it a privilege rather than a right, disproportionately affecting women in rural and economically disadvantaged communities.

The recent decline in the use of contraception signals a systemic failure that extends beyond individual choice. There remains a critical lack of government attention to population control programmes. Despite adequate funding, shortages of contraceptives have become commonplace. The consequences are severe:

death rates from abortion complications have more than doubled, from six percent in 2016 to 14 percent in 2024.

The urban-rural divide further compounds these issues as the disparity in modern contraceptive use reflects broader inequalities in healthcare access and highlights the failure of current distribution systems to reach remote areas effectively. The government’s inability to

not just a technological gap, but a persistent societal assumption that family planning is primarily a woman’s responsibility. As US biologist Gregory Pincus predicted in 1964, the development of male contraceptives would have to overcome “the attitude of men”—a prophecy that remains relevant even now.

The knowledge gap between genders is equally troubling. A 2020 survey by BBS found that only 29 percent of men had knowledge about family planning methods, compared to 61 percent of women in Bangladesh. More concerning still, only 12 percent of men believed they should be responsible for family planning, while 69 percent of women recognised it as a shared responsibility. This disparity in awareness and accountability perpetuates a cycle where women’s reproductive autonomy is compromised by men’s disengagement.

Recent developments in male contraception, including the clinical trial of YCT-529 in the UK and the promising NES/T hormonal gel in the US, suggest that new options for men might finally become available within the next decade. However, these advancements will mean little without corresponding shifts in cultural attitudes and healthcare policies in least-developed countries like Bangladesh.

The solution requires a comprehensive overhaul of current approaches. First, there must be increased education and awareness campaigns specifically targeting men about their role in family planning. Second, healthcare policies need to ensure consistent availability and affordability of contraception options. The recent shortages of pills and injectable methods at the field level demonstrate the devastating impact of supply chain failures. Third, there needs to be a reversal of the privatisation trend in contraception access, ensuring that family planning remains a public health priority.

A 2020 survey by BBS found that only 29 percent of men had knowledge about family planning methods, compared to 61 percent of women in Bangladesh. More concerning still, only 12 percent of men believed they should be responsible for family planning, while 69 percent of women recognised it as a shared responsibility.

deliver contraceptives to char areas, haors, and other remote locations has created geographical barriers to reproductive healthcare.

The global context adds another layer to this discussion. While women have access to a wide array of contraceptive options—from daily pills to long-term implants and IUDs—men’s options have remained unchanged since the 1960s: condoms or vasectomy. These limited choices indicate

rather than a commercial opportunity. Finally, there must be a fundamental shift in societal attitude about reproductive responsibility.

The burden of birth control shouldn’t rest solely on women’s shoulders. Until our male counterparts recognise family planning as a shared responsibility, and until healthcare systems and societies support this view, women will continue to bear both the physical and emotional costs of contraception.

Analysing Trump’s territorial ambitions in Gaza, Ukraine, and Greenland



Dr Sayeed Ahmed
is a consulting engineer and the CEO
of Bayside Analytix, a technology-
focused strategy and management
consulting organisation.

SAYEED AHMED

President Donald Trump is smart. He wants to pull off economic, strategic, and political interests on three seemingly unrelated fronts—Gaza, Ukraine, and Greenland (GUG)—all at once. While these territories may appear disparate, a closer examination reveals common threads that suggest a broader US worldview, which Trump and its dominant elites represent, driven by strategic, military, and political goals. Unlike his predecessor, Trump has shown an inclination to avoid direct military conflicts while seeking to profit from both war-like situations and times of peace.

One of the most striking commonalities among Trump’s GUG targets is the prospect of economic and strategic gains, particularly through access to valuable natural resources, such as rare earth elements (REE). These critical minerals are used in almost every piece of advanced technology: semiconductors, mobile phones, computers, tablets, computer screens, hard drives, batteries, wind turbines, fuel cells, MRI machines, X-ray machines, missiles, and fighter jets. The list is endless. REEs are essential for today’s economy; without them, the world would come to a grinding stop.

China became the dominant global producer of REEs in the 1980s after the US industry declined due to stricter regulations. It strategically invested in REE technology and production, becoming the leading nation in controlling intellectual property rights and processing facilities. Consequently, all existing REE mines outside China, save for a few exceptions, export raw materials to China

for processing and value addition. Beijing thus has a chokehold over Washington, which Trump wants to break, for which securing alternative REE sources is essential.

