

## Pledge made to build a 'second republic'

Uprising leaders launch National Citizen Party; 171-member committee formed

MASHFIQ MIZAN and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

The young leaders behind the successful mass uprising against Sheikh Hasina officially launched the National Citizen Party (NCP) yesterday, declaring their vision for a "second republic".

The thousands in attendance cheered as Nahid Islam, the convener of the newly formed party, vowed to reshape Bangladesh's political landscape at a rally to mark the launch on Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka.

He said that in this envisioned political order, the common people—and only the common people—will be the supreme source of power. He emphasised that the NCP's core mission is to dismantle constitutional autocracy and establish a robust democratic framework.

To achieve this, the party, styled Jatiya Nagorik Party in Bangla, demanded that the next national election be held for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

Pledging sweeping reforms, the NCP vowed to rebuild political and economic institutions, combat corruption and nepotism, and prioritise inclusion, equity, and national sovereignty. In a rallying call to the people, the party urged citizens to unite in the struggle for democracy and

justice, promising a future where power truly belongs to the people.

This is the first time in Bangladesh's history that a political party has emerged directly from the heart of a mass uprising—led by the very youth who spearheaded it. Never before has a youth-driven party been founded with such momentum and public enthusiasm.

Nahid affirmed that the NCP will be a truly democratic, egalitarian, and people-centered political force.

Rejecting the influence of external political alignments, he said Bangladesh would never be divided again.

"There will be no room for pro-India or pro-Pakistan politics in Bangladesh. We will build our politics and our state together, with the sole focus on Bangladesh and the interests of its people," he said.

Reflecting on the unity forged during the July-August mass uprising last year, Nahid emphasised that the people had successfully resisted attempts to weaken Bangladesh through divisive politics.

"From this stage today, we vow that Bangladesh will never be divided again."

With a shared belief that the day would mark the beginning of something new, students, activists, young professionals,

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A drone shot of the crowd at the rally marking the official launch of National Citizen Party on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital yesterday. The party is led by individuals who played key roles in protests that ended the Sheikh Hasina regime.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

### What does a second republic mean?

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

In its first statement to the people, the National Citizen Party clearly declared a vision for a second republic in Bangladesh. Speaking at the party's inauguration, Nahid Islam, the top leader of the party read out the declaration which outlines the ideals and principles of his centrist party. But what is this second republic?

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### New constitution for new Bangladesh

Says NCP in its declaration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam delivered a speech after the formal announcement launching of National Citizen Party and the leaders of the party said the convener's speech is NCP's "declaration".

The following is an English translation of Nahid's speech.

In the context of the July 2024 uprising and under the leadership of the Students Against Discrimination and initiative of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, the students and masses of Bangladesh, hereby declare: We, the people of the Bengal delta, bear a rich and distinct culture shaped over a thousand years of historical evolution. After nearly 200 years of British colonial rule, the state of Pakistan was established in 1947 following a long struggle.

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### Explain how Hasina, others managed to flee

BNP decides to demand from govt

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has decided to demand an explanation from the interim government regarding how Sheikh Hasina and her associates managed to flee Bangladesh after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5.

Party leaders criticised the delay in prosecuting and punishing identified

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## NAHID ISLAM

NCP CONVENER

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam, a sociology graduate from Dhaka University, was one of the key organisers of the anti-discrimination student movement, which toppled the Sheikhha Hasina regime.



Nahid was one of the student representatives within the interim government. He resigned from the advisory council on Tuesday to take on his new role.

Nahid became the member secretary of Ganotantrik Chhatra Shakti on October 3, 2023, which was a breakaway faction of Chhatra Odhikar Parishad led by Nurul Haque Nur.

Chhatra Shakti was dissolved on September 14, 2024, a week after the Jatiya Nagorik Committee was formed.

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## AKHTER HOSSEN

NCP MEMBER SECRETARY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Akhter Hossen, a law graduate from Dhaka University, was one of the key organisers of the anti-discrimination student movement, which toppled the Sheikhha Hasina regime.



He came under the spotlight when he went on a hunger strike all by himself on October 16, 2018, protesting the question leak of a Dhaka University admission test.

In 2019, he contested the Ducus polls from the panel of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, a platform that had led the 2018 quota reform movement. He contested for the social service secretary post and won.

Akhter later joined Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, a student body of Nurul Haq Nur's Gono Odhikar Parishad,

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PHOTO: STAR

As the National Citizen Party was launched yesterday at the capital's Manik Mia avenue, its top leaders raise their hands as a sign of success.

## What does a second republic mean?

FROM PAGE 1

Second republic signifies transformation of the political system through democratic means, rewriting or reform of constitution and political institutions following a revolution or mass uprising.

The term "second republic" has been used in various countries to refer to a specific period in their political history, usually marking a transition from one form of political system or government to another, said political analysts, in their instant reaction regarding the new political party's call.

The new party led by July uprising leaders also envisions a constituent assembly.

A professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, said the second republic indicates a revolution and the transformation of the political system through democratic means.

"It speaks of correcting the failures of the first republic through reformation and a new constitution, indicating a change in the political system and the entire political settlement," he said.

Dhaka University political science teacher Sabbir Ahmed said the leaders of the new party perceive that although the people had established ownership of the state through the independence of 1971, they had lost it afterwards.

"The people regained their ownership through the mass uprising of 2024, and therefore they now want to declare a second republic," he said attempting to explain the new party's vision.

"The second republic brings about fundamental changes in the state, the political system, and institutions. The constitution can be rewritten or formed anew and political institutions can be reconstituted or reformed as well," he added.

Asked about constituent assembly, Al Masud Hasanuzzaman explained that it is elected for the sole purpose of writing a new constitution.

### TWO 'SECOND REPUBLICS'

The first French republic (1848-1852) after the French Revolution had given way to monarchy. The second French republic was established through the revolution of 1848 toppling the monarchy of King Louis-Philippe.

The liberal hopes of establishing an enduring democratic regime were soon frustrated. In 1848 Louis-Napoléon (a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) was elected president with a monarchist majority in the legislative assembly. This led to the enactment of conservative measures restricting voting rights and freedom of the press, giving the church increased control over education. Soon realizing that his power and future reelection were limited by the assembly's actions, Louis-Napoléon organized a coup d'état in 1851. Following a new constitution that reduced the assembly's power, and a plebiscite, Louis-Napoléon declared himself emperor Napoléon III in 1852. Louis-Napoléon, and thus the second empire was born.

France has so far had five republics with the last one founded in 1958.

Second Republic of Spain (1931-1939) emerged as King Alfonso XIII was forced to leave Spain after municipal elections showed massive support for republicanism. It led to the introduction of secular reforms, including separation of church and state. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) led to collapse of Second republic and Francisco Franco established a dictatorship that lasted until 1975.

## Pledge made to build a 'second republic'

FROM PAGE 1

and ordinary citizens from across the country started arriving at the venue in the morning, with the NCP slated for an afternoon launch.

Many had travelled overnight. Their eyes were heavy with exhaustion but alight with anticipation. Most had come in groups, arms linked, voices filled with excitement.

"This is the change we fought for last year," said Imran Khan, a former Dhaka University student. "We want a political party that represents our generation."

By afternoon, the crowd swelled, spilling onto the streets surrounding the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. And amid the sea of people, one thing stood out—the red and green of the national flag. It was everywhere. Wrapped around foreheads, draped over shoulders, waving high above heads. From a distance, the gathering looked like a great tide of red and green, moving as one, a rhythmic wave of unity and hope.

"This flag is not just fabric. It carries our history, our struggle," said Nishat Rahman, a college student from Sirajganj, gripping her flag tightly.

Among the crowd was Abu Zar, who had left Terkhada, Khulna, at 2:00am

effective bureaucracy.

On foreign relations, he said, "We will maintain friendly ties, but without external prescriptions. Who enters the Ganabhaban or parliament will be decided by the people of Bangladesh—not by India."

Sarjis Alam, NCP's chief organiser (northern region), called for unity among all political parties to rebuild Bangladesh.

"Sheikh Hasina destroyed the country's institutions—we must come together to restore them and ensure her trial," he said.

Warning against political monopolies, he added, "If major parties suppress smaller ones, another autocracy could emerge. Let's learn from Hasina's example."

Nowsher Ali, father of uprising martyr Jabir Ibrahim, demanded an end to the practice of using brutal and deadly force to suppress protests.

Expressing his support for the party, he said, "I stand firmly with them in building a new Bangladesh. I want my country to be safe in their hands."

Mim Akhtar, sister of July martyr Ismail Hossain Rabbi, announced the names of Nahid and Akhter Hossen as the NCP convener and member

Abedin Shishir, Mohammad Muntasir Rahman, Gazi Salauddin Tanvir, Tamim Ahmed, and Tahsin Riaz

Akhter said, "The youth envision a future Bangladesh governed under a new constitution. With that dream in mind, I conclude by demanding an election for a constituent assembly."

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the crowd showed no sign of dispersing. The flags kept waving, their red and green catching the glow of streetlights and stage floodlights. Voices rose in unison, carrying the dream of a new Bangladesh. The crowd erupted in thunderous chants and applause as Nahid, wrapping a national flag on his speech, began the introductory speech around 6:30pm.

"Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to building a just and equitable society. We firmly believe that the July 2024 mass uprising was not just a victory against a fascist regime—it was a pledge to shape our future," Nahid said.

"Let us stand together, hand in hand, to build a Bangladesh where every citizen's voice is heard, where justice prevails, and where the struggle for people's rights defines politics. A nation founded on equality and human dignity."

## Parties welcome NCP launch

Some congratulate, some apprehensive

MD ABBAS

Several political parties, including BNP, Jatiya Party, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Ganosamhati Andolon, and Islami Andolon Bangladesh, have welcomed the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP), saying it has the potential to bring a shift in the country's political landscape.

Jatiya Party, however, claimed the new party had the "blessings of the interim government", while CPB warned that if any government affiliation was found within the NCP, the people would not accept it, which would be detrimental to its success.

Speaking to reporters at the capital's Manik Mia Avenue, where the NCP was formally launched, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi hoped the party would bring change and a new political dynamic to Bangladesh, offering a fresh perspective to the people.

"I hope the NCP will become a genuine political platform for the masses and that people will see it as nothing more than that."

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader said the formation of this new party would strengthen the country's multi-party democracy.

However, he alleged the NCP is receiving preferential treatment from the interim government and enjoying various advantages, adding that some members of the government are affiliated with the party. He refrained from naming anyone.

Quader also questioned whether the upcoming parliamentary election, set to be held under the interim government, would be free and fair, given the government's apparent support for the NCP.

Meanwhile, CPB General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince told The Daily Star his party welcomes any initiative that involves those who participated in the July uprising, upholds the spirit of the Liberation War, believes in democracy and secularism, and opposes discrimination.

"This party is now the talk of the country, which is natural. There're speculations that it was formed with 'the blessings of the interim government'. If any evidence of such affiliations comes up, the people will not accept them [NCP], and it will not be beneficial for the party either."

Regarding the NCP's declaration of a "second republic" or "new independence", Prince said, "They need to clarify what they mean by second republic because our independence came only through our great Liberation War. If this concept [of a new independence] seeks to undermine the Liberation War, then they don't truly recognise it [the 1971 war], regardless of what they claim publicly."

He further noted that while the NCP envisions equitable wealth distribution, it would not be able to achieve this goal if it continues to uphold a free-market economy. However, he said this was just his initial reaction. "My party will have further discussions [regarding the new party] internally."



**"I hope the NCP will become a genuine political platform for the masses and that people will see it as nothing more than that."**

- Ruhul Kabir Rizvi  
BNP Senior Joint Secretary General



**"If any evidence of government affiliations comes up, the people will not accept them [NCP], and it will not be beneficial for the party either."**

- Ruhin Hossain Prince  
CPB General Secretary

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar told this newspaper that welcoming new political parties is the beauty of democracy.

"The formation of the NCP will play a positive role in advancing the country," he said, expressing hope that his party would engage with the NCP with mutual understanding.

Regarding the government's alleged support for the NCP, he said there was no clear evidence of such an affiliation so far.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh Secretary General Principal Hafiz Maulana Yunus Ahmad also congratulated the newly formed NCP, emphasising that a multi-party system is essential for democratic politics.

He said Bangladesh had developed a two-party system instead of a multi-party one, which had led to various political challenges in the country.

"The emergence of a new political party could serve as an alternative solution to this problem.... The formation of this youth-led political party brings hope to the nation."

Also congratulating the NCP, Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of the Ganosamhati Andolon, hoped the party, which was formed by the masses, would remain deeply connected to the people.

"If the party has clear goals and is committed to recognising the struggles of the masses, it will be able to win over the people of the country."



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders of the BNP, Jamaat, and other political parties at the rally for the launch of National Citizen Party.

secretary.

Akhter, who is also the member secretary of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, read out a partial organogram of the party.

Samanta Shermeen and Ariful Islam Adib were named senior joint convenors, while Tasnim Jara and Nahida Sarwar Niva were appointed senior joint member secretaries.

Nagorik Committee Convener Nasiruddin Patwary was made the chief coordinator, while Abdul Hannan Masud will serve as the joint coordinator.

Nusrat Tabassum, Monira Sharmin, Mahbub Alam, Sarwar Tushar, Advocate Mujahidul Islam Shahin, Tajnuva Zabin, Sultan Muhammad Zakaria, Atiq Mujahid, Ashraf Uddin Mahdi, Arpita Shyama Deba, Tanjil Mahmud, Anik Roy, Khaleda Saifullah, Javed Rasim, Ehtesham Haque, and Hasan Ali were made joint convenors.

Joint member secretaries of the 171-strong NCP committee are Abdullah Al Amin, Arif Sohail, Rashidul Islam Rifat, Mahin Sarkar, Mohammad Nizam Uddin, Akram Hossain, SM Saif Mustafiz, Saleh Uddin Sifat (attached to the office cell), Alauddin Muhammad, Farid Uddin, Mohammad Farhad Alam Bhuiyan, Mohammad Miraj Mia, Lutfar Rahman, Mohammad Mainul Islam Tuhin, Mushfiqur Salehin, Zahidul Islam, Zahirul Islam Musa, Humayra Noor, Mushfiqur Rahman Juhon, Molla Mohammad Faruq Ehsan, Shagufta Bushra Bismah, Ahanaf Saeed Khan, Abu Saeed Mohammad Sujauddin, Mir Arshadul Haque, Faisal Mahmud Shant, Tarek Reza, Mashur Rahman, Zainal



Govt publishes  
list of 1,401  
‘July Warriors’

UNB NEWS, Dhaka

The government has published two separate gazettes listing 1,401 people classified as “July Warriors” under the “A” and “B” categories as recognition of their participation in the student-led uprising in July-August last year.

A total 493 people, who were severely injured, were listed under A category, according to a gazette signed by Deputy Secretary (Gazette) Haridas Thakur of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, issued on Thursday by order of the president.

In another gazette, 908 people who also sustained injuries during the uprising were listed under B category.

The documents detail the serial numbers, medical case IDs, names of the injured, their parents’ names, permanent addresses, and respective divisions and districts.



Thousands of book lovers, both young and old, flocked to the Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy one last time as the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela concluded yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Curtain falls  
on boi mela

DIPAN NANDY

As the Ekushey Boi Mela drew to a close, an air of bittersweet nostalgia enveloped Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy. Thousands of book lovers, young and old, meandered through the colourful stalls, their hearts heavy with the impending farewell to the largest book fair.

Children clutched their parents’ hands, eyes wide with wonder as they explored the vibrant displays alongside university students, couples, and the elderly, all united in their love for literature.

The final day saw a unique energy – a blend of excitement for the new literary treasures discovered and a longing for a tradition that binds generations. “I’m a bit sad now that the book fair has ended. I wish it lasted a little longer,” said Jannatul Mawa, a Dhaka University student.

A total of 708 publishers participated, embracing the theme “July Gono-Obbhutthan: Natun Bangladesh Binirman,” which echoed the spirit of resilience and renewal following the Awami League regime and the July uprising.

“The month went by too quick,” said Shamima Sharmeen, a student of Dhaka University yesterday evening.

Her friend, Manosh Chowdhury, added, “I bought five books so far. Two novels and three poetry books. It’s still not enough.”

Poetry once again took centre stage, maintaining its status as a staple of the fair. However, this year saw a noticeable decline in poetry sales, as readers gravitated towards novels, essays, and historical accounts of the Liberation War.

Monirul Huq, owner of Annanya, said, “Readers mostly

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Man killed,  
another hurt  
in Dhaka fire

STAR REPORT

A man was killed and another was injured in a fire at a building in Dhaka’s New Eskaton area early yesterday.

The deceased, Abdul Malek Khan, 40, was an office assistant at BIAM Foundation, according to his relatives.

“We learned about the fire on the fourth floor of the 10-storey BIAM building around 3:30am, and two fire units doused it by 4:15am,” said Nazim Uddin, senior station officer of Tejgaon Fire Station.

