



Another Eid
for children
without
Shishu Park
P3



Overcoming
stigmas,
girls get
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Built on sand,
bribery, and
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Sanjida
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Different and
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Easy ride home

Long Eid vacation, staggered
RMG closures cut travel woes

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Holidaymakers' journeys have been relatively smooth this year, thanks to the extended vacation, staggered closures of garment factories, and improved traffic management, according to operators, officials, and experts.

The involvement of army personnel in traffic management in congestion-prone areas, the removal of some bottlenecks on the highway connecting the capital to the north, and the opening of the Jamuna Rail Bridge have also contributed to this, they said.

However, many private bus operators, particularly those running AC buses, have been overcharging passengers, causing distress. Additionally, a shortage of vehicles during peak hours has worsened the situation.

Despite measures by the authorities, illegal and risky rooftop journeys on many trains and launches were still observed, highlighting the need for further action during the Eid rush, they added.

Eid-ul-Fitr will likely be celebrated on March 31 or April 1, depending on the sighting of the moon.

Like the past few days, thousands of people have left Dhaka and adjacent districts by bus, train, and launch yesterday as well.

"Long holidays are an ad-hoc measure... Decentralisation of various facilities from Dhaka to other regions is one of the key permanent solutions to the perennial problem."

PROF HADIUZZAMAN,
transport expert.



A gleeful child and his uncle at Kamalapur Railway Station before they board a train to leave for their hometown Netrakona and spend the Eid holidays there.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Myanmar quake toll soars past 1,600

Toll likely to rise as true scale of disaster starts to emerge; foreign aid begins to tickle in

AFP, Mandalay

The death toll from a huge earthquake that hit Myanmar and Thailand passed 1,600 yesterday as rescuers dug through the rubble of collapsed buildings in a desperate search for survivors.

The shallow 7.7 magnitude quake struck northwest of the city of Sagaing in central Myanmar early Friday afternoon, followed minutes later by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock.

The quake destroyed buildings, downed bridges, and buckled roads across swathes of Myanmar, with massive destruction seen in Mandalay, the country's second biggest city and home to more than 1.7 million people.

"We need aid," said Thar Aye, 68, a Mandalay resident. "We don't have enough of anything."

At least 1,644 people were killed and more than 3,400 injured



in Myanmar, with at least 139 more missing, the junta said in a statement. Around 10 more deaths have been confirmed in Bangkok.

But with communications badly disrupted, the true scale of the disaster is only starting to emerge from the isolated military-ruled

state, and the toll is expected to rise significantly.

In Mandalay, AFP journalists saw rescuers pull a woman alive from the remains of one apartment block where a Red Cross official said more than 90 people could be trapped.

After hours of painstaking work at the Sky Villa Condominium, half of whose 12 stories were flattened by the quake, Phy Lay Khaing, 30, was brought out and carried by stretcher to be embraced by her husband and taken to hospital.

Another woman at the apartment block was less fortunate. Her 20-year-old son, an employee at the building, is still missing.

"We cannot find him yet. I only have this child -- I feel so heartbroken," said Min Min Khine, 56, a staff who cooks at the building.

"He ate at my dining room and said goodbye. Then he left, and the earthquake happened. If he was

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JULY UPRISING
US recognises
the brave women

Picks them for Madeleine Albright
Honorary Group Award



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department has announced Madeleine Albright Honorary Group Award to the women student protest leaders of Bangladesh for their extraordinary bravery during the July-August uprising that led to the fall of Awami League regime.

This accolade is part of the Secretary of State's 2025 International Women of Courage Award. The recipients were announced by the US State Department yesterday.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio and First Lady Melania Trump will host the annual International Women of Courage (IWOC) Awards ceremony at the Department of

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ARREARS, BONUSES
TNZ group
agrees to Tk
3cr payout
Workers to resume
demo on Apr 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The workers of TNZ Group have decided to suspend their demonstration for a week upon the assurance of receiving Tk 3 crore ahead of Eid.

TNZ management said factory machinery would be sold to arrange the fund, and it would be disbursed among some 3,500 workers who are owed around Tk 16 crore in arrears.

In response, the union leaders have agreed to temporarily halt their programmes, provided the amount was disbursed by last night.

"However, we will be staying at the Sromo Bhabon until the agreed amount is disbursed," said Joly Talukder, vice president of the Garment Workers' Trade Union Centre.

She also announced that



Some of the demonstrating workers of garment factories owned by TNZ Group break down in tears in front of Sromo Bhaban yesterday. The workers have been pressing for payment of their overdue wages and Eid bonuses for over a week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NEWS ANALYSIS

Yunus' China trip may boost trade prospects

PORIMOL PALMA

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' visit to China laid a strong foundation to draw more investments, transfer technologies and improve cooperation, foreign policy analysts say.

During his four-day visit that ended yesterday, Prof Yunus delivered a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in Hainan, met Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang, Water Resources Minister Li Guoying and other dignitaries.

The two countries signed one agreement on economic and technical cooperation and eight MoUs. The two sides made five announcements of cooperation on investment infrastructure, and technology.

The visit dwelt on fostering commitments and exploring opportunities for trade and economic collaboration rather than immediate outcomes, foreign policy analysts observe.

Beijing expressed its willingness to start negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement and Investment Agreement with Dhaka, and promised to encourage more Chinese private investment and relocation of Chinese manufacturing plants to Bangladesh.

China promised to lend some \$400 million for Mongla port modernisation, \$350 million for the development of the China Industrial Economic Zone, and \$150 million as

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MY DHAKA

EID PREPARATIONS IN DHAKA

The spice, the hustle, and the feast

RBR

The last two days before the grand Eid day are packed with frenzied fuss about anything and everything.

