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Moody's cuts banking outlook to negative

Forecasts Bangladesh's real GDP growth to slow to 4.5pc in FY25 from 5.8pc in FY24

STAR REPORT

Moody's Ratings has downgraded Bangladesh's banking system outlook from "stable" to "negative", citing rising asset risks and worsening economic conditions.

The report, released yesterday, highlights key concerns, including deteriorating asset quality, high inflation, and weakening economic growth, which it says will negatively impact the banks' profitability and financial stability.

"Structural risks to banks' asset quality, such as lax regulations and poor corporate governance, will persist," the US credit rating agency said.

Liquidity across the banking system is expected to be stable but tight, with the systemwide loan-to-deposit ratio standing at 81 percent as of September 2024, according to the report.

Moody's acknowledges that the government is likely to continue supporting banks through regulatory forbearance and liquidity measures to reduce "contagion risks".

The negative outlook reflects govt's deteriorating capacity to provide support for banks in times of need

Bangladesh's banking sector will face mounting asset risks as non-performing loans continue to rise

Such measures would mask asset risks and hamper loan recovery, Moody's said. The systemwide NPL provision ratio remained low at 42 percent as of the end of June 2024, which would decrease even further if loans with modified payment terms are included.

The negative outlook also reflects the government's deteriorating capacity to provide support for banks in times of need, the report said.

The report further cautions that Bangladesh's banking sector will face mounting asset risks as non-performing loans continue to rise.

As of September 2024, the systemwide NPL ratio had surged to 17 percent from 9 percent in just nine months.

"Asset quality will deteriorate as the operating environment worsens," Moody's said, adding that "social unrest has severely affected" the financial stability of some domestic businesses by reducing demand, disrupting supply chains, and creating labour shortages.

Additionally, newly introduced stricter NPL classification rules taking effect in April 2025 could further exacerbate the situation, the agency said.

According to Moody's, the banks' profitability will deteriorate as loan-loss provisions increase. Loan-loss provisions will increase significantly across the system as existing reserves for stressed loans are insufficient, especially in light of rising asset risks.

Banks with strong fundamentals

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



SYED MANZUR ELAHI
(1942-2025)

A business titan with unshakable ethical values

MAHMUDUL HASAN and JAGARAN CHAKMA

The business world often thrives on boldness, but in Syed Manzur Elahi, Bangladesh found something more: a quiet fortitude, a moral compass, and an entrepreneurial mind that always seeks to build. And he built the country's leading shoe brand – Apex. He was, after all, a man who preferred crafting legacies over anything else.

Yesterday, he passed away at Gleneagles Hospital in Singapore at 7:30am Dhaka time, leaving behind an industrial and financial landscape forever shaped by his vision. He was 83.

With his passing, Bangladesh lost a visionary who not only built a business empire but also shaped industries, policies, and the lives of countless individuals. His journey was one of courage, resilience, and an unrelenting pursuit of excellence.

Elahi was a "distinguished figure in Bangladesh's entrepreneurial sector and a patriotic businessman who played a crucial role in advancing the country's leather industry," Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus said in a statement. "Through his

MORE ON BI
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Kidney cases far outstrip doctors and facilities

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Medical facilities and the number of specialised doctors for treating kidney patients remain inadequate even though such patients are increasing.

This is leaving many patients without proper treatment, health experts say.

Only 35 government hospitals offer kidney dialysis at a relatively low cost, while there are just 350 specialist doctors for treating the tens of thousands of patients.

Kidney disease is called a "silent killer" because it progresses slowly and often has no noticeable symptoms until significant kidney function decline and life-threatening complications, say the experts.

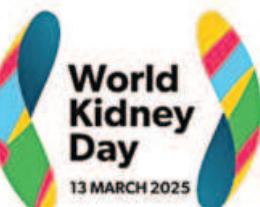
Around 22.48 percent of the country's population or around 3.82 crore people suffer from kidney diseases, according to the Bangladesh Renal Association, which cites a review of eight studies published in 2019.

The association, which represents doctors treating the disease, said that 30,000 to 40,000 people suffer kidney failure every year.

Apart from state-run hospitals, private healthcare facilities also offer kidney dialysis but at significantly higher costs, placing a financial burden on patients. Most private facilities are also in towns and cities, leaving many rural patients deprived of the healthcare service.

As a result, a large number of kidney patients either do not receive proper treatment or face delays, leading to higher mortality rates.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh, along with the rest of the world, today observes World Kidney Day with the theme, "Are



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ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear readers, due to unavoidable circumstances, we are unable to run part 2 of "The disappeared of the July uprising" series today. We will publish it tomorrow. Don't miss your copy. Thank you for your understanding.



IN REMEMBRANCE

It is with great sadness that Pioneer Insurance Company Limited announces the passing away of **Syed Manzur Elahi**, the Founding Chairman of the company on the morning of 12th March 2025 at 7:30 A.M. (Bangladesh Time) in Singapore (Inna lillahi wa Inna ilayhi Raji'un). He was the son of Sir Syed Nasim Ali, the Chief Justice of undivided Bengal in 1946. His only son, Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur, the current Chairman of Pioneer Insurance Company Limited.

Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi was a trailblazer in Bangladesh's corporate sector, a visionary entrepreneur, and a widely respected philanthropist. His exemplary character and professionalism led him to serve as an Advisor to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh on two occasions, in 1996 and 2001, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's development. Mr. Elahi's profound contributions, leadership, and dedication to the country will forever be remembered and celebrated.

We extend our deepest sympathies to his family, friends, and all those who were fortunate to know him. His passing away is an immense loss, but his legacy will continue to inspire future generations. May Allah grant him eternal peace and elevate his place in Jannahul Ferdouse.

পাইওনিয়ার ইলিয়ুরেস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
PIONEER INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

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স্মরণীয় হয়ে থাকবেন চিরকাল

স্যেন্ট ম্যান্জুর এলাহী (১৯৪২ - ২০২৫)

গার্জিয়াত লাইফ-এর অন্যতম প্রতিষ্ঠাতা
স্যেন্ট ম্যান্জুর এলাহী'র
প্রয়াণে আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাত

গার্জিয়াত
লাইফ ইলিয়ুরেস



IN LOVING MEMORY OF SYED MANZUR ELAHI

We, the family of Mutual Trust Bank PLC (MTB), along with its subsidiaries - MTB Capital Ltd. and MTB Securities PLC - deeply mourn the passing of **Syed Manzur Elahi**, Founding Chairman & Current Chairman of MTB, a prominent entrepreneur, eminent industrialist, and philanthropist.

He breathed his last in Singapore at the age of 83, at around 7:30 AM (Bangladesh Time) on March 12, 2025, Wednesday. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiuun.

MTB Board of Directors and all employees extend their heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family, friends, and well-wishers during this difficult time. His legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Namaj-e-Janaja

will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque on March 13, 2025, Thursday after Jumu'ah Prayer.

China says to host Russia, Iran for nuclear talks this week

AFP, Beijing

China will host Russia and Iran for trilateral talks on Tehran's nuclear programme on Friday, Beijing's foreign ministry said.

"The three parties will exchange views on the Iranian nuclear issue and other issues of mutual interest," a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The meeting will be attended by China's Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.

The United States withdrew from a landmark deal that had imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief during President Donald Trump's first term, which ended in 2021.

Tehran adhered to the 2015 deal for a year after Washington's withdrawal but then began rolling back its commitments.

Efforts to revive the pact have since faltered.

12 sued for attacking cops

FROM PAGE 12

districts since February 27. I was over 350 kilometres from Dhaka, yet I have been falsely implicated in the case," Arman told The Daily Star yesterday evening, claiming he was speaking from Naogaon.

"This seems like a continuation of the way the police used to file false cases against opposition leaders and activists during the fascist regime," he added.

Another accused, Chhatra Federation's President Mashirul Rahman Richard, said he was in the capital's Dhamondi when the clash took place.

"Police filed a false case against me," he told The Daily Star.

The other named accused are Meghmallar Basu, DU unit president of a faction of Chhatra Union; the unit's General Secretary Maelen Ahmed; Saikat Arif, general secretary of Chhatra Federation; Al Amin Rahman, president of Chhatra Federation's Dhaka city unit; Fahim Ahmed Chowdhury, general secretary of Ganatantrik Chhatra Council; Sumaiya Shahina, president of Eden Mahila College unit of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front; and Chhatra Federation activists Hasan Sikder and Sima Akter; Adrita Ray and Aung Aung Marma.

The protest was organised by the platform "Bangladesh Against Rape and Oppression" amid a recent rise in reports of rape and other forms of violence against women and children.

In the case statement, Khair said police stopped the protesters in front of the hotel and urged them not to obstruct the road, citing the need to ensure the chief adviser's security and maintaining smooth traffic flow.

Ignoring the call, stick-wielding protesters attempted to break the barricade, attacked police personnel and hurled brick chunks at them, leaving seven police personnel injured, according to the case statement.

Protesters earlier said it was the police who attacked their peaceful demonstration.

Asked about the inclusion of Arman and Richard in the case even though they claim that they were not present during the clash, Khair told The Daily Star, "We filed the case after collecting information. If there is any mistake, the investigation officer will correct it during the probe."

PHQ PROTESTS

The Police Headquarters alleged that images published in the media failed to depict the context of the clash accurately.

It claimed that footage showed protesters attacked officers before the law enforcers tried to contain the situation.

It said police stopped the protesters, considering the safety of key state establishments and smooth traffic flow during Ramadan.

Despite repeated requests to disperse, the protesters began throwing bricks at the police, read the statement.

It said an assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police was seriously injured. A deputy commissioner of DMP and four other officers were also wounded, the PHQ said.

It expressed concern over what it called a "partial representation of the incident", urging media outlets to maintain responsible journalism while covering such events.

The Bangladesh Police Service Association also protested against the attack on law enforcers.



Police use water cannon to disperse primary school teachers who were marching towards the chief adviser's residence demanding their institutions be nationalised. The photo was taken near the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

A business titan with unshakable ethical values

FROM PAGE 1

relentless efforts, Apex Footwear became one of the nation's leading footwear exporters," he said.

Elahi was born into prestige. His father, Sir Syed Nasim Ali, a towering legal figure, was the chief justice of undivided Bengal. It would have been natural, expected even, for the young Elahi to follow in those judicial footsteps. But he had little interest in courtroom.

Elahi began his career with a tobacco giant, enjoying the stability of a corporate job. However, he was restless. There was a fire within him that refused to be tamed by the monotony of a predictable career path. He longed for something greater -- a challenge, a purpose, a legacy. In an act of daring defiance, he pivoted to the leather business in Dhaka's Hazaribagh area, an industry known for its challenging working conditions.

His decision was unconventional but laid the foundation for one of South Asia's most successful footwear brands. He turned obstacles into opportunities, refusing to let circumstances define him.

At a time when Bangladesh's leather industry primarily focused on raw material exports, Elahi saw an opportunity to create value-added products. With persistence and business acumen, he built Apex Footwear into the country's top shoe manufacturer, expanding both locally and internationally.

Today, Apex exports to more than 50 countries and has a vast retail presence across Bangladesh with 250 stores, setting new standards for quality and design in the region's footwear market.

The company's revenue stood at Tk 1,497 crore in the fiscal year 2023-24, including Tk 481 crore in export earnings. Its closest competitor, the multinational corporation Bata, reported an annual revenue of Tk 987

crore for 2023.

Beyond his business achievements, Elahi, the chairman of Apex, played a key role in Bangladesh's industrial growth. He advocated for better working conditions in the tannery sector and was instrumental in its modernisation. His influence extended beyond Apex as he contributed to trade policies and industrial reforms.

The first namaz-e-janaza will be held on the East West University premises, Dhaka, at 10:30am today.

The second namaz-e-janaza will take place after Zohr prayers at Azad Masjid, Gulshan-2, Dhaka.

Syed Manzur Elahi will be laid to rest at the Banani Graveyard.

His early years took him to St. Xavier's College in Kolkata, followed by a Master's in Economics from Dhaka University. A stint at British American Tobacco gave him a taste of corporate life, but his ambitions lay elsewhere. His break came not from the boardrooms of multinational firms but from an unexpected source: a French businessman who gave him a modest opportunity to trade leather between Dhaka and Paris. From that small opening, he built an empire.

Apex Footwear and Apex Tannery became Bangladesh's leading names in leather and footwear exports, feeding into a global demand for high quality products. Elahi's leadership stretched beyond these

two companies. He was a founding force behind Mutual Trust Bank and Pioneer Insurance. His wisdom and vision guided East West University, Sunbeams School, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Freedom Foundation, institutions that would shape minds, industries, and social change for generations.

The government twice turned to him for leadership, appointing him an adviser to caretaker administrations. His voice was trusted, his judgment sought, his integrity unwavering. His presence was felt across the Bangladesh Association of Banks, Bangladesh Bank, the Centre for Policy Dialogue and the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He advised on banking regulations, industrial policy, and governance, helping to stabilise and steer Bangladesh's economic trajectory.

Recognition came, though he never seemed to chase it. The American Chamber of Commerce named him Business Executive of the Year in 2000. Two years later, he was Business Person of the Year awarded by The Daily Star and DHL. In 2019, the UK Bangladesh Catalysts of Commerce and Industry gave him a Lifetime Achievement Award, a fitting nod to a man who had spent decades quietly shaping the contours of commerce. In 2023, The Daily Star and DHL conferred upon him a Lifetime Achievement Award for his pioneering role in business.

Loss, too, visited him. In 2020, his wife, Niloufer Manzur, the founder of Sunbeams School, was taken by the pandemic. It was a grief that weighed heavily, yet he carried on -- perhaps more subdued, but no less committed to the enterprises and institutions he had built.

ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

In 1975, amid the government's privatisation of loss-making tanneries, Elahi successfully acquired Orient Tannery, marking his entry into

mainstream leather manufacturing. This venture laid the foundation for Apex, which he took public in 1982 to finance capital-intensive operations. In 1990, he expanded into footwear manufacturing.

It was not an easy road. Early on, Apex faced quality control issues. After securing an order from Japan's largest shoe retailer, Marutomi, 97 percent of the shoes failed quality tests. It was a crushing blow. But Elahi did not waver. He took the setback as a lesson, refining Apex's manufacturing processes and elevating its standards to global levels.

"Today, his story reaches its final chapter. But legends do not end; they echo. His name will be whispered in boardrooms, etched into ambition, and carried in the steps of those who walk in his shoes -- quite literally," Apex said in a statement.

His unwavering belief in Bangladesh's potential propelled him forward. He championed the use of technology to give Apex a competitive edge, ensuring that "Made in Bangladesh" became synonymous with quality in the global footwear industry.

Elahi's leadership philosophy was centred on power-sharing, selecting the right people, and fostering an environment conducive to growth.

"You should try to conduct a meeting or run an organisation through respect, not fear. Respect is a much stronger affection than love," he often said.

Elahi leaves behind his beloved family -- his daughter Munizur Manzur, son Syed Nasim Manzur, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends.

Now, he is gone. But the legacies of figures like him do not simply fade. "His legacy shall endure as a man who refused to be anything but extraordinary -- Bangladesh stands indebted to you," Apex said.

Moody's cuts banking outlook

FROM PAGE 1

will see improvements in net interest margins (NIMs) as lending rates remain elevated after the removal of an interest rate cap by the central bank while benefiting from decreases in deposit costs amid a flight to safety among depositors.

On the other hand, NIMs for banks with worsening asset quality will decline as the proportion of interest yielding loans shrinks.

The agency projects Bangladesh's real GDP growth will slow to 4.5 percent in the fiscal year ending June 2025, from 5.8 percent the previous year.

"The operating environment will deteriorate due to economic slowdown and a high inflation rate," Moody's said.

The slowdown is driven by a combination of political and social instability, disruptions in supply chains within the garment sector, and weakening demand, both domestically and internationally.

Furthermore, Bangladesh's central bank has raised policy rates from 6 percent to 10 percent over 15 months in an attempt to curb inflation, which is expected to remain high at 9.8 percent in 2025.

High inflation and unemployment rates will limit the interim government's political capital to implement significant reforms, according to the report.

The interim government's fiscal capacity to provide support will be limited and deteriorating, further constrained by its lack of political power, the report observes.

Despite these challenges, Moody's noted overall capitalisation is expected to remain stable due to slower credit growth.

However, state-owned banks remain particularly vulnerable, with an average capital-to-risk-weighted-assets ratio of 2.5 percent as of September 2024, well below the private sector average of 9.4 percent and regulatory minimums.

"State-owned banks will remain undercapitalised because of weak profitability that is strained by high levels of NPLs and the absence of government capital infusions," Moody's said.

Kidney cases far outstrip doctors and facilities

FROM PAGE 1

Your Kidneys OK? Detect Early, Protect Kidney Health".

Katha Majumder (real name withheld) said her mother, now in her mid 50s, has been suffering from kidney disease for a long time. However, her condition worsened after contracting Covid-19 in mid-2020.

She has been undergoing dialysis since then.

After changing hospitals three times, she is now receiving dialysis twice a week at Anwar Khan Modern Medical College Hospital. The hospital charges Tk 4,500 per session, meaning that they have to spend approximately Tk 40,000 per month on dialysis alone.

She said it requires another Tk 40,000 on injections, blood, and medicine, she said. "We have to spend Tk 80,000 per month. This is a huge financial pressure."

Responding to another query, she said that they did not consider a kidney transplant due to its high cost, her mother's age, and the possible complications after the procedure.

Farhad Hasan Chowdhury, member secretary of Bangladesh

Renal Association, said dialysis and kidney transplant are the only treatment available for kidney patients in the fourth and fifth stages of the disease.

However, only 35 government medical colleges and specialised hospitals currently have dialysis facilities, he said in his written speech at a press conference yesterday.

Although dialysis facilities are available at several private healthcare facilities, around 70 percent of these are concentrated in Dhaka. A very few district towns have these facilities, he mentioned.

For this, patients often have to travel to other cities with their attendants, making treatment costly and burdensome, Farhad added.

Besides, there are only 350 kidney specialists across government and private hospitals, meaning that there is just one specialist for every 5 lakh people.

In contrast, in the US, there is one kidney specialist for every 50,000 people. In India, there is one for every 3 lakh, he mentioned.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Farhad explained that there is a huge cost difference between dialysis at

government and private hospitals.

While government hospitals charge Tk 400 per dialysis session, the cost at private facilities ranges from Tk 3,000 to Tk 10,000.

However, dialysis facilities at government hospitals are severely inadequate, forcing many patients to seek treatment at private hospitals. But the majority can afford it for only a few months, he added.

Farhad, also an assistant professor at the Muggla Medical College and Hospital, said they can provide dialysis to only 120 patients daily.

However, around 800 patients are currently on the waiting list, and it is impossible to say when they will get the service, he added.

At the press conference, Farhad said that although kidney transplant began in 1982, the country is lagging behind its neighbours due to donor shortage.

He added that the existing capacity of the country's healthcare system can provide dialysis or kidney transplant facilities to only 15 to 20 percent of patients.

"This means around 80 percent of patients die without getting proper treatment or any treatment," he

added.

PREVENTION

Prof Muhibur Rahman, head of nephrology department at Popular Medical College and Hospital, said many do not know that they have kidney diseases.

He said that there may be no symptoms until 80 percent of the kidney is damaged as the harm occurs gradually. By the time it is detected, the damage is often at an advanced stage.

"People with diabetic, hypertension, or a family history of kidney disease and those who smoke are more vulnerable to this disease," Prof Muhibur said.

Given the high costs of kidney treatment, he stressed that more emphasis should be given on prevention. He recommended that everyone undergo at least two tests -- blood (serum creatinine) and urine (albumin-to-creatinine ratio) -- for early detection of kidney disease.

Prof MA Samad, head of nephrology department at the Anwar Khan Modern Medical College and Hospital, said 10 percent of the patients are unable to afford the high cost of treatment.

Prof Muhammad Nazrul Islam, convener of Bangladesh Renal Association, said there is a severe shortage of kidney donors, as the scope for donating kidneys is limited by the law.

The association has called for an expansion of dialysis facilities to every district, increased collaboration among different doctors' organisations, and the timely promotion of kidney specialists to address these challenges.

This correspondent could not reach Prof Abu Jafor, director general of Directorate General of Health Services, for comment.

Zainal Abedin Tito, line director of Hospital Services Management, said as the number of kidney patients is rising, there should be a kidney unit at every district hospital.

The government is working on the issue, he told The Daily Star recently.

The DGHS is now implementing a project to upgrade kidney units at government medical colleges to 50-bed units and establish dialysis centres at district hospitals, DGHS source said.

ত্রুটি এ রিপোর্ট রিপোর্টের পার্শ্বে
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Π

Govt to shift NID services to independent authority

EC staff to stage demo today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Identity Card (NID) services will remain under the Election Commission (EC) for now but will eventually be transferred to an independent data authority, said Faiz Ahmed Tayab, special assistant to the chief adviser for the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

Speaking at a press conference titled "Ownership of NID" held at the ICT Building yesterday, he said, "We are establishing a Data Authority, not shutting down the EC's IT cell. For now, everything will remain unchanged but will be regulated through the new authority."

"No one will lose their job; instead, new employment opportunities will be created," he said, adding that the move will not place NID operations under any ministry.

Meanwhile, EC officials and employees have announced a two-hour nationwide demonstration today, demanding that NID

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For the fifth year running, UNDP and The Daily Star gave five women the "Nirbhaya" award yesterday for championing the cause of women changemakers from grassroots communities. They received crests and certificates during a ceremony at IDB Auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

PRY SCHOOL TEACHERS Cops use water cannons, batons on protesters

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday charged batons and used water cannons to disperse a procession of non-government primary school teachers demanding nationalisation of their institutions.

At least six people, including two women, were hurt in the incident near the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka. They took primary treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said hospital sources.

Police and witnesses said the incident took place around 1:30pm when the teachers started a procession towards the state guest house Jamuna, the residence of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, from the Jatiya Press Club to press their demand.

Shahinur Rahman, one of the injured, told reporters that they were marching towards Jamuna with a legitimate demand, but police used water cannons and charged batons on them.

Khalid Mansur, officer-in-charge (OC) of Shahbagh Police Station, said a protest procession of the teachers was marching towards Jamuna when police tried to stop them near the Kadam Foara.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Fearless champions of change

Five grassroots women changemakers get 'Nirbhaya' award by UNDP Bangladesh, Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Born into poverty and forced into an abusive marriage at a young age, Rogina Begum from Pirojpur seemed destined for a life of hardship.

Despite enduring physical and emotional torment, she remained silent, believing that leaving her husband's home would only lead to more suffering.

However, her determination to build a better future for her children kept her going.

Working as a domestic helper and tutor, Rogina's life took a turn when she was selected for UNDP's SWAPNO Project. The programme provided stable employment and financial literacy training, ultimately transforming her life.

With her earnings, she invested in livestock and small-scale fish farming, creating a sustainable income.

As part of the celebration of International Women's Day 2025, Rogina was honoured with the "Nirbhaya" (Fearless) award by The Daily Star and UNDP Bangladesh, alongside four other women -- Nazrul Islam Ritu, Tandra Mollik, Champa Chakma, and Kabita Banerjee.

This was the fifth edition of the "Nirbhaya" initiative.

The women were recognised for championing female changemakers in grassroots communities at a ceremony at the IDB Auditorium of the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

At the event, Rogina shared how she became a force for change in her community. She collects school supplies from affluent individuals and distributes them to underprivileged children, finding joy in their smiles.

Through regular training, she has gained knowledge to support others, particularly women struggling due to a lack of education.

She ensures they receive medical care and provides warm clothes during winter to ease their hardships. "I wish to raise my children well and achieve greater success," she said.

Nazrul Islam Ritu, the first elected union parishad chairperson from Bangladesh's hijra community, shared how she transformed Trilochanpur Union Parishad in Jhenaidah through inclusive leadership.

She spoke about earning the trust of her community, which led her to run for the UP chair.

Ritu also emphasised the importance of women's leadership.

As chairperson, she has resolved numerous

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



We must
remember the
human stories
behind these
figures -- the
individuals
who are the
true agents of
change.

STEFAN LILLER
Resident
representative of
UNDP Bangladesh

Ensure justice in hills and plains Demand indigenous students protesting surge in gender-based violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous students yesterday called for the formation of a speedy trial tribunal to ensure justice for victims of gender-based violence in both the hills and plains.

The protest was held at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture at Dhaka University, in response to the increasing incidents of rape and violence against women, including the recent rape of an indigenous woman in Ruma, Bandarban.

Ananta Tanchangya, president of the Bangladesh Adivasi Sangram Parishad, presided over the event, while Hlamangpru Marma, organising secretary of the Parbatya Chattogram Pahari Chhatria Parishad Dhaka Metropolitan Branch, conducted it.

Several indigenous leaders, including Dipayan Khisa, central member of the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti, and Rumen Chakma, general secretary of PCP's central committee, expressed solidarity.

Dipayan Khisa condemned the ongoing violence, saying, "Is this the country we fought for? The same Rupaiya Shrestha who led the uprising

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Gambian foreign minister calls on CA

BSS, Dhaka

Gambian Foreign Minister Mamadou Tangara called on Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday.

The foreign minister apprised the chief adviser about the genocide case against Myanmar that his country instituted and was pursuing to bring justice for the much-persecuted Rohingya Muslims.

"We want to put this issue back on the map," Tangara said.

Tangara thanked Gambia for taking up the cause of the Rohingya people and the African nation's persistent commitment and continued efforts.

He also called for deeper trade and cooperation between the two nations.

The two leaders also expressed satisfaction at signing an agreement to jointly work in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

WE DEEPLY MOURN



Syed Manzur Elahi

(26 September 1942 - 12 March 2025)

ICC Bangladesh is deeply shocked and grieved at the sad demise of ICC Bangladesh Founding Member and Chairman of Apex Group of Industries Syed Manzur Elahi in Singapore at 9.30 am on Wednesday, 12 March 2025. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un. Mr. Elahi was the current and founding Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank PLC and sponsor Director of International Publications Limited (The Financial Express).

We remember with gratitude his unqualified support, contribution, guidance and active participation since ICC Bangladesh started its journey in the 90s. He has served as ICC Bangladesh Executive Board Member for a number of years.

He was appointed Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, twice (1996 & 2001) for his integrity, leadership, professionalism and non-partisanship. He was President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka; Bangladesh Employers Association (BEA); Dhaka University Alumni Association (DUAA) and Honorary Consul for Belgium in Bangladesh.

Mr. Elahi has served as Chairman of the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB), Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd. (CDBL), Credit Rating Agency of Bangladesh (CRAB), Manusher Jonno Foundation, MTB Foundation and Sunbeams School Ltd.; Vice Chairman of the Bangladesh Association of Publicly Listed Companies (BAPLC), Director on the Boards of Bangladesh Bank, Sonali Bank and Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

Mr. Elahi was awarded "Business Executive of the Year 2000" by the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), Bangladesh and "Business Person of the Year 2002" by the Daily Star and DHL Worldwide Express & "Lifetime Achievement Award" of the UK-Bangladesh Catalysts of Commerce and Industry (UKBCCI).