A preliminary investigation suggests the fire originated from an electrical short circuit, followed by an explosion, he added.

Md Faruk, a driver, is receiving treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery with 43 percent burns, said Dr Shaon Bin Rahman, the institute’s resident surgeon.

Sub-inspector Moniruzzaman of Hatirjheel Police Station said both individuals were on the floor when the fire broke out, leaving them injured. They were rescued and rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where Malek was pronounced dead at around 6:45am.

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‘Hope for a new dawn  
in country’s politics’

People express optimism as youth-led  
National Citizen Party launched

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Manik Miah Avenue was abuzz with anticipation yesterday as the National Citizen Party (NCP) was officially launched.

The air buzzed with energy as people from all walks of life – particularly students – gathered to witness what many believe to be the birth of a new era in the political landscape of Bangladesh.

The launch of the party, formed by the youth-led movement Students Against Discrimination (SAD), quickly gained momentum, as enthusiastic supporters poured in from across the country, some travelling long distances to be part of what they deemed a historic moment.

Abdul Hannan, a college student from Halishahar, Chattogram, arrived with 27 others by bus. “I came here because I believe they will build a new Bangladesh, free from discrimination,” he said.

Hannan was far from alone. Nine buses carried supporters from Chattogram, while Md Rakib Hossain, a university student from Khulna, journeyed with ten others. “After the mass uprising, we have an unprecedented opportunity to build a better Bangladesh. I came all the way to support this party because they give us hope for change,” he said.

The Daily Star talked with over 30 people at the avenue who gathered there to witness the



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

launch. They expressed optimism for a corruption-free and democratic Bangladesh.

Among the crowd stood 72-year-old Saima, a Liberation War veteran, who arrived at the rally with her daughter. “We are elderly now, but we came here to encourage the young generation,” she said.

A former Dhaka University student during the Liberation War of 1971, Saima believes history is repeating itself.

“It was young people who led the Language Movement of 1952, the Liberation War of 1971, and now the movement that ended the fascist Hasina regime. Before we pass away, we want to witness the long-awaited change,” she added.

Others also shared her sentiment.

Masud Rana, a businessman from Rajshahi, observed, “For too long, young people stayed away from politics. But through the July uprising, they freed this country from fascism. Now, I welcome students stepping up to take charge of our future and establish a healthy political culture by getting rid of corruption.”

He emphasised that youth-led movements should remain independent and not be co-opted by traditional parties that have historically used student organisations for muscle power.

MA Yusuf, convener of the Bangladesh Workers, Employees, and Professionals Unity Coalition, attended the rally from Lakshmipur.

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Strict action  
against unjust  
price hikes in  
Ramadan

Says Adviser Farida Akhtar

UNB, Dhaka

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhtar issued a stern warning yesterday to those inflating prices of daily commodities, stating that they would no longer be tolerated.

Speaking at the “Inauguration of the Sale of Milk, Eggs, and Meat at Affordable Prices in Ramadan” event in Merul Badda, she called upon students to unite against unjust price increases.

“As an interim government, we aim to reduce the problems faced by the public, especially rising prices,” she said.

Akhtar acknowledged that while complete price control remains a challenge, efforts are underway to provide essential goods at reduced rates during the holy month of Ramadan.

From the 1st to the 28th of Ramadan, essential products will be available at affordable prices at 25 locations. At the inauguration, it was revealed that dressed broiler meat would be sold at Tk 250 per kg, pasteurised milk at Tk 80 per litre, eggs at Tk 114 per dozen, and beef at Tk 650 per kg.

1,021 detained in  
Dhaka in 4 days

11,931 so far arrested across  
country in ‘Devil Hunt’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid a surge in crimes, law enforcers arrested 1,404 people across the country in the last 24 hours until yesterday afternoon, including 618 as part of “Operation Devil Hunt,” according to the Police Headquarters.

With these latest arrests, the total number of people detained since the operation began on February 8 has reached 11,931.

Among those arrested yesterday, 786 were either accused or wanted in previous cases. Law enforcers also recovered a firearm, one cartridge, and eight sharp weapons during the operation.

The interim government launched the operation on February 8 to restore law and order.

An analysis of reports from several districts shows that many of the arrestees in the operation are members of Awami League and its affiliated organisations, facing charges in cases filed after the Hasina-led government fell on August 5.

Despite the operation, crimes such as mugging and robbery continue.

To improve security, the Law and Order Core Committee introduced nine initiatives on February 25, including joint task force operations in crime-prone areas involving the army, police, and BGB.

Police have also intensified their activities in the capital to ensure public safety and maintain law and order.

As part of this effort, integrated checkpoints

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‘Interim govt failed to  
deliver justice for Taqi’

Allege speakers at seminar

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Narayanganj

Despite being in power for the last seven months, the interim government has yet to initiate legal proceedings in the case filed over the murder of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi in Narayanganj, said speakers at a rally yesterday.

They also alleged that ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina had deliberately stalled the investigation and trial for her own interests.

The Santras Nirmul Taqi Mancha organised the event at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city.

They said the Awami League-led government was ousted in August last year following a mass uprising, and a non-partisan interim government was formed, giving new hope for justice.

However, that did not happen, they added.

Speaking at the rally, Prof Anu

Muhammad said despite the fall of the Awami League government, trials for murders – including Taqi’s – that were stalled under its rule remain unresolved, fuelling public frustration.

“We all know who killed Taqi and how the former prime minister protected the murderers. Under her patronage, a mafia system flourished across the country. She shielded Taqi’s killers, obstructing justice. This was not an isolated incident – disappearances and killings became rampant during her tenure,” he said.

He further questioned why Taqi’s killers had fled the country and were now leading luxurious lives abroad while the interim government remained silent.

He emphasised that one of the interim government’s top priorities should have been ensuring justice for high-profile murder cases like Taqi, Tanu,

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Guests at the seventh edition of “Gunijan Sambardhana” (Honouring Eminent Personalities), organised by Bangla daily Bonik Barta and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies at a hotel in the capital yesterday. The event, which recognises distinguished personalities for their outstanding contributions to the nation, honoured Saifur Rahman posthumously for his role in shaping the country’s economy.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Saifur Rahman,  
a champion of  
market economy

Say speakers at ‘Gunijan  
Sambardhana’ event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh’s economy was criminalised for many years, but it avoided total collapse due to key transformational steps taken by former finance minister Saifur Rahman, said Commerce Adviser SK Bashir Uddin yesterday.

He made the remarks while speaking at the seventh edition of “Gunijan Sambardhana”, organised by Bangla daily Bonik Barta and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies at a city hotel.

The event, which recognises distinguished personalities for their outstanding contributions to the nation, honoured Saifur Rahman posthumously for his role in shaping the country’s economy.

Saifur Rahman served as the commerce minister from 1976-1980, finance minister from 1980-1982, technocrat finance minister from 1991-1996, and finance and planning minister from 2001-2006.

He played a crucial role in developing the private sector and shaping economic policies, including the introduction of VAT, back-to-back LCs in the garment sector, and bonded warehouse facilities.

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ILLEGAL SAND  
EXTRACTION  
Journalist  
threatened,  
bike, camera  
vandalised  
OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Lalmonirhat

A journalist received a death threat allegedly from some sand extractors in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila early yesterday when he took a video of illegal sand extraction from the Teesta river.

The sand extractors also vandalised his camera, motorcycle, wireless boom and headphones.

Mahfuzul Islam Bakul is Lalmonirhat district correspondent of Channel 24 Television and Dainik Khaborer Kagoj.

Bakul filed a written complaint against nine people with Aditmari Police Station, said OC Ali Akbar of the police station.

Bakul said he received information from locals that a syndicate had been illegally extracting sand from the Teesta at night.

Based on it, he and his cameraman arrived at the Chandimari Kutirpar area around 1:30am. "The sand lifters attacked us and vandalised my camera, motorcycle, and other equipment. They also threatened to kill both me and my cameraman. Later, with the help of locals, we managed to escape."

OC Ali Akbar said they would look into the complaint.

NU Bogura  
regional office  
launched  
CITY DESK

The Regional Center of the National University (NU) in Bogura was inaugurated yesterday.

National University Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr ASM Amanullah inaugurated the regional office in the morning. Later, at an event centring the inauguration was held.

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**LEGAL NOTICE**

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH**  
**HIGH COURT DIVISION**  
**(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)**  
**COMPANY MATTER NO. 218 OF 2025**

**IN THE MATTER OF :** An application under Section 12 read with Section 13 of The Companies Act 1994.

**-AND-**

**IN THE MATTER OF:** Steel Enterprise Limited .....Petitioner

**-Versus-**


The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms .....Respondent.

Take notice that an application under Section 12 read with Section 13 of The Companies Act 1994 was moved before the High Court Division of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of Bangladesh for confirmation of alterations of object clauses in the Memorandum of Association of the petitioner company by Special Resolution adopted by the members of the petitioner company in the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 21.11.2024. Upon hearing, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel was pleased to admit the application for hearing vide order dated 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025.

Anyone willing to oppose the said application, may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through duly appointed Advocate. Copy of the application can be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary charges.

**MD. TAZUL ISLAM**  
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Suite # 102 (1<sup>st</sup> Floor) Sharika Tower, 8, Shegunbagicha, Dhaka-1000  
Mobile: 01982366580

**We Remember**



20.09.33 - 13.2003

On his 22<sup>nd</sup> death anniversary today, we profoundly remember late **Matiur Rahman**- a Freedom Fighter, Founder & Chairman of Kisan Group, Former Cabinet Minister and former President of Dhaka Chamber of commerce & Industries.

Charity lunches will be served today at orphanage. Please pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Chondona, Robin, Shuvo & Amit  
&  
Members of Kisan Group  
mr Rahmanfamily@gmail.com



Many of the roads in the busy Bahaddarhat area in the port city remains under the clutches of vendors. Ongoing development work further complicates the situation. These factors together contribute to traffic congestion, making it difficult for residents to navigate the area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

BRIDGE OVER BARAK RIVER

Work yet to begin  
after 9 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The construction of a new bridge over Barak River near Sarkar Bazar in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila has yet to begin even though nine months have passed since the work order was issued.

The upazila administration invited tenders for constructing the new, 11-metre-long girder bridge to replace the old, dilapidated one over the river on April 4, 2024. The Department of Disaster Management allocated Tk 42.64 lakh for the project, and the contract was awarded Sajida Enterprises.

However, despite receiving the work order on May 28, the contractor firm has yet to commence construction.

"Crossing the river using the broken bridge becomes particularly challenging in monsoon, when it becomes slippery and causes people to slip and sustain injuries. Students sometimes use boats for the crossing when the river swells up in monsoon, but boats are not always available," said Nurul Islam, a resident of Nasirpur village.

Abu Mia Chowdhury, chairman of Khalilpur union parishad, said the local market is a major hub for cattle trade. The delayed construction of new bridge is compelling people to use the old bridge for access to the market, and bear extra expenses for



transporting goods and cattle, he added. Abhijit Dey, an engineer representing the contractor firm, attributed the delay to political instability.

Also, the contract includes construction of six bridges in different locations, so priority was given to areas with less developed communication, he added.

Abhijit, however, assured that primary

work on the bridge over Barak river could be completed within 15 days, allowing construction to continue even during adverse weather conditions.

Contacted, Zahirul Islam, project implementation officer in the upazila, said he assumed his role only recently and did not have the contractor's contact information to reach out to them in this regard.

Once

FROM PAGE 5

dilapidated condition.

The Sreemangal municipality alleged that the college authorities did not hand over the library building to the municipality when it relocated. As such, no steps could be taken to renovate the structure. Moreover, the college authorities earlier had demolished the rear boundary wall of the library and built an extended classroom, encroaching on the land of a children's park beside it.

A cyclone in April 2024 caused significant damage to the entire structure.

"The college authorities did not hand over the keys and other belongings when they left the building in 2020," said Zahirul Islam, executive engineer of Sreemangal municipality.

Contacted, Piyali Bhowmik, acting principal of the college, claimed the college's activities were conducted in the library building with permission from the then municipal authorities. She, however, said there is no document in this regard.

Islam Uddin, UNO of Sreemangal, said there is a plan to establish a modern public library on the land. "We are working in this regard," he added.

**PRAYER  
TIMING**

**MARCH 1**

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:15	12:45	4:30	6:05	7:30

JAMAAT 5:50 1:15 4:45 6:10 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

1,021 detained in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3

and patrol operations have been strengthened in coordination with the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and other law enforcement agencies.

In Dhaka, DMP and other law enforcement agencies arrested 228 suspected criminals, including robbers and muggers, in a crackdown against criminals in the capital on Thursday, said a DMP release.

With these arrests, the total number of detainees in Dhaka over the past four days has risen to 1,021.

The arrestees include 15 robbers, 24 professional snatchers, five extortionists, 12 thieves, 27 drug dealers, and 30 individuals with outstanding warrants.

Law enforcers seized 12 sharp weapons, a microbus, four mobile phones, and Tk 62,290 in cash from the detainees. Additionally, they confiscated 238 yaba pills and 37.6 kg of cannabis.

A total of 49 cases were filed, and legal action has been initiated against those arrested.

According to the DMP's Crime Command and

Control Center, 550 patrol teams have been deployed across 50 police stations in Dhaka to ensure security and smooth movement of the people of Dhaka Metropolitan City.

Additionally, 65 police checkpoints have been set up at key locations, with 20 more operated by the specialised police unit APBN alongside the DMP.

To further strengthen security, 14 patrol teams from the CTTC, 12 from the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU), and 10 from the DMP and Rab are stationed in crime-prone areas of the city.

Outsourced workers

FROM PAGE 5

programme on February 23.

Ashraful Alam, a leader of BCMCL's outsourced workers, said despite working at the mine for 15-20 years, they remain deprived of various benefits, including salary increments and festival bonuses, unlike their permanent counterparts.

The then Awami League government in 2018 had issued a directive revoking essential benefits for outsourced workers, putting many temporary employees in financial distress, he alleged.

After the AL government's ouster, the outsourced workers staged protest in Dhaka, and received assurances from the then advisory council on wage disparity concerns.

The fire and explosion reportedly occurred while Malek and Faruk were asleep.

Meanwhile, another fire, that raged through Shewrapara kitchen market in Dhaka early yesterday, gutted 61 shops including a shoe

showroom, according to the fire service.

Lima Khanam, duty officer at the fire service headquarters, told UNB that the fire erupted from an electric short-circuit at a shop in the kitchen market near Shewrapara Metro Station on Begum Rokeya Sarani.

Firefighters managed to bring the blaze under control after 45 minutes and it was completely doused around 5:50am.

The fire damaged 51 kitchen shops, eight grocery stores, a Bata showroom and an electric shop, she added.

Saifur Rahman

FROM PAGE 3

Highlighting Saifur Rahman's contributions, Bashir said his policies prevented an economic downturn immediately after a period of instability.

"The economy was on the verge of collapse, but his policies kept it running for years," he said. Bashir emphasised that the current government is working to rebuild the economy with a fair distribution of resources, preventing the rise of crony capitalism.

BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said Saifur worked for all sections of the society, maintaining a balance between business interests and the welfare of citizens. He focused on improving the lives of the marginalised, said Khasru, a former commerce minister. Saifur focused on reducing dependency on foreign aid and mobilising internal resources, Khasru said.

Describing Saifur as "a champion of market economy, private sector development, and export-led growth," Khasru said he had the ability to make tough decisions for economic transformation.

Power Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir

Khan said when autocratic governments leave power, they often deplete the country's treasury and foreign exchange reserves, a situation Bangladesh recently witnessed.

He credited Saifur for successfully managing the finance ministry in the 1990s under similar circumstances, calling him the best finance minister the country has seen.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said he had not seen such a friendly and knowledgeable minister in his career as Saifur.

He said Saifur never interfered in the central bank's operations, which is rare for a political finance minister.

Former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed, BIDS acting Director General Kazi Iqbal, and Bonik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud also spoke at the event.

Additionally, Planning and Education Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, ICC Bangladesh President Mahbubur Rahman, and Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at CPD, shared their thoughts via video messages at the event.

Hope for a new dawn

FROM PAGE 3

"No political party has truly been people-friendly. Leaders, once in power, deceive the public through unethical politics, voter suppression, and corruption. They amass billions of dollars through corruption and then syphon that money off to abroad. Then there is also revenge culture in politics. The result is the suffering of people and a dysfunctional state," he said.

He believes NCP could be the answer by establishing an inclusive democratic state and promoting equality and justice.

Delwar Hossain, who hailed from Narayanganj,

said, "People have been held hostage by two major political parties, both of which have established dynasties. We believe that in this new party, even a hawker or a farmer's child -- if qualified -- can become prime minister."

For many attendees, this rally marked their first active participation in politics.

Rakib Fakir, a National University student from Savar, said, "Since becoming politically aware, I have only seen Sheikh Hasina in power. I never even had the chance to vote. We were disengaged, but not anymore. From now on, I will be involved in politics in support of the new party."