From buying a pair of leather slippers at the last moment from Elephant Road on Chand Raat or to airing out the old panjabi, starching and ironing it, (just in case you didn't go for a new one).

The lady of the house, along with her entourage, is the busiest of all because now is the time for all the month-long effort taken to fall in place – festival grocery shopping, getting fresh notes for Eid salami, booking henna artist, the salon girls, and barbers – everything must be done within the next 48 hours.

I love this hullabaloo, even though Eid rituals are now passé for me. Nevertheless, I put a meek effort into



setting the menu, which is a chore, only because I love spice and condiment shopping. Getting the right ingredients is another hurdle to cross, especially during festivals, because you do not want to compromise on the quality of spices and condiments; they make or break the dishes.

Spices and seasoning are used to enhance and temper flavours of any rich curry or Mughal recipe, and to cut the rawness of poultry, red meat, and fish, whereas condiments are add-ons and garnishes used while serving.

A tedious search for Rabri, which is a creamy clotted cream or malai, that goes so well with your vermicelli zarda, is a must. A dollop of Rabri with crunchy nuts on top of your delightful dessert of vermicelli, sautéed in ghee

and sweetened with sugar, cardamom, and saffron is the absolute Eid favourite. If you are not making your own Rabri from scratch, the city's sweet shops like Premium Sweets are selling it for around Tk 900 a kilo.

The almonds, pistachios, and sultanas, the fragrant green cardamom, the mild spicy rolled-out cinnamon, and nutmeg, to availing the best quality poppyseeds are tasks to be reckoned with. Karwan Bazar grocers stock them from Kaptan Bazar or Chawk Bazar, and sell them at a reasonable price. Like a hundred grams of poppyseed are sold for Tk 280, whereas the local grocery store in your lane sells it for Tk 450. They score their stock from Tongi, and there is the fear that half your poppy seed in those hundred grams is suji

or semolina. Poppyseed paste, along with cashews and almonds, is essential for any korma or braised with yoghurt gravy.

I found that mildly earthy-scented green cardamoms are pricy; Tk 550 to Tk 600 for a hundred grams is consistent in Karwan Bazar and any grocery store in your locale. Mace is Tk 350, while a single nutmeg is Tk 10. The one ingredient that you cannot do without is raisins; the spice markets are flooded with black sultanas and golden raisins; and all less than Tk 100. These prices are for hundred grams only. Aloo Bukhara or plums for your biryanis cost Tk 80 or more, and maybe five or six pieces make for a hundred grams.

Gulshan 1 DCC market, Old Dhaka spice lanes, and Karwan Bazar are the best options to shop for Eid spices, seasonings, and condiments. Though all stores are now in a 'no-bargain' mode, open markets ensure quality and are fairly priced compared to supermarkets and local grocery stores.

Festival cooking for Eid-ul-Fitr is always elaborate; you opt for the best Dhaka cuisine with Mughal influence. Rich menus boasting lamb kababs, mutton rezala, koftas with tomato gravy, biryanis, kheer, and firni have you spoilt for choices. I emphasised local taste because hands down, Dhaka's kacchi biryani recipe is the best in the sub-continent, for which, you need to get your hands on the best spices.

Plating the dishes, serving, and setting the table are all part of the grand show down, and Eid lunch is where you shine the most.

Eid Mubarak to all My Dhaka readers.

BNP to take to streets again if people's interests are in jeopardy

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Warning of a plot to deprive people of their right to vote, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said their party will once again take to the streets if the interests of the party and people are in jeopardy.

"We are not on the streets right now. We are going to people with iftar items and Eid gifts and standing by them in their joy and sorrow. But, if any obstacle arises against the interests of the party and people, we, the BNP, will take to the streets once again," he said while distributing Eid gifts among the poor in Beraid area of Badda.



Fakhrul called upon the people of the country to prepare for a movement, as a plot, both from within and outside the country, is underway to deprive people of their right to vote and delay the elections.

"We will not allow this to happen," he said.

He said over the past 15 years, their party leaders and activists have endured serious repression in their fight for the restoration of people's voting rights.

The BNP leader also mentioned that the people of the country were freed from Sheikh Hasina's "monstrous and fascist" regime on August 5 after 36 days of movement and the united efforts of political parties and students.

He said the interim government, led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, was formed with the primary responsibility of holding a national election by creating a level-playing field within a short time.

"But whenever we discuss elections, many claim that the BNP only raises the issue of elections. It is natural for us to do so, as we have fought for that very cause," he observed.

Myanmar quake toll soars past 1,600

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with me, he might have escaped like me," she told AFP.

Elsewhere in Mandalay, AFP journalists saw dozens of people preparing to bed down for the night in the streets, preferring to sleep in the open rather than take the risk in quake-damaged buildings.

This was the biggest quake to hit Myanmar in decades, according to geologists, and the tremors were powerful enough to severely damage buildings across Bangkok, hundreds of kilometres (miles) away from the epicentre.

AFP journalists saw a centuries-old Buddhist pagoda in Mandalay that had been reduced to rubble.

The monastery also collapsed.

One monk died, some people were injured, we pulled out some people and took them to the hospital," said a soldier at a nearby checkpoint.

There are reports of damage to Mandalay Airport, which would complicate relief efforts in a country whose rescue services and healthcare system have already been ravaged by four years of civil war sparked by a military coup in 2021.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing

issued an exceptionally rare appeal for international aid on Friday, indicating the severity of the calamity. Previous military governments have shunned foreign assistance, even after major natural disasters.

The US Geological Service's predictive modelling estimated Myanmar's death toll could exceed 10,000 and losses could exceed the country's annual economic output.

The country declared a state of emergency across the six worst-affected regions after the quake, and at one major hospital in the capital, Naypyidaw, medics were forced to treat the wounded in the open air.