It’s no wonder that Greenland’s enormous deposits of REEs are on all big players’ radars, especially Washington’s. Securing Greenland’s REE mines could give the US a strategic advantage in the highly competitive race for these critical raw materials. This is all the more critical for Washington because some Greenlandic politicians consider Chinese investments an opportunity for job creation, economic development, and for

even a stepping stone to independence from Denmark.

Trump left European leaders scratching their heads by making a dramatic shift in US strategy as he poured cold water on Kyiv’s wishes to join NATO and agreed to negotiate a settlement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war.

Trump’s Greenland bid is also about strengthening a strategic military base. The existing US Pitmeek Space Base—previously known as Thule Air Base until early 2023—is vital for US military operations in the Arctic, and expanding US influence there would help counteract Russian ambitions. With its



President Donald Trump’s proposed plan involves scooping up \$500 billion worth of REEs from Ukraine for the US in exchange for brokering a peace deal between Ukraine and Russia.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

melting ice caps and emerging trade routes, the Arctic presents a new frontier for military and economic interests, making Greenland a valuable asset for Washington in countering China and Russia.

As for Gaza, the eastern Mediterranean region has become the focus of exploration for natural gas deposits—resources that hold significant economic promise for Israel and US interests in energy security. Ensuring access to these resources amid geopolitical tensions may be pivotal to Washington’s strategic calculations.

Gaza will also fit nicely into Washington’s expanding military network, offering a secure base to help bolster its strategic influence across the Middle East. This will give Washington greater oversight over a volatile area, allowing it to counter hostile regional

powers and receive crucial military support from a well-supplied base.

The Gaza plan may also be a mere negotiating tactic. Still, it has strengthened the ultra-nationalist Jewish supporters of both Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, strengthening their positions in the respective domestic fronts.

However, it must be noted that Trump’s Gaza rhetoric has raised legal, moral, ethical, and political questions. History shows that plans to take over hostile territories backfired and ended up in catastrophic consequences, as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it will enhance Trump’s stature as a dealmaker among his supporters.

Like Greenland, Ukraine is also rich in REEs, with 22 of 34 rare earth deposits. Trump’s proposed plan involves scooping up

\$500 billion worth of these REEs in exchange for brokering a peace deal, highlighting a transactional view of foreign policy, where US interests dominate negotiations. Besides, Ukraine plays a crucial role in the global energy landscape as a key transit country for natural gas from Russia to Europe. Control over Ukraine translates into substantial economic leverage in European energy markets. Trump left European leaders scratching their heads by making a dramatic shift in US strategy as he poured cold water on Kyiv’s wishes to join NATO and agreed to negotiate a settlement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war.

Nonetheless, Washington will remain an important geopolitical player in this crucial region. Ukraine is edging towards becoming the ground for another “forever war” draining billions of dollars from Washington’s coffers, which the real estate tycoon will hate to see. His business instincts followed a path of promptly ending it and securing the best possible deal, which, in this case, involved his aforementioned claim on Ukraine’s REEs. This would nicely supplement Greenlandic supplies to break free from Beijing’s chokehold. The deal will also ensure Washington’s continued influence over Kyiv, which has been the plan since the 1998 book The Grand Chessboard by President Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Even a partial success of Trump’s GUG bid would highlight his domestic and international standing. By proposing territorial takeovers or enhanced US involvement, Trump positioned himself as a decisive US leader with a global vision, however flawed, capable of navigating complex geopolitical landscapes. Crafting a narrative of US intervention as a stabilising force could redirect public attention from domestic issues to the international arena, reinforcing a nationalistic agenda that will resonate with many voters. How far will Trump go to achieve his ambitions?

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CT debutants Afghanistan ready to go all in

SPORTS DESK

Afghanistan will make their Champions Trophy debut today at when the Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side lock horns with South Africa in their first match of the mega event at the newly renovated National Stadium in Karachi.

Tembu Bavuma's South Africa has the requisite quality with the bat and the ball to make a deep impact in the tournament, even if their patchy recent form suggests otherwise.