Interim govt failed

FROM PAGE 3

Sagar-Runi, and Munia, as people have long awaited their resolution.

Accusing the previous government of sheltering Taqi's killers, particularly individuals linked to former MP Shamim Osman and his family, Rafiur Rabbi said, "The interim government's advisers initially spoke about the case, and Rab made some progress. They arrested six people, and one even gave a confessional statement before the court. But nothing has moved forward since then."

Rabbi also recalled that

in 2014, a year after the murder, Rab announced that the investigation was nearly complete, and a draft charge sheet was prepared. However, the investigating authorities have yet to finalise and submit it to the court.

Taqi went missing after he left his Shaista Khan Road home in Narayanganj for Sudhijon Pathagar, a local library, around 4:00pm on March 6, 2013.

A day after his body was found, his A-level results were out, which showed he got the world's highest mark in physics in that exam, obtaining 297 out of 300.

Curtain falls

FROM PAGE 3

bought novels, essays, and history books this year."

This year's fair was also fraught with challenges.

On February 7, during the first Shishu Prohor, the absence of Sisimpur disappointed little book lovers. Further controversies emerged, including an incident on February 10 when a group of people stormed the Sabyasachi stall displaying books by Taslima Nasrin, leading to police intervention.

On February 15, another controversy erupted on social media over the closure of a stall selling sanitary pads. A letter -- regarding the closure circulated on Facebook -- said "several Islamist

groups" had objected to the sale of sanitary pads.

Later, Bangla Academy DG Mohammad Azam said, "This stall did not have approval. That's why it was shut down."

Amidst the challenges, new elements of the fair sparked interest among visitors. A notable addition was the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement stall, which featured literature and memorabilia related to mass uprisings.

As the sun set on the Boi Mela, a palpable sense of farewell washed over the fairgrounds. While the bittersweet nature of goodbyes lingered, there remained a glimmer of hope that this cherished tradition would continue to endure.

Hills razed

FROM PAGE 5

"We do not know whether the contractor is using hill soil. Since red soil is being used, it might have been extracted by razing hills. We will send a letter to the contractor in this regard," he said.

Mohammad Asad, contractor of the project, claimed they had collected the soil from a subcontractor

who extracted it from registered land, not from hills.

Md Shahinul Islam, range officer of Cox's Bazar South Forest Division (Ukhiya), said they received a complaint a few days ago and launched an investigation. "We found an area where small hills were razed. Further investigation is ongoing."



UKHIYA IN COX’S BAZAR

Hills razed to supply soil for LGED roadwork

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has allegedly been using red soil from neighbouring hills for the construction of a one-kilometre road in Machkaria area of Cox’s Bazar’s Ukhiya upazila over the past two weeks.

Locals claimed the razing of hills began around two weeks ago, with the soil being used for road construction in broad daylight. They alleged that state agencies concerned, including the Forest Department and the Department of Environment, have yet to take any action, while villagers face intimidation for speaking out against the irregularities.

“LGED razed some three to four hills and used the soil, worth around Tk 30 lakh, instead of sand for road construction, apparently to cut costs. The authorities concerned have ignored the environmental damage despite protests from locals,” said Abdul Haque, member of Ward-6 under Rajapalong union.

HM Ershad, president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon’s Cox’s Bazar chapter, said, “Hill soil is easily identifiable due to its red colour. LGED engineers and the contractor are colluding to embezzle money by using hill soil instead of sand.”

Contacted, Md Rokonuzzaman Khan, upazila engineer of LGED in Ukhiya, said the one-kilometre concrete road in Machkaria is being constructed at a cost of Tk 4 crore.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Hills being razed to supply soil for the construction of a one-kilometre road in Machkaria area of Cox’s Bazar’s Ukhiya upazila. Locals claim the cutting of hills began around two weeks ago, with the soil being used for construction in broad daylight.

PHOTO: STAR

BARAPUKURIA MINE

Outsourced workers on hunger strike Demand permanent employment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A total of 287 outsourced workers of the Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited in Dinaipur yesterday launched an indefinite hunger strike, demanding permanent employment.

They began the strike in front of the union office of workers and employees within the mine premises, to press home their five-point demand including: permanent employment, wage equality, annual increments, festival bonuses and overtime pay, and provisions for casual and maternity leave.

The workers said they continued their protests since the BCMCL authorities failed to respond to their demands by Thursday following their previous work abstention

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

3 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed and one was injured in road accidents in Lalmonirhat and Munshiganj districts yesterday.

In Lalmonirhat, a passenger bus of Navila Paribahan hit a motorcycle coming from the opposite direction near Swarnamati Bridge in Aditmari, leaving its rider dead and pillion critically injured.

Locals rushed the injured to Aditmari Upazila Health Complex. As her condition worsened, she was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, but succumbed to her injuries on the way.

The deceased are Ramjan Ali, 52, and his niece Khadija Tul Kobra, 25, both residents of Kaliganj upazila, said Ali Akbar, officer-in-charge of Aditmari Police Station.

Police seized the bus but its driver and helper managed to flee.

In Munshiganj, Hafizur Rahman, 30, a truck driver, and his helper Abul Kalam, 45, were fixing their truck’s wheel on the roadside near the Padma Bridge toll plaza on Dhaka-Mawa Expressway in the morning, when another truck hit it from behind, leaving Hafizur dead on the spot and Abul injured.

The deceased Hafizur Rahman was from Satkhira, said OC Abdul Kader Zilani of Hasara Police Station.

Man killed in elephant attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was killed in an elephant attack inside Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary in Chattogram’s Banshkhali upazila yesterday.

The deceased is Abu Siddique, 45, of Puichhari union.

“Siddique went inside the sanctuary on Thursday morning to collect sungrass (a type of perennial grass used for roofing in rural areas), but didn’t return home. Today [Friday], relatives and locals went to look for him, and found his body in a field around 10:00am,” said Anisuzzaman Sheikh, forester of Jaldi Wildlife Range. He said no one can enter any reserve forest without permission.

“We provide financial compensation to victims of elephant attacks. However, there is no provision for compensation if an elephant attack occurs inside a sanctuary or reserve forest area,” he said.

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinaipur

Rangpur Medical College Hospital has long been struggling with ensuring safe and effective disposal of medical waste, raising concerns over public health and the environment.

For the past five years, it has relied on a private organisation for medical waste disposal. However, the service has been largely inadequate.

The absence of a proper waste management system has resulted in the accumulation of hazardous waste within the hospital premises, posing health risks to visitors and patients alike.

Adding to the crisis, the construction of a medical waste management plant at the hospital, intended to mitigate pollution and ensure safe disposal, has been halted due to strong opposition from locals.

According to the Health Engineering Department in Rangpur Division, the Tk 3.43 crore project was awarded to Jhenaidah-based contractor firm Gungun Enterprise through a tender process on May 8, 2024, with a one-year deadline for completion.

The proposed 5,500-square-foot plant was designed to include an office room, an autoclave and effluent treatment plant, a storage room, and a container washroom.

Sauqib Ahmed, site engineer of the contractor firm, said workers cleared waste from the construction site and excavated the land for the building’s foundation.

Necessary materials, including rods and cement, were also



stocked. However, due to resistance from locals, they were forced to halt the project, he added.

On September 15 last year, locals formally complained to the hospital director, arguing that the plant’s location near the Bangladesh Medical Association building and adjacent residential areas posed health risks.

Additionally, they pointed out that the Department of Environment has yet to issue a location clearance certificate for the project.

Despite these concerns, healthcare experts stressed the urgent need for a proper waste management plant for RMCH.

Mohammad Istak Mahfuz, co-ordinator (Northern Zone) of Prism Bangladesh Foundation, which has been collecting medical waste from the hospital since 2020, said the hospital generates nearly 1.5 tonnes of waste daily, including 300 kilogrammes of hazardous waste.

“Due to poor waste segregation, much of the hazardous waste gets mixed with general waste, leading to improper disposal,” he said.

Health experts warned that without a sustainable waste disposal system, the accumulation and poor disposal of hazardous medical waste will increase the risk of infections, disease outbreaks,

groundwater contamination, and environmental degradation.

Contacted, Brigadier General Ashiqur Rahman, director of the hospital, said locals not only submitted a written complaint but also staged protests, threatening legal action if the plant’s construction continued.

Dr ABM Mosiur Rahman, project director of the waste management plant, however, said the protesters were misguided.

“Similar waste management plants are being constructed at hospitals across the country. Some people have falsely linked these facilities to pollution risks, leading to unnecessary delays,” he said.

RANGPUR MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Medical waste piles up amid disposal woes

Two-month ban on hilsa fishing starts in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A two-month fishing ban will be enforced from today, impacting an 82-kilometre stretch across three rivers in ten upazilas of Barishal division. The ban, which has been in place since 2019, aims to protect juvenile hilsa (jatka), ensure safe breeding, and boost hilsa production.

The restriction will run from March 1 to April 30, covering the Meghna, Kalabadar, and Gojaria rivers in Barishal and Bhola districts. Affected upazilas include Hizla, Mehendiganj, and Barishal Sadar in Barishal, as well as all seven upazilas in Bhola district.

Ripon Kanti Ghosh, Barishal district fisheries officer, said, “The area is a crucial hilsa breeding zone. The ban is essential to protect juvenile fish and ensure increased production in the long run.”

The ban will affect approximately 46,576 fishermen in the designated areas. While they will not receive separate compensation, all registered fishers are eligible for assistance under the government’s Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme.

Bhanga Police Station OC sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has arrested Md Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhanga Police Station in Faridpur, for allegations of crimes against humanity.

He was detained from Bhanga Police Station and later produced before International Crimes Tribunal-1, which ordered his formal arrest and sent him to jail.

Shailen Chakma, additional superintendent of police in Faridpur, said Shafiqul was taken into custody. However, he did not disclose specific details regarding the case.

DB police from Dhaka picked up Shafiqul around 8:00pm on Thursday from Bhanga Police Station.

Shafiqul had assumed charge as OC of Bhanga Police Station on February 15, and his arrest came just 11 days later. Before this posting, he served as a DB inspector in Habiganj and later in Gazipur Metropolitan Police.

SREEMANGAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Once a learning centre, now in ruins

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Located on College Road in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar, the Sreemangal Public Library was once a centre for learning and a vibrant hub of knowledge seekers.

Bibliophiles of all ages used to gather in the library every afternoon, browsing through its collection of books of diverse genres and contents.

Now, the library is left in ruins and has become a haunted shadow of its former self.

The abandoned structure, including the walls, is crumbling. Its tin roof was ripped off during a cyclone last year. None of the doors, windows, and even cupboards that once housed numerous books are left anymore. The floor is also in a shabby state, with remnants of destruction scattered all over it.

“The library was once a cultural landmark in Sreemangal. Its present condition is deplorable,” said Ismail Uddin, a senior journalist in Sreemangal.

According to locals, the library was

established on July 22, 1983, initially in a tin-shed room of the Sreemangal Municipality Office. In 1984, it relocated to a tin-shed building on 1.5 acres of Khas land allocated by the upazila administration on College Road.

Later, in 1993, the upazila administration transferred the land along with the tin shed building to the municipality, and the library was renamed as Sreemangal Municipality Auditorium and Library.

Till 2012, the library remained functional, before the then Moulvibazar-4 (Sreemangal-Kamalganj) lawmaker Md Abdus Shaheed took over and founded a college there in his name.

The Vice Principal Md Abdus Shaheed College closed the library’s operations and used its tin-shed building to hold classes and administrative activities for eight years. In 2020, the college relocated to its own campus in Matiganj area of the upazila, leaving the library building in a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



The Sreemangal Public Library is now left in ruins, becoming a shadow of its former self. Once upon a time, bibliophiles of all ages would gather here in the afternoon to browse through the library’s rich collection of books. The photo was taken from College Road in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar recently.

PHOTO: STAR



## S Sudan leaders fuelling violence, instability: UN

AFP, Juba

South Sudan's leaders are fuelling violence and instability in the young nation, a critical United Nations report said yesterday.

The oil-rich but impoverished country, which achieved independence in 2011, is plagued by frequent clashes and political infighting.

Clashes broke out earlier this month in two regions, killing civilians and wounding a peacekeeper, with Human Rights Watch recently noting an "alarming surge of violence".

### Shrine set on fire

FROM PAGE 12

a memorandum to the upazila nirbahi officer in this regard.

Yesterday afternoon, hundreds of people gathered and marched to the shrine with lit torches, demanding a ban on the event that drew hundreds of devotees from across the country.

After a brief argument with people present at the shrine, the protesters went on a rampage.

At one point, they set fire to the shrine, stage, marquee, gate, and the tents.

After the vandals left, a devotee in tears said, "I have been attending this gathering for 21 years. We never faced such a situation. No unlawful activities take place here. A group is trying to stop the event for no reason."

Shahidul Islam Jinnah, the shrine's caretaker, said the district administration and police had given written permission for the Urs.

"We have been organising this event for years. Now they are threatening to demolish the shrine," he added.

Nazmul Haque, officer-in-charge of Ghorighat Police Station, said police were trying to calm the situation.

An army team arrived at the site around 8:30pm and a fire service unit around 9:30pm.

"We are working to resolve the dispute through discussions with both parties," the OC said.

### Australia into semis

FROM PAGE 12

South Africa and Afghanistan have three points each. Afghanistan have already played their last game in the group phase while the Proteas will be taking on bottom-placed England today in Karachi.

If South Africa beat England, who have already been eliminated after losing both their games so far, the Proteas would reach the semifinal as Group B champions.

For Afghanistan to qualify, England will have to beat South Africa by at least 207 runs if they bat first and if they bat second, they will have to chase down the target within 11.1 overs, assuming a first innings total of 300 in both cases.

In yesterday's game, Sediqullah Atal scored 85 while Azmatullah Omarzai made 67 in Afghanistan's total of 273 all out in 50 overs at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Atal scored a 95-ball 85 with six fours and three sixes before Omarzai boosted the total at the end with a 63-ball 67 at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

Battling first after winning the toss in overcast conditions, Afghanistan lost opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz for nought in the first over to Spencer Johnson.

Ibrahim Zadran, hero of Afghanistan's win over England in the first match with the highest-ever Champions trophy score of 177, added 67 for the second wicket with Atal before he fell for 22 to spinner Adam Zampa.

Atal and skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (20) put on 68 for the fourth wicket before Australia fought back with four wickets for just 40 runs.

At 199-7 Afghanistan were in danger of being dismissed for a below-par total but Omarzai held the innings together, smashing five sixes, adding an invaluable 74 runs with the last three wickets. Ben Dwarshuis was the best Australian bowler with 3-47 while Zampa took 2-48 and Johnson finished with 2-49.

### Nahid Islam

FROM PAGE 2

At the height of the protests in July, Nahid was picked up by law enforcers and tortured until he lost consciousness. He was returned after a couple of days only to be picked up again when the protests gained even more momentum, this time along with five other fellow protesters, and detained at the headquarters of the Detective Branch of police.

In 2018, Nahid participated in the quota reform protests that shook the nation. At the time, he received threats from the university administration and teachers.

In 2019, he ran for the post of cultural secretary at Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DucsU) from Nurul-Rashed-Faruk panel under the banner of Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad.

He lost the election and later separated himself from the platform.

Nahid was admitted to DU in 2016.



**Palestinians and Hamas fighters attend a funeral procession for 40 civilians and Hamas members killed during the war with Israel, at the Shati camp for Palestinian refugees north of Gaza City yesterday.**

PHOTO: AFP

## Explain how Hasina, others managed to flee

FROM PAGE 1

allies of the AL despite strong evidence and credible allegations of enforced disappearances and murders against them by domestic and international organisations.

Many of them were roaming freely, the BNP leaders alleged, seeking an explanation from the government.

The BNP made the decisions during its Thursday's extended meeting held near the parliament, attended by leaders from across the country. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was the chief guest of the event presided over by acting chairman Tarique Rahman. Both joined virtually from London.

Hasina, the deposed prime minister, fled to India on August 5 following a student-led mass uprising. She is now facing over a hundred cases, including charges of murder, genocide, and crimes against humanity related to the deadly crackdown during the uprising.

BNP Standing Committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said the

government must clearly explain to the public how Hasina and her associates fled the country.

"People are still very confused. The government should at least publish a white paper on the matter," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Blaming the government for its failure to maintain law and order, he said, "Nearly seven months have passed, and the public still does not know how many firearms have been recovered from Awami League leaders and activists. The government should take this issue seriously."

BNP leaders called for the government to take strong diplomatic and legal action against those who have fled and are allegedly conspiring against Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty, and stability from abroad.

The party has decided to demand action against the cohorts of the AL who are trying to destabilise the country, calling for the immediate withdrawal of all politically motivated cases filed by the previous

government and during the 2007-08 caretaker administration.

The BNP proposed that all reform proposals possible before the national election be implemented immediately, while other reforms requiring legal or constitutional amendments be submitted to the House for approval after the polls.