Offers of foreign assistance began coming in, with President Donald Trump pledging US help.

An initial aid delivery arrived from India, while China said it sent more than 80 rescuers to Myanmar and pledged \$13.8 million in emergency assistance.

Aid agencies have warned that Myanmar is unprepared to deal with a disaster of this magnitude. Some 3.5 million people were displaced by the raging civil war, many at risk of hunger, even before the quake struck.

Across the border in Bangkok,

rescuers were continuing to work yesterday as a second night drew in, searching for survivors trapped when a 30-storey skyscraper under construction collapsed.

Bangkok governor Chadechart Sittipunt told reporters that eight people had been confirmed dead in the building collapse so far, while at least eight others were rescued.

But he said 79 were still unaccounted for at the building, close to the Chatuchak weekend market that is a magnet for tourists.

"I can't describe how I feel -- it happened in the blink of an eye," said construction worker Khin Aung, who escaped the collapse.

"All my friends and my brother were in the building when it collapsed. I don't have any words to say."

Sniffer dogs and thermal imaging drones were deployed to seek signs of life in the rubble -- Chadechart said that the locations of about 30 people could be ascertained by radar.

Bangkok city authorities said they will deploy more than 100 engineers to inspect buildings for safety after receiving over 2,000 reports of damage.

On Wednesday, mobile courts of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority fined nine private bus operators for overcharging and failing to display fare charts.

THE REASONS

Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the long

holiday is the main reason behind the smoother journeys this time.

A rare nine day Eid holiday began on Friday, giving people at least three days before Eid, assuming it is observed on Monday. Usually, people get only one day off before Eid.

"We used to spend six to eight hours stuck in traffic when heading to northern destinations. The situation is different this year," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Additionally, the deployment of army personnel in congestion-prone areas has contributed to the smoother journeys, he said, adding that the phased closure of garment factories was also a key factor.

The staggered closure of garment factories had long been discussed but not properly implemented. As a result, thousands of workers create pressure on vehicles in the industrial belt, bringing traffic to a halt after a single-day factory closure.

"There are still debates among hydrologists about the project's efficiency, especially the implications of dredging on the environment. Also, there is a lack of water upstream," he says.

Prof Imtiaz says Bangladesh, India and China need cooperation when it comes to the transboundary rivers.

Humayun Kabir says Bangladesh's mention that it opposes the "Taiwan independence" may raise questions.

"We could have been more careful in phrasing," he says.

Overall, Prof Yunus' visit has a significant symbolic and political value, he adds.

The visit takes place when Bangladesh's relations with India are strained.

Asked if Prof Yunus' visit will affect Bangladesh's relations with India, Prof Imtiaz says Bangladesh's relations with the two countries are separate and should be viewed from that perspective.

"Having relations with one does not mean severing relations with the other," he adds.

"Once we have an agreement like

that, we will see substantial Chinese investments and production units here. That will be great for our economy," he says.

Besides, around 30 Chinese companies promised to invest around \$1 billion in Bangladesh.

Foreign policy analysts point out that the two countries have yet to sign any agreement on Mongla port and acquisition of land for the Chinese Industrial Economic Zone remains incomplete.

"The pledges are fine, but it will take time," says Prof Sk Tawfiq M Haque, director at the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance of North South University.

The engagement with the Chinese businesses, President Xi's promise to encourage businesses to invest in Bangladesh are something that will bring Chinese investments to Bangladesh, he says.

"From that perspective, I would say there is success."

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, executive director of the Centre for Alternatives, says the Chinese side mentioned the business climate in Bangladesh.

"I think Chinese firms will not invest here until there is a stable government led by a political party. I appreciate the engagement with the Chinese private sector though. It should continue," he says.

M Humayun Kabir, chairman of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, says one must appreciate the fact that Beijing agreed in principle to start negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement and Investment Agreement with Dhaka.

"Once we have an agreement like

Easy ride home

FROM PAGE 1

This time, however, Eid journeys have been relatively smooth, with no major traffic congestion reported on key highways for several days, except in isolated cases.

Yet, many passengers travelling on AC buses -- except those run by a few reputed companies -- were forced to pay extra due to the absence of a fixed fare for such services and a lack of proper monitoring.

Although the price hike is not as steep for non-AC buses, most private operators, particularly lesser-known companies, are still overcharging passengers ahead of Eid.

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Shishu Park in Shahbagh used to be the go-to destination for families during the Eid holidays. However, the park has been closed since January 2019, depriving children. According to officials, the renovation work is scheduled to complete in December 2026.

Another Eid without SHISHU PARK



DIPAN NANDY

On Monday noon, Arohi Hasnat stood with a forlorn look in front of Dhaka Shishu Park, accompanied by her mother, Sharmin Hasnat.

Sharmin was trying to reassure her seven-year-old daughter that the park would reopen soon. However, the promise made by the mother to her daughter will not be fulfilled anytime soon.

The park is set to reopen in two more years. Renovation work, which resumed in May last year, is scheduled for completion in December 2026, after which the park will be open to the public.

Project Director and Supervising Engineer of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), Anisur Rahman, told The Daily Star, "Our project duration extends until December 2026. We are working towards completing the development of

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Brace for heatwave on Eid holiday

UNB, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast that the severe to moderate heatwave sweeping over Dhaka and several other districts will persist until Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to a BMD bulletin issued yesterday, the heatwave conditions are expected to remain unchanged for the next five days.

"A severe heatwave is affecting Jashore and Sirajganj, while a mild to moderate heatwave is sweeping over Dhaka, Barishal, and parts of Rajshahi, Khulna, Moulvibazar, Brahmanbaria, and Rangamati. This may continue in the coming days," the bulletin added.