He was also the Chairman of Apex Pharma Ltd., Blue Ocean Footwear Ltd. (Joint Venture with Taiwan), Apex Enterprises Ltd. (Holding Company), Apex Investments Ltd. (Licensed stock brokerage), Grey Advertising (Bangladesh) Ltd. (Joint Venture with USA) and Quantum Consumer Solutions Ltd. (Joint venture with India).

May Allah rest his soul in peace in heaven.



International Chamber of Commerce - Bangladesh
The world business organization

CONDOLENCE MESSAGE



Syed Manzur Elahi

The Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) is deeply saddened by the passing of Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi, a distinguished industrialist and business leader. He passed away on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at Gleneagles Hospital in Singapore at 9:30 AM Singapore time (7:30 AM Bangladesh time). Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un. His loss will be profoundly felt both personally and nationally, especially within the business community and by all who had the privilege of knowing him. A quiet mentor to many, his business acumen, integrity, and kindness remain an enduring example adding immense value to strengthening corporate governance and empowering various social organisations.

Mr. Elahi served as MCCI President in 1990 and 1991 and as President of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation in 2005-06 and 2006-07. Under his leadership, MCCI played a pivotal role in shaping Bangladesh's trade and commerce landscape, particularly in advancing the revenue generation system.

As the visionary leader of Apex Group, one of the country's prominent conglomerates, Mr. Elahi's illustrious career spanned multiple industries. He was recognized with accolades such as "Business Executive of the Year 2000" and "Business Person of the Year 2002." He also served as an Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh in 1996 and 2001.

MCCI extends its heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family and requests prayers for his departed soul. May Allah grant him Jannatul Firdous and bless his family with patience and strength.

Ameen



Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka

A DAY IN COURT

Of 'preventing measure' against anti-govt slogans

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Former state minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak was brought to a courtroom of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court of Dhaka from its lockup yesterday.

Wearing a police helmet and bulletproof vest, Palak was escorted from the lockup at 9:30am, flanked by police officers. His hands were cuffed behind his back.

Just two days back, on the premises of the Metropolitan Sessions Court of Dhaka, he had complained about how he was handcuffed from behind while being brought to the courtroom.

Salman F Rahman, former private industry affairs adviser to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, also walked towards the courtroom just before Palak yesterday. His hands were also cuffed behind his back.

Former lawmaker Mohammad Solaiman Salim and former Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) mayor Atiquil Islam followed, both had their hands cuffed behind their backs.

Further back, former senior secretary Mohibul Haque also walked with his hands cuffed behind his back.

Their handcuffs were unlocked after they were placed inside the courtroom dock.

Minutes later, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Ensure justice in both

FROM PAGE 3
and drove Hasina away is now attacked in Dhaka; her head cracked open. Where is justice?"

Namangru Marma, general secretary of Bangladesh Marma Students' Council, added, "The dream of the uprising has failed. Sexual violence against women and children is rising, while authorities remain silent, emboldening perpetrators."

Subhromoy Mahato, president of Bangladesh Mahato Indigenous Student Organisation. "We live in constant fear, facing harassment and violence."

Speakers criticised the government's inaction in previous cases, including the abduction of Kalpana Chakma.

They said the state's failure to address indigenous rights and violence against women perpetuates a culture of impunity.

The demonstrators reiterated their demands

for full implementation of CHT Peace Accord, constitutional recognition of indigenous identity, and formation of a separate ministry and land commission for plainland indigenous communities.

Cops use water

FROM PAGE 3
A scuffle took place, forcing police to use a water cannon, the OC added.

Under the banner of "Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association," a section of teachers have been demanding nationalisation of their primary schools.

According to the agitating teachers, the government nationalised 26,193 primary schools that were established before May 9, 2012. But around 4,000 primary educational institutions were not included in the third phase, despite fulfilling the prerequisites.

Of preventing

FROM PAGE 3
Awlad Hossain Muhammad Jonaid took his seat and held hearings in four cases linked to the July uprising.

After the court's hearings, Palak, Salman, Solaiman, Atiqul and Mohibul were handcuffed again in the same manner before being taken back to lockup.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruqi on February 26 told several media outlets that he was unaware of any accused being brought to court with hands cuffed behind their backs. "No accused should be presented in court in such a manner," he said.

However, Faruqi yesterday said, "Several accusers wanted to raise their hands and shout anti-government statements while being taken from the lockup to the courtroom. To prevent them from doing so, they are being cuffed with their hands behind their backs as an advocate for women's rights and social justice."

Champa Chakma, a young female Karbari (village chief) from Rangamati's Longadu Union, shared her journey as an advocate for women's rights and social justice.

FROM PAGE 3
legal cases and continues to champion women's rights.

Tandra Mollik, 28, from Bagerhat, shared her journey of overcoming adversity by empowering women in one of Bangladesh's most climate-vulnerable areas.

After facing financial hardship during pandemic, she received support under the LoGIC project, which helped her start climate-adaptive livelihoods, like sheep rearing and watermelon cultivation.

She actively promotes climate resilience by educating women on sustainable farming, water access, and disaster preparedness. "Not just my future; I also want to ensure a better future for my community," he said.

Champa Chakma, a young female Karbari (village chief) from Rangamati's Longadu Union, shared her journey as an advocate for women's rights and social justice.

As the organising secretary of the CHT Female Headman Karbari Association, she fights against gender-based violence, child marriage, and social injustice.

Champa recalled intervening to save a 15-year-old girl from a forced marriage, allowing her to continue her education.

"I couldn't let her future be destroyed," she said.

She also leads anti-drug campaigns, mediates local disputes, and fosters peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups.

Kabita Banerjee, from the flood-prone Hariharpur village in Khulna, shared how she overcame climate challenges through financial empowerment.

Despite challenges like floods and rising salinity, Kabita learned climate adaptive skills and established a mobile cash

transfer hub, providing access to banking services in her village.

As head of the Ward 8 Climate and Livelihood Development Cooperative Society, she now mentors 147 women on financial independence, showing that true empowerment is about not just surviving but helping others thrive.

Stefan Liller, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, highlighted the organisation's 50-year commitment to gender equality and urged a focus on the human stories behind statistics.

"We must remember the human stories behind these figures -- the individuals who are the true agents of change," he said.

He praised the Nirbhayas for their remarkable work and emphasised that gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are crucial for progress.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, commended the Nirbhayas for their resilience, stating, "Your struggles are extraordinary; I am insignificant compared to you because I have never faced the challenges you have overcome. You have my deepest respect and love, and I will stand by you however I can."

He acknowledged that financially privileged urban dwellers often fail to understand the struggles of rural women, particularly in terms of economic vulnerability, lack of access to resources, and gender-based violence.

Mahfuz Anam also said men are the biggest barrier to gender equality as patriarchal attitudes persist, even subconsciously, and discrimination against women is perpetuated from a young age, with a focus on marriage prospects for girls rather than professional

aspirations, he noted.

He argued that achieving gender equality requires conscious effort within families and recognition that, in terms of intellect, traditional justifications for gender differences no longer hold.

"It is the intellectual strength of human beings -- the mind -- that determines the world. Both women's and men's minds are equal," he said.

UNDP Gender Team Leader Sharmin Islam highlighted the impact of UNDP's work in supporting

women and girls across the country.

Speaking about the Nirbhaya initiative, she said its purpose is to recognise grassroots women leaders who are not only changing their own lives but also creating positive change in their communities.

"Too often, we only hear about prominent women leaders, while the inspiring stories of local changemakers remain unheard. Through Nirbhaya, we bring these powerful stories to the national stage and inspire others," she said.

Govt to shift

FROM PAGE 3
operations remain under the EC.

Monir Hossain, convener of the Bangladesh Election Commission Officers' Association, announced the protest at a press conference yesterday.

EC officials are protesting the government's plan to streamline vital citizen services, including National Identity cards, birth and death registrations, and other essential services, by placing them under a single authority -- a separate commission named the 'Civil Registration Commission.'

Fearless champions of change

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EC officials

HEALTHCARE
Coordination
between govt,
NGO needed

Says Hossain Zillur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

NGOs play a crucial role in Bangladesh's healthcare system by delivering essential services, raising awareness, and advocating for policy reforms, speakers said at an event yesterday.

They said NGOs help provide basic healthcare to underserved communities and strengthen engagement with public infrastructure.

However, financial sustainability and integration challenges hinder their effectiveness, they said, raising concerns about duplication of efforts and short-term project-based approaches without lasting impact.

They were speaking at the Health Debate held at CIRDAP auditorium, organised by Power and Participation Research Centre and UHC Forum.

At the discussion, PPRC Executive Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman emphasised the need for better government-NGO coordination, improved financial governance, and strategic policy engagement to strengthen healthcare system.

"We must integrate services from government, private sector, and NGOs," he said. "Defining clear roles and creating parallel structures for underserved areas is essential."

He acknowledged that foreign donor dependence won't end soon, urging NGOs to focus on maximising local resources.

The debate explored govt financing for NGOs. "There are many activities the government won't directly implement, but can utilise NGO structures and personnel," said Zillur.

Preserving the taste of puffed rice

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

The day begins at dawn every day for Rekha Mondal.

She cleans the utensils, heats the earthen stove, and soaks rice in brine for the first steps after waking up.

These are the initial stages of preparing puffed rice in the traditional way.

With machine-made puffed rice gaining ground, traditional methods are gradually fading over time.

A few families in Lara village, under Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila, are still striving against the odds to keep the tradition alive.

Rekha Mondal's family is among



them.

The process of making puffed rice traditionally is simple yet labour-intensive.

"It takes two people to do the work, both usually women. My mother-in-law and I do it at our house from dawn till dusk," said Rekha, 45.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw Rekha and her mother-in-law, Kanan Mondal, 65, sitting around a triple-top earthen stove, making puffed rice.

On the stove were three pots – two earthen and one aluminum – being heated with rice inside.

Each pot serves a different purpose. One of the earthen pots is used to heat rice that was previously soaked in salt water.

The rice is then heated again in the aluminum pot before being placed in hot sand in the other earthen pot.

Once the rice is heated in the hot sand, it turns into white puffed rice in the blink of an eye.

Later, it is separated from the sand using a sieve and packed for sale.

Kanan's son, Biplob Mondal, 25, oversees selling their puffed rice to buyers.

With the help of family members, Biplob Mondal has been producing puffed rice naturally for the last 25 years.

"Apart from salt for taste, we add nothing to the puffed rice. It is completely natural and safe to consume," Rekha said.

Kanan Mondal, who has been preparing puffed rice for the last 25 years, said it is very uncomfortable to work all day amid the heat inside the kitchen.

"However, I have become accustomed to it by now," she said with a smile.



Biplob said they produce around two maunds of puffed rice daily.

"Around 24 kilogrammes of puffed rice can be prepared from one maund of paddy. As such, we need around 400 maunds of paddy every year. Our production usually peaks during Ramadan since the demand for puffed rice rises at that time," he said.

He also mentioned that their puffed rice has good demand even beyond their locality.

"However, the spiraling price of paddy and the commercial production of machine-made puffed rice at lower costs have made it difficult for us to survive," he said, adding that they cannot sell their product at the expected price.

"Dishonest businessmen deceive consumers by selling machine-made puffed rice with harmful additives while falsely claiming it to be traditionally made. They can sell it cheaply and still make a profit, whereas it is hard for us even to recover our production costs," Biplob added.

Govt cancels Jai Jai Din's permit

STAR REPORT

The government has cancelled the permit of the daily Jai Jai Din in response to an application from the newspaper's former editor Shafik Rehman, alleging that it had violated publishing rules.

This information was revealed in an order signed by Dhaka District Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner Tanvir Ahmed yesterday.

Shafik Rehman had complained that the newspaper is not being printed from the authorised press and that false information is being given in the printers' line. In view of this, after taking all necessary measures including issuing a show-cause notice and finding the facts of the complaint, the permit declaration has been cancelled.

According to the order, the publication of Jai Jai Din has violated Section 10 of the Printing and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973.

The order said that considering this violation of rules, the permit under the name of Sayeed Hossain Chowdhury (brother of former Awami League lawmaker and minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury), publisher and printer of the daily Jai Jai Din newspaper, has been cancelled.

The HC also clarified that those who have already used "Dr" before their names without completing MBBS or BDS degrees till yesterday cannot be punished. But if they use it from today, they can be punished.

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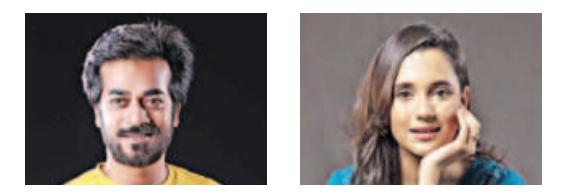
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'Makorsha' unites Shamol Mawla and Sabila Nur for the first time

Popular actors Shamol Mawla and Sabila Nur are set to share the screen for the first time in *Makorsha*, a thriller directed by Ragib Raihan Pial. Written by Rebeka Sultana Keya, the drama will premiere on Deepot this Eid ul Fitr.

Shamol, known for his work across TV, films, and OTT platforms, has been actively involved in multiple projects, including *Agontuk* on iScreen. Meanwhile, Sabila, who won acclaim for *Golam Mamun*, recently debuted as an author with *Bhalobasha Otopor*, published by Anannya Prokashoni.

Excited about the collaboration, both actors praised the gripping storyline, with director Pial feeling confident that *Makorsha* will captivate audiences with its unique plot and powerful performances.