It's been 27 years since South Africa lifted an ICC Men's senior white-ball Trophy and 1998 was the year of the inaugural ICC Men's Champions Trophy, and it was also the only time that South Africa claimed a senior ICC Men's silverware.

So, they will be looking for a good start in the tournament but Afghanistan, the breakout team of the last two ICC World Cups – both ODI in 2023 and T20 in 2024 – will be looking to spring a few surprises in this tournament as well.

Afghanistan have emerged as one of the fastest-growing cricketing nations, consistently challenging top teams and producing world-class talents. While their dominance in T20 cricket is well-established, the this Champions Trophy presents an opportunity to showcase their strength in the 50-over format.

They impressed in the 2023 ODI World Cup, finishing sixth with the same points as Pakistan, and reached the



The two teams have met five times in ODIs and the head-to-head record is 3-2 in South Africa's favor.

semi-finals of the 2024 T20 World Cup, defeating top-tier teams along the way. Their squad is packed with match-winners who have gained valuable experience playing in international leagues and ICC events.

Notably, Afghanistan scripted history last year by scripting their maiden ODI series win over the Proteas, by 2-1 margin.

"We have recently beaten South Africa in Sharjah so we have that confidence with us and we are not under any pressure," said Afghanistan skipper Shahidi.

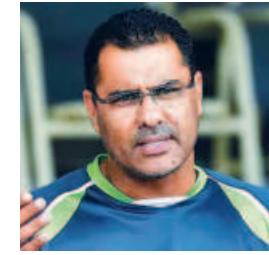
Afghanistan skipper also vowed his team wants to win the Trophy.

"We are doing very good so we are here to win the final and not just to participate. We are definitely hundred per cent looking to win this event."



"When he (Babar Azam) plays well, there's no better sight, simple as that. But if you are going to take 90 balls to make 60 then you are going to lose more games."

Former Pakistan captain **Waqar Younis** said following Pakistan's 60-run defeat to New Zealand in Champions Trophy opener on Wednesday.



Without cramps, could've scored 20-30 more: Hridoy

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Dubai

Despite scoring a fighting hundred, Towhid Hridoy shouldered the blame for Bangladesh's failure to post a more challenging target for India in their ICC Champions Trophy Group A match in Dubai yesterday, as the batter said that getting cramped up during the last stretch of his innings shaved a few runs off the total.

"Alhamdulillah, I'm fine now. I think my cramping was the bigger issue [than Jaker Ali's dismissal]. If I had been fine, I feel I could have scored 20-30 runs more for the team," Hridoy told reporters after the match in Dubai yesterday.

After being reduced to 35-5 only in the ninth over, Hridoy along with Jaker put up a record 154-run stand off 206 balls for the sixth wicket to trigger a comeback.

The partnership was finally broken when



A familiar script of face-saving heroics

ASHFAQ-UL ALAM

After getting dismissed as the last Bangladesh batter in their ICC Champions Trophy opener against India in Dubai yesterday, centurion Towhid Hridoy limped back to the dressing room, with shoulders slumped and a pained expression etched across his face – a wounded soldier who knew his resilience and determination were not enough to lift Bangladesh out of trouble.

Hridoy came to the crease when Bangladesh were three down for 26 inside seven overs after opting to bat first and, almost in the blink of an eye, lost two partners.

With half the side already gone and 41.3 overs still left in the innings, Hridoy and Jaker Ali did the sensible things – closed shop, took runs when they could, and, most importantly, did not lose their wickets.

And the duo, to their credit, rescued the side from catastrophe with a 154-run stand – their highest-ever partnership against India in ODIs for any wicket and the all-time best sixth-wicket stand in Champions Trophy, surpassing 131 runs by South Africa's Justin Kemp and Mark Boucher registered against

Pakistan in Mohali in 2006.

But then Jaker got dismissed for 68 off 114 balls, deceived by a cutter from Mohammad Shami. To make matters worse, Hridoy started cramping up a few overs later.

What followed were a few minor contributions from the tail enders and Hridoy fighting through the pain to take Bangladesh's innings to the final over, completing his maiden ODI ton in the process. Despite Hridoy's heroics and Jaker's assistance, the Tigers could only put up a paltry 228 on the board, which, against a heavyweight Indian team, seemed insufficient.