The weather is expected to remain dry, with a partly cloudy sky across the country.

Daytime temperatures are likely to remain unchanged, while night temperatures may drop slightly.

Country's highest temperature was recorded in Jashore at 41 degrees Celsius on Friday.

A special Eid for Khaleda

BNP chief to celebrate festivities with family after nearly 8 years

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is set to celebrate Eid with her family in London for the first time in nearly eight years.

Khaleda, who travelled to London on January 7 for medical treatment, will spend Eid with her eldest son Tarique Rahman, his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman, their daughter Zaima Rahman, as well as her late son Arafat Rahman Koko's wife Shamila Rahman and granddaughters Zafia and Zahia Rahman.

Speaking to UNB from London, her personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain said Khaleda is mentally strong and in stable health as she prepares for the occasion. She has been receiving treatment at home under the supervision of Professors Patrick Kennedy and Jennifer Cross from The London Clinic since her discharge on January 25.

Zahid said a medical team is continuously monitoring her condition.

Khaleda, 79, has long suffered from liver cirrhosis, kidney and heart issues, diabetes, and arthritis.

This will be her first Eid with her entire family since her imprisonment in 2018. She last celebrated Eid in London in 2017, during a three-month stay at Tarique Rahman's residence.

Asked about the possibility of Khaleda returning to Bangladesh, Dr Zahid said she could return any time after Eid, depending on the advice of her medical team.

"The final decision rests on the approval of her medical team. I hope she'll return home very soon with the medical board's decision, as her condition is now stable," he said.

Eid-ul-Fitr will be celebrated in the UK either on Sunday or Monday, depending on the sighting of the moon.



Ration for Secretariat staff recommended. Other depts decry discrimination

BAHARAM KHAN

The Ministry of Food has recommended ration facilities for Secretariat employees, triggering dissatisfaction among the government staff in other offices and agencies.

The ministry sent a letter, signed by Senior Assistant Secretary Abdulla Al Mamun, to the finance secretary on March 25, with the proposal from the Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Coordinated Council for approval.

The letter stated, "The proposal from the Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Coordinated Council regarding the provision of ration facilities for officials and employees working in the Secretariat has been recommended for favourable consideration and is being forwarded with directives."

It also mentioned that the food adviser had approved the move.

Secretariat employees have long demanded ration benefits similar to those provided to institutions such as the Anti-

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667 patrol teams, 71 checkpoints

DMP tightens security for Eid; home adviser says no security threat in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has intensified security measures to ensure a safe and festive Eid-ul-Fitr celebration and will launch a special operation after Eid to prevent post-holiday crime and ensure the safe return of city dwellers.

Speaking at a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre yesterday, Additional Police Commissioner (Detective Branch) Rezaul Karim Mallick said 667 patrol teams have been deployed in two shifts across 50 police station areas daily.

Seventy-one police checkpoints have been set up at key strategic locations in the capital, while auxiliary forces have been deployed to support law enforcement activities.

Mallick said the Detective Branch (DB) has been actively ensuring public safety throughout Ramadan and will maintain its vigilance during Eid.

Security has been heightened at shopping malls, railway stations, bus terminals and launch terminals to facilitate a smooth and secure Eid journey.

DB teams are working alongside uniformed police to prevent criminal activities.

A special post-Eid operation will be conducted to ensure the safe return of city dwellers, targeting pickpockets, thieves and extortionists. DB teams

will be stationed at strategic points across Dhaka to prevent post-holiday crime.

He advised people to contact the DMP control room or the national emergency helpline 999 for assistance.

'NO SECURITY THREAT'

There is no security threat in Dhaka during Eid-ul-Fitr, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday.

There is no threat of sabotage in Dhaka. If such a situation arises, it will be dealt with collectively. If the people remain vigilant, no one will be able to carry out any acts of sabotage.

Jahangir Alam Chowdhury
Home Adviser

Speaking to reporters after inspecting Ghatoli Bus Terminal, a key entry and exit point of the capital, he dismissed concerns over any conspiracies regarding security issues.

"There is no threat of sabotage in Dhaka. If such a situation arises, it will be dealt with collectively. If the people remain vigilant, no one will be able to carry out any acts of sabotage," he said.

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All set to hold Eid congregation at National Eidgah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All necessary preparations have been completed for the main congregation of Eid-ul-Fitr at the National Eidgah ground, according to Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

Speaking at a press briefing at the National Eidgah yesterday morning, DSCC Administrator Shahjahan Mia informed that arrangements have been made for around 35,000 worshippers, including the president, chief adviser, diplomats, and people from various walks of life, to offer their prayers in a well-managed environment.

The main congregation of Eid-ul-Fitr will be held at the National Eidgah at 8:30am, he said, adding that "In case of rain or adverse weather conditions, the Eid congregation will be shifted to Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 9:00am."

The administrator urged the residents of Dhaka to attend the main congregation. "We have completed all arrangements to ensure that worshippers can perform their Eid prayers comfortably and safely," he added.

No metro rail on Eid day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metro rail service will be suspended only on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL) announced yesterday.

However, the service will operate as usual on other days. DMTCL made the announcement through a post on its official Facebook page at 5:30pm.

Eid is likely to be celebrated on either March 31 or April 1, depending on the sighting of the moon.

Case filings increase, so does backlog

Over 4.5m cases pending in courts, experts blame judge shortage

ASHUTOSH SARKAR



RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase number of judges

Appoint more support staff

Reduce court vacations

Form special benches

Expedite police probes

Accelerate e-judiciary project

Supreme Court sources and legal experts.

Supreme Court reports show that from October to December last year, the number of pending cases across all courts, including the Appellate and High Court Divisions, increased by 73,093.