Prague Film Fest to screen Bangladeshi film 'Not a Fiction'

The Prague Film Festival 2025, set to take place from April 23 to April 26, has included the Bangladeshi film *Not a Fiction* in its lineup of screenings. The project has notably gained recognition by being screened at three Oscar and two Canadian Screen Awards- qualifying festivals.

Directed, produced, and shot by young filmmaker Shah Newaz Khan Cju, *Not a Fiction* is set for its European premiere at the festival.

This single-take film will compete against strong contenders, including *I'm Not a Robot*, winner of the 2025 Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film, and other international entries.

The Voices of Distant Lands section of the film festival honours films with fresh takes on social issues. This year, only five films were selected, with *Not a Fiction* as Asia's sole representative.



NEWS

Mahmudullah retires from int'l cricket

FROM PAGE 12
earlier ended his Test and T20I career, Mahmudullah took his final bow from ODIs yesterday.

"All praises only for the Almighty Allah. I have decided to retire from international cricket. I would like to thank all of my teammates, coaches and specially my fans who have always supported me. A big thank you to my parents, my in laws, especially my father in law and most importantly my brother Emdad Ullah who has been there for me constantly since my childhood as my coach and mentor," the veteran posted on Facebook.

Mahmudullah remained a key player over the years for the Tigers and was part of the 'Big Five' of Bangladesh cricket alongside Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mashfiqur Rahim.

Mahmudullah now joins Tamim, who had announced his retirement from international cricket in January, in the sidelines. Mashrafe, who has

not played for Bangladesh for over five years, has still not officially retired from ODIs but the 41 year-old's international career is realistically over.

Meanwhile, Shakib's international career remains in limbo, having earlier expressed his desire to play ODIs till the Champions Trophy but not getting selected in the squad. He was also unable to play his farewell Test at home against South Africa in last year's October and chances of him being a part of the Tigers' setup in future are slim.

It means Mashfiqur, who earlier this month stepped away from ODIs, remains the last active member of the 'Big Five', having wished to continue in Tests.

Both Mahmudullah and Mashfiqur failed to impress in the recent Champions Trophy and came under criticism. Yesterday, before Mahmudullah's announcement, cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim had said that the

veterans realise they need to make way for upcoming stars.

"Not everything comes to an end in a perfect way but you say yes and move forward. Peace," Mahmudullah said at the end of his statement yesterday.

The veteran has lived through the many ups and downs of Bangladesh cricket, carrying the burden of some close defeats in big matches while also pulling off rescue acts many a times.

Time and again, he answered his critics with notable performances, especially in ICC events. He became Bangladesh's first centurion during the 2015 ICC World Cup with a century against England, and then repeated the feat in the following match against New Zealand. He hit another memorable ton against the Kiwis in the 2017 Champions Trophy.

Mahmudullah, who made his international debut in ODIs in 2007, brings down the curtain with 239 ODIs and 5689 runs besides his name.

Rohingyas."

The government is continuing its all-out diplomatic efforts to ensure the safe and dignified return of Rohingyas to their home in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, he said.

On Saturday, Guterres will hold a meeting with Yunus at his office. A joint media briefing is scheduled to be held in the afternoon that day. He will also meet with the National Consensus Commission.

He will leave Bangladesh the next day, said Azad Majumder, Yunus's deputy press secretary.

Guterres arrives today

FROM PAGE 12
the Rohingya crisis.

During his visit, which comes as part of his Ramadan solidarity visit, Guterres and Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus will visit Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar and attend an iftar party with the presence of 1 lakh Rohingyas on Friday.

The Rohingya crisis has been overshadowed and lost focus due to numerous global crises, said Shafiqul Alam, Yunus's press secretary, at a press conference yesterday.

"We hope that he [Guterres] will deliver a strong and positive message.

Rape victim's father murdered the night

FROM PAGE 12
unnamed individuals accusing them of aiding Shibu in the crime.

Police arrested Shibu on March 8, and he was sent to jail by a court, police said.

Since Shibu's arrest, his cohorts had allegedly been threatening the victim's family and putting pressure on them to withdraw the case, the family claimed.

The family said there was a court

hearing scheduled yesterday.

The deceased's wife said, "Yesterday [Tuesday] evening, my husband told me over the phone that he would return home late, but he never came." "At one point, we started looking for him in the area and found him in a bush near our house late at night," she added.

"The criminals -- associates of the accused rapist -- have killed my husband. I want justice," she told The

Daily Star yesterday.

Barguna Sadar Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Dewan Jaglu Hasan said, "Police recovered the body around 1:00am [Wednesday]. Our initial investigation suggests that the person was murdered. Further investigation is underway, and legal action will be taken accordingly."

The victim's family had not filed any complaint regarding the threats, he said.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Musicians set to enhance Eid festivities with fresh releases



SHAH ALAM SHAZU

There was a time when music lovers eagerly awaited the release of new albums during Eid. Popular artistes would drop fresh collections, and fans would rush to grab their favourite singer's latest work.

However, with changing times and the rise of digital platforms, those days are long gone. Now, singles and music videos are released on YouTube and aired across various television channels, making Eid an exciting time for music lovers in a new way.

This year, several popular singers are gearing up to treat their fans with new songs and performances. Here is an exclusive look at how they are preparing for Eid:

The *Close Up 1* famed singer, Beauty, has already filmed two original music videos, both set for release during the festive season of Eid ul Fitr. One of the songs is penned by Liton Adhikary Rintu, with the melody composed by Syed Monsur, who also composed the second track.

Besides her YouTube releases, Beauty will be appearing on multiple TV channels throughout Eid. Reflecting on the changing times, she said, "There was a time when everyone eagerly awaited new albums, and I was no exception. But those days are gone. Now, listeners wait for my songs to be released on YouTube. It's the same for everyone."

Audiences expect new songs all year round, but the anticipation is even higher during Eid. Keeping that in mind, I've worked on two new music videos, and I only select songs when the lyrics and melody truly move me."

Musician Sabir Zaman is set to be one of the busiest singers this Eid, performing on multiple television channels from the first to the sixth day of Eid festivities.

In addition to his TV performances, two of his music videos have already been released ahead of Eid. Expressing his excitement, Sabir said, "During Eid, almost every musician becomes busy with music, and I'm no exception. I enjoy recording more songs than

usual during this festive time because listeners eagerly wait for them."

Moreover, he has collaborated with singer Rizia Parveen on a duet song for Bangladesh Betar, with lyrics written by Moniruzzaman Monir. Speaking about the song, he shared, "I have recorded a special Eid song for the radio, and it's a really good one."

Zakiya Sultana Kornia is known for bringing something special to her audience on festive occasions, and this year is no different. She will be releasing a brand-new music video on her own YouTube channel.

"Eid is a special occasion, so I feel compelled to come up with exciting projects for it. That's how I planned and worked on this song with Tanveer. I believe my new music video will be well received," she said.

Putul Sajia Sultana has also filmed several songs for this Eid, which will be aired on different TV channels. She is equally excited about her YouTube releases, with two songs scheduled to drop online. One of them, *Shesher Kobitagulo*, was composed by Syed Reza Ali.

She reflected on how music releases have evolved over the years, saying, "There was a time when albums with eight to ten songs were released, but now, new songs keep pouring in. We have to adapt to the new era, but I do miss the old days—it had its own charm."

Additionally, she has recorded a special song for Bangladesh Betar, which will be aired during Eid.

Singer Liza is set for an incredibly packed Eid schedule with multiple projects lined up. She has filmed a song for BTV, collaborating with Belal Khan, and recorded another track for the same channel. She also worked on songs for three to four other TV networks and will perform in several live shows during the holiday season.

She is set to release two music videos on her YouTube channel, but she's unsure if both will be ready for release in time.

"I have been working on two music videos for Eid, and at least one of them will be released," she affirmed.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

Photography exhibition: 'Hajong'

The exhibition *Hajong* by photographer Mohammad Asadurjaman Aslam Molla offers a compelling visual exploration of the struggles and cultural resilience of the indigenous Hajong community in Bangladesh.

Through powerful photography, the exhibition aims to raise awareness, spark dialogue, and highlight the persevering nature of this marginalised group.

Date: Friday-Tuesday | March 14-18

Time: 4pm onwards

Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhammandi



Pritom and Habib unite for Eid special 'Ityadi'

Popular musicians Habib Wahid and Pritom Hasan are set to share the stage for the first time in this year's Eid special *Ityadi*.

The duo will present a duet performance in the much-anticipated magazine show.

The song was penned by Inamul Tahsin, with Pritom composing the tune and arranging the music.

Although the two artistes have collaborated on projects before, this marks their first time performing together.

As per tradition, the Eid special *Ityadi* will air on Bangladesh Television (BTV) the day after Eid at 8pm, following the Bangla news.

The programme is written, directed, and hosted by Hanif Sanket and produced by Fagun Audio Vision.

ICT issues

FROM PAGE 12
before the court on May 12 in connection with the Shapla Chatter incident after the prosecution filed a petition seeking arrest warrants and production warrant for them.

They are former state minister for home Shamsul Haque Tuku, former IGP AKM Shahidul Haque, ex-director general of National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) Ziaul Ahsan and deputy inspector general of police Molla Nazrul Islam. They are in jail in different cases.

During the court proceedings, Justice Md Shoful Alam Mahmood asked the prosecution how Imran H Sarker was involved in the Shapla Chatter killings.

ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam then told the tribunal that Imran, along with high officials of the then government, was involved in the plan on the crackdown at the Shapla Chatter.

"The investigation agency has found information that the Gonojagoron Mancha had created the ground for the mass killings at Shapla Chatter and it took part with the police in the killings of Hefajat e Islam activists," he added.

On May 5, 2013, members of Hefajat, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, mobilised thousands of supporters from across the country at Shapla Chatter to press home their 13-point demand, which included stricter blasphemy laws stipulating that atheists be hanged.

As the protest turned violent, police, Rab, and BGB members launched a late-night operation on May 5-6 and dispersed the demonstrators. Although Hefajat claimed that 2,000 of its leaders and activists were killed in the incident, the government put the death toll at 13, including three police personnel.

Yesterday, the tribunal also sent police constable Sohel Mia to jail in connection with the death of Shaikh Ashabul Yamin, a student in Savar on July 18 last year.

8-yr-old Magura girl

FROM PAGE 12
no progress has been made."

He added that the family wanted justice.

On March 6, the child was taken to a hospital in Magura in an unconscious state. She was then taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then to the CMH.

Regarding the investigation of the case, Inspector Muhammad Alaudin of Magura Sadar Police Station said, "We are interrogating the four arrestees. We are analysing the information that is being gathered during the interrogation."

Amendment drafted

FROM PAGE 12

being reduced from 30 days to 15 days and the time for completing the trial is being reduced from 180 days to 90 days, he said.

Besides, the draft has a provision that if the judge deems it necessary, the case proceedings and investigation can continue based on the DNA certificate without the DNA report.

The government has taken a zero-tolerance policy against those involved in violence against women, Nazrul said.

About the Platform Against Rape's demand for speedy trial for the child rape case in Magura, he said: "We have assured them that police have already collected DNA samples of the accused in the Magura rape on Tuesday. I have told them that we will have a vigil so that justice is done quickly."

The delegation of the "Platform Against Rape" submitted a memorandum containing a five-point demand to Nazrul.

They demanded that the investigation report of the Magura rape case be submitted within seven days, form a special tribunal for swift justice for rape and torture cases and death penalty upon completion of the judicial process within a month.

They also urged the government to

Unite to build strong JS

FROM PAGE 12

want a new constitution through a constituent assembly".

Salahuddin alleged that while Bangladesh is now free from fascism, attempts to create instability continue.

"If we remain united and uphold the national unity against fascism, we will succeed," he added.

Speaking as the chief guest at the event organised by Jamiat Ulama-e Islam, he further claimed that during Sheikh Hasina's rule, Muslims were the most persecuted in the country, although 90 percent of the population

had converted to Islam.

The memorandum stressed the

need to incorporate gender-based

empowerment narratives into legal and

social discourse, highlighting equal

rights for women.

The memorandum also called for

the formation of a national commission

to monitor the implementation of the

8 killed as Russia hits Odesa, east Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

A Russian ballistic missile strike overnight on the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa killed four people and damaged a Barbados-flagged cargo ship, authorities said yesterday.

The attack late Tuesday came as Ukraine endorsed an American proposal for a 30-day ceasefire and agreed to immediate negotiations with Russia.

Ukrainian officials said the attack occurred as the ship was being loaded with a grain consignment intended to be sent to Algeria.

"Unfortunately, four people died -- citizens of Syria. The youngest victim was 18, the oldest was 24 years old. Two more people were wounded -- a Ukrainian and a Syrian," Oleksiy Kuleba, vice prime minister for reconstruction, wrote on social media.

"Russia is attacking Ukraine's infrastructure, including ports that are involved in ensuring the world's food security," he added.

Separately, the governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region said a 47-year-old woman was killed during a Russian missile attack on the central city of Kryvyi Rih, the hometown of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Ukrainian air force said that in total Russia had launched three missiles at the war-battered country overnight as well as 133 drones of various types.

Ukrainian air defence units shot down 98 of the drones, the air force added.

Prosecutors in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia, said separately that three people had been killed and two wounded in Russian strikes.



This handout photograph taken and released by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine yesterday, shows a destroyed building at the site of a strike in Kryvyi Rih, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

30-DAY CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL IN UKRAINE

Ball in Putin's court

Says West as Zelensky expects 'strong' action from US if Russia refuses truce

AGENCIES

Kyiv's Western allies upped the pressure on Russia yesterday to respond to a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire plan, after Ukraine backed the proposal aimed at ending the three-year war.