While Hridoy is sure to garner a lot of deserved praise for his innings, what also is worth mentioning is that a knock of such skill and determination usually makes no difference to the team's fate.

The script is all too familiar for Bangladesh in ICC events. The Tigers look completely down and out after losing wickets in clusters at the top, leaving it to a few defiant middle-order batters to salvage respectability.

Yet, despite their fight, the deficit remains too large to overturn. In the last ODI World Cup in 2023,

for example, Bangladesh experienced similar collapses in five matches: 49-4 against England, 56-4 against New Zealand, 81-6 against South Africa, 70-6 against Netherlands, and 23-3 against Pakistan.

Of these matches, the Tigers crossed the 200-run barrier four times, only failing to do so against Netherlands, and finished on the losing end on all five occasions.

Bangladesh's most famous victory in the Champions Trophy, the five-wicket win over New Zealand in Cardiff back in 2017, also came after a top order collapse, as they were 33-4 before Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan struck centuries and strung together a record stand to take them over the line.

Neither was on the field yesterday. Mahmudullah was out injured, while Shakib was not picked for the tournament. In their absence, Hridoy and Jaker stepped up, fought bravely, and put forth a commendable effort.

But, with a sub-par total against an intimidating batting force, another chapter in Bangladesh's growing anthology of valiant yet fruitless battles was in the making, which ended in a six-wicket defeat.

Rana omission turns heads in Dubai

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Dubai

The pre-match hype around Bangladesh's speedster Nahid Rana proved to be for naught as the pacer did not get picked for their opening Group A match of the ongoing ICC Champions Trophy against India in Dubai yesterday, a decision that raised quite a few eyebrows.

Out of the four Bangladesh squad members who got benched against India, Parvez Hossain Emon wasn't a surprise as he has been brought in as a back-up opener and Mahmudullah's was a forced omission as the all-rounder, who has hit half-centuries in his last four ODI innings, is still recuperating from a calf muscle injury he sustained during Bangladesh's first training session in Dubai.

But Rana, Bangladesh's lone pacer who can hit 150kmph, not making the cut as the management chose to go with the three-pronged attack of – Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman and Tanzim Hasan Sakib instead, surprised many.

In the pre-match press meet too, Indian journalists brought up Rana a few times to Shanto, who also showered praises on the youngster, which led to the common belief that the Tigers would pick him in the opener.

Former Bangladesh skipper and current ICC development manager Aminul Islam Bulbul, who arrived in Dubai from Muscat a day before the contest, was among the many who were perplexed by Rana's omission but was even more shocked that left-arm spinner

Nasum Ahmed had been left out. As India were playing with six right-handed batters, Aminul insisted that the Tigers might have missed a trick by not bringing in Nasum in their playing XI, who has done well in similar conditions in the past.



Nasum has previously played two ODIs in the UAE, both at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium against Afghanistan, where he picked up three wickets at an economy rate of 2.81. "Nahid's omission was really surprising. But I was more shocked not to see Nasum in the playing XI. As India have so many right-handers, the team management should have picked Nasum in the contest," Aminul told The Daily Star.



56 hockey players sans Jimmy turn up for fitness tests

SPORTS REPORTER

As many as 56 players turned up to the fitness tests yesterday at the National Stadium ahead of Bangladesh national hockey team's preparation camp for April's AHF Cup in Indonesia.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation called up a total of 63 players bar experienced campaigner Rasel Mahmud Jimmy for the cooper test and among those that turned up, three failed the fitness test which was conducted by head coach Mamun Ur Rashid at the National Stadium in Paltan in the early morning.