The BNP reiterated that it is the responsibility of all democratically minded and patriotic citizens to support the interim government in ensuring a free, fair, and impartial national election.

The party emphasised that democracy can only be established through free polls where people can choose their representatives.

The people of Bangladesh have been deprived of this fundamental right for nearly a decade and a half, and no further delays are acceptable, said leaders.

The BNP leaders urged the interim government to complete the necessary reforms and conduct the election as soon as possible.

## Shilpakala DG hands in resignation letter after fiery speech

FROM PAGE 12

of obligation [on September 9]. It was my intention to bring financial stability and administrative order, allowing art to flourish within the academy's core principles.

"However, it's no longer possible for me to continue working here, and so I'm submitting my resignation letter to the secretary [of Shilpakala, Mohammed Wares Hossain] in front of you all."

He alleged financial mismanagement within the academy, claiming the administration treated allocated funds as "personal assets".

"My request for a Tk165 crore budget was not fully met. If we [Shilpakala authorities] must repeatedly call upon the administration and still fail to establish a collaborative and peaceful working environment due to bureaucratic obstacles, I don't see

how I can effectively fulfill my role here.

"I've given this decision a lot of thought. It's now time for me to return to my own theatre work."

He expressed sincere thanks to the Shilpakala Academy staffers for their unwavering commitment in restoring the nation's artistic spirit after a tumultuous period.

He further voiced his concerns over restrictions on cultural expression, particularly the prohibition of the term "Adivasi" (indigenous communities).

"We were told that we can't even utter the word 'Adivasi.' As I step down today, I now utter this word and express my heartfelt wish that the Adivasis receive their rightful recognition, that they are free from all forms of oppression and can live

with the same rights and dignity as every other citizen of this country."

Jamil concluded his resignation speech with a broader call for social justice.

"I dream of a discrimination-free Bangladesh, a nation that upholds the ideals our martyrs sacrificed their lives for. We're losing sight of the spirit of the recent July movement, and I sincerely hope that Shilpakala Academy will work toward realising that vision in the future."

However, on the same stage, the Secretary of Shilpakala Academy, Mohammad Wares Hossain, said he does not have the authority to accept the resignation and that the responsibility lies with the cultural affairs ministry's secretary.

Md Mofidur Rahman, acting secretary of the ministry, told

They also expressed concerns over the rising prices of essentials and the worsening law and order situation in the country.

They accused certain business groups, allegedly benefiting from the previous government, of contributing to instability and called on all political parties and professional organisations within the anti-fascist movement to unite against their activities.

They also made the decision to seek a compilation of a list of individuals affected over the last 16 years, particularly during the July-August movement.

The leaders urged the government to provide state recognition, compensation for families of victims, and treatment and financial support for the injured.

They also instructed party members, activists, and affiliated organisations to remain active in their communities and engage with the public through people-centric programmes.

Prothom Alo that he heard about the resignation but has not yet received the official letter that Jamil handed to Wares.

"I'll make further comments after receiving the letter."

Later, Jamil spoke to a crowd of theatre activists outside the Natyashala auditorium.

He said he would withdraw his resignation only if some conditions were met: Shilpakala Academy must be allowed to operate with complete autonomy and free from interference by the cultural affairs ministry, whose role should only be providing necessary legal counsel; the authorities must allocate necessary funds for the academy; and the Shilpakala Academy must have the right to use the term "Adivasi" when it needs or wants to.

unwavering commitment to establishing a just and equal society. We strongly believe that the July 2024 mass uprising was not just a victory against a fascist regime but also a pledge to shape our future. Let us unite, hand in hand, to build a Bangladesh where every citizen's voice is heard, where the struggle for justice and human rights will be at the heart of politics, and where equality and human dignity will form the foundation of the state.

Now is the time to dream anew, to march forward, and build a new Bangladesh.

Therefore, let us all take an oath. Let us unite and move forward with unwavering determination in our struggle to establish the second republic.

The second republic is not an unattainable dream. It is our promise!

### Akhter Hossen

FROM PAGE 2

and became president of the student organisation's DU unit.

In 2023, Akhter floated the Ganotantrik Chhatra Shakti, breaking away from Chhatra Odhikar Parishad on October 3, 2023, in which he was the convener.

Akhter was arrested from the base of the Raju Memorial Sculpture on the Dhaka University campus around 3:00pm on July 17, 2024, just when the quota protest was heating up.

He was admitted to Dhaka University in 2015.

"It's going to be a tough deal to make because the attitudes have to change."

Trump ten cut short the meeting with Zelensky saying the Ukrainian leader is "not ready" for peace with Russia.

Zelensky left in his motorcade shortly after, without holding a planned joint press conference. The resources deal was left unsigned, the White House said.

Trump had alarmed US allies and upended Washington's longstanding Ukraine policy two weeks ago when he spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin and started talks on ending the three-year-old war -- without Kyiv's involvement.

Trump told reporters he had since spoken on "numerous occasions" to Putin.

The US leader has demanded a deal granting Washington preferential access to Ukraine's rare-earth and other natural resources as the price for any continued backing -- even though he has refused to commit to giving Kyiv security guarantees as part of a truce with Russia.

The clash came despite Trump recently softening his tone on Zelensky in recent days, after berating him last week as a "dictator without elections", blaming Ukraine for Russia's February 2022 invasion and echoing a series of Kremlin talking points about the war.

### Democracy not safe

FROM PAGE 12

He stressed that security is a right for all, cautioning that neither minorities nor the majority can be safe unless justice and the rule of law are upheld.

Drawing from the Mahabharata, Tarique said Lord Sree Krishna descended on earth over five thousand years ago in the city of Mathura to defeat the evil king Kansa, who was the tyrannical ruler at the time.

He said, similarly, Bangladesh had endured over a decade of oppression under an autocratic regime, which was ultimately overthrown by a mass uprising involving people from all walks of life.

However, he warned that the regime's lackeys continue to conspire.

Addressing the Hindu community, he urged them to recognise the reality that a certain faction has politically exploited them for the past 17 years, calling such awareness an important realisation.

BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Chattogram City Corporation Mayor Shahadat Hossain also spoke at the event.

### Four lemons for Tk 120!

FROM PAGE 12

"How can the price increase so drastically in just seven days?" he questioned.

Several other buyers shared similar frustrations.

Fazol Haque, who has been trading lemons and green chillies at Karwan Bazar kitchen market for 35 years, said that he had never seen such high prices of lemons. "The lemon price rises at the beginning of every Ramadan, but this hike is unprecedented."

Wholesaler Abul Kalam explained that the usual daily supply of lemons in the Karwan Bazar kitchen market is seven to eight lakh, but it has now dropped to four to five lakh.

"Usually demand for lemons increases during Ramadan, but its supply has dropped this time."

Kalam pointed out low rainfall as a factor behind reduced lemon yield. "The supply is already low, and some traders are stocking the sour fruit to inflate prices further."

Wholesale lemon prices have almost doubled, with four pieces of this sour fruit now selling at Tk 80-100, he said.

Interestingly, just a couple of months ago, lemon prices were at their lowest in years. The wholesale price went down to Tk 5-6 for four pieces of small and medium-sized lemons, said Kalam.

### Israel wants

FROM PAGE 12

hostages each week in exchange for Palestinians held by Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel's military said yesterday it had killed a Hezbollah weapons smuggler in a strike on eastern Lebanon a day earlier, the latest attack since a November ceasefire halted the Israel-Hezbollah war.

Lebanon's health ministry on Thursday reported one death and one injury in a strike on a vehicle in Hermel, the area the Israeli military said it had targeted, reports AFP.

In a statement, the military said the Israeli air force "conducted an intelligence-based strike in the area of Hermel and eliminated the terrorist Mohammed Mahdi Ali Shaheen... who had been coordinating terrorist transactions for the purchase of weapons".

It added that the slain militant had "recently been involved in transporting weapons from Syria to Lebanon".



**REUTERS, Peshawar**

PHOTO: AFP

**AFP, Geneva**

humanitarian programmes. "We have received termination notices for Unicef grants, and they include humanitarian as well as development programming," the agency's spokesman James Elder said at a press conference in Geneva.

**Multi-year aid contracts were being slashed by 92 percent: state dept**

half the countries that we work. "Without urgent action, without funding, more children are going to suffer malnutrition. Fewer will have access to education, and preventable illnesses will claim more lives," he said.

in any funding during these exceedingly difficult times for children is putting child lives at risk at a time when they need support more than ever."

The US has, until now, been by far the world's largest donor of humanitarian and development aid.

**AFP, Rome**

Nations cheered a last-gasp deal to map out funding to protect nature Thursday, breaking a deadlock at UN talks seen as a test for international cooperation in the face of geopolitical tensions.

Rich and developing countries hammered out a delicate compromise on raising and delivering the billions of dollars needed to protect species.

**AFP, New Delhi**

Militia fighters from rival ethnic groups in India's conflict-torn Manipur have surrendered scores of guns and other gear looted from security forces, police said yesterday, days after the state was placed under New Delhi's direct rule.

The Manipur police, in a series of posts on X yesterday, shared photos of hand grenades, pistols, rifles, helmets, bulletproof jackets and ammunition surrendered by ethnic militias from across the state.

At least 307 weapons were handed over in the last week, police said in a statement. The “request for the surrender of looted and illegally held weapons and ammunition has yielded a positive response”, it added. “Such voluntary surrender of weapons

will significantly help in restoring peace, communal harmony and lawfulness in the state of Manipur."

Those who gave up weapons would not be criminally charged, police said.

Manipur has been split along ethnic lines since the outbreak of deadly violence between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community in May 2023.

At least 260 people have been killed and tens of thousands have fled their homes in the northeastern state along India's border with war-torn Myanmar.

**AFP, Bangkok**

The United States issued a security alert to its citizens in Thailand yesterday, warning of the possible risk of reprisal attacks after the kingdom deported dozens of Uyghurs to China.

The Thai government has suffered intense criticism from around the world for its decision to hand over at least 40 Uyghurs, who were flown by special plane to China's northwestern Xinjiang region on Thursday.

Beijing is accused of committing human rights abuses in Xinjiang, including the incarceration of around one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. It denies the allegations.



Beijing yesterday accused the United States of exerting “tariff pressure and blackmail” after President Donald Trump’s latest threat to slap an extra duty of 10 percent on imports from China, citing a continued flow of fentanyl into the country.

The fresh China tariffs, in addition to a tariff of 10 percent levied on February 4, coincide with Wednesday's start of China's annual parliamentary meet.

Washington had “used the fentanyl issue to insist on tariff pressure and blackmail,” foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a daily briefing.

"It has created a serious impact, pressure, coercion and threat to the dialogue and cooperation between the two sides in the field of drug control," Lin said of the tariffs, warning that they would backfire.

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## Break the silence on domestic violence

### New BBS survey reveals alarming prevalence of intimate partner abuse

A major survey carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in collaboration with the UNFPA has confirmed our worst fears: that women are three times more likely to face physical abuse and over 14 times more likely to suffer sexual violence from their husbands than from others. According to the Violence Against Women Survey 2024—based on interviews with 27,476 women—54 percent of the respondents reported experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse by their husbands at some point in their marital lives. Moreover, 70 percent experienced at least one form of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional or economic—at some stage. These figures are staggering, even if not entirely surprising, given the silence enforced on intimate partner violence (IPV) in our typically conservative society.

To understand how widespread this has become, it is sufficient to note that 41 percent of the respondents reported being abused by their intimate partners during the 12-month survey period alone. And the fact that 76 percent of women in rural areas and 75.6 percent in urban areas faced such abuse—with smaller margins of difference among divisions than one would have expected—shows how this has transcended geographical divides. This may come as a surprise since urban households are often thought to be more educated. The types of abuse experienced by married women are also diverse, with the most common being controlling behaviour and emotional abuse, which underscores the severity of psychological violence in relationships.

This landmark national survey—the third of its kind—offers comprehensive insights into the scale and impact of violence against women. Only the other day, we raised alarm about the frequent incidents of rape and sexual violence being reported across the country. Among such crimes, IPV is one that deserves to be particularly highlighted because of the silence around it, with many frowning upon even the mere acknowledgment of abuse within marriages. The survey's finding that 64 percent of the victims never share their experiences—and only 7.4 percent seek legal action—is a stark reminder of how deeply ingrained this silence is. It may stem from a desire to protect family reputation, concerns for children's well-being, and the perception that such abuse is “normal.” Whatever the cause may be, the culture of silence and denial only enables the perpetrators, helping perpetuate domestic violence through generations.

There is, therefore, no alternative to raising awareness and encouraging married women to speak out without fearing stigma and judgement. Equally importantly, men must be engaged in this effort—through education, community programmes, and stricter accountability—to end the impunity that allows such abuse to persist. At the same time, the government must act on the findings of the BBS survey and implement its recommendations so that there are greater protections against all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

## Kidney patients need support at CMCH

### Comprehensive action needed to ensure viable kidney treatment for all

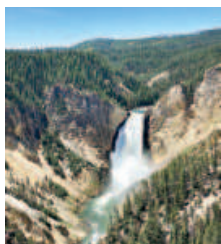
We are concerned about the crisis of space and resources at the nephrology ward of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH). According to a report by this daily, despite increasing demand for kidney treatment, this unit remains overcrowded, forcing many patients to receive treatment on the floor. Established with 25 beds in 1991, it now has 40 beds, but this is too inadequate considering the huge number of patients that flock to the facility from Chattogram and the neighbouring districts.

The bed shortage is not the only problem here, however. Dialysis facilities at the CMCH are also quite inadequate. There are nine haemodialysis machines that can serve only 32 patients twice a week. A public-private partnership initiative, comprising 31 machines, has extended services to more patients, but the number of patients seeking dialysis is still almost three times the hospital's capacity. While private clinics offer haemodialysis, their cost is prohibitive for most. Unfortunately, dialysis is the only viable treatment for end-stage kidney failure (ESKF) patients, so a lack of access can have devastating consequences for them. Moreover, a kidney transplant initiative launched at the CMCH in 2008 was later suspended due to a lack of resources and trained personnel.

The CMCH case sums up the overall experience of kidney patients in Bangladesh: lack of treatment options as well as their exorbitant costs. According to a BIDS study unveiled in December, 93 percent of the families of kidney patients experienced financial distress in accessing dialysis across public, private, and NGO-run hospitals. In a country where an estimated 200–250 people per million develop ESKF every year and require dialysis, the average monthly treatment cost of Tk 46,426 is too high, given that our average monthly household income is just Tk 32,422. As per the BIDS study, 19.5 percent of the surveyed kidney patients received fewer dialysis sessions than medically recommended because of the high cost, jeopardising their health further.

This situation deserves to be addressed with the highest priority. Given the dependence on the CMCH in the broader region of Chattogram, the nephrology ward there must be expanded to accommodate more patients, while new specialised kidney care facilities should also be established. Given the growing number of kidney patients in Bangladesh, a similar approach should also be adopted across the country.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### World's first national park established

On this day in 1872, Yellowstone National Park, situated in the western United States and designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, was established by the US Congress as the country's—and the world's—first national park.

# Will Hasina's shadow continue to loom over Dhaka-Delhi ties?



WINKERS AWEIGH!

Tanim Ahmed  
is digital editor at The Daily Star.

TANIM AHMED

Sheikh Hasina's “leaked” phone call conversations started surfacing about two weeks after she fled to Delhi while facing a people's uprising. The audio clips began circulating on social media with the deposed prime minister feigning a candid conversation, but in fact passing on messages to her party cadres. In one conversation, she said she was not far away, quite close by actually... and she could enter Bangladesh in a jiffy if needed. In another clip, she was heard saying, as she did more recently, that those attacking the houses of Awami League faithfuls had houses of their own, too. The suggestion of counterattacks and incitement of arson was evident.

In his interview with the Indian state-run news agency Press Trust of India about a month after taking over as the interim head of government, Prof Muhammad Yunus was clear: India could keep their trusted ally, but they would have to keep her quiet. *The Hindu* reported on September 5, “Muhammad Yunus, the head of Bangladesh's interim government, has said that former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina making political remarks from India is an ‘unfriendly gesture,’ asserting that she must remain silent to prevent the discomfort to both countries until Dhaka requests her extradition.”

Yunus was quoted saying, “If India wants to keep her until the time Bangladesh (government) wants her back, the condition would be that she has to keep quiet.”

**The interim government has always made it clear that it does not mind if Hasina remains in India for the time being (provided that she refrains from public speeches) until her trial is completed when the Bangladesh government will look to have her extradited. So far, India has not spoken about it definitively and will presumably drag its feet for as long as possible.**

The “leaked” phone conversations stopped surfacing.

Within a couple of months, the ousted premier emerged on social media again, this time addressing large crowds virtually. There was one in London on December 10 that attracted much attention.

The Indian foreign secretary's visit on December 9 provided Dhaka with another opportunity to express its ire about Hasina speaking in public. It was clear from deliberations of both sides

that the message had been sent and duly received. Vikram Misri went back to report to the parliamentary standing committee on external affairs, headed by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, that “India does not endorse deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's criticism of the interim government in Bangladesh and it remains a pinprick in India-Bangladesh relationship,” according to a report in *The Hindu*. And again, Hasina stopped speaking in public.