In its first comments on the proposition, the Kremlin said it was waiting for details from Washington.

US President Donald Trump's administration lifted a freeze on military aid to Ukraine after Kyiv accepted the plan, the latest in a rapid-fire series of developments on the conflict.

"The idea of a 30-day ceasefire is an important and correct step towards a just peace for Ukraine... Now it's up to (President Vladimir) Putin," Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on social media platform X.

Scholz echoed similar demands from a Russian reply that have already been made by Washington and Kyiv.

"We'll take this offer now to the Russians and we hope they'll say yes to peace. The ball is now in their court," American Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday after talks in Saudi Arabia where Ukraine backed the US truce proposal.

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that he expected strong measures from the United States if Russia rejected Washington's proposal.

With Trump's stunning allies by applying intense pressure on Kyiv and reaching out to Moscow, Ukrainian officials came to talks in Saudi Arabia

eager to make up and had proposed a partial truce on air and sea attacks.

Earlier, Russian news agencies reported that the heads of CIA and Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency spoke by phone on Tuesday, in the first such contact in several years.

Rubio says minerals deal will give US 'vested interest' in Ukraine security

US military aid deliveries to Ukraine resume

US, Russia spy chiefs agree to hold regular contacts

CIA's John Ratcliffe and SVR's Sergei Naryshkin agreed on "regular contact" between their agencies.

In Washington, Trump said he was ready to welcome Zelensky back to the White House and may speak to President Vladimir Putin this week.

Since the US cutoff of aid and intelligence sharing, Russia has stepped up attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and seized back land in Russia's Kursk region which Ukrainian forces had infiltrated.

Rubio yesterday said that an expected minerals deal would give the United States a "vested interest" in Ukraine's security, although he stopped short again of promising formal guarantees.

1,383 civilians killed in Syria violence

AFP, Beirut

At least 1,383 civilians, the vast majority of them Alawites, were killed in a wave of violence that gripped Syria's Mediterranean coast, a war monitor said yesterday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the civilians were killed in "executions by security forces and allied groups", after a wave of violence broke out last week in the coastal heartland of the Alawite minority to which toppled president Bashar al-Assad belonged.

The Britain-based Observatory added that even as the violence subsided, the toll was still rising as bodies continued to be discovered, many on farmland or in their homes.

The latest deaths were recorded in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus and in the neighbouring central province of Hama, it said.

The violence erupted on Thursday when clashes broke out after gunmen loyal to Assad staged attacks on the new security forces.

At least 231 security personnel were killed in the ensuing clashes, according to their official toll. The Observatory said 250 pro-Assad fighters were killed.

The UN Human Rights Office said it had documented "summary executions" that appeared "to have been carried out on a sectarian basis".

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, who led the Sunni Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that toppled Assad, has vowed to prosecute those behind the "bloodshed of civilians" and set up a fact-finding committee.

ARREST FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY Duterte's lawyers demand his return to Phillipines

AFP, Manila

On Wednesday morning, his lawyers filed a Supreme Court petition on behalf of his youngest daughter Veronica -- accusing the government of "kidnapping" Duterte and demanding it "bring him back".

But presidential palace press officer Claire Castro said cooperating with Interpol was the government's prerogative.

"This is not just surrendering a Filipino citizen, this is surrendering a Filipino citizen who is accused of crimes against humanity, specifically murder," she said.

At a church in the capital, some of those whose family members were killed in the "drug war" discussed the arrest.

"Duterte is fortunate, there's due process for him," Emily Soriano said of her son Angelito, at a press briefing organised by a local rights group.

MSF urges Israel to stop using aid as 'bargaining chip'

AFP, Geneva

The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) medical charity yesterday claimed that Israel had "instrumentalised humanitarian needs" in Gaza, with its decision to halt aid and cut electricity into the Palestinian territory.

"Israeli authorities are yet again normalising the use of aid as a negotiation tool," MSF emergency coordinator Myriam Laaroussi said in a statement.

"This is outrageous. Humanitarian aid should never be used as a bargaining chip in war."

Israel halted aid deliveries to war-torn Gaza after a deadlock over a fragile ceasefire, which since January 19 has reduced hostilities after more than 15 months of relentless fighting.

And ahead of a current round of talks in Doha, Israel on Sunday halted the supply of electricity to the territory's only desalination plant, in a move Hamas



condemned as "cheap and unacceptable blackmail".

Describing the move as "collective punishment", MSF demanded that Israel "end this inhumane blockade of the Strip".

It warned that with the suspension of electricity supply, the water desalination plant in Khan Yunis in the south of the territory had already run out of fuel.

"The plant has dropped its production from 17 million to 2.5 million litres per day," its statement said.

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তারিখ: ০৬ মার্চ, ২০২৫ থেকে ০৮ এপ্রিল, ২০২৫ পর্যন্ত।

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২০৩, শহীদ সৈয়দ নজরুল ইসলাম সরণী, বিজয়নগর, ঢাকা-১০০০, ফোনঃ +৮৮ ০২-২২৬৩৯৭৯
ই-মেইল: info@bnmc.gov.bd ওয়েব সাইট: www.bnmc.gov.bd

নং-বিএনএমসি/প্রশা-৩৪ (অংশ-৫)/২০২৫-৪ ৭৪

তারিখ: ১২ মার্চ ২০২৫

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বাংলাদেশ নার্সিং ও মিডওয়াইফারি কাউন্সিলের নং-বিএনএমসি/প্রশা-৩৪ (অংশ-৫)/২০২৫-১২৯, তারিখ: ১১ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৫ খ্রি।
বিজ্ঞপ্তি মোতাবেক সরকারি, স্বায়ত্তশাসিত (সামরিক-বেসামরিক) ও বেসরকারি নার্সিং ও মিডওয়াইফারি শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে ০৪ বছর মেয়াদি বিএনসি ইন নার্সিং, ০৩ বছর মেয়াদি ডিপ্লোমা ইন নার্সিং সার্ফেল এবং মিডওয়াইফারি এবং ০৩ বছর মেয়াদি ডিপ্লোমা ইন নার্সিং ও মিডওয়াইফারি কোর্সে ২০২৪-২৫ শিক্ষাবর্ষে ভর্তির আবেদন নিয়োগভাবে বৃক্ষি করা হলো।

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সদস্য-সচিব, ভর্তি কমিটি

বিশ্ব কিডনি দিবস
১৩ মার্চ ২০২৫

আপনার কিডনি কি সুস্থ ?
দ্রুত শনাক্ত করুন, কিডনি স্বাস্থ সুরক্ষা করুন

— ৬৬ —
সচেতনতাই কিডনি রোগ প্রতিরোধের একমাত্র উপায়

— ৭৭ —

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Why are so many girls still married early?

Govt must adopt a zero-tolerance approach to this scourge

Child marriage, early pregnancy, and sexual harassment and violence are among the most persistent challenges plaguing the lives of adolescent girls in Bangladesh. While resistance to these trends has grown over the years, recent studies suggest that progress has been minimal, if not entirely stagnant. For instance, child marriage, often caused by a combination of poverty, entrenched social norms, and legal enforcement gaps, remains a blot on the country's otherwise positive records in some socioeconomic aspects. A UNICEF report, released on International Women's Day, reveals that Bangladesh has the highest child marriage rate in Asia, with 51.4 percent of women aged 20-24 married before they turned 18. This is quite alarming.

Further details from the report—such as that 24 percent of young women give birth before 18, and 28 percent of girls aged 15-19 have experienced physical or sexual violence from their partners—show how widespread and devastating the impact of child marriage has been. Moreover, only 47 percent of married teenage girls have autonomy over reproductive health decisions. According to the report, Bangladesh is also one of seven countries with less than two percent of adolescent girls having digital literacy. Girls aged 15-24 are twice as likely as boys to be out of education, employment, or training, making them more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation.

These findings show how the stakes remain heavily stacked against adolescent girls, especially if married early. The question is, why are we failing to do anything about it? This is not just about how barriers to girls' education and personal autonomy are hindering their life prospects; it's also about how their lack of agency and social empowerment is putting them in life-threatening situations. As well as risky pregnancies, intimate partner violence, or violence by husbands, remains another serious concern. In a climate where, according to a recent study by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 54 percent of women experience physical and/or sexual abuse by husbands at some point, young wives are more vulnerable. The fact that this threat is rarely acknowledged by society reeks of the still-pervasive patriarchy that justifies or covers up such violence citing family reputation and children's well-being.

The reality is, child brides are children, too, and we need to be able to protect them from this scourge at any cost. Two persistent obstacles to ending child marriage are financial hardships and weak law enforcement—problems that transcend gender issues but which must be addressed precisely because of such devastating impacts. We urge the authorities to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to child marriage, regardless of the reason behind it, and address the issues that continue to fuel it.

Gorer Khal on its deathbed

Yet another example of a poorly executed project

It is appalling to witness our rivers, canals, and such water bodies die one after another due to encroachment, pollution, and mindless development. One such canal is Gorer Khal at the Baniachong upazila in Habiganj. According to a report, the 19.2-kilometre-long canal was once a lifeline for the region's agriculture, communication, and flood management. But it is now on the verge of death due to illegal encroachment, pollution, and siltation. The Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) took up a project at a cost of Tk 7.16 crore in FY 2022-23 to excavate and revive it but failed to do so. What, then, was the point of taking up such a project?

Clearly, the project was not properly planned or executed. Reportedly, while the project was underway, the authorities focused on digging the canal's branches instead of excavating its main body. Moreover, the excavation was allegedly conducted without proper land measurement or clearing encroachments. Additionally, the soil dug from the canal was piled up along its banks, which washed back into it during the monsoon. And although a total of 4,000 trees were supposed to be planted along the banks, this was not done either. All this explains why, around a year and a half into the work, the project has failed to bring any positive results.

Local residents also alleged corruption and misappropriation of funds by those who implemented it. Although the canal's situation has not improved at all, the project authorities have claimed that they did as far as they could, which shows their inefficiency and lack of sincerity. Unfortunately, the situation of Gorer Khal and the excavation project undertaken by the BWDB is not unique. Hundreds of such ill-executed projects can be found across the country. For instance, only the other day, a report published in this daily revealed how bridges built over the canals of Barguna were collapsing due to the use of poor quality materials.

Corruption in development projects, whether large or small, was a recurring issue during the previous Awami League regime. This must come to an end. We urge the government to hold those responsible for such poorly planned projects accountable and reclaim canals like Gorer Khal to restore the vital lifelines of rural Bangladesh.

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The planet Uranus discovered

On this day in 1781, English astronomer William Herschel observed the seventh planet from the Sun, Uranus—first described by him as “a curious either nebulous star or perhaps a comet.”



Priorities and challenges for the new education adviser



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN) and adviser to Campaign for Popular Education (CAMP). Views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

MANZOOR AHMED

Education Adviser CR Abrar, newly appointed on March 5, spoke of his dream of an education system that would allow students to see their future within Bangladesh. Presumably, the education system would enable young people to acquire skills and competencies to realise their own goals in life and contribute to the nation's development. What actions can the adviser himself take, and what can he persuade the interim government to consider in promoting this indisputable objective?

The interim government has waded into reform efforts in many difficult, complex, and sensitive spheres. So far, 15 commissions and task forces have been set up. Many have submitted their reports, and consultations on building a consensus have begun. Education has been left out so far, despite demands from educationists and concerned citizens for an education reform initiative.

In the education sphere, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) appointed a nine-member “consultation committee” last October. After four months of intensive work that included consultations with stakeholder groups and extensive field visits, the committee, headed by this author, submitted its report. It was formally received by the chief adviser on February 10. A more detailed technical report is to be submitted shortly.

The primary and non-formal education committee attempted to weigh the expectations and demands of diverse stakeholders and provided what it considered realistic and implementable recommendations for early, medium term, and longer term actions. Media reports and stakeholder reactions indicate that the report has been perceived positively. Moreover, the deliberative process and well-argued recommendations have had a calming effect, as evidenced by the absence of stakeholder protests, demands, and ultimatums in the primary education sub-sector. The diverse stakeholder groups are now watching to what extent and how the government demonstrates a good-faith and sincere effort to act on the recommendations. They will look for signals about how the recommendations are reflected in the upcoming FY2025-26 budget and the Fifth Primary Education

Development Program (PEDP5), now under preparation.

The primary and non-formal education sub-sector reform initiative is a positive but partial move that leaves major education sector concerns unaddressed. The committee report itself has pointed to the need for a comprehensive approach and holistic thinking about the education system, especially school education from pre-primary to pre-tertiary levels. This calls for political choices by the state on education reform beyond the remit of MoPME alone.

In December 2010, a national



VISUAL: MAHIYA TABASSUM

education policy was adopted by parliament, which is still in effect. However, no effort was made to implement it. Such an effort would have required assigning tasks and responsibilities for preparing an action plan, setting priorities and targets among and within education subsectors, mobilising and allocating resources, and monitoring progress. The 2010 policy itself recommended the formation of a permanent and statutory education commission to guide and oversee the implementation process. Political decision makers chose not to pursue this course.

Meanwhile, ad hoc, fragmented, uncoordinated, and partial subsector actions were taken without an overall mission or holistic strategy for the nation's education system. The education services mirrored or reproduced the prevailing social fault lines and economic classes in society. As a result, we see the growth of English-medium private schools

for English-medium schools. He might have added that a significant proportion of families below the poverty line send their children to one of various types of madrasas. He advises a serious probe into household schooling choices as both a possible cause and consequence of widening social disparities. Explaining the roots of disparities is necessary, but this can lead to remedial action only if decision makers see the need and feel the obligation for such actions.