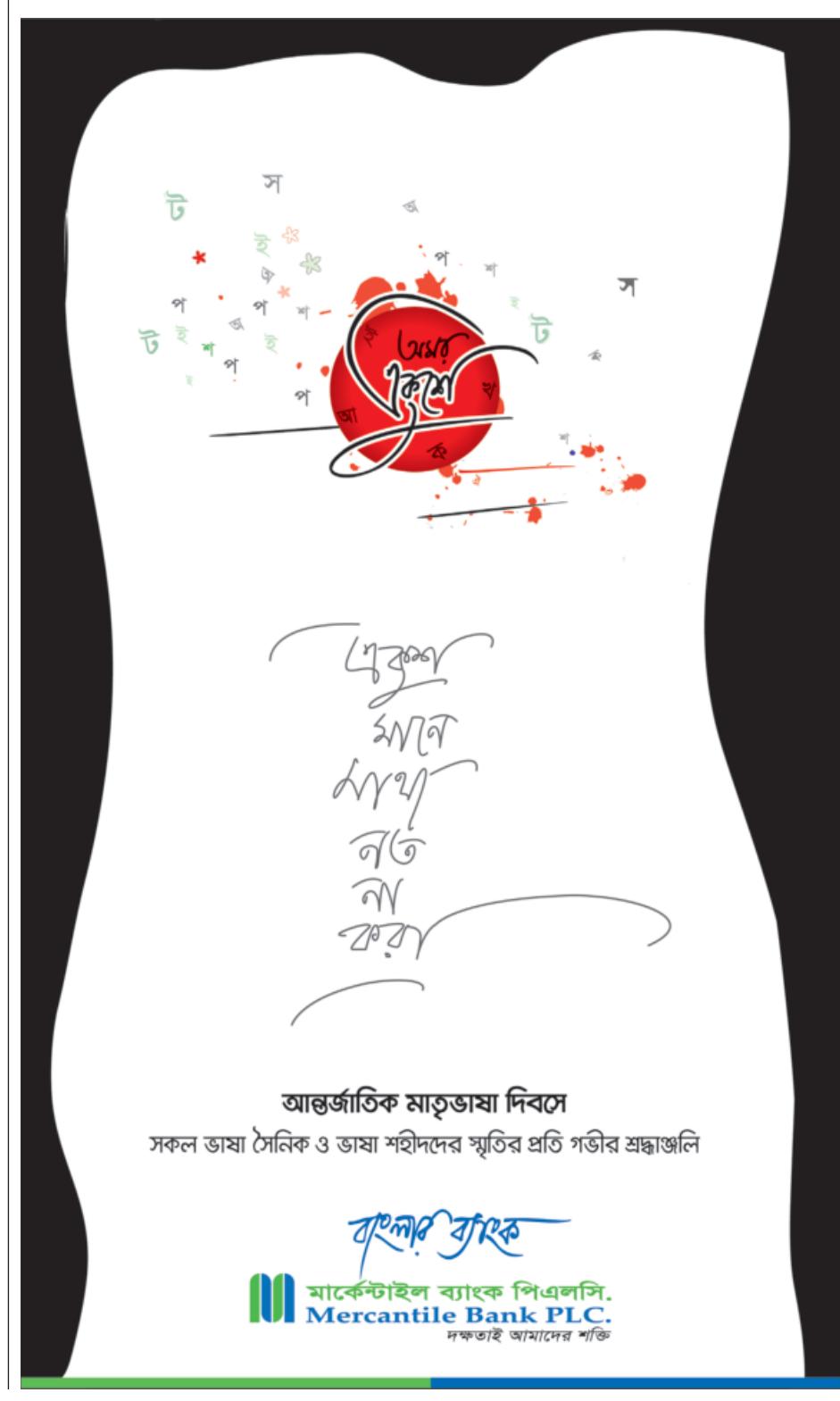
"Of 63 players, seven players including national players Shafiqul Alam Shishir and three U-21 national team's players – Azizur Rahman and Asaduzzaman Chand and Saddam Khan did not turn up for different reasons while only three out of 56 players failed to prove their fitness but they have still been kept in the squad," Mamun Ur Rashid told The Daily Star yesterday.

Mamun also informed that Jimmy was not called up for the fitness training.

The players who turned up to the cooper test, were divided into four groups to play two practice matches at Maulana Bhasan National Stadium and four more matches will be held today before 42 players are selected for the preliminary squad, the former national team player informed.

"After four trial matches which are to be played tomorrow [Friday], we will select 42 players who will report to the team management on February 24 as the training will get underway the next day," said the head coach.

The AHF Cup is scheduled to take place in Jakarta, Indonesia from April 17 to 25.



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AFP, Madrid

Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick against Manchester City propelled Real Madrid into the Champions League last 16 on Wednesday and him to a new personal high with Los Blancos.

This was the kind of night the French superstar dreamed of, both as a boy in his bedroom surrounded by Cristiano Ronaldo posters and in his past few seasons at PSG.