More recently, earlier in February, Sheikh Hasina's scheduled address



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

triggered mass anger which is said to have led to the demolition of what remained (it had been partially destroyed in the aftermath of Awami League's fall in August last year) of her father's iconic house on Dhanmondi Road 32. This was the same house where Bangladesh's founding president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had been assassinated with his entire family (Hasina and her sister were abroad at that time). This was also the same house that had been one of the nerve centres of Bangladesh's independence movement. It had been turned into a museum and demolition of this house was a loss. But the anger that surged among people was perhaps because Hasina and her cohorts, are still to exhibit even a glimmer of admission, let alone repentance, that they were wrong. The former premier, who will perhaps be remembered as an ousted autocrat, remains boastful and completely oblivious to her misdeeds. Instead, she keeps repeating her intentions to mount a comeback and hold trials of her detractors.

The resulting frenzy lasted for a few days when enraged people also attacked houses of other Awami League leaders in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country, besides the one in Dhanmondi.

The change of stance is obvious, as is the message. India could not have been clearer that it is not going to hold back Hasina or discourage her from speaking out publicly. The interim government will have to figure out how to resolve whatever problems that might trigger within Bangladesh.

While there are no laws to restrict exiled political leaders—or autocrats, for that matter—from making public statements, precedence might be said to have contributed to certain protocols for the host country.

For instance, Idi Amin of Uganda was granted asylum in Saudi Arabia but forbidden from engaging in politics. In fact, it is reported that Idi Amin was under constant surveillance to ensure that he had no direct contact with Ugandan politics. He was never allowed to return to Uganda.

Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines was flown to Hawaii with US military assistance where he was given asylum, but the US refused to let him make a political comeback from US soil. Despite his attempts to maintain influence in Filipino politics, the US discouraged him from such engagement.

Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia fled to Zimbabwe with Robert Mugabe's

might we say bankable?) and will not lay down restrictions for such a friend only to please Bangladesh's incumbent government. Although there appeared to have been some encouraging movement on both sides, the bilateral relations have remained somewhat wary.

The interim government has always made it clear that it does not mind if Hasina remains in India for the time being (provided that she refrains from public speeches) until her trial is completed when the Bangladesh government will look to have her extradited. So far, India has not spoken about it definitively and will presumably drag its feet for as long as possible. If the bilateral relations remain as they are, India is unlikely to extradite the ousted premier to face trials in Bangladesh, for which she could be given the capital punishment. But that will be later.

Following the foreign ministers' meeting in the Omani capital, there was little substance in what either of them said about their discussions. They touched all the points but refused to give away the specifics. But since then, Bangladesh's council of advisers have quieted down on their India rhetoric, while Hasina has also gone quiet in what appears to be a strained détente.

## The real picture of Bangladeshi corporate

Araf Momen Aka  
is executive at Radiant Pharmaceuticals Ltd. He can be reached at akaaraf@hotmail.com.

ARAF MOMEN AKA

The experience of working for a corporation is not much different globally. Commuting between home and work beating traffic or overcrowded public transit, working eight hours, day in and day out, five days a week—six days a week for jobs that require “essential” extended hours of service, in exchange for a steep remuneration for the extra workday per week. Greece, for instance, introduced a labour law in September 2023 that allowed employers the option of enforcing six-day work weeks by paying an additional 40 percent of the daily wage for every 6th day of the week, according to Al Jazeera.

In Bangladesh, however, it is commonplace for employees to be overworked and underpaid. Poor working conditions here is no breaking news, but it is mostly sidelined or forgotten, reduced to a daily inconvenience. Yet, being ranked as one of the worst 10 countries in the world for eight years in a row in the International Trade Union Confederation's Global Rights Index

should give us reason to give this matter a second thought.

Unclear working hours that often extend beyond eight hours, six-day work weeks by default with no additional remunerations, little to no proper guidelines on salary structures leads to the employees' plight. Employees in the lower rungs have little to no wiggle room, and their only motivation, mostly, to continue up the corporate ladder is to someday wear the boot that presses down on them.

Much like most other issues in Bangladesh, no consequence for labour law violation allows employers to treat the law as a mere suggestion, while the exploited labour force bear the consequences. Job descriptions are vague; basic salary structures and gross salaries are often created out whimsically, with the bare minimum being offered. Gross salaries nowadays often start from Tk 25,000 a month, when the rent alone costs between Tk 10,000 and Tk 14,000 in places like Mirpur and Savar in Dhaka.

In my opinion, a “Yes, Sir” culture has also contributed to the deterioration of work culture in Bangladesh. With nearly no objection being raised against the exploitation, local employers are given the opportunity to become bolder with their grips on their employees. What can the employees do to tackle

such a situation? If they protest, the management's common response is, “You are free to find a better job with better salary and benefits elsewhere.” People feel they have no choice but to sit quietly and bear with the blows.

The legal system does little to help corporate employees. Despite all the

**Nobody can argue with the fact that a satisfied workforce would lead to better productivity, hence better growth. But even then, without proper enforcement of the law, it would not be possible to reverse the dystopia that the Bangladeshi corporate job sector has become.**

blatant violations from corporate employers, when was the last time we read an article underlining something as simple as a case against an employer over improper employment culture? We have barely ever heard of a case being filed successfully against an unscrupulous employer, since such cases are promptly silenced and never see the light of day.

The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 has barely seen any useful amendments



NATIONAL CITIZEN PARTY

The new kids on the political block



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza  
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The new kids on the political block have a name: the National Citizen Party (NCP). After some test runs under the banners of Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee, the NCP represents “July’s People” who ousted an authoritarian regime through a people’s uprising. Thus, Generation Z’s youthful exuberance translates into political power. However, history tells us that uprisings and revolutions are only the easy part; governing is the real challenge. The interim government includes three (minus one) student leaders who, I am sure, will attest to this truism.

NCP’s emergence as a political entity promises change. If guided properly, the party can bring in a reformed democracy, ending years of political stagnation. For a country yet to properly earn the guiding principles of the Liberation War—equality, social justice, and human dignity—even after nearly 54 years of its independence, there is an overwhelming disillusionment with traditional political forces. The societal and cultural fault lines are responsible for occasional tremors. The eruption of July 2024 is symptomatic of a deep-rooted molten anxiety. Reconciliation and national unity are crucial, requiring negotiation of the contested narratives of identity, history, and ideology. Whether the NCP will look for national healing is not clear at this point.

Sarjis Alam, one of the chief organisers of NCP, asserts that their party aims to emphasise “citizenship” that transcends the limitations of being a Bangalee or Bangladeshi. This stated centric position, which they call pro-Bangladeshi, is vague and warrants further elaboration. The party grew out of the rejection of the established culture that conceptualises political loyalty as an allegiance to one of the dynasties that has a male heroic figure at its pivot. The “Bangalee” and “Bangladeshi” discourses are credited to two iconic male figures. Despite being ruled by female leaders, the country has never been able to transcend the legacies of its patriarchs. More than three decades of premiership held by female figures

as symbolic heirs have not presented women as transformative figures. Even the head of the interim government, known for his efforts in women’s empowerment through microfinancing programmes, has struggled to create a substantial space for women in Bangladesh 2.0.

The composition of NCP is no different. The euphoria of July’s achievements has started to wane as the harsh realities of politics have surfaced. The unity of the students is fractured by ideological rifts, political rivalries, and allegations of corruption. The new party has strategically detached itself from its rightist members, but not without suspicion. The common perception is that in the forthcoming national election, they might complement one another.

NCP and its allies came together through their opposition to a common adversary: the fallen regime of Awami League. The absence or shadowy presence of the deposed leadership has made ideological rifts within the orbit of the party both visible and pronounced. Different factions with varied political philosophies are now fighting for influence. For some, radical reforms are the logical consequence of an uprising. Others push for a rather moderate and incremental approach. All eyes will be on the NCP to see if our young ones have the ability to maintain solidarity and navigate the country’s complex political landscape as well as the international spheres of influence.

Another challenge for the NCP is its perceived association with the interim government. The established political parties, who have been running the oppositional marathon race for decades, find the NCP as the last runner to finish the race with their baton. The glory for NCP thus overshadows their long-anticipated political comeback. The atmosphere is a breeding ground for suspicion and resentment as former allies are turning into political adversaries.

Some have accused student leaders of monopolising the revolutionary narrative, highlighting their role while slighting the contributions of their peers. This perception

is both politically damaging and historically contentious. The apparent, initial exclusion of private university students from the central committee of the recently formed student organisation Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad (BGCS) strengthened this perception, leading to scuffles between these students and BGCS supporters at the DU campus on Wednesday. Although later developments somewhat cleared the air, with the disclosure

people’s mandate.

I don’t want to discourage our young revolutionaries. They need time to strike roots and sprout shoots before they bloom and yield fruits. But if the maturity of their fruits is rushed chemically and artificially, their party is unlikely to be acceptable and sustainable in the long run. The party’s high moral ground has already been tainted by some allegations of corruption and violence.

grew up with fast internet, instant food, instant messaging, and instant access to the information galaxy. They demand quick results and are notoriously unforgiving. They need to learn to deal with others with mutual respect.

To stay relevant, the party’s manifesto must prioritise the country’s expected demographic dividend. This involves the transformation of youthful energy into economic productivity.



The emergence of Jatiya Nagorik Party (National Citizen Party) as a political entity promises change.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

of the full 205-member committee including private university representation, the damage was already done. One hopes that, with time, these young leaders will have the maturity to adopt an inclusive narrative that recognises the contributions of all factions.

The new party will also have to respond to the grapevines that whisper conspiracy. The party will have to come clean about its funding source, especially after allegations about the paid agency of overseas actors or covert operatives of rightist political parties. We need a proper distance from the event to understand whether the revolutionary zeal of NCP was organically homegrown or strategically manufactured. The challenge for NCP is to prove that they are not a beneficiary of political crises or even conspiracies, but a transformative force advocating for the

Some of the accusations are likely political smears, while others seem genuine enough to raise concerns. For credibility’s sake, the party must come clean, championing transparency and due diligence, and restore public trust.

Let’s not forget: the NCP holds huge potential. Like the student-led movements of 1952, 1966, 1969, 1990, and 2018, the NCP’s youthful leadership promises to offer an alternative to the entrenched political dynasties that have controlled our politics for decades. Their idea of anti-discrimination resonates with a generation that is logged onto social media and globalised interfaces. Then again, whether the Gen Z will be patient enough to work closely with other generations is a point to ponder. We already see the impatience and arrogance that have alienated some of the leaders. This is a generation that

We need education reform, vocational training, and digital literacy not only to fulfil their promise of equality and opportunity but also to solidify their support base among the youth.

To become a credible political force, the new party must learn from historical precedents and strategically address ideological rifts, corruption allegations, and political hostilities. Ultimately, the legacy of the new party will be determined by the nation it purports or helps to build, not by the regime it has overthrown. The country awaits a leadership that has integrity, vision, and inclusivity to change the course of Bangladeshi politics. Even if they don’t succeed, at least they will have some exciting stories to share with their grandchildren about the time they nearly changed Bangladesh.

Maximising energy efficiency is key to our industrial growth



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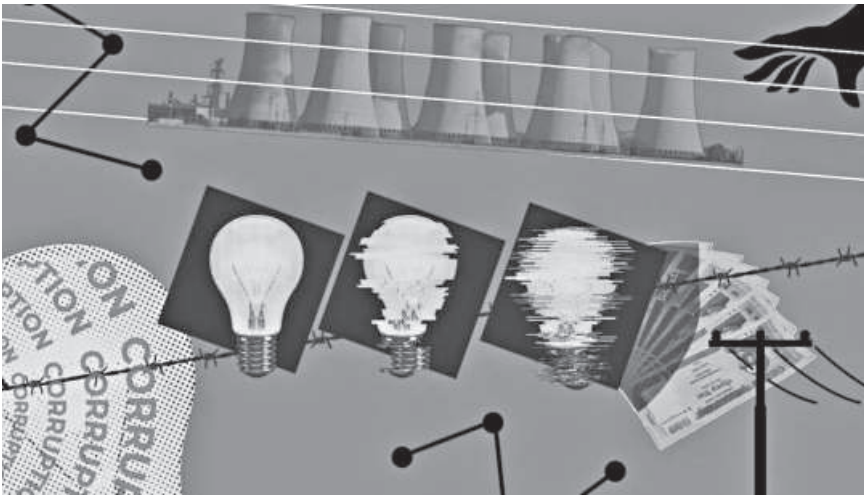
AFIA MUBASSHIRA TIASHA

The need to tackle climate change necessitates an increase in energy efficiency. Global energy intensity has been declining annually since 2015, with significant implications for businesses, governments, consumers, and the environment. Energy security, climate change, and economic stability are more pressing than ever, and both developed and developing countries must take action to address these issues amid rising concerns over energy price volatility and the worldwide focus on reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions.

In developing countries, where energy consumption and the search for clean energy sources continue to grow, energy efficiency is becoming an increasingly important tool for both financial stability and energy security. Furthermore, in developing countries like Bangladesh, energy efficiency has emerged as a crucial component, owing to its commercial and industrial competitiveness and energy security advantages. In addition, the environmental benefits, such as lowering CO2 emissions, make it increasingly valuable.

In FY23, over 10.35 percent of Bangladesh’s GDP was derived from its ready-made garment (RMG) industry. This sector employs millions of people and is the main driver of economic growth. Also, in terms of satisfying the increasing demand for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards for international clients, energy efficiency is essential for Bangladesh’s industries. For example, Bangladeshi garment manufacturers need to meet foreign consumers’ requirements to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

However, the pattern of energy use in Bangladesh indicates a significant reliance on non-renewable resources. Recent data shows that the industrial sector alone is responsible for a large amount of the overall energy consumption, with textiles, clothing, and chemicals being the main



Although energy efficiency has many advantages, several obstacles hinder its widespread use in the industrial sector of Bangladesh.

FILE VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

contributors. Collectively, the garment (15.4 percent), textile (12.4 percent), and chemical fertiliser (12.2 percent) sub-sectors account for over 40 percent of the total energy consumption of the industrial sector.

Given this high level of consumption, energy-saving strategies could significantly lower costs and improve these businesses’ competitiveness globally. Limiting energy use in the industrial sector lowers operational costs, boosts economic efficiency, and frees up capital for growth and innovation. Reducing CO2 emissions and other pollutants also encourages environmental responsibility and helps the country meet its environmental commitments under international agreements. By lowering dependency on foreign fuels and increasing energy efficiency, national energy security and stability can be improved. Effective energy use also boosts Bangladeshi products’ competitiveness in the global market, where sustainability is

is the high upfront cost of energy-efficient technologies and the absence of financial incentives. Furthermore, energy performance requirements and incentive gaps persist, while enforcement of some laws to foster energy efficiency remains weak. Another barrier is the challenge for businesses to shift to modern energy-efficient systems without major investment and technical know-how, as many still cling to outdated equipment and manufacturing practices.

One of the key obstacles industries face is the high upfront costs associated with implementing energy-efficient technology. The swift development of energy-efficient technologies creates a knowledge gap since some industries do not have the expertise needed for successful deployment.

Existing infrastructures and legacy systems in industries may not readily integrate with newer, more energy-efficient technologies. Moreover, industries may be reluctant to comply

with new laws or mandated guidelines meant to increase energy efficiency. In addition, a lack of knowledge about the advantages and opportunities accessible to organisations is a widespread obstacle to energy efficiency. A major gap still exists in the application of standardised frameworks for energy efficiency.

Governments worldwide understand the critical significance of energy-efficient technologies in combating climate change and decreasing industrial energy usage. Tax incentive schemes can encourage businesses to invest in energy-efficient equipment. Grants can fund projects that improve energy efficiency, encourage renewable energy integration, and develop novel technology with environmental benefits. Providing funding channels, incentives, and support systems helps reduce the initial investment burden. Mandatory energy efficiency targets encourage businesses to invest in technological upgrades, operational improvements, and environmentally friendly practices. International collaborations enable the exchange of knowledge and experiences, allowing countries to learn from one another’s successes and failures in boosting energy efficiency.

Moreover, collaborative projects bring together experts from several countries, encouraging innovation and the development of cutting edge technology that improves energy efficiency and promotes waste reduction to help develop a more sustainable and environmentally conscious industrial landscape. Governments should foster a conducive environment for joint ventures, research collaborations, and knowledge-sharing. Also, increasing investment in research and development can address new technical problems and gaps, encourage innovation in energy-efficient technology, enhance existing solutions, and develop new techniques.