It is unrealistic to expect that the interim government, given its uncertain tenure and the larger political context in which it operates, will break away completely from the pattern of an unequal and non-inclusive education system that has emerged over the decades. A radical change in policy and decision-making mechanisms, as well as in the mindset of key actors, is unlikely in the present context. These factors contribute to poor learning outcomes and unequal

life chances for the majority of children.

What the education adviser may aim for now is at least to move away from the fragmented and ad hoc decision-making approach—often dependent on individual ministry officials' preferences and the default mode of taking the path of least resistance, avoiding disruption, and postponing solutions, which often do not address the root of the problem and may even create greater problems in the future.

The experience with the consultation committee on primary and non-formal education highlights the value of a deliberative and dialogue-driven process, in which stakeholders have faith and trust. A consultative council consisting of academics and others with a reputation for being knowledgeable and fair-minded can serve as such a mechanism for the entire education sector. It would have to be somewhat different from a committee focused on a single sub-sector. The education sector encompasses major sub-sectors with distinct objectives, pedagogic approaches, beneficiaries, organisational arrangements, and state obligations. The challenges vary across primary and secondary education, vocational and technical skill development, higher general education, higher professional education, the parallel madrasa system, and non-formal lifelong learning. Policy responses and the scope of implementable measures by the state must be informed by insights into both the unique characteristics of each sub-sector and their interconnections. Therefore, a consultative council for the education sector should include sub-sector committees to ensure a holistic perspective is maintained.

The consultative council, among other functions, can guide the preparation of a medium-term (five-year) education sector plan and a longer-term (10-year) perspective plan. The government can also use it as a sounding board, seeking its advice for decision-making on critical issues. It should have an open-ended tenure and could eventually be replaced by a permanent national education commission under an elected government.

I propose that we begin rethinking our education system now, rather than deferring it to the post-election ruling party or parties. The past record of political parties of all stripes regarding education has not been stellar. Work done now, in an apolitical environment, to set the agenda, priorities, and strategies may help nudge political parties in the right direction. Appropriate policy-relevant research to inform policy deliberation should also be encouraged.

Can we revive our riverine transport?



Dr Nasim Ahmed is additional secretary at the Public Security Division under the Ministry of Home Affairs. He can be reached at nahmed5905@gmail.com.

NASIM AHMED

Bangladesh, often called the “land of rivers,” has traditionally depended on its extensive river network for transportation. Inland water transport (IWT) has been integral to the country's economy, facilitating the movement of freight and passengers across regions. However, infrastructural advancements like the Padma Bridge have significantly impacted the dynamics of riverine transport.

Bangladesh boasts a vast network of more than 700 rivers, canals and streams (according to Bangladesh Water Development Board) with a total length of approximately 24,000 kilometres. However, the navigability of these waterways varies seasonally. During the monsoon season, only about 6,000 kilometres are navigable, which reduces to approximately 3,900 kilometres in the dry season.

Despite efforts to enhance this network, such as dredging projects, the overall length of navigable waterways has remained relatively stable, suggesting that the ongoing maintenance efforts primarily serve to preserve existing routes rather than expand them significantly.

Traditionally, inland waterways have been a cornerstone of Bangladesh's transportation system. According to the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), IWT is responsible for transporting over 50 percent of the country's total cargo and approximately 25 percent of passenger traffic. However, recent reports tend to argue that these figures have been declining.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) manages a diverse fleet to support riverine transport. As of 2024, the fleet comprises 119 vessels, including 59 ferries, 20 passenger vessels, 16 coastal vessels, nine tugboats, and 15 cargo and container ships. Apart from that, thousands of private boats and ships are operating. However, the shift towards road and rail transport, coupled with challenges in maintaining navigable waterways, has led to a decrease in the operational efficiency of these vessels.

The inauguration of the Padma Bridge in June 2022 has drastically reduced travel times between Dhaka and the southwestern regions, significantly diverting traffic

from riverine routes to roadways. Consequently, passenger ferries have experienced a sharp decline, with daily trips reduced and staff members facing job losses. This shift has impacted rural livelihoods and low-income groups, as higher transport costs from reliance on road transport led to some increase in commodity prices.

Maintaining rivers' navigability is crucial for the sustainability of riverine transport. The BIWTA has undertaken numerous dredging projects to restore and expand waterways. Between 2010 and 2023, BIWTA reported an increase of 3,700 kilometres in navigable waterways. However, studies have revealed discrepancies between reported figures and on-ground realities. Many rivers listed as dredged remain non-navigable, suggesting that the effectiveness of these projects is limited. Factors such as unplanned construction, encroachment, and pollution impede the restoration of these waterways.

Despite the decline in usage, the IWT remains a cost-effective and environmentally friendly mode of transportation. Transporting goods by water is up to 50 percent cheaper than by road, primarily due to lower fuel costs and the ability to move larger cargo volumes in a single trip. Moreover, water transport contributes less to air pollution and traffic congestion than road transport. Recognising these advantages, there is a growing discourse on revitalising riverine transport to promote sustainable and inclusive economic

growth.

A multifaceted approach, including effective maintenance of waterways, strategic infrastructural planning, and policies, is needed to incentivise the use of riverine transport. Regular and targeted dredging can mitigate siltation and ensure consistent depth for vessel movement. Tidal River Management, which involves controlled flooding of specific areas to facilitate natural sediment deposition, will help enhance river depth and flow. Upgrading existing ports and developing new inland container terminals can alleviate congestion and promote efficient cargo handling.

The IWT sector has so far received a smaller share of funding. Although the 8th five-year plan (2020-2025) has increased this share, it remains below pre-1990 levels. Rebalancing investment towards IWT is crucial for its revitalisation.

Enhancing the capacity of organisations like the BIWTA is warranted. Developing multimodal connectivity by integrating services at ports like Pangaon with rail and road links can streamline cargo movement and reduce transit times. Enforcing stringent safety regulations and regular inspections can reduce accidents. Upgrading vessels to meet modern safety standards is imperative. Harmonising policies across different transport sectors can facilitate smoother operations and reduce bureaucratic hurdles, encouraging the use of riverine routes for both passenger and freight transport.

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FILE ILLUSTRATION: BIPLAB CHAKROBORTY

The new Bangladesh needs a new education system



Ashfaq Zaman
is the founder of Dhaka Forum and a strategic international affairs expert.

ASHFAQ ZAMAN

Focusing on education is essential to changing the trajectory of a nation, because, at the end of the day, a nation is built by its people—and those people are shaped by education.

Education is like a passport to the future for any nation. If we look at all the world's superpowers and ask why they became superpowers, yes, the economy plays a role, but education is just as important. The highest-ranking universities are in the most developed countries—whether in the UK, the US, Canada, or the Scandinavian nations. Education reflects a nation's prosperity because a sound and educated population produces ideas and innovations that drive the economy forward.

It's important to identify what worked in the past and what is needed for the future. Whether in Bangladesh or elsewhere, one of the best aspects of past education was its focus on morality, ethics, and character-building. These values were always a part of learning. The teachers also used to live morally and thus led by example. In society, they were treated respectfully for their wisdom and were consulted on many issues. Some villages in Bangladesh still have that.

In Korea, the suburbs of the UK, the US, and Australia, basic manners are still taught—not to litter, how to behave at home, how to take care of animals, to have compassion, to be respectful, and even how to hold a fork and knife properly.

We also lack pedagogy—or andragogy-based teaching, meaning that teachers aren't able to transfer the knowledge they have in their respective fields to the students. This is because, even though they acquire education and degrees in certain subjects, they never really learn how to teach.

In Bangladesh, we are no longer doing that. There was a time when education focused on standards, on teaching morality and character. But in our attempt to modernise, we have not only failed to truly modernise but have also lost the essence of what was once there.

The second issue is preparing for the future. We have not done well in equipping our workforce with future ready skills. According to the World Economic Forum, 65 percent of jobs will require some sort of reskilling. This means that the skills needed in the new world are very different.

Coding, for example, must become fundamental. It should be as important as maths, physics, or history—because that is the future.

Students may not gain as much from history or literature in their professional lives, but they will undoubtedly need technology and an understanding of it. That is where our education system is falling behind. School education has still not integrated these skills, we lack resources, and the focus simply isn't there.

Outcome-based learning is also missing in our curriculum. The way our education is designed is quantity-based. There is a specific quantity of material that needs to be "finished" for one's education to be considered complete. The understanding of the implementation of the syllabus is absent.

research. We don't have enough academic collaborations, and because of this, our critical thinking is weak. This has even bigger national consequences.

We are becoming a follower nation rather than an innovator or leader. Research gives us breakthroughs, new ideas, and critical thinking skills that allow us to challenge the status quo. Without research, we cannot develop new concepts, innovations, or industries.

The focus should not just be on increasing the number of academic publications but on ensuring that research is meaningful and impactful.

The need for a hybrid education model

The education system needs to shift towards a more flexible model—one that follows a "just-in-time" and "just-in-need" approach. Today, people learn more from YouTube, Google, and AI than from traditional education. If someone needs to learn something, they look it up instantly.

The much-talked-about Gen Z

What was taught in the 1990s about marketing is still being taught today, yet marketing itself has changed dramatically. It's no longer just about placing ads in newspapers or on television. Now, it's about digital marketing, influencer strategies, and data-driven decisions.

There are three key areas we need to address:

The gap between industry and academia

Industries often say they are looking for top talent. It's not that jobs aren't available but rather that they aren't finding the right candidates. The reason? The pace at which industries evolve is not matched by academia.

What was taught in the 1990s about marketing is still being taught today, yet marketing itself has changed dramatically. It's no longer just about placing ads in newspapers or on television. Now, it's about digital marketing, influencer strategies, and data-driven decisions.

Unlike places like Silicon Valley, we don't have strong collaborations between academia and industry. Most industries have little involvement with universities beyond occasional guest lectures or event sponsorships.

They aren't actively shaping the curriculum, brainstorming solutions, or ensuring students graduate with relevant skills. This needs to change.

Universities must work more closely with industries; update syllabuses based on real-world needs and involve professionals in teaching.

Lack of research and innovation

Bangladesh ranks very poorly in

and Gen Alpha are no strangers to technology. In fact, many children belonging to Gen Alpha are exposed to smartphones and gadgets before they are exposed to books and pen-paper. Now, it is a matter of much debate how healthy this is for the development of young minds and what the future consequences of it are. But the fact remains that they are much more comfortable with technology than previous generations.

The strength of this should be utilised by properly integrating technology into teaching in schools. This means we need more specialist modules, more microlearning, and a system that adapts to the realities of how people learn today. Attention spans are shorter, and the demand for quick, relevant knowledge is higher. Education must evolve to match this.

We need to rethink our education system. We need to bring back moral and character-building lessons while also preparing students for the future. We need stronger ties between universities and industries, more research and innovation, and a system that embraces modern ways of learning.

Only then can we build a Bangladesh that is not just educated but ready to lead.

How Mahmoud Khalil's arrest threatens free speech on US campuses



Sarzah Yeasmin
is a contributor to The Daily Star and works on the intersections of education and public policy. She is an alumnus of Harvard University.

SARZAH YEASMIN

On a damp March morning, the usual chatter of student life on campuses across the US fell eerily subdued. Just weeks ago, pro-Palestinian student protests had drawn thousands into vibrant encampments, their banners calling for an end to US military aid to Israel. Now, with the sudden arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a graduate student of Palestinian ancestry, and the looming threat of deportation, a shadow had fallen over student activism. What had once felt like a fundamental right—the freedom to protest—was beginning to feel like a dangerous gamble.

Khalil was detained by federal immigration authorities on allegations that he had engaged in activities "aligned with Hamas." Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, in fact, said that the arrest was carried out "in support of President (Donald) Trump's executive orders prohibiting antisemitism." His green card now hangs in the balance, and his case has become the latest flashpoint in the escalating crackdown on student dissent. For international students across the country, the arrest signalled a grim new reality: their voices could cost them their future in the US. While Khalil's case has raised concerns among international students, it's important to note that he is a legal permanent resident, not someone on a student visa. However, there are broader implications for student activists.

The US has drawn millions of students from around the world, making its universities global centres of innovation, research, and intellectual debate. But these latest government actions risk dismantling the very foundation of that appeal. International students, often seen as guests rather than stakeholders, have always walked a tightrope—striving for academic excellence while avoiding controversy. Now, their presence on American soil feels even more precarious. The unspoken warning is clear: challenge US policy, and you might find yourself on the next flight out.

The financial consequences of such a shift are staggering. According to NAFSA: Association of International Educators, world's largest non-profit dedicated to international education based in Washington, DC, international students contributed

over \$40 billion to the US economy through tuition payments and living expenses during the 2022-2023 academic year. They fill crucial roles in research labs, technology start-ups, and public health initiatives, forming the backbone of the country's intellectual capital. Universities, especially those heavily reliant on international tuition dollars, are already beginning to feel the tremors of what could become a long-term crisis.

The US government's use of immigration law as a tool to suppress activism has historical precedent. During the McCarthy era, immigrants suspected of communist sympathies were deported without clear evidence of wrongdoing. After 9/11, thousands of Muslim immigrants

The US government's use of immigration law as a tool to suppress activism has historical precedent. After 9/11, thousands of Muslim immigrants were subjected to surveillance, visa denials, and deportations under the guise of national security.

were subjected to surveillance, visa denials, and deportations under the guise of national security. Now, with Khalil's case, a new chapter in this long history is unfolding, one in which student activists—especially those critical of US foreign policy—become targets of the state.