By December 31, the total number of pending cases stood at 45,16,603, including 31,606 in the Appellate Division, 5,89,651 in the High Court, and 38,95,832 in lower courts.

This marks an increase from September 30, when the figures were 28,901, 38,37,329, respectively. The total backlog was 44,43,510 at that time, according to the SC reports.

From October to December, a total of 2,74,749 cases were disposed of across all courts, while 3,84,074 cases were filed.

The Appellate Division received 2,705 new cases and disposed of 486. The High

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Additionally, 74 election petitions challenging the December 30, 2018, parliamentary election results -- alleging widespread irregularities -- have yet to be disposed of by the High Court.

The backlog of cases continues to grow due to lengthy legal procedures, a shortage of judges, and overburdened courts.

Lawyers' lack of proactive efforts to expedite hearings and disposals further exacerbates the problem, according to



Army personnel on guard near the Dhaka airport yesterday. With the Eid holiday around the corner, security has been heightened in the country.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Decades of delicacy

The enduring legacy of Fakir Kabir Bakery's semai

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The process of making semai (vermicelli) begins with mixing flour and hot water, then shaping the dough into thin strands through a round die, which are placed in bamboo baskets. After drying in the sun, the semai is roasted in a furnace, turning a rich reddish colour, and is then ready for sale.

This meticulous process is what gives the "Chak Semai" at Fakir Kabir Bakery in Chawkbazar its unmatched quality.

The bakery has been using this traditional technique for 89 years, offering people a delicacy that has stood the test of time.

Despite the rise of mass-produced semai brands, Fakir Kabir Bakery has maintained its reputation for excellence.

Founded in 1936 in a rented space, the bakery started with a simple goal: to produce high-quality, handmade semai.

In the past, people would travel from far and wide to buy Chak Semai, especially during Eid, when long queues of customers would form.

Now, the demand for semai remains steady throughout the year, with peak seasons during Ramadan and Eid.

During these times, the bakery sells up to 200 kilograms of Semai daily, priced at Tk 240 per kilogram.

During a recent visit, this correspondent observed workers preparing semai in a clean and well-maintained environment.

Dilip Kumar, the bakery's manager, pointed out that the sun-drying process is the most crucial part of production.

"It's essential for maintaining the semai's high quality," he explained.

After drying, the semai is roasted in a traditional tandoor, which enhances its texture and flavour.

Over the years, Fakir Kabir Bakery has built a strong reputation for consistency and quality, a sentiment echoed by many loyal customers.

Anwarul Islam, a customer who travelled from Boalkhali upazila to purchase semai, shared that its taste is unlike any other in the market.

"I mainly buy the semai during Ramadan and Eid to offer my guests a unique recipe," he said.

Carrot farmers count losses as prices plummet

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers across five districts in Rangpur division are facing significant losses due to a sharp drop in carrot prices this year.

Many farmers said their production cost was Tk 9-10 per kilogramme, but the vegetable is now selling wholesale at only Tk 5-6 per kg, leaving them frustrated.

"Last year, we sold carrots at Tk 14-15 per kg from the field and made a good profit, but this year prices have plummeted. We now have to sell carrots at half the cost of production," said Sirajul Islam, a 55-year-old farmer from Panchgachhi village in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

He said he has already incurred losses of around Tk 70,000 after cultivating carrots on seven bighas of land.

Nur Alam, a farmer from Char Kalmati in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he cultivated carrots on one hectare of shoal land on the Teesta riverbed, investing Tk 2,55,000.



"At the end of February, I sold 1,000 kg of carrots at Tk 25 per kg. In early March, the price dropped slightly, but I still earned some profit, selling 2,000 kg at Tk 15-16 per kg. However, after the first week of March, the price crashed to Tk 5-6 per kg. I had to sell 20 tonnes at this rate, incurring heavy losses. I still have 6-7 tonnes in the field, and if prices remain this low, I will suffer a severe loss this year," he said.

Delwar Hossain, a vegetable vendor in Rangpur city, said they are buying carrots from wholesalers at Tk 8-9 per kg and selling them at Tk 15-16 per kg in the retail market. "This year, supply is high, but demand is low," he added.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rangpur, carrots have been cultivated on 2,420 hectares, mostly in shoal areas across Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Rangpur, and Nilphamari districts.

"Carrot is usually a profitable crop for farmers. Those who harvested early benefited from high prices, but later, an oversupply caused prices to drop sharply," said Shafiqul Islam, additional director of the DAE in Rangpur region.



A henna artist applies "mehendi" to a client's hands, copying a design that can be seen on the phone. Ahead of Eid, such henna artists are busy round-the-clock serving customers who want to indulge in henna art as part of the celebrations. The photo was taken from Prabartak Mor in Chattogram city yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Ration for Secretariat staff

FROM PAGE 3

Corruption Commission.

The latest appeal, submitted on March 12, argued that Secretariat officials often work beyond office hours, including holidays, without additional financial benefits.

In contrast, approximately 8,00,000 military and civilian personnel across various government departments receive both ration facilities and special risk allowances.

The appeal further mentioned that this has created "extreme discrimination against the officers and employees of the Secretariat."

Mahmudul Hasan, general secretary of the Bangladesh Government Employees' Claim Recovery Council, expressed concerns that introducing ration benefits exclusively for Secretariat employees

would sustain the existing disparity.

"We collectively demanded a ration facility. If it is allocated only for the Secretariat, the discrimination will persist. The government should ensure it for all lower-grade employees," he told The Daily Star.

The "11-20 Grade Government Employees' Forum" also condemned the move, calling it a "deliberate attempt to implement the decision without informing everyone" just before the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday.

In a press release issued

yesterday, the organisation accused the government of ignoring widespread demands for a revised pay scale and dearness allowance.