As Bangladesh aims to become a higher-middle-income country and be increasingly integrated into the global economy, maintaining growth and competitiveness will depend heavily on efficient energy use. To remove obstacles and realise the full potential of energy efficiency, government regulations, business dedication, and international assistance must come together. It’s time to take action. For industries, the economy, and future generations, the risks are high, but so are the rewards.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Predicament
- 7 Pindar poems
- 11 Piled up
- 12 Latvia’s capital
- 13 Pooh’s pal
- 14 Pop of music
- 15 Seek, as office
- 17 Power unit
- 20 Vigilant
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- 26 Beagle or boxer
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- 31 Green of “Casino Royale”
- 32 Small sounds
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- 34 Ignores the limit
- 37 Too
- 39 Big-billed bird
- 43 Foot features
- 44 Painter Monet
- 45 Artist’s inspiration
- 46 Lent a hand

DOWN

- 1 That ship
- 2 Semicircular shape
- 3 Beam of light
- 4 Left on a liner
- 5 Llama’s land
- 6 Adam’s home
- 7 Baltimore player
- 8 Goes off on a tangent
- 9 Easter quest
- 10 Put into words
- 16 Rural businesses
- 17 Crumple
- 18 Detached
- 19 Fierce females
- 21 “Superman” star
- 22 Michener book
- 24 Unfaithful
- 25 Pipeline flow
- 30 Go against
- 33 Routine
- 35 Engrave
- 36 Portion (out)
- 37 Money machine
- 38 Singer Reed
- 40 Trophy
- 41 Sports drink suffix
- 42 Homer’s neighbor



YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



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dsopinion@gmail.com.



New Zealand all-rounder **Michael Bracewell** said ahead of their final Champions Trophy Group A game against India in Dubai tomorrow



The people of Pakistan are known for their friendly nature and

**AFP, Gqeberha**

Draper continued to play first-class cricket until 1959/60 and finished with a respectable average of 41.64. He also became the first to score two centuries in a match in South Africa's Currie Cup competition in 1952/53 season.



## Mourinho gets four-match suspension

AFP, Istanbul

Fenerbahce coach Jose Mourinho was handed a four-match ban and fined more than 40,000 euros by the Turkish football federation on Thursday for comments he made after an explosive Istanbul derby against Galatasaray.

After Monday's game ended in a 0-0 stalemate, the 62-year-old Mourinho said the home bench had been "jumping like monkeys".

He also reportedly repeated his criticism of Turkish referees.

Fenerbahce said that Mourinho's comments were taken out of context.

On Thursday the Turkish football federation (TFF) disciplinary council handed down a two-match suspension for his comments against the fourth referee and two additional matches for his blast at the Galatasaray bench. They were judged "contrary to sporting ethics".

Mourinho, whose team trail leaders Galatasaray by six points in the table, was also fined just over 42,000 euros.



Bangladesh players celebrate their 45-27 points victory in the fifth and final match of the five-match kabaddi series against Nepal which helped them to a 4-1 overall victory at the Outer Stadium in Paltan yesterday. Nepal, who won only the second match of the series, saw their star player Ghanshyam Roka Magar (bottom) adjudged the best raider of the series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Beating Bangladesh a big achievement: Ghanshyam

Bangladesh defeated by Nepal 45-27 points in the final match of the five-match Test series yesterday, securing a 4-1 triumph. However, Nepal's historic victory over Bangladesh in the second match grabbed much focus, with the visiting team's captain Ghanshyam Roka Magar eventually becoming the best raider of the series. Ghanshyam had earlier played a key role in taking their country to the final of 2024 Bangabandhu Gold Cup Kabaddi, using his experience from the Indian Pro Kabaddi League where he played for Haryana Steelers. The youngster spoke to **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** about the just-concluded series and Nepal's rapidly-improving kabaddi team after the fifth match. Following are excerpts from the interview.

**The Daily Star (DS):** How would you describe the experience you gained in the five-match Test series against Bangladesh?

**Ghanshyam Roka Magar (GRM):** It has been a really good experience for us because we defeated Bangladesh for the first time. We performed well throughout the series. Beating Bangladesh for the first time in 20-25 years is a big achievement. Bangladesh also provided us with excellent facilities here, and we appreciate their efforts. We hope to use the experience gained here to perform better in the South Asian Games and the Asian Games in the coming days. However, we still need to improve and learn from our mistakes so that we can compete at a higher level.

**DS:** What went wrong in the last two matches after Nepal's strong performances in the second and third matches, including a victory in the second one?

**GRM:** Nothing went wrong. It was more



of a technical issue and a lack of team coordination, which prevented us from performing as expected.

**DS:** What is your response to your officials' allegations about poor umpiring?

**GRM:** It was only a technical issue.

**DS:** What, according to you, is the difference between Bangladesh and Nepal?

**GRM:** I think Bangladesh have more experienced players, while Nepal have a

younger team. The only difference, in my opinion, is experience.

**DS:** Some say Nepal's kabaddi team now revolves around you. How do you feel about such a compliment?

**GRM:** No, no. Kabaddi is a team sport, and you can't achieve anything alone without the support of your teammates. There is no such thing as leading Nepal single-handedly. I am just the captain of the Nepal kabaddi team, and I am happy with that role.

**DS:** Nepal introduced a franchise-based kabaddi league like the Indian Pro Kabaddi League this year. What impact has it had?

**GRM:** It was held in Nepal for the first time, and I think it is the second-biggest kabaddi league after the Indian Pro Kabaddi League. It has been a great opportunity for Nepalese kabaddi players and will help us improve in the coming days. We have set our sights on winning medals in the upcoming South Asian Games and Asian Games.

## Ancelotti pleased with forwards' defensive efforts

REUTERS

Real Madrid's forwards have worked hard and defended well in recent weeks to turn the side into a more solid outfit, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Friday ahead of this weekend's LaLiga trip to Real Betis.

Real, who are in second place level on points with leaders Barcelona, have kept clean sheets in their last two matches.

"We have talked about it many times. Not just with Vinicius Jr, with everyone. And they agreed," the Italian told reporters.

"It has obviously changed in the last few games. Since the game against Atletico Madrid (on February 9), the defensive improvement has been evident..."

"Vinicius is helping a lot. It has changed the team a lot, because the strikers are working hard. The team is more solid."

Real face a tough test at Betis on Saturday, with the seventh-placed side coming into the match on the back of two consecutive wins.

The hosts will also have in-form winger Antony available after successfully appealing against the red card against Getafe. Ancelotti said he would not field a weakened team against Betis to keep the squad fresh for their Champions League tie against rivals Atletico on Tuesday.

## 'Spassky was an entire era for chess'

REUTERS

Russian chess grandmaster Boris Spassky has died at the age of 88, International chess federation (FIDE) general director Emil Sutovsky told Reuters on Thursday.

Spassky, who took French nationality in 1978, was the 10th World Chess Champion, holding the title from 1969-1972, when he lost it to American Bobby Fischer in Reykjavik in a contest later dubbed as the "Match of the Century".

During that match in the midst of the Cold War, which he lost 12.5-8.5 despite winning the first two games, Spassky showed great sportsmanship, applauding Fischer after losing the sixth game.

Former world champion Anatoly Karpov, who beat Spassky in the semi-finals of the Candidates tournament in 1974, paid a warm tribute.

"My idols in chess were Jose Capablanca and Boris Spassky. And when I managed to beat Spassky, it was the greatest of victories and, in a sense, defeating something inside me by beating my teacher," Karpov told state news agency RIA.

"For me, Boris Spassky was an entire era for chess. He became most famous, of course, for being the man who handed over the title to



Bobby Fischer.

"But he had chances to win that match. He may have lost by a wide margin, but when everything was in his favour, he let his chances slip away."

Spassky had been the oldest living world chess champion.

"A great personality has passed away, generations of chess players have studied and are studying his games and his work. This is a great loss for the country," Russian Chess Federation President Andrei Filatov told the TASS news agency.

Alexander Tkachev, executive director of the Russian Chess Federation, said Spassky's death was a huge loss for the world of chess.

"Boris Vasilevich lived in Moscow and was in contact with everyone close to him... I knew him in a different way than from books. It was always interesting to speak with him. He was a very interesting story-teller and it's hard for me to talk about him leaving us," Tkachev told RIA news agency.

Spassky represented France in three chess Olympiads in 1984, 1986 and 1988, and was seen playing in the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris during the 1990s.

After his health deteriorated in the early 2000s, Spassky disappeared from Paris in August, 2012 before resurfacing in Moscow in October that year.

"It was my desire to return to Russia, because my time in France had run its course. It was time to start a new stage. I understood it was time to leave," he said at the time.

## Inter and Napoli clash in high-stakes showdown

REUTERS

Neither league leaders Inter Milan or second-placed Napoli are in the best of form ahead of what could be a season-defining spectacle when the two sides meet in a high-stakes Serie A clash on Saturday.

Inter recently snatched top spot from Napoli and are a point ahead of their title rivals with both sides having 12 games left to play.

Neither side, however, can claim to be at their peak ahead of the game in Naples, as a gruelling season begins to take its toll with injury lists expanding at a worrying rate.

Inter have won two of their last five league games, while Napoli, who are still adjusting to life without Khvicha Kvaratskhelia who left for Paris St Germain in January, are winless in their last four.

Napoli earned just three points from four matches in February, with key midfielder Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa sidelined due to a calf injury sustained in their recent loss to Como and winger David Neres recovering from a hamstring injury.

However, Inter are not without their own problems, particularly in defence, with Carlos Augusto, Matteo Darmian and midfielder Nicola Zalewski all sidelined due to recent injuries.

Veteran goalkeeper Yann Sommer is still recovering from a thumb operation and it remains

unclear if he will be fit to return.

Backup keeper Josep Martinez, touted as a future first choice, has already made his debut for the club and is likely to be called upon again.

Despite a turbulent period that saw Atalanta exit the Champions League and manager Gian Piero Gasperini announce he would not renew his contract, all while dealing with a spat with key striker Ademola Lookman, the Bergamo club have capitalised on Inter's and Napoli's inconsistent form to narrow the gap in the title race.

Atalanta have 54 points, three adrift of Inter, and with a home clash against second-from-bottom Venezia on Saturday, they have a prime opportunity to turn the Scudetto battle into a three-horse race.

Unlike their rivals, Atalanta have no new injury concerns and could field Serie A's top scorer, Mateo Retegui, with Lookman and Charles De Ketelaere providing support in attack.

At AC Milan, the momentum manager Sergio Conceicao built with his Italian Super Cup triumph in just his second match at the club appears to have waned.

Italian media report that he is under evaluation following a Champions League exit and back-to-back league defeats to Torino and Bologna. Sunday's home clash with Lazio could prove pivotal in shaping his future at the club.



Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera and captain Jamal Bhuiyan pose for a photograph with the other players and the coaching staff during the team's official reporting at the InterContinental in the capital yesterday evening. Out of 30-member squad, 27 joined as defender Saad Uddin will join today and UK-based Hamza Choudhury and Italy-based Fahamedul Islam will join later. The team will hold their first training session at the Bashundhara Sports Complex football field this afternoon. The team will leave for Saudi Arabia for a two-week training camp on March 5 ahead of their Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture against India on March 25.

PHOTO: BFF



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## Shilpakala DG hands in resignation letter after fiery speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

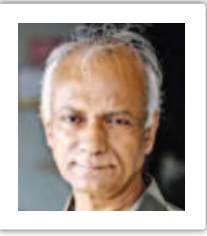
Noted theatre personality Syed Jamil Ahmed, in a surprise move, handed in his resignation as director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday, citing “bureaucratic challenges” and “restrictions on artistic expression”.

He announced his resignation at the closing ceremony of the “Munier Chowdhury Prothom Jatiya Natya Utshab, organised by the BSA training department, where Jamil Ahmed attended as chief guest.

Jamil gave a fiery speech before the audience before informing them of his resignation.

“I accepted the position out of a sense

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Syed Jamil Ahmed



US President Donald Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky meet in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Democracy not safe until elected govt in office

### Says Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman believes the upcoming national election presents a crucial opportunity to build a safer Bangladesh for all, irrespective of religion and social class.

He said that until an elected government takes office, the country's democracy remains at risk as conspiracies to create instability persist despite the ouster of the autocratic regime.

Tarique made these remarks while virtually addressing the biennial conference of the central committee of the Sree Sree Jannastami Udjapan Parishad Bangladesh at JM Sen Hall in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon.

He sought support and cooperation from the Hindu community to help build a democratic election.

Reaffirming the party's commitment to equality, Tarique said that every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, religion, caste, belief, or non-belief, has equal rights under the BNP's policy.



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## Shrine set on fire in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A shrine was vandalised and set on fire by a group of people in Ghioraghat, Dinajpur, yesterday.

Devotees at the Rohim Shah Baba Bhandari Mazar in the Singra area were preparing for their two-day annual Urs, scheduled to begin on March 2.

Urs is an Islamic function observed to commemorate the death anniversary of a saint.

Locals said a group of men calling themselves Sirat-e-Mustaqeem Parishad had been lobbying for a ban on the Urs, claiming that the event promoted un-Islamic activities like music, drugs, and other immoral acts.

On February 24, the group submitted

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## ‘Make a deal or we’re out’

Trump slams Zelensky over not being ‘thankful enough’ at Oval Office meet, says Ukraine leader risking WWII; Zelensky leaves without signing deal

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky clashed in an extraordinary shouting match in the Oval Office yesterday, leaving efforts to end the war with Russia hanging in the balance.

“You’re either going to make a deal or we’re out,” a furious Trump told Zelensky, as a meeting that was meant to ease tensions over the sudden US outreach to Russia ended up inflaming them. “And if we’re out, you’ll fight it out and I don’t think it’s going to be pretty.”

“You’re gambling with the lives of millions of people. You’re gambling with

World War Three, and what you’re doing is very disrespectful to this country,” Trump added.

Zelensky was at the White House to sign a deal on sharing Ukraine’s mineral riches and discuss a peace deal with Russia, despite the US president recently branding his Ukrainian counterpart a dictator.

The meeting came after a week-long diplomatic dance that has also seen the leaders of France and Britain come to the White House to persuade Trump not to abandon Kyiv.

But tempers frayed after Vice President JD Vance said that “diplomacy” was needed to end the war. Zelensky

asked “what kind of diplomacy” and Vance then accused him of being “disrespectful” in the president’s office.

“Mr president, with respect, I think it’s disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media,” Vance told Zelensky.

“Have you ever been to Ukraine that you say what problems we have?” Zelensky shot back.

“I’ve actually watched and seen the stories and I know that what happens is you bring people, you bring them on a propaganda tour,” Vance continued. “Mr president. Do you disagree that

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## Four lemons for Tk 120!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



With just a day remaining before Ramadan begins, lemon prices in the capital’s kitchen markets have skyrocketed, frustrating consumers.

The retail prices of four lemons (one hali in Bangla) at Karwan Bazar kitchen market were between Tk 40 and Tk 120 yesterday, depending on the size and quality.

Four small-sized lemons were sold for Tk 40, up from Tk 20 a week ago, and medium-sized ones were at Tk 60, previously Tk 30.

Large lemons were available at prices ranging from Tk 80 to Tk 120 for four pieces. A week ago, the prices were between Tk 60 and Tk 80.

Md Nazir, a regular shopper, was surprised to find that four lemons cost Tk 120, up from Tk 70 just a week ago.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai smashes one over the cow corner as Australia wicketkeeper Josh Inglis looks on during their ICC Champions Trophy Group B fixture at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday. The all-rounder's 63-ball 67 propelled the Afghans to 273 all out in 50 overs, but the match was called off due to rain after Australia made 109 for one in 12.5 overs.

PHOTO: AFGHANISTAN CRICKET BOARD

## Australia into semis after Afghan match called off

AFP, Lahore

The all-important ICC Champions Trophy Group B match between Australia and Afghanistan in Lahore ended in a no result due to rain, sending Australia through to the semifinals while leaving Afghanistan's hopes of making it to the top four on the brink.

Australia, chasing 274 to win, were 109-1 after 12.5 overs with Travis Head and Steve Smith unbeaten on 59 off 40 and 19 off 22 respectively before rain halted play and did not allow it to resume.

With one point from the match, Australia edged South Africa and jumped to the top spot in Group B with four points in three games.

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## GAZA CEASEFIRE DEAL

## Israel wants to extend 1st phase by 6 weeks

### Say Egyptian security sources; Hamas opposes extension

AGENCIES

An Israeli delegation in Cairo aims to negotiate to extend the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal by an additional 42 days, two Egyptian security sources said yesterday.

Hamas opposes the extension and insists on proceeding to the second phase of the deal as originally agreed, the sources told Reuters. The second phase is meant to include steps leading to a permanent end to the war.

The first phase of the ceasefire is set to end today, and the warring parties have yet to clarify what will happen if no agreement is reached by then. Egypt and Qatar are mediating the talks, with US support.

In a statement yesterday, the Palestinian group urged the international community to press Israel to immediately enter the second phase without any delay.