As PSG came up short year after year in Europe, Mbappe watched on as Madrid

extended their power over the European game, reaching a record 15 European Cup triumphs.

With Madrid's poor start to the current campaign -- in part due to Mbappe's teeth problems -- leaving the Spanish and European champions in the play-off round against City, they needed the forward to deliver.

With three lethal finishes, he did just that to help Carlo Ancelotti's rampant Madrid seal a 3-1 win on the night and a 6-3 aggregate triumph.

"This is the type of game we want to play,"

said Mbappe.

"People told me about these nights and now I can see it with my own eyes and I want to live through many more of them."

Following a rather slow start in Spain, Mbappe pledged to show his character. And he has done just that, with his best performance in a Madrid shirt coming at the adoring Santiago Bernabeu against City.

"I knew that I couldn't have done worse than I was doing," Mbappe told Movistar after his stunning treble against City.

"I had to play with personality, my adaptation time was over and I have to show my quality."

Mbappe said signing for Madrid to accomplish his long-term goal was not enough.

"Making my dream come true is one thing, but I want to play well here, mark an era and write history at Real Madrid," he explained.

Mbappe has 28 goals for Real Madrid in 38 games and the form he is in has opened up comparisons to the club's all-time greats, even though he is just at the start of his trajectory with Los Blancos.

"He has the quality to reach the level of Cristiano (at Madrid)," Ancelotti told reporters.

"He has to work because Cristiano set the bar very high, (Mbappe) has just started at this club."



Kylian Mbappe has netted seven goals for Real Madrid in the Champions League this season -- the joint-most by a player in their first campaign for the club in the European Cup/Champions League, along with Cristiano Ronaldo (7 in 2009-10) and Justo Tejada (7 in 1961-62).

Real Madrid are unbeaten in each of their last nine matches in the knockout stages of the UEFA Champions League (W5 D4), equalling their longest such run in the competition (between April 2016 and May 2017).

For the first time in his managerial career, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has seen his side eliminated from the UEFA Champions League prior to the round of 16.

"For the quality he has, and the excitement he has to play here, he can reach Ronaldo's level but it won't be easy for him, he has to work."

Portuguese veteran Ronaldo scored 450 goals in 438 games for Madrid. Mbappe is far away from that, but if he can keep on replicating what he did at the Bernabeu on Wednesday, the French superstar can indeed reach the same level. After all, this is just the beginning for Mbappe at Madrid.

He has the quality to reach the level of Cristiano (at Madrid).

Real Madrid coach CARLO ANCELOTTI on Kylian Mbappe



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থাকাবে চিরনবীন
বিশ্ব ইতিহাসে
আমরা পরিচয় দিবো
মাথা উঁচু করো

মহান শহীদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবসে
ভাষাসৈনিকদের জানাই বিনোদ শুন্ধা

ইসলামী ব্যাংক



আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস

সকল ভাষা শহীদের প্রতি
আমাদের বিনোদ শুন্ধা ও ভালোবাসা।



শাহজালাল ইসলামী ব্যাংক সিলসি।

আন্তর্জাতিক সেবার প্রতিবন্ধিত্বে

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South Africa
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Footballers Sabina Khatun and Maria Manda pose with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, who presented the Ekushey Padak 2025 -- the country's second-highest civilian award -- at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday. The Bangladesh women's football team, who won the SAFF Championships 2022 and 2024, are the first sporting team to receive the prestigious award. Sabina and Maria, meanwhile, are two of the 18 rebel women footballers who were left out of the squad for the upcoming UAE tour following a row with head coach Peter Butler.

PHOTO: BFF

Butler names 23-member squad sans 18 rebels for UAE friendlies

SPORTS REPORTER

With last Sunday's announcement confirming a break for 18 rebel players embroiled in a dispute with head coach Peter Butler, their absence from Bangladesh's women's squad for the upcoming FIFA friendlies against hosts UAE seemed inevitable.

As expected, Butler yesterday unveiled a 23 member squad, opting for a fresh lineup that excludes several senior players who were instrumental in Bangladesh's SAFF Championship triumph last year.

Instead, the squad features a mix of experience and youth, with eight new faces earning call-ups.

"It is a mix of 23 players -- some experienced and others I just find faith in. It is a young group. I would prefer to give them time. Be patient with them. They may make mistakes, but they will learn," Butler said in a video message.