"Granting benefits to a select group will only deepen inequalities and weaken the ongoing movement for fair wages," the statement said.

The group further warned that limiting ration benefits to Secretariat employees violates the constitutional principle of equal rights and that the government would be held accountable for any unrest resulting from the decision.

Seismograph at PSTU

FROM PAGE 5

Experts note that part of the seismograph, a plate embedded underground, measures ground displacement relative to sea level. However, setting up a new device with institutional or government funds is not feasible due to high costs.

They suggest seeking support from international development agencies to re-establish earthquake monitoring capabilities.

PSTU Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Kazi Rafiqul Islam acknowledged that the seismograph is outdated and analogue-based. He emphasised that modern countries use advanced equipment for seismic monitoring. He suggested that, like Japan, Bangladesh should establish a multidisciplinary team and install state-of-the-art equipment to enhance seismic research.

667 patrol teams

FROM PAGE 3

With thousands leaving Dhaka for Eid, security forces and law enforcement agencies such as police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Ansar, remain on duty.

During his visit to Gabtoli Bus Terminal, the adviser made queries over reports of excessive ticket pricing.

"Fare charts have been posted at each counter. If anyone is overcharged, they should file complaints with

the BRTA vigilance team or the police control room," he said.

He acknowledged minor complaints and assured that action was being taken.

The adviser also addressed road safety concerns, saying that he had spoken to bus drivers about the risks of fatigue-related accidents.

"I have instructed transport owners to ensure drivers get proper rest, as exhaustion often leads to accidents," he said.

Another Eid without Shishu Park

FROM PAGE 3

Shishu Park within the stipulated time."

SHISHU PARK: A TALE OF DISAPPOINTMENT

"Our childhood Eid was spent on the swings and trains of this Shishu Park. But since my daughter started understanding things, the park has remained closed. Taking children to other entertainment centres is quite expensive nowadays," said Sharmin Hasnat.

Shishu Park is the country's first amusement park for children, located in Shahbagh. Originally, it was a venture of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and was named after former President Ziaur Rahman.

Later, in 1983, the then Dhaka City Corporation took over the 15-acre park. After the corporation was split into Dhaka North and Dhaka South in November 2011, DSCC took charge of the park and renamed it after Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy on December 30, 2021. However, in the fourth governing committee meeting of DSCC on February 19 this year, it was decided to restore its previous name, Shahid Zia Shishu Park.

Since its inception, Shishu Park has been a

major recreational hub for children in the capital, especially during holidays.

But since January 2019, a total of 16 Eid holidays have passed, and the park has remained closed throughout.

In January 2019, a DSCC notification stated that the park's modernisation and development would be carried out under the third phase of the "Independence Monument Construction" project in Suhrawardy Udayan, overseen by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs. To prevent any accidents during the project, the park would remain closed to the public.

Initially, the project cost was estimated at Tk 78 crore. However, after Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh assumed the role of DSCC mayor in May 2020, the cost surged to Tk 603.81 crore. Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the renovation work on May 25 last year.

CURRENT STATE OF SHISHU PARK

A recent visit to the park revealed high fences surrounding the area, preventing public entry. However, many families still visit the site with their children, only to leave

Case filings increase

FROM PAGE 3

Court received 18,967 cases and resolved 6,597. Lower courts settled 2,67,666, while getting 3,62,402 new cases.

In the previous quarter (July-September), 3,36,421 cases were filed, and 2,71,917 were settled, according to the reports.

Currently, the Appellate Division has five judges, including the chief justice, down from 11 in 2009.

Meanwhile the High Court has 96 judges, of whom seven are barred from judicial functions due to ongoing inquiries, said SC sources. Lower courts have 2,187 judges.

Contacted, Supreme Court's Special Officer Muajjim Hossain said case disposal rates have remained similar despite changes in the political landscape since August 5 last year.

He attributed the rising backlog to an increase in the filing of cases and the transfer of around 900 lower court judges after August 5.

To address the shortage, the Supreme Judicial Appointment Council, led by Chief Justice Syed

Rafat Ahmed and formed under the Supreme Court Judge Appointment Ordinance, 2025, is working to appoint new judges, he also said.

Lower court judges are recruited regularly through the Bangladesh Judicial Commission, he added.

Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, a Supreme Court lawyer and head of Law Lab, which conducts research on constitutional, legal, and rights issues, warned that the growing backlog is eroding public trust in the judiciary.

It is not possible to deal with the backlog with the small number of judges, he said.

He urged immediate measures, including increasing the number of judges, appointing more support staff, reducing court vacations, forming special benches for miscellaneous cases, expediting police investigations, and accelerating the e-judiciary project.

The police should also complete investigations as soon as possible, Shishir Manir added.

4 children rescued

FROM PAGE 5

Police Outpost, said Aduri was detained and four children were rescued. The rescued children have been reunited with their families, while legal proceedings against the suspect are ongoing.

Majid Ali, commissioner of Rangpur Metropolitan Police, said an investigation is underway to determine if others were involved in the incident, he said.

Abul Kalam, in charge of Rangpur Railway

Railway

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Seismograph at PSTU inactive for over 14yrs

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The seismograph at Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) has remained inoperative for nearly 14 years. Installed in 2010 at a cost of around Tk 50 lakh, the instrument failed to record Friday's earthquake due to its non-functional status.

Experts believe round-the-clock monitoring could provide crucial earthquake warnings and mitigate potential damage.

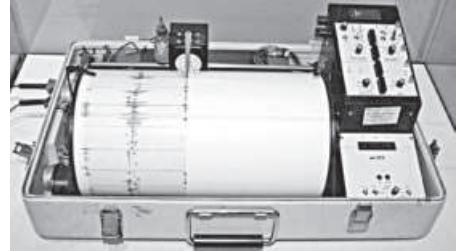
Set up as part of an initiative by Columbia University, USA, and the Department of Geology at Dhaka University, the seismograph encountered operational issues in January 2011. Though initially reconnected with full internet access to the underground chamber of an academic building, it ceased functioning within a year and has remained non-operational since.