Civil rights activists argue that Khalil's arrest is a politically motivated attempt to silence campus activism. But the government insists that national security is at stake. His legal team has pushed back, demanding to see hard evidence against Khalil, but so far, none has been publicly presented. Is this about safety, or making an example of him?

The chilling effect is already being felt. Students who once spoke freely are now scrubbing their social media accounts, avoiding protests, and hesitating before signing petitions.

The phrase "proceed with caution" has become a mantra among activists. Many are asking: where is the line? At what point does political dissent become a deportable offence?

Beyond the personal cost to

activists, the economic and diplomatic fallout of these crackdowns could be severe. US' reputation as a beacon of free speech and intellectual freedom has long been a key driver of its global influence. The ability to challenge authority, to debate openly, to criticise policies without fear of reprisal—these are the principles that have made. The US universities are considered to be the gold standard. But if international students start to feel that their presence is conditional on their silence, they may begin looking elsewhere.

For the US, the long-term economic consequences of losing its international student base could be profound. Universities facing declining enrolment would struggle to fund research programmes, graduate fellowships, and faculty positions. High-tech industries, which rely on a steady influx of international talent, could see a shrinking pipeline of skilled workers. In short, the very system that has allowed the US to maintain its global intellectual dominance could begin to erode.

What remains uncertain is whether Khalil's case will serve as an outlier or a blueprint. Will the government

continue down this path, using immigration status as a political weapon against student activists? Or will legal challenges and public outcry force a course correction?

For now, the case hangs in limbo. Khalil's legal team has filed an emergency motion to block his deportation, and civil rights organisations are rallying behind him. But the larger question remains: what does this moment say about the future of activism in the US?

For decades, the US has presented itself as a champion of democratic values, a place where dissent is not just tolerated but celebrated. But for students, now watching their peers face arrest and deportation, that promise feels increasingly hollow.

And so, the banners may come down. The chants may quiet. The crowds may thin. But the fear that has settled over US' campuses will not fade so easily. The next generation of activists will remember this moment—not just for what was lost, but for the warning it carried: in the land of the free, speaking truth to power may come with a price.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Dakshin Surma, Sylhet.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No.-46.02.9131.000.07.003.24-188

Date:10/03/2025

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Interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hour.

Sd/-
(Sheikh Azim Ur Rashid)
Upazila Engineer
LGED
Dakshin Surma, Sylhet.
Phone: 01708-161689
Email: ue.dakshinsurma@lged.gov.bd

ESSAY

“A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS BORN” in Gaza and West Bank



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The steadfastness and determination of the rebel leaders and the manner in which they were killed galvanised retrospective support for the uprising and garnered public sympathy for them. Like many others, Yeats was ambivalent about the Easter rising and had mixed emotions about its leaders.

MD MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Easter Rising of 1916 against British rule in Ireland has both political and literary significance. It marked one of the foundational moments in European history that led to the liberation of the Irish state six years later. WB Yeats's famous poem "Easter 1916" gives the rebellion a literary expression that transcends political and geographical boundaries.

Through the uprising, the Irish rebels took the British coloniser as well as the people of Ireland by surprise. It was planned so furtively that even a close observer of Irish politics like Yeats was unaware of what was going on among the rebels. They sought to free their country from centuries-old British colonial rule.

Yeats thought that the Easter uprising was premature, and its unpredictability and suddenness initially shocked him. Later he surmounted his shock and reservations about the revolt and composed the poem to commemorate the heroism and sacrifice of the rebels.

In the Easter armed rebellion, about 1600 members of the paramilitary group Irish Volunteers (now known as the Irish Republican Army or IRA) in addition to 200 fighters of the more radical organisation the Irish Citizen Army took control of several key points in Dublin on Monday, 24 April, 1916. The

General Post Office (GPO) in the city was the epicentre of the insurrection.

Initially the British colonial government was unprepared and suffered casualties, but later it deployed additional soldiers eventually totalling about 20,000 against roughly 2000 Irish freedom fighters. On the whole, the British response to the uprising was brutal, cruel and ruthless. By Friday, April 28, 1916, the armed struggle was crushed and the fighting ended the next day. Nearly 500 people including civilians, rebels, British troops, and police officers were killed. Within a couple of weeks, the British government put to death 15 of the key rebel leaders by firing squad.

The steadfastness and determination of the rebel leaders and the manner in which they were killed galvanised retrospective support for the uprising and garnered public sympathy for them. Like many others, Yeats was ambivalent about the Easter rising and had mixed emotions about its leaders. But the rebels' commitment to the cause of Irish liberation and their resolute conviction that the country they loved needed their support changed Yeats's perception of them.

In "Easter 1916", Yeats repeats the phrase "a terrible beauty is born" to refer to what the rebels did for their country and the cost that they paid. The inhuman savagery of the British

was terrible, but the selflessness and bravery that the Irish revolutionaries demonstrated were most beautiful.

Yeats's elegant oxymoron of "a terrible beauty" can be extended to the situation in Palestine. Most people passionate about the cause of Palestine had conflicting feelings when on October 7, 2023, a group of Palestinians launched a surprise attack on apartheid Israel, their long-term oppressor. Global sympathy was divided, and Israel received comforting words from many world leaders.

However, Israel's indiscriminate killings of Palestinians in Gaza and continued settler terrorism in the West Bank, and finally over a yearlong livestreamed genocide in Gaza shifted public sympathy in favour of the victims of Israel's aggression. People of the world have watched the unspeakably sickening cruelty of Israel and its backers and undoubtedly horrifying devastation that the Zionist genocide has left in Gaza.

Pre-occupation Palestine had, to use Anglo-American poet WH Auden's words, "marble well-governed cities" full of "vines and olive trees." But Israel and its allies have turned it into "an artificial wilderness." Gaza is now:

"A plain without a feature, bare and brown,

No blade of grass, no sign of neighborhood,

Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down."

During this time and previously, Palestine has been a battleground between some of the most powerful nations and some of the poorest and most vulnerable people on earth. Again to borrow Auden's words, against their oppressors, defenceless Palestinians

"could not hope for help and no help came:

What their foes liked to do was done."

Israeli government and its allies have killed tens of thousands of Palestinians children, men and women, demolished their houses, destroyed their schools, colleges, and universities, turned their hospitals to rubble, killed doctors who treated them, butchered journalists who told the world about their ordeals, murdered teachers who taught their children and assassinated aid workers who stood by them in their difficulty. Israel and its allies perpetrated all the above and many other atrocities against Palestinians to break their will to resist. But the genociders have been defeated by Palestinians' willpower, strong resolve and formidable opposition to foreign occupation.

Without any support from the rest of the world, vulnerable Palestinians stood up to powerful nations that have continued providing arms and ammunition and diplomatic support to Israel, especially, Gazans have remained steadfast and resilient in the face of barbarity and evil that epitomise the behaviour of their oppressors.

Despite military superiority, Israel and its Euro-American allies have not been able to break the courage of Palestinians and their urge for resistance. Against the sadistic and bellicose behaviour of the Israeli administration and its sophisticated weaponry, Palestinians are armed with an enormous dose of courage and spurred by love for their land.

The land that has been littered with blood and dead bodies of Palestinians bears a strong testimony that it belongs to those who are ready to die for it and not to those who have come to destroy it. Every injured Palestinian child and bereaved parent declare in unison that Palestinians will continue to live and die in their land and their source of strength is not modern, hi-tech weapons but truth and moral rectitude.

Most Palestinians who live in Gaza and the West Bank have their roots in cities in what is now Israel. They or their ancestors were uprooted from their homes when the Zionist state was established. Even before the post-October 7, 2023, genocide, Gazans were already living in a condition that

commentators regarded as Israel's open-air prison or the world's largest concentration camp. By making life in Gaza increasingly unbearable in pre-existing and post-genocide periods, Israel and its backers seek to ramp up their ethnic cleansing project. Thus, Palestine's "casual comedy" is still in play.

Every time we open the newspaper or turn on the news channel, we see scores of Palestinians are butchered or buried in their homes which Israeli bombings have turned into mountains of rubble. Using Yeats's words, we tend to ask:

"O when may it suffice?"

Palestinian homes that now look like demolition sites were once inhabited by men and women along with their old parents and young children. Their homes were bombed while they were inside them. We now see only the rubble, debris and ruins of destroyed buildings. But how was the experience of those who were living there with their families during the horrifying moments of the bombings?

We are required to raise the level of our psychological adaptability even to imagine the frightening sounds, fallen pieces of concrete, and dust in the midst of which Palestinians regularly die or survive with significant bodily impairments and other devastating outcomes. When houses are bombed and reduced to heaps of debris, how do their occupants and people around feel?

The patience and resilience of Palestinians in the midst of genocide and decades-long human rights violations tell us about the beauty of their "hearts" which have been "enchanted to a stone" of single-minded devotion to Palestinian liberation. This resonates with what Yeats said about the freedom-loving Irish:

"Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart."

By daring to stay put in the face of death and destruction, for decades Palestinians have been affirming their love for their land and confronting injustice with dignity and resilience. Conversely, the ugliness and hypocrisy stored in the hearts of their oppressors are exposed out there for all to see.

While the global conscience is continuously challenged by Israeli aggression, inhumanity and intolerance, as in 1916 Dublin, "a terrible beauty is born" in present-day Gaza and West Bank.

Md Mahmudul Hasan is Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: mmhasan@iium.edu.my.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

‘Apni Ki Alien Dekhte Chan?’: A debut with immense possibility

Review of ‘Apni Ki Alien Dekhte Chan?’ (Afsar Brothers, 2024) by Wasif Noor

NAFIS SHAHRIAR

Publishers, 2020), certainly made an effort to stick to the naturality of the original book, but it quickly fell into the trap of devolving into a convoluted thriller, AKA Masud Rana, and the second half of the book suffers immensely as a result. I remember reading a book titled *Gadfly* (Adi Prokashoni) by Muradul Islam in early 2015 where it followed the outlandish plotting of a Masud Rana book to the T, so much so that even when I was done with the book, I still couldn't recognise the Dhaka that was depicted.

I understand it might be silly to split hairs over authenticity in a genre that is dominated by ghosts and goblins and hidden, murderous cults, but what I'm trying to say is that when the masters of the genre write, they can work such outlandish material into the narrative in such a way that they feel completely natural and commonplace. An example of this would be William S. Burroughs' *Cities of the Red Night*. This book has one of the most daring, outlandish plots and structures that I've ever had the pleasure of reading, but nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, seems out of place.

This to me is the benchmark for



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

work dealing with non-reality. This to me is the major strength of *Apni Ki Alien Dekhte Chan?*—the debut collection of 15 loosely connected short stories by Wasif Noor. Not only do the stories feel like they could be real, but it feels like Noor has captured the zeitgeist of the period

of 2010 itself.

Some of the tricks used to evoke this authenticity were so simple, they can be termed genius. The loose connection of the stories creates this shared reality through the book, and being immersed in this shared reality for the duration of around 100

pages builds a sense of relatability between the readers and the book. The way Noor repeatedly mentions the same objects/attributes of this shared reality—a Facebook group, an artist disappearing, the narrative of one story becoming background information in the next—gives a

sense of actuality to this world, making it a world that seems to exist out of the confines of the stories themselves.

The use of the Facebook group was a particular standout. As a source of information, Noor repeatedly mentions a Facebook group for the sharing of 'real' paranormal incidents. This clever mirroring of the real world through the lens of fiction (for groups dedicated to the paranormal had become something of a hot topic for Facebook users in Bangladesh during the 2010s, particularly due to the re-popularisation of the paranormal due to Bhoot FM and Bhoutist) elicits strong reactions from the readers, and this simultaneously allows the readers to connect strongly with the narrative while evoking a sense of wonder and excitement, something that is important when confronting works of the unreal.

This is an excerpt. Read the full review on The Daily Star and Star Books and Literature's websites.

Nafis Shahriar is currently working in the Ed-Tech space.

Mahmudullah's CAREER AT A GLANCE

Bangladesh veteran Mahmudullah Riyad called time on an 18-year international career through a Facebook post yesterday. The 39-year-old, who scored 11,047 runs in international cricket, had retired from Tests in 2021 and called time on his T20I career last year in October. Here we present the highlights of his career:

Mahmudullah scored 5689 runs from 239 matches at an average of 36.46 and a strike-rate of 77.64 in ODIs. He has four centuries and 32 fifties to his name; with the ball, he has 82 wickets at an economy-rate of 5.21 in the format.

He is the fourth-highest run-getter in the format for the Tigers, after Tamim Iqbal (8357), Mushfiqur Rahim (7795), and Shakib Al Hasan (7570), and also played the fourth-most ODIs for the country.

The 39-year-old has a best score of 128 not out in ODIs which was against New Zealand in the 2015 ODI World Cup. The knock was his second ton in the campaign after he scored a 103 (against England in Bangladesh's previous match) which was the first century by a Bangladeshi player in a major ICC event.

The right-handed batter has four centuries in major ICC events (3 in World Cups and 1 in 2017 Champions Trophy) – the most by a Bangladeshi player. Two of his tons contributed to winning causes (against England in Adelaide in the 2015 World Cup and against New Zealand in Cardiff in the 2017 Champions Trophy), while the other two failed to drive the Tigers to a win.

He tops the list for most sixes hit a Bangladeshi player in ODIs (107) and T20Is (77).

He is the country's second-highest run-scorer in T20Is with 2444 runs in 141 matches at a strike-rate of 117.38 and an average of 23.50.