Stressing the importance of attitude

“
We dedicate this award to our mother tongue Bangla and to all those who tirelessly work behind the scenes to advance our society and culture. We hope that recognising contributions to women's sports in this way will inspire future generations even more. For this, we express our gratitude.

Bangladesh footballer
SABINA KHATUN

and commitment, he added, "The most important thing for me is that these players approach their work with the right mindset, show respect, and deliver a performance that does justice to representing Bangladesh." Bangladesh will face the UAE on February 26 and on March 2. The squad is set to depart for the UAE on February 24.

SQUAD

Yearzana Begum, Mili Akter, Meghla Rani Roy, Kohati Kisku, Joynob Bibi, Afeida Khandakar, Surman Jannat, Halima Akther, Sapna Rani, Aririn Khatun, Aklima Khatun, Shaheda Akter Ripa, Ayonto Bala Mahato, Oyeshi Khatun, Tonima Bishwas, Munki Akther, Bonna Khatun, Mrs Sultana, Kanom Akther, Arpita Bishwas Arpita, Sourovi Akter Prity, Mariam Binta Hanna, Nabiran Khatun.

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Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus poses for a photograph with the recipients of the prestigious Ekushey Padak, including the Bangladesh women's football team, at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

90s economic problems still persist

Says noted economist Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economic and governance problems identified at various times since the 1990s have now come to the forefront again, requiring closer examination of why they still exist, said noted economist Rehman Sobhan yesterday.

He cited an article he wrote back in 2004 titled the political economy of mal-government to further his point.

"So all the mal-government problems that you have identified, I had written about this in 2004," he said at the launch of two books -- 'Bangladesh's Economy: Current and Future' (in Bengali) and 'Bangladesh: Contemporary Development Issues' -- written by Selim Jahan, the former director of the Human Development Report Office of UNDP, New York.

The event held at the RC Majumdar Auditorium at the University of Dhaka was organised by Banglar Pathshala.

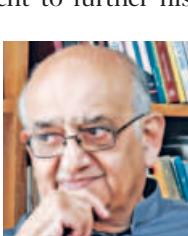
"Why have they persisted and why have we not really been able to do anything about this?"

Many issues are being repeated in the task forces commissioned by the interim government, similar to those found in the 29 task forces Sobhan led after the fall of the military regime in 1990, he added.

Successive governments have failed to implement the recommendations made in the 29 task force reports led by Sobhan in the 1990s, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

"My experience is that there is a disconnect between our policymakers, policy implementers and academia."

Even when academics succeed in convincing



SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

'TK 297CR GRAFT'
Former BB
governor
Atiur, 22
others sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed a lawsuit against 23 individuals, including former Bangladesh Bank governor Atiur Rahman and economist Abul Barakat, over allegations of embezzling Tk 297 crore through AnonTex Group.

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed a lawsuit against 23 individuals, including former Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman and economist Abul Barakat, over allegations of embezzling Tk 297 crore through AnonTex Group.

The amount was misappropriated from Janata Bank in the name of AnonTex Group, according to the statement of the case filed with the ACC's Dhaka integrated district office.

Rahman, who was the BB governor from 2005 to 2015, and Abul Barkat, who was the chairman of Janata from 2009 to 2014, allegedly colluded to approve loans amounting to Tk 297 crore to 22

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

'Tone down' US criticism

Trump aide urges Ukraine as Russia warns against Nato troops

REUTERS, Washington

The White House continued to press Kyiv yesterday with its efforts to bring an end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, urging it to rein in criticism and quickly sign a minerals deal pushed by US President Donald Trump.

"They need to tone it down and take a hard look and sign that deal," Mike Waltz, the White House national security adviser, said in an interview with Fox News.

Pushback from Ukraine on the minerals deal and how Trump is carrying out peace talks is simply unacceptable, Waltz said, given everything the United States has done for Ukraine.

Waltz's comments come a day after Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traded insults, with Trump calling Zelensky a dictator and Zelensky saying the US president was living in a disinformation bubble and spewing talking points from Moscow.

However, Waltz said US differences with Ukraine were not irreconcilable, saying: "The president also said how much he loves the Ukrainian people."