Prof Dr Md Nurul Amin, Dean of the faculty of Environmental Science and Disaster Management at PSTU, said the device was maintained under the supervision of the Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department, the Geo Information Science and Earth Observation Department, and the Agricultural Engineering Department.

Prof Dr Sheikh Abdullah Al Mamun

Hossain, chairman of the Agricultural Engineering Department, said the device was installed under a specific project. However, from the outset, keeping it operational proved challenging. Eventually, the project ended, and no funds were allocated for its maintenance.

Prof Dr SM Tawhidul Islam of the Electrical and Electronic Engineering



The seismograph at Patuakhali Science and Technology University remains inoperative for over 14 years. PHOTO: STAR

Department explained that earthquakes generate primary, secondary, and surface waves. While surface waves carry the main energy of an earthquake, primary waves travel faster and reach the surface first. Modern sensors detect these waves and issue early warnings.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



With the sun gradually setting in the late afternoon, herders return home with their cattle from the fields. During the dry season, the local wetlands remain empty, allowing cattle owners to hire herders to graze their cattle in those areas. A herder earns a monthly wage of Tk 250-350 per cow for this work. The photo was taken from the Moukhali village of Dacope upazila in Khulna recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Four JCD men among six hurt in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

At least six persons, including four leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal were injured in a clash in Pirojpur's Kawkhali upazila on Friday night.

The injured are: Tarikul Islam Sumon, 30; Jubayer Hossain, 25; Nayem Akan, 18; and Bellal, 28, from Shialkathi village; Ferdous Hossain, 26, and Kawsar Hossain, 22, from Saturia village in the upazila.

The incident took place near Shialkathi union parishad at Rarir Haat around 9:30pm on Friday.

Sumon, a former leader of Dhaka North unit JCD, said they went to hang posters on Eid greetings in favour of Jasim Uddin, joint general secretary of Swecchchabak Dal's central unit, at Rarir Haat when some 7-8 youths led by Rasel Rari, vice president of Kawkhali upazila unit Chhatra League, attacked them with sharp weapons, leaving them injured.

Sumon alleged that Rasel has been running a fake Facebook account to spread misinformation against BNP men to instigate the attack.

After the incident, Rasel's house in Rarir Haat was set on fire.

Rasel's brother Rafikul Islam Rari claimed they had returned from Dhaka on Thursday night to celebrate Eid.

"Sumon and some youths came to Rarir Haat to pick up my brothers Rasel and Rahmat over prior conflict regarding

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA, back from Sylhet

Monowara Mubashira Chowdhury, a seventh-grader at Government Agragami Girls High School and College in Sylhet, suffered a head injury and was unconscious for 45 days before undergoing surgery.

Currently, she is on various medications, which has left her mother worried about whether the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine would be suitable for her.

"I spoke to the doctors before she received the HPV vaccine to check for any complications. Many people say the vaccine causes problems with menstruation and conceiving children. Initially, I was concerned, but later I took both my daughters to be vaccinated," said Monowara's mother, Hasina Azha Chowdhury.

"Since then, four months have passed, but none of my daughters have faced any complications so far," she added.

Monowara said, "I got vaccinated around four months ago in 2024. I felt a little pain, and my arm remained sore for two days. Then the pain went away after the third day. I am not worried anymore."

The government launched the final phase of its HPV vaccination campaign in Barishal, Chattogram, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Rangpur divisions on October 24 last year, with the support of Gavi -- the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, and WHO -- to protect 6.2 million girls aged 10-14 against cervical cancer.

In 2023, the programme's first phase was conducted only in Dhaka division. This year, the

vaccine is being provided free of charge to school students and out-of-school girls aged 10-14 in the remaining seven divisions. The campaign, run by the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) of the Department of Health, continued until November 28.

An HPV vaccination camp was arranged at Government Agragami Girls High School and College in Sylhet, where 946 out of a total of 1,121 students at the institution received the vaccine.

The campaign faced various social stigmas and obstacles

Happy Begum, the school's headteacher, said, "Many people lack awareness regarding this vaccine. Parents came to us and expressed their concerns. We worked to raise awareness among the students and their parents about this vaccine from the very beginning. The campaign was quite successful."

Many children of tea garden workers and sex workers were also vaccinated during the campaign.

Tahmina Ahmed, whose parents work in a tea garden, said, "My friends and I learned about



during its implementation.

Afia Pragga, a ninth-grader from the same institution, said, "There were rumours from Bholia about the vaccine, but our teachers informed us that in some places, girls received the vaccine on an empty stomach in the morning and fell ill due to a lack of glucose. In addition, vaccination can cause dizziness, weakness, and fainting. Apart from that, there is no real risk. So, my father later allowed me to get vaccinated, even though my mother was scared."

During its implementation, the campaign and went to find out more. The nurse informed us about the vaccine's significance. Then I told my parents, and they allowed me to get vaccinated."

Amina Akther (pseudonym), a sex worker, said, "Due to our profession, we have the highest risk of cervical cancer and thus need this vaccine the most. However, many in our community don't know this. No one ever informed us when we were young, so we didn't have the opportunity to get the vaccine."

Amina and a few other sex

workers encouraged their daughters to get vaccinated to protect them from cervical cancer.

According to Unicef, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women in Bangladesh and is responsible for most cancer-related deaths in the country.

It is estimated that approximately 8,300 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed annually, resulting in about 4,900 deaths.