Two Israeli government officials had told Reuters that Israel was seeking to extend the initial phase, with Hamas freeing three

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শেখ হাসিনা সরকার

সরকার

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

বিদ্যুৎ, জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়

আসন্ন গ্রীষ্ম ও সেচ মৌসুম এবং পবিত্র রমজান মাসে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে পরিমিত ও সাশ্রয়ী বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবহারে সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকগণের প্রতি আহবান

● সেচ পাম্পে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ নিশ্চিতের লক্ষ্যে রাত ১১ টা থেকে সকাল ৭ টা পর্যন্ত সেচ পাম্প চালু রাখুন।

● বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানির সাশ্রয়ী ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে ওয়েট এন্ড ড্রাই পদ্ধতিতে সেচ কাজ সম্পাদন করুন।

● লোডশেডিং এড়াতে এসির তাপমাত্রা ২৫ ডিগ্রী সেলসিয়াস বা তার উপরে রাখুন।

● দোকান, শপিং মল, পেট্রোল পাম্প ও সিএনজি স্টেশনে অতিরিক্ত বাতি ব্যবহারে বিরত থাকুন।

● অতিরিক্ত আলোকসজ্জা পরিহার করুন, বিদ্যুতের অপচয় রোধ করুন।

● কোন কারণে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহে বিঘ্ন ঘটলে ধৈর্য সহকারে অপেক্ষা করুন এবং কর্তৃপক্ষকে অবহিত করুন।

● বিদ্যুৎ সেবা প্রাপ্তিতে আপনার যে কোন অভিযোগ বা তথ্যের জন্য বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের হটলাইন নম্বর ১৬৯৯৯ এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ এবং অধিনস্থ সংস্থা/কোম্পানিসমূহের হটলাইন ও কন্ট্রোল রুমের ফোন নম্বর:

সংস্থা/কোম্পানির নাম	অনুসন্ধান হটলাইন নম্বর	কন্ট্রোল রুমের ফোন নম্বর
বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ	১৬৯৯৯	০২-৪৭১২০৩০৯, ০১৭৩৯-০০০২৯৩
বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড	১৬২০০	০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০২, ০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০৩
বাংলাদেশ পল্লী বিদ্যুতায়ন বোর্ড	১৬৮৯৯	০২-৮৯০০৫৭৫, ০১৭৯২-৬২৩৪৬৭
ডিপিডিসি	১৬১১৬	--
ডেসকো	১৬১২০	--
নেসকো	১৬৬০৩	--
গুজোপাডিকো	১৬১১৭	০২-৪৭৭৭২৪৪৭২, ০১৭৫৫৫৬৮৭৮১



# Poisoning land and lives

## Illegal brick kilns take a toxic toll on Brahmanbaria

Field visits to Suhilpur and Bakail villages under Sadar upazila, as well as various kilns in Sarail and Bijoy Nagar upazila, revealed that most of these unauthorised kilns are built on fertile farmland.

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Afarchan Begum, a 60-year-old resident of Balarampur village in Brahmanbaria's Bijoy Nagar upazila, is grappling with respiratory issues attributed to toxic black smoke from nearby brick kilns.

During a recent conversation, she revealed that two kilns – Banoful and Digital Brick Field – are located adjacent to her village. The chimney of Banoful Brick Kiln is clearly visible from the village's only government primary school. The emissions from these kilns are ruining their homes and the environment.

The dust from the ash generated by brick burning accumulates on their houses, stunting the growth of local vegetation. "Mango blossoms wither, green coconuts fall prematurely, and crops such as lemons and perennial chillies no longer give any yield," Afarchan said.

Even livestock and poultry are frequently affected by the polluted air. During the peak brick-burning season, fine dust particles carried by the wind settle on residents' skin and belongings, many other villagers added.

Afarchan's plight resonates with hundreds of farmers across the villages of Shoshoi, Budhanti, Islampur, Shahbazzpur, Chandura,

continue their operations without interference.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), Brahmanbaria has 177 brick kilns, with 110 operating without licences. Many of these kilns are situated in prohibited zones near schools, markets, farmlands, residential areas, and riverbanks.

Rakibul Hasan, an inspector with the DoE, said owners of 18 brick kilns in the district are continuing production by filing writ petitions in the High Court.

"Despite being illegal, they have resorted to this tactic to exploit the legal system," he said.

Consequently, the DoE finds itself powerless to act against these kilns, even though they lack proper clearance, he added.

During a recent visit to Nazirabari village in Bijoy Nagar upazila, this correspondent witnessed that vast fields once used for cultivating paddy, mustard, and winter vegetables have now been overtaken by brick kilns.

Two kilns – Messrs Digital Bricks and Banoful Brick – have been set up side by side, occupying the entire field near a paved road built by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) a few years ago.

While visiting Rajabariakandi village in Shahbazzpur union under Sarail upazila, multiple brick kilns on

KEY ISSUES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Brick kilns major polluter in Brahmanbaria	Enforce strict regulations against illegal kilns
Respiratory issues plague residents near kilns	Promote use of eco-friendly alternatives
Agricultural productivity severely impacted	Increase public awareness on dangers of brick kilns
Many kilns operate without proper licences	Improve DoE monitoring, enforcement
Soil fertility diminishing from topsoil extraction	Facilitate legal actions against non-compliant kiln owners
Authorities lack effective action against illegal kilns	Conduct regular inspections of brick kilns in the area

legal action must be taken against these environmentally hazardous kilns. If no action is taken, the government officials involved must be held accountable. No illegal brick kiln should be allowed to operate at the cost of our environment."

Md Nasir Mia, member secretary of the Brahmanbaria district unit of the National Committee for the Protection of Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power, and Ports, said, "The fertility of agricultural land is concentrated in the top 12 to 20 inches of soil. When this upper layer is removed, the land becomes barren. A group of middlemen exploits impoverished farmers, luring them with incentives to sell topsoil.

"As a result, two to three feet of soil is excavated from farmlands for brick-making. This unregulated extraction not only reduces soil fertility but also severely disrupts agricultural production."

Experts also suggested adopting alternatives, such as the environment-friendly "hollow blocks", that will greatly reduce the dependence on bricks.

They said when the demand is down, these kilns will have little incentive to carry on with their devastating activity.

Therefore, what the authorities must do is increase the production of eco-friendly blocks while improving vigilance to prevent brick kilns from ravaging lands for topsoil.

Contacted, Azizul Haque, general secretary of the Brahmanbaria Brick Manufacturers' Association, defended the industry, stating, "Brick kilns are allowed to use soil for brick-making until 2025. After that, using soil for bricks will be prohibited. If kilns are abruptly shut down, people will suffer, and development will be hindered."

"The administration should adopt a balanced approach – being lenient towards kilns causing minimal environmental harm while taking gradual action over the next three years against those causing significant damage," he added.

Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Didarul Alam assured that the list of illegal brick kilns is being updated.

"Multiple operations have already been conducted to shut down these kilns, and some operations are still ongoing. Instructions have been given to various upazilas to take legal actions, including fines and other penalties, by conducting mobile courts against these illegal brick kilns according to the rules," he said.



and Rampur in Bijoy Nagar upazila.

Despite the severe consequences, brick burning has been a persistent issue in the area for almost two decades, often occurring without proper permissions.

Alarmingly, authorities have taken no effective action against the kilns, which continue to operate with impunity, alleged locals.

Locals report that some kiln owners openly admit to "managing" local administration

both the north and south sides were observed, leaving residents struggling with respiratory illnesses.

Last year, approximately 50 acres of Boro paddy fields in Lopara village under Chunta union were destroyed due to toxic gases from nearby brick kilns, said locals.

Field visits to Suhilpur and Bakail villages under Sadar upazila, as well as various kilns in Sarail and Bijoy Nagar upazila, revealed that most of these unauthorised kilns are built on fertile farmland.

Alarmingly, many are located close to residential areas and within just 500 metres of educational institutions. Despite the existing ban, at least 10 brick kilns have been constructed along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway, said officials.

The Jinan Brick Field, located along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Chandura village under Bijoy Nagar upazila, is surrounded by agricultural land on three sides. Its short chimney emits black smoke during this season, scorching the upper leaves of adjacent rice plants.

Local residents complain that the transport of bricks and raw materials by trucks stirs up thick dust clouds, damaging crops and covering nearby homes in layers of fine particles.

Almost all kilns emit hazardous black smoke, severely impacting plant life – rice plants' upper leaves wither, mango blossoms shrivel, and trees' foliage burns.

Despite the severe environmental and economic consequences, local residents feel powerless against the influential kiln owners, who wield financial and political clout. While a few have attempted to resist,

they often find themselves unable to confront the brick kiln owners' money and muscle power.

Sachhu Miah, the owner of Banoful Bricks, which was established in 2009 in Nazirabari village, defended his operations.

He claimed, "We are operating the kiln by coordinating with the Department of Environment, union parishad, deputy commissioner, and upazila nirbahi officer offices."

"Although there have been discussions about making blocks as an alternative to bricks, it is not possible. Therefore, as long as there is public demand, we will continue to produce bricks," he said.

Meanwhile, environmental activists argue that despite years of legal violations, the DoE and district administration have failed to take significant action against brick kiln owners. They alleged that before each brick-making season, kiln owners engage in large-scale financial transactions to "manage" the authorities.

Sohel Rana Bhuiyan, a member of Tori Bangladesh – Social Movement for River and Nature Protection – said, "How can so many illegal brick kilns operate in a single district? Immediate







ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

There is a point to this, I think

The lacewings are tiny little bugs that drape the carcasses of their prey over them like a cape to camouflage themselves from larger insects.

FAIZA RAMIM

Here are a few things I learned in the one month we haven't spoken.  
Metamorphosis, as you're aware, is a common occurrence in the entomological world. And I've been watching time lapses of insects, growing and dying.  
Like how ladybugs go from little yellow buds on the tree to an empty shell to a natural death if they are lucky; or to a meal if they are not.  
Changing so much and so eloquently, it's hard not to be envious.  
When you can see the part of you, your old self discarded once and for all and never look back again,

don't you wish you could change like that?  
In their final form, the bright red color they finally assume makes it less appetizing to predators. (Much like humans)  
The lacewings are tiny little bugs that drape the carcasses of their prey over them like a cape to camouflage themselves from larger insects.  
The desert locusts when well-fed are solitary creatures. However, in case of scarce food, they bunch up together to search for leaves to survive.  
There's a point to this, I think.  
I think that you and I are too similar. And this kind of similarity shouldn't come so naturally.

I think we've met before. In a grocery line, or maybe our shoulders brushed while we got on a bus, maybe you helped me up with a change.  
I'm bad with faces. But maybe we met, we touched, and through some form of psychometric miracle that I know nothing about, we exchanged parts of our souls.  
Or maybe you found one of my old selves, shed off like dried skin and decided to keep it because you liked how it looked on you.  
Maybe I killed you because you reminded me too much of myself and I am not too fond of myself.  
And now I wear you, draped onto me like an omnipresent silhouette, for it still terrifies me to be seen.  
I know there's a way of leaving without one of the two being dead, but I can't seem to figure it out.  
In inanimate objects, in memories, the sea of the people I've lost looks like a war zone.  
I thought I had learnt to tame this beast of solitude and be fine with the blood on my hands but it kept turning on me.  
I had become so touch-starved that I clung onto every stranger with a kind smile like driftwood. And you were the only one this far away from the shore.  
But you messed up, you got too comfortable. To think that I wouldn't much rather swallow this log whole, and drown with its weight than to reach out to someone who isn't reaching back just as desperately.  
I'm not sorry.  
I'm not sorry that I only had room for tenderness in my life and I owed myself to not tolerate anything else. Not even once.  
Don't you know why I owe myself that?  
In a dream, God asked me What did I ever do, in this world, of love?  
And I replied that I had, for the most part, not been cruel to anybody.  
"That is not the answer to my question."  
I remember waking up with wet around my eyes.  
What was I talking about again? There was a point to this, I swear.  
Anyway, what are you up to? Nowadays?  
Don't answer that.

Faiza Ramim is in her final semester at IBA, University of Dhaka. When she's not increasing her Spotify minutes listening to Car Seat Headrest, she likes to write sad poems; or sometimes both simultaneously. Her new book New Beginnings and Other Terrible Things is out now.

POETRY  
Titled 'Loss'

SNATA BASU

you pass by an old tree,  
an orb dislocates,  
the treasure of time has folded  
and joined hands with loss.  
no part is left to mourn in the sun of this madness;  
you look up and the root takes you by the shoulders,  
god is frozen in the lip of a fruit  
the tail of a leaf,  
malignant in the freeze is your terrible tragedy;  
you don't love anymore.  
you are frightened,  
your fear is slow.  
in the years of your becoming of you,  
nothing outlives the memory of what has been.  
you don't recognise yourself,  
everything is lost like a fish in Lethian space.  
you have mistaken truth for love again  
and given yourself up forever.

Snata Basu is a writer based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her poetry has appeared on numerous literary platforms including The Opiate, Visual Verse: An Online Anthology of Art and Words, and Small World City.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

This world is full of paper

RAIAN ABEDIN

After Stationery  
Agha Shahid Ali, one day, through his words, filled this world with paper/write to me/so I resemble a dog with a neck like a question mark/striking through pages/writing to you/turning you into a god with every wreath made out of white sheets/at night I look past my window/moon like a bruise hoisted on the shoulder of onlookers/as they draw their curtains/resembling a poem/every poem resembles another/I spent years writing to you/I am 24 now/trying to grow hair on my face/the absurdity of it is that I admire my skin a little bit more/my heart lives inside the vanity of remembering the names of flowers/I could write them down for you/weave them together/it might resemble a poem/or it might be a desert, with large swathes of glass/and an oasis where they will sew our sternums together/and it will rain/do you remember the rain/I am still trying to find ways to describe its smell/my mother says it smells like my father/both of us cling on to words like they were humans/the entirety of a song is a small village/I do not belong there, in those songs/I create with reams of dark ink/I am the night sky/give me words, moon/write to me.

Raian Abedin is a poet, a student of Biochemistry, and a contributor to The Daily Star.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

broken bridges don't burn

ree

when love ends where do we go, when your footprints are no longer flowers-but tar-and i leave poems unwritten-do not tell me about silver linings, i am made of rain-and i stop, i stop writing hey how has it been my love where do we go, when the path ahead is blocked - three buses face to face, 20 taka in my pocket and this keyless map do you think love ever ends? i box up my emotions in containers too small, spilling from my bag like bombs and i keep myself from looking back i haven't

thought of you in days i choose each turn with a careless flair, passing mirages each one sweeter than the last yet still missing the shade i search how do you grow a tree-when the only thing beneath is sand slippery and slowing it burns my feet i stopped writing long ago, the words like the sand, my thoughts-slipping through my fingers, disregarding any effort to grab onto something one grain could save me



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

or break me out of this loveless stupor undo-undo? how shall i undo this? i never prepared for lightning to hit, my tree wasn't tall-i kept it pruned yet it burned i carry the coal with me, dropping pieces, like memory the hourglass trickles on i stopped writing long ago my surroundings bounded by the vast blank not even a rest stop, i have to move for reasons no longer clear to me my feet still carry on i haven't thought of you in days and maybe i have walked far enough

ree hates love stories bc things only work out in fiction, and never for them. their therapist thinks it's bc of anxiety but ree is just plain jealous.

Sighs, ember and lies.

SAFAYAT SUMON

Pebbles strewn pavement  
Keep drawing me back,  
Like the putrid smell of Love and Dead  
That has been reeking like a never-ending proletariat loop,  
Whistle like a wheeze of rustic chest  
Which left back thousand nights of sleepless sighs,  
Now mooring a deep-seated ember and lies,  
And bellowing those sighs  
Around the neck  
Before the dawn  
At the dusk  
And during the long stretching journey  
From my door to bed.  
Poetry: Sighs, ember and lies.

Safayat Sumon is a security professional guarding his fantasy world made up with poetry, pun, and fiction.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

POETRY

Moving forward

SHAERAH SHAMAEL SIDDIQUI

January, unbearably long and tiring.  
But days will pass and blend with one another,  
Swamped with work and sometimes wishing there was more to do,  
Maybe it's an act, maybe it's true.  
One day and it's February, not that soul crushing.  
You are doing better.  
You'd want to see what's next moving forward.  
I hope you fight with your mother when you have a migraine,  
I hope there's a holud ceremony playing item songs right beside your building.  
When you look for the tufnil, you remember it stayed with me.  
I hope you wonder if time has even passed yet.

Shaerah Shamael Siddiqui is a poet hoping to find the right words for her pretty journals and ugly feelings.

DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA



SHARMIN JOYA

A shy and introverted boy from Chattogram embarked on a journey to Dhaka, embracing a new chapter of self-discovery. Today, Zulfiqar Noori Angel—known by his moniker Angel Noor—has become a name to watch out for in Bangladesh's entertainment industry. Noor is making waves as a singer-songwriter, composer, and actor, seamlessly blending his talents across multiple disciplines.

Noor first captured attention with his soulful cover songs, but it was his original release *Jodi Abar* last year that paved his place in the hearts of the Bangladeshi youth. "I never imagined my song would resonate with people. I sing from my heart, and perhaps that sincerity connects with my audience," he shared with The Daily Star.