Trump on Wednesday said the Russians "have the cards" in negotiations on ending the war in Ukraine.

"I think the Russians want to see the war end... But I think they have the cards a little bit, because they've taken a lot of territory, so they have the cards," Trump told reporters on Air Force One.

Zelensky said he was counting on unity at home and in Europe as well as pragmatism from Washington, striking a conciliatory tone.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said yesterday that any plan to send Nato troops to Ukraine as part of a potential peacekeeping mission would be unacceptable for Russia and that it was monitoring such proposals with concern.

In a separate development, Russia launched 161 drones and a dozen missiles overnight, targeting gas infrastructure in Ukraine's north eastern Kharkiv region and hitting power supply in the southern Odesa region for a second night in a row, Ukrainian officials said yesterday.

Russia has recaptured 64 percent of the territory captured by Ukraine in the Kursk border region since Kyiv's offensive there last summer, a senior Russian military leader said.

The Russian army rarely gives figures on the amount of territory taken by Ukraine in Kursk, which spans nearly 30,000 square kilometres.

'Red card' to politics on campus

Kuet students continue demo over Tuesday clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Students of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology at a demonstration yesterday displayed red cards in protest against all political student organisations and the university administration.

At a gathering at the Durbar Bangla Chattar around noon, they directed their protest at student parties and platforms, including Chhatra Dal, Chhatra League, Chhatra Shibir, Chhatra Union, and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Demanding an end to on-campus politics, they chanted slogans and held placards reading "No student politics in Kuet" and "Red card to student politics".

The protesters also called for the resignation of the vice-chancellor, pro-

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A PARAKEET'S PARADISE...

Every year, when the Gumai Beel bursts into gold with ripe paddy, it is not just the farmers who rejoice. Hundreds of thousands of red-breasted parakeets descend from the mountains to claim their share of the rice. Just before the end of the Boro and Aman seasons, these birds enjoy a lavish feast as they soar over the golden fields. Gumai Beel, also known as the grain storehouse of Chattogram, is the second largest paddy field in the country after the Chalan Beel. Spanning 3,000 hectares, it can produce enough paddy to feed the entire population of Bangladesh for at least two days -- a proud claim by the farmers of Rangunia upazila.

PHOTO: M HAIDER ALI

SC restores appointment of 1,137 candidates of 27th BCS exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday restored a 16-year old High Court verdict that ordered the government to appoint 1,137 candidates, who had passed the first viva voce of the 27th BCS examinations.

The apex court delivered the judgement after allowing three appeals filed on behalf of the 1,137 candidates challenging its 2010 verdict that scrapped the HC ruling.

A five-member full bench of the apex court, led

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Sylhet MC College student beaten up by 'Shibir activists'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A student of Sylhet MC College was attacked allegedly by Chhatra Shibir activists at a dormitory in Sylhet early yesterday over a Facebook comment about the recent clash between activists of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and Chhatra Dal at Kuet.

The victim, Mizanur Rahman Riyad, is a third-year English department student at the college and the information and technology affairs secretary of the college unit of Anjuman-e-Talamiz-e-Chhatra Dal at Kuet.

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'Ex-Rab official raped wife of detainee'

Chief prosecutor tells ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ICT prosecution yesterday said former Rab officer Alep Uddin raped a university student by threatening to kill her detained husband.

While serving in the Rapid Action Battalion in Narayanganj in 2018, Alep, an additional superintendent of police, called the woman to his office during the month of Ramadan and threatened to execute her husband by "crossfire", Chief Prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam told the International Crimes Tribunal.

"Later, Alep forcibly took her to the officers' mess near his office, forced her to break her fast,

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Jubo League activist beaten to death

Two suspects held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Jubo League activist was beaten to death by unidentified men in the Noapara area of Raozan, Chittogram, on Wednesday night.

Mohammad Hasan, 35, may have been killed over political rivalry or personal enmity, said Monirul Islam Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Raozan Police Station.

Police yesterday arrested suspects Rakib and Tipu.

"In primary investigation, we found evidence suggesting that the crime took place over political

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একুশে

মহান শহিদ দিবস ও
অন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবসে
সকল ভাষা শহিদের প্রতি

গভীর
শুন্দাঙ্গলি



বাংলাদেশ কৃষি ব্যাংক
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