Under his captaincy, Bangladesh won 16, lost 26, and saw one match yield no result in 43 T20Is. He also scored 782 runs at an average of 23,

including two fifties and a high score of 52, as a captain in the shortest format.

He also led Bangladesh in six Tests. Under Mahmudullah's captaincy, the Tigers won one (against Zimbabwe in Mirpur in 2018) and drew one (against Sri Lanka in Chattogram in 2018) while losing four Tests. However, his batting average of 59.44 as a Test captain is significantly higher than his overall career Test average of 33.49.

His unbeaten 150 in his final Test, against Zimbabwe in Harare in 2021,



is also his career-best score in the format.

Mahmudullah has been a part of Bangladesh's 'Big Five', also including Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, and Mushfiqur Rahim.

Fizz awaits signal to play DPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's star pacer Mustafizur Rahman is suffering from a shoulder injury and is awaiting permission from BCB's medical department to play in the DPL.

Mustafizur had not taken a token for a players' transfer this season even though Prime Bank has now informed that they had not released the player. There are rumours that the left-arm pacer may be called up to play in the IPL. If he does not play the IPL, and gets the green light from the medical department, he may play the ongoing DPL.

Mustafizur was administered a PRP injection yesterday according to sources. The injection is used for stimulating healing and to reduce pain through regeneration. Sources informed that he has been prescribed 7-10 days of rest.

Prime Bank sources said that talks have been held with Mustafizur.

"He has not gone to any other team but since there is an injury concern and we don't know much about the report, the medical department would let us know. If he is free and does not play IPL and the board allows, we will see," a Prime Bank official said.

Brothers Union batters had a hard time against Mohammedan's Taijul Islam (4-31) and Mehedi Hasan Miraz (2-30) and were bundled out for 187 in 48.4 overs.

In reply, Tamim hit an unbeaten 96-ball 105aced with nine fours and four sixes in a fluent and assertive knock as Mohammedan, who are the most star-

studded team in this year's league, completed their fourth straight win.

At BKSP Ground 4, Naim, who had made 176 to power Prime Bank to 422-8 in their last game against Brothers Union, was once again amongst the runs yesterday against Legends of Rupganj, scoring an 83-ball 81.

However, the rest of the batting self-destruct as Prime Bank got bowled out for just 154 with part-timer Saif Hassan picking up 4-37 and Tanzim Sakib getting 3-30.

In the chase, Tanzid Tamim (68 off 49) and Soumya Sarkar (50 off 40) hit brisk fifties as Rupganj chased down the target in just 23.2 overs.

Winning matches quickly is fast becoming a trend for Rupganj, stacked with star players from the national team, as in their earlier match they bowled Shirepukur out for 69 and finished the chase in 9.3 overs. That game ended at 12:13 pm after a 9:00 am start, not an endorsement of a competitive league.

In the day's other match, Abahani, who have lost some of the sway they used to hold in preceding seasons but still have the likes of national team captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and Parvez Hossain Emon amongst others in their side, recorded an eight-wicket win over Partex Sporting Club.

Abahani first bowled Partex out for 100 before Parvez's 50-ball 55 and Mosaddek Hossain's 27-ball 37 ended the chase inside 15 overs.

In club cricket, the clubs serve their own purpose and the team that spends the most can acquire the best quality players. But if only a few teams completely overpower the remaining teams, that creates an imbalance that is far from ideal from national interest point of view.

Bangladesh's premier 50-over competition suffers from a lack of grind that cricketers are supposed to face in domestic cricket to get ahead in international cricket.

With the changes in cricket administration after the fall of the Awami League regime, expectations were that the teams will even out further in terms of strength and more title contenders would emerge.

But so far, only the names of the dominant outfits have changed, the power dynamics remain the same.

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) witnessed some brilliant individual showings in three very one-sided contests yesterday which highlighted the power imbalance that remains prevalent in the country's premier List-A tournament.

Tamim Iqbal hit his second hundred in as many games and his teammate Mahidul Islam Ankon played some dazzling strokes on his way to making 75 off 96 balls to help Mohammudan's Cricket Club register a nine-wicket win over Brothers Union at BKSP Ground 3.

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Quality present but balance missing in DPL

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studded team in this year's league, completed their fourth straight win.

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BCB ANNOUNCES SQUAD FOR ICC WOMEN'S ODI WC QUALIFIER

SQUAD

Nigar Sultana Joty (Captain), Nahida Akter (Vice Captain), Ishma Tanjim, Dilara Akter, Sharmin Akter Supta, Sobhana Mostary, Shorna Akter, Jannatul Ferdus, Sumona, Rabeya, Fahima Khatun, Farha Islam Trisna, Farzana Hague, Shanjida Akther Maghla, Marufa Akter and Ritu Moni.



Newcomers Sheltech Cricket Academy lifted the Women's DPL trophy yesterday at Bashundhara Sports Complex after securing an eight-wicket win against BKSP, having clinched the title ahead of the league's final day. Led by national skipper Nigar Sultana Joty, Sheltech became first-time champions, finishing their campaign unbeaten with eight consecutive wins.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Team cohesion triumphs over individual brilliance

AGENCIES

For years, PSG had been synonymous with star power, banking on marquee signings to fulfil their European ambitions.

But in a defining moment of the club's evolution, they proved that unity and tactical discipline could outweigh individual brilliance. PSG's hard-fought victory over Liverpool in the Champions League last 16 on Tuesday was a testament to their transformation.

The Parisians entered the tie as underdogs, particularly after losing 1-0 at home in the first leg despite dominating play. With Kylian Mbappe having departed and PSG enduring a lacklustre group-stage campaign, expectations were tempered. Yet, Liverpool's new boss, Arne Slot, had warned of Luis Enrique's tactical acumen, and his words proved prophetic.

PSG's resilience shone through at Anfield, where they matched Liverpool's intensity and prevailed with a 1-0 victory, forcing the contest to penalties. The shootout saw Gianluigi Donnarumma redeem himself with crucial saves, ensuring the Parisians' passage to the quarterfinals.

"Over the two legs, we deserved to go through. Football does not always acknowledge merit, but tonight I'm happy we qualified because we deserved it," PSG captain Marquinhos said.

Liverpool were eliminated from a major European knockout tie for the first time ever after winning the first leg away from home, progressing from 30 straight ties before Tuesday's game.

Liverpool lost a penalty shootout in the European Cup/UEFA Champions League for the first time (W3 before).

PSG's newfound ethos revolves around teamwork rather than reliance on a singular talisman. President Nasser Al-Khelaifi echoed this sentiment: "We are building something special with young talent. We have the best coach in the world and players with immense technical ability." Luis Enrique's philosophy -- centered on possession, pressing, and collective effort -- was on full display. Ousmane Dembele, a player once criticised for inconsistency, delivered the crucial goal with a composed finish on the break. Meanwhile, Donnarumma, who had been

blamed for PSG's first-leg loss, thwarted Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones in the decisive shootout.

"Knocking Liverpool out is incredibly difficult," Enrique said. "But we showed our identity. No matter the stadium, we play our football with courage."

With emerging stars like Desire Doue and Bradley Barcola stepping up, the club is embracing a sustainable future. Their next hurdle will be Aston Villa or Club Brugge, but with Ligue 1 nearly secured and a reinvigorated mindset, PSG have every reason to dream big in Europe.



Lamine Yamal and Raphinha dazzled as Barcelona thumped Benfica 3-1 in the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Tuesday, reaching the quarterfinals with a 4-1 aggregate win. Raphinha netted either side of a stunning Yamal strike as the Catalans dominated in the first half, building on their 1-0 last 16 first-leg win in Lisbon.

PHOTO: AFP





Guterres arrives today

UN chief to visit Rohingya camp tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary General António Guterres is set to arrive on a four day visit to Bangladesh this afternoon to witness the Rohingya situation.

Guterres's visit, which is his second, is expected to strengthen international efforts to mobilise increased aid for the Rohingya people and reignite global attention on

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NO LESSON LEARNT

A jaywalker falls in the middle of airport road after being hit by an autorickshaw at Chairmanbari yesterday. A nearby footbridge can be seen in the photo. The incident was only yards away from the place where a garment worker was run over and killed by a truck on Monday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SHAPLA CHATTAR INCIDENT ICT issues arrest warrants for Hasina, 4 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday issued arrest warrants for deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and four others over the "mass killings" during a Hefajat-e-Islam protest at Motijheel's Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013.

The four are former home minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, ex-inspector general of police Hasan Mahmud Khandaker, then Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Benazir Ahmed, who later became IGP, and Imran H Sarker, spokesperson for Gonojagoron Mancha, which sought death penalty for war crimes.

The tribunal also asked the authorities concerned to produce four arrestees

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PAKISTAN TRAIN SIEGE 340 hostages freed after 30hrs

27 hostages killed; military says 33 militants eliminated

AFP, Sibi

More than 340 train passengers taken hostage by a militant group were freed yesterday by Pakistani security forces after a 30-hour siege, an army official told AFP, confirming that 27 off-duty soldiers were shot dead by militants.

Pakistan security forces launched a rescue mission Tuesday afternoon after a separatist group bombed a railway track in mountainous southwest Balochistan and stormed a train with around 450 passengers on board.

"346 hostages were freed and 33 terrorists were killed during the operation," an army official told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The 27 slain soldiers had been travelling on the train as passengers, the army official said. One on-duty soldier was killed in the clearance operation.

The official did not give a civilian death toll, but earlier a railway

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Unite to build strong JS for carrying out reforms

Salahuddin calls on uprising leaders

STAR REPORT

BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed has urged young participants of the July uprising to unite to build a strong national parliament, where all reform proposals can be discussed and adopted through national consensus.

He made the remarks at an iftar event yesterday, calling the youth-based platforms "friends who

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

8-yr-old Magura girl suffers 4 cardiac arrests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eight-year-old girl from Magura suffered four cardiac arrests yesterday, Bangladesh Army wrote on Facebook last night.

Physicians performed CPR to make her condition stable, and she has been receiving dialysis, it said, adding that her blood pressure is 60/40, far below the level doctors say is healthy.

The army urged people to pray for her.

A high-level medical board comprising specialist doctors of the Combined Military Hospital is making all out efforts to save the child's life.

The girl is undergoing treatment at the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Earlier in the day, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam told a press conference that the girl's Glasgow coma scale -- a neurological scale that measures a person's conscious state -- dropped to from four to three.

He also urged people to pray for her.

According to a case filed by her mother on March 8, the girl was raped while she was visiting her elder sister's house in Magura town. Her sister's husband, parents-in-law and brother-in-law were arrested and placed on remand.

An uncle of hers said, "We all are in shock. Everyone is praying for her recovery. The doctors are trying, but

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Mahmudullah retires from int'l cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's 39 year old veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, who had earlier withdrawn himself from Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB)'s central contracts for this year, ended all speculation regarding his international career by announcing his retirement yesterday.

Mahmudullah, who had played a pivotal role for many years down the order in the Tigers' setup, played his last game against New Zealand in the ICC Champions Trophy. Having

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

ANTI-RAPE PROTEST 12 sued for attacking cops

2 of the accused say they were nowhere near the scene

RAFIUL ISLAM

Two of the accused in a case over attacking police during anti-rape protests in Dhaka on Tuesday have said they were not present at the scene during the clash.

The clash broke out in front of the Hotel InterContinental when the protesters attempted to break a police barricade and submit a memorandum to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at his residence.

Sub-Inspector Abul Khair of Ramna Police Station filed a case accusing 12 named and at least 70 other unidentified individuals.

One of the named accused, Armanul Hoque, convener of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation's Dhaka University unit, says he was in Dinajpur's Khansama upazila on Tuesday.

"He has been on an organisational tour in the northern

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 13

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:54	12:45	4:30	6:07	7:30
JAMAAT 5:04	1:15	4:45	6:22	8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING	
RAMADAN	MARCH
12	13
13	14
14	15

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A paramilitary soldier stands guard at a railway station in the Sibi district of southwestern Balochistan province yesterday, during a security operation against militants a day after they hijacked a passenger train.

PHOTO: AFP

Rape victim's father murdered the night before court hearing

STAR REPORT

Police recovered the body of a rape victim's father in Barguna town early yesterday.

The victim's family members claimed that he was murdered by associates of the rape accused, who is now in jail.

The deceased worked at a poultry shop in the town. His daughter, a fifth grader, was raped allegedly by one of their neighbours on March 7.

The next day, the victim's father filed a case against Shibu Das, 30, and other

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

SAFETY OF WOMEN, CHILDREN Amendment drafted for quick probe, trial Says law adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has prepared a draft of the amended Women and Children Repression Prevention Act that would shorten the trial and investigation time for rape cases by half, said Law Adviser Asif Nazrul.

The draft "Amendment to Women and Children Repression Prevention Act" was prepared after consultations with all concerned, he said in a media briefing after a meeting with a delegation of the "Platform Against Rape" at the secretariat.

"We will try to ensure strict implementation of the law as soon as possible. The trial of rape cases should not only be speedy but justice should be ensured and fair."

As per the draft law, the investigation period for rape cases is

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

WE MOURN Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi (1942 - 2025)

Eminent entrepreneur and industrialist Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi has passed away.
(Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaihi Rajiu'n).



Mr. Elahi was the founding Chairman of one of the biggest conglomerates Apex Group. He also was the founding and current Chairman of Mutual Trust Bank PLC. Mr. Elahi was appointed as Advisor to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh twice. He was a dedicated business personnel whose contributions to our nation will be remembered with deep respect.

Dhaka Bank family extends its deepest condolences on his passing away and prays for the salvation of his departed soul. May Almighty Allah grant him Jannatul Ferdous. Ameen.

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EXCELLENCE IN BANKING