Noor's musical journey began unexpectedly while he was pursuing his studies in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at North South University. A member of the North South University Shangskritik Shongothon (NSUSS), he confessed, "I am not a trained singer. I discovered my voice during my university years, and it was my friends who encouraged me."

With his unique curly hair and unconventional look, Noor soon found himself in front of the camera. Director Adnan Al Rajeev cast him in a television commercial, marking his on-screen debut. From there, he ventured into

was a learning experience beyond just acting. Their approach to life and their expertise has helped me develop a deeper philosophy that helps me move forward in life," said Noor, who played Nasir Uddin Khan's son in *Boli*.

Despite his rising fame, Noor's journey has been far from straightforward. Determined to be financially independent, he took up tuition jobs to support his education. It wasn't an easy journey, as the artiste lost his mother at a very young age. His uphill battle included facing his family's disapproval. "I grew up with my grandmother, who is probably my only unconditional supporter. The rest of them don't like the fact that I am in the showbiz industry. Many a time, I felt really alone and wanted to give up."

Thankfully, he did not—his talent has subsequently crossed the Bangladesh border. His cover of *Ghodey Pe Savaar* from the film *Qala* led to an opportunity in a film from Tamil Nadu. Additionally, his cover of *Pasoori* was recognised as the best fan-made cover from South Asia by Coke Studio Pakistan.

The rising star will be starring in four films this year—two Bangladeshi projects, including one directed by Tanveer Hossain Probal, and two Indian films, one from Tamil Nadu and another from Kolkata. "I have a significant fanbase in Kolkata, and that's how I was approached for these projects," he shared.

Beyond acting, he remains deeply

**Recently, to the surprise of their fans, famed Indian singer Arijit Singh shared Noor's 'Jodi Abar' through his official X handle and quoted, "What a song." Noor replied to the musician with unbelievable glee.**

television and eventually landed roles in television projects, followed by the web series *Mobaroknama* and eventually the silver screen venture *Boli*.

His performance in *Boli* earned him widespread acclaim. The film, directed by Iqbal Hossain Chowdhury, not only impressed critics but also became Bangladesh's official submission for the Best International Feature Film category at the 97th Academy Awards. It won the New Currents category at the 28th Busan International Film Festival.

Noor shared how actors Mosharraf Karim (*Mobaroknama*) and Nasir Uddin Khan (*Boli*) influenced his acting career. "Working with them

engaged with music. His band, *Angel Noor and Friends*, is actively performing on-stage. Additionally, six of his compositions will be featured in upcoming television projects for Eid. His second original track, *Til*, is set for release during Eid, followed by a full album post-festival.

Despite his growing fame, Angel Noor remains humbly philosophical. "If I never get another acting offer, or if people stop listening to my music, I won't have any regrets. I never chased these things—they came to me naturally. I am simply going with the flow, letting life take me where it will," he said.

# Angel's voice, FIGHTER'S GRIT



PHOTO: ZIAUDDIN SHIPLU

## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



### 'Shohure Sur'

Today (March 1) | 7pm onwards  
Jatra Biroti



### 'Cartoon o Meme-er Rajniti'

March 6-9 | 11am-3pm  
Zahir Raihan Auditorium,  
Jahangirnagar University



### Late Night Comedy Show

March 14 | 11:59pm-1pm  
Naveed's Comedy Club, Gulshan-2

## TRENDY STREAMS

### Netflix You



### Apple TV+ Dope Thief



### Disney+ Daredevil: Born Again



### Chorki Ghumpori



### Binge Neel Sukh



## STYLE STATEMENT

# NUSRAT IMROSE TISHA

The beloved actress Nusrat Imrose Tisha resembled a blushing pink blossom during Mehazabien Chowdhury and Adnan Al Rajeev's wedding reception, which took place on February 24. The wedding event that made headlines throughout the week saw the presence of several industry bigwigs dressed to the nines.

As she posted photos from the reception across her social media accounts, fans couldn't help but gush over Tisha's look in the comment sections. She chose an organza saree in blush pink, subtly embroidered with silver flowery designs.

She elevated the overall look with a neatly done braided updo. For jewellery, she opted for sparkling silver earrings paired with a *tikli*, perfectly balancing the complimentary hues of silver and blush pink. Her funky sunglasses made for the perfect day-time wedding accessory.



## WHAT'S PLAYING

# BAD DREAMS

by Teddy Swims

Teddy Swims' latest single, *Bad Dreams*, from his recent album *I've Tried Everything but Therapy* (Part 2), is a soulful pop-rock anthem that dives into the haunting experiences of insomnia and emotional turmoil. The song masterfully blends warm piano melodies, steady drums, and rich vocal harmonies, paying tribute to classic soul with echoes of Motown and Stax Records.

Produced by Julian Bunetta, Matt Zara, and John Ryan, *Bad Dreams* navigates themes of heartache, insomnia, and internal chaos, connecting deeply with listeners who share similar emotional struggles.

Swims' powerful, expressive vocals perfectly capture a sense of longing and introspection, elevating the track into an emotional anthem.

Accompanied by a surreal and visually captivating music video, *Bad Dreams* treats listeners to both sonic comfort and emotional resonance.



## 1-MINUTE REVIEW

# 'The Gorge': A gripping drama of love and conflict

*The Gorge*, a Scott Derrickson film, explores the familiar genre territory of his other films like *The Black Phone* and *Doctor Strange*, with some light, enjoyable moments.

Set during the Covid era, it follows Miles Teller's character, Levi, a soldier for hire, who unexpectedly spends a year alone in a watchtower. After a brief exchange with his predecessor (Sope Dirisu), Levi learns his job is to guard against whatever might emerge from the gorge, humorously likening it to guarding the gates of hell.

Early in Levi's year-long assignment, he spots Drasa, his Lithuanian counterpart played by Anya Taylor-Joy, across the gorge. Though their duties are split by country, the plot's focus shifts to their attraction. They break the rules, exchanging messages like characters from early 2000s films. Predictably, their neglect of duty leads to complications, and they soon find themselves under siege.

The film, despite its video game-like appearance, is original and feels like a *Resident Evil* sequel. Zach Dean's screenplay offers a fresh take on two sociopathic killers' bond, blending dark humour with emotional depth to create a brooding exploration of love and torment.



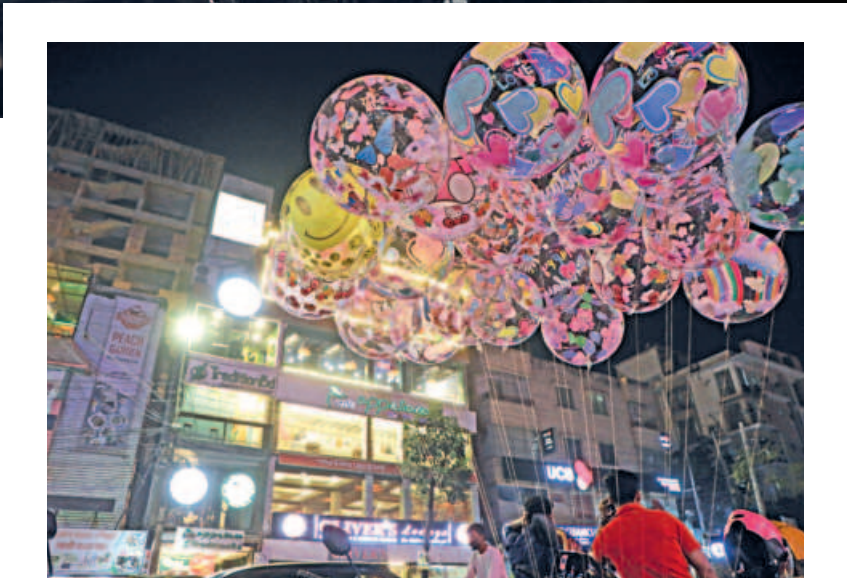




# THE CHANGING FACE OF KHILGAON

From sleepy suburb to a hotspot for business, dining and lifestyle

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS



MD ABU TALHA SARKER

Picture a street with more than 300 eateries, lined with customers waiting in long queues to secure a table at their favourite spots, where a coffee can cost from Tk 80 to Tk 300.

The hustle and bustle of these cafes and restaurants is matched equally by the surrounding area, home to lifestyle outlets and educational institutions.

You may be thinking that such a hotspot for businesses is likely located in an upscale neighbourhood, perhaps Gulshan, Uttara or Dhanmondi.

can observe the rapid growth and diversification of Khilgaon's business scene. There are about 25,000 restaurants in Dhaka, with thousands having sprouted up over the past decade to cater to the demand for hygienic food among city dwellers.

On a broader scale, there are 4.81 lakh restaurants across the country employing about 30 lakh people, according to the Bangladesh Restaurant Owners' Association (BROA).

About two crore people are either directly or indirectly linked to industry, as per BROA data.



identity. Mahtab Uddin, chief barista at Apon Coffee House, shared his perspective on the cafe's success, saying, "Apon Coffee House has set a standard for the restaurant business in this area. Many other businesses have followed in our footsteps, but the competition is fierce. Some have done well, while others have struggled to keep up with rising operational costs."

Alongside western cuisine, local delicacies also abound.

Harvagar Mor, just a stone's throw from the Khilgaon flyover, is known as "biryani para" due to concentration of eateries that offer the popular dish. Among them, Mukta Biriani Ghar stands as the oldest, with its history going back 30 years.

Saidur Rahman Bappi, proprietor of Mukta Biriani Ghar, shared that they started their business with dishes like 'gorur chap', slabs of marinated meat that are fried, chicken biryani and slow-cooked beef and goat liver.

"We later expanded our menu to include kacchi biryani, tehari, and mutton khichuri. We also prepare

Currently, there are over 19 educational institutions in the area.

"I've witnessed the area's growth firsthand," he said, adding that the real transformation began about 10 years ago with the establishment of educational institutions. "What was once a quiet residential neighborhood with only a few schools and colleges has now become home to a wide range of educational institutions."

This expansion of educational opportunities in Khilgaon has attracted a large student population.

Additionally, global cosmetics brands like Herlan, Flormar, and Moon's Gallery have opened outlets in the area.

Tahira Binte Zaman often visits the Herlan outlet with her friends. She shared that she enjoys shopping, having coffee, and more at this location.

"It's been great to have a place like this for shopping and hanging out. We come here with no particular reason, just to enjoy ourselves," said Zaman, a second-year student at Habibullah Bahar College in Shantinagar.

Lamiya Jannat, a staff member at

growth of Khilgaon has not come without its challenges. One significant issue is the rising cost of rent and operational expenses. As businesses in the area have flourished, so too have the costs associated with running a commercial establishment.

Business owners in Khilgaon are feeling the impact of soaring rent prices and rising security deposits. Some businesses, including those that were once staples in the area, have been forced to adapt their business models or relocate to more affordable locations.

Md Abdus Salam, owner of "Karim Books and Stationery," which he recently transformed into "Karim Live Bakery," shared his experience.

"I've been in this area for over 30 years. The business landscape has changed significantly. Rent prices have increased, and many businesses have had to adapt to survive. We had to change our business model to stay competitive."

The high cost of rent has forced many business owners to either downsize or switch to more profitable ventures. For instance, a former bookshop near Khilgaon's main road was replaced by a bakery, a more sustainable option given the rising rent and changing customer needs. Pointing to a building that once housed Faizur Rahman School, Salam explained that the owners previously received Tk 3 lakh in rent from the school, but now they are getting Tk 4 lakh per floor.

Businesses like Cielo Rooftop, Kuddos Fun, Elysian Cafe, Skinologic Laser & Aesthetic Centre and others have taken the school's place. High inflation and political instability have also negatively impacted businesses, with inflation showing few signs of relief.

In January this year, inflation reached 9.94 down from 10.89 percent, driven by soaring food prices, particularly for rice and vegetables, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Imran Hassan, secretary general of the BROA, said no restaurant in the Khilgaon zone is a member of the association. They carry on their own course of action, he added.

Zakaria, chairman of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority, said none of the restaurant hubs in Dhaka are monitored separately. However, they have plans to establish a green zone, under which they will provide training to restaurant staff on food safety and include them in a monitoring system.

Mohammed Alim Akhter Khan, director general of the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection, said they conduct regular drives so that the consumers' interests are not affected.

Raids have also been conducted in Khilgaon zone at different times in the past. If anyone complains, an operation is conducted, he added.

After raids, restaurants found guilty are fined and checked through follow-ups, he continued.

Many banks establish their branches and ATM booths to ensure that customers can carry out financial transactions smoothly and securely. An official from Dhaka Bank PLC mentioned that around 13 branches of various banks are located in the area. For those without branches, ATM booths have been installed to facilitate easier transactions.

Khilgaon's transformation from a quiet residential neighbourhood to a thriving business hub is a testament to the dynamic changes happening in Dhaka. With its growing population of students, young professionals, and families, Khilgaon has become a center of commerce, education, and entertainment.

The presence of part-time workers, especially students, is another important factor in Khilgaon's business boom. Many young people balance their studies with part-time jobs, helping to meet the growing demand of the coffee shop and restaurant culture.

But this is the reality of Shaheed Baki Sarak, which stretches along the heart of Khilgaon, a locality in the eastern part of Dhaka that was little more than a modest suburb.

One person who could testify to this transformation is Ikhtedar Uddin Akib, a final-year student of Bengali literature at Dhaka College.

Akib's and his family have lived in Khilgaon since 1989, witnessing the neighbourhood's significant evolution firsthand. In those days, the idea that he would be able to pop over to a popular franchise such as KFC was little more than a fantasy. But now, he regularly takes his beloved uncles, aunts, grandparents and cousins to prominent coffee shops or restaurants in the area.

Akib, who balances his studies with a part-time tutoring gig while also helping his father manage business, finally settled upon one of the more popular haunts in Khilgaon, PizzaBurg.

This simple anecdote not only highlights not only Akib's personal experience, but also reflects the broader changes in the socio-economic landscape in the area.

At PizzaBurg, Akib's family was seated and quickly began sipping on coffee. After settling in, Akib – who is also quite the social media enthusiast – took the chance to snap a few pictures with his siblings at the restaurant's photo corner, creatively decorated with a variety of colorful flowers.

"We often come here with friends to have coffee," the 23-year-old said.

He also mentioned that he often enjoys pizza. "When I eat pizza, I prefer it with white sauce. It's my favourite, I prefer it much more than red sauce," he added.

"Everyone, especially my nani, really enjoyed the pizza," he continued. "She is definitely looking forward to coming back."

This small, family-oriented outing serves as a lens through which we

In Khilgaon, around 8,000 to 9,000 people are employed by such businesses, with PizzaBurg being just one example.

According to Abdullah Al Noman, head cashier at PizzaBurg's Khilgaon branch, the restaurant can seat up to 100 customers, making it a popular destination for locals and out-of-towners alike.

The venue frequently hosts social events, including get-togethers, engagement parties, birthday celebrations, and family reunions, highlighting the central role of such establishments in the social fabric of the neighbourhood.

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Among these workers are Rifat Rahman Gazi, a BBA student at the University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS), Ajanta Ema, who studies at Tejgaon College, and Rifaz Rashid, who is pursuing studies at the Independent University of Bangladesh.

They serve as members of the waitstaff, with Rashid acting as the team leader. Gazi, who has been working at PizzaBurg for nearly two years, expressed his satisfaction with his job, saying, "It's a great group to work with alongside my studies. I enjoy being here, and I feel it's a great learning experience."

Such trends are not isolated to PizzaBurg, with other popular eateries like Apon Coffee House, Domino's Pizza, Kacchi Bhai, Kebab Station, BFC, KFC, Secret Recipe, Herfy, Cielo, also becoming central to the area's business ecosystem.

Apon Coffee House, a pioneering cafe that opened in 2006, is another local establishment that has become an integral part of Khilgaon's evolving



special food items based on a seasonal basis. For example, during the winter season, we make dishes with pigeon and duck meat," he said.

But restaurants and cafes are not the only businesses thriving in Khilgaon. Lifestyle outlets such as fashion stores and beauty salons have also proliferated, adding to the area's economic vitality.

For example, Sailor, a popular clothing store, has witnessed strong sales growth. Ahmed Sumon, a BBA student from Barishal who works as a sales manager at Sailor's Khilgaon branch, explained, "We're preparing for summer season, as winter season is about to finish."

"Customers buy jackets, hoodies, and other winter wear. We will pull winter wear off our shelves soon. The summer stock has just arrived. We're expecting a surge in sales in summer," he added.

These are not only places to enjoy a meal or a shopping spree, but also social spaces where students and young people can gather, study, or unwind after a long day of classes. This is indicative of the changing lifestyle in Khilgaon, where a younger, more dynamic population is driving the demand for modern retail and hospitality services.

Md Helal Uddin, proprietor of Islam Brothers, which has been in the area for nearly 30-35 years, said the presence of educational institutions was a key factor in Khilgaon's transformation.