The target population for the vaccination campaign in Sylhet division was 583,241, of which 544,975 (around 94 percent) were vaccinated.

"We visited many remote villages to inform parents and teenagers about this vaccine's proven effectiveness in reducing the rate of cervical cancer. UNICEF is working with the Bangladesh government to ensure all girls receive the vaccine before they are infected with this deadly virus," said Kazi Dil Afroza Islam, chief of field office for Sylhet division.

Dr Manisar Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Sylhet, emphasised the need to simplify the online registration system for vaccination, as many people find it difficult.

"So far, we haven't found any complaints of side effects or complications from the vaccine four months after the campaign.

While there was misleading information on social media, we managed to address it effectively," he said.

"Community-based initiatives and awareness-building efforts are essential to make the campaign more effective," he added.

UTTAR PINGORIA SCHOOL

Dilapidated building puts students at risk

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, Bagerhat

Students at Uttar Pingoria Government Primary School in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila are enduring dire learning conditions due to the lack of a proper building.

Currently closed for Ramadan vacation, the school operates from a dilapidated abandoned structure and a few tin-roofed rooms resembling a warehouse, leaving both students and teachers in distress.

Despite being a government institution, the school has never received any official allocation for infrastructure development. Compounding the issue, the land available for constructing a new building is a 10-foot-deep pond, rendering it unsuitable for development.

Locals have long demanded proper

facilities, particularly a permanent, elevated school building that could also serve as a shelter during floods. Villagers often struggle with rising water levels, as



the area lacks a nearby cyclone or flood shelter, leaving them vulnerable during natural disasters.

"I have been seeing this school in the same condition for years," said Mahitul

Islam Nakib, a local politician. "Our children deserve a proper learning environment. During the monsoon, water seeps into the tin rooms, and in summer, it becomes very hot, making it almost impossible for them to study," he said.

Another resident, Mizan Nakib, a local reporter, said, "When floods hit, the people have nowhere to go. If a proper school building is constructed, it could also serve as a shelter for villagers in emergencies."

Contacted, Kachua UNO KM Abu Nawshad said the upazila administration is working towards a solution.

"We are taking steps to make the pond-like land suitable for construction. Once that is done, we will push for a new building to address both the students' needs and the local population's demand for a flood shelter," he said.

Indians 'beat up' farmer at Lalmonirhat border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi farmer has allegedly been beaten up by Indian nationals at the Lohakuchi border in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat.

The incident took place on the bank of Malda river near border pillar 919 in Dulali area yesterday morning.

The victim, Madhab Chandra Barman, 38, is a resident of Dulali area.

Locals said Madhab had set up a fishing trap in the river along the Lohakuchi border. The Indian nationals tried to take away the trap. When Madhab protested, the Indians beat him up.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

4 children rescued after abduction in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police rescued four children after they were abducted from their home in Rangpur city, and detained a woman in this connection from near Rangpur Railway Station on Friday night.

The detainee, Aduri Begum, 28, is wife of Mansur Ali from Fakirchar village in Ulipur upazila of Kurigram.

Shankar Ganguly, superintendent of Rangpur Railway Station, said they suspect that the children were being taken to be trafficked.

According to the victims' family, on Thursday, Aduri Begum arrived at a house in Tapodhan village under Ward-7 of Rangpur city, seeking shelter. The homeowner, Ashikul Islam, accommodated her.

She stayed overnight, had sehra, and remained at the house throughout Friday.

After iftar on Friday evening, she disappeared with four children, aged 6-10 years.

The children's guardians immediately informed the police upon realising their absence.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Eid diaries with showbiz stars

As the festive spirit of Eid fills the air, plans for celebration take centre stage. For celebrities, who spend most of the year juggling shoots and schedules, Eid offers a necessary pause. Here's a glimpse into how some of the most familiar faces from showbiz are spending their Eid holidays.



Sadia Islam Mou

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Sadia Islam Mou

Popular model, dancer, and actress Sadia Islam Mou will be spending Eid in Dhaka. "I stay busy throughout the year, and Eid gives me a chance to pause and spend time with family. I'll be in Dhaka during the holidays," she told The Daily Star, adding, "I wish everyone an early Eid Mubarak. May this Eid bring joy to all, and may everyone celebrate in their own festive way."

Speaking about Eid special programmes, she shared, "Two of my dramas are set to air this Eid. I hope viewers enjoy them. I've also performed a dance for *Anandamela*. Dance has always been a passion of mine, so I hope the audience appreciates it."

When asked how she would spend Eid day, she replied, "I'll be celebrating with my

family. My daughter is studying abroad—I'll be missing her a bit more on this special occasion."

Azmeri Haque Badhan

Badhan will be spending this Eid in Dhaka with her family. "I'll be celebrating Eid with my parents and loved ones here in Dhaka. My daughter will be with me too, and that's what makes it special. Eid means joy, and I want to share that joy with my family," she told The Daily Star.

Reflecting on past celebrations, Badhan



Azmeri Haque Badhan

added, "As a child, I used to make big plans for Eid. Now, I see that same excitement in my daughter, which feels lovely. During Eid, Dhaka becomes quiet and peaceful. For those travelling to their hometowns, I wish them a safe journey and a joyful Eid. One thing I enjoy about Eid in the city



Zakia Bari Mamo

is the absence of traffic. I plan to mostly stay home, but if my family decides to go somewhere together, I'll join them as well."

Zakia Bari Mamo

Zakia Bari Mamo will also be spending Eid in Dhaka. "I'll be at home during the holidays. My mother is currently performing Hajj, along with my brother and sister-in-law. My Eid celebrations will feel complete only after they return," she shared.

"This year, I haven't made any elaborate plans. There was a time when Eid meant lots of excitement—shopping, outings, celebrations. But with time, things change and responsibilities grow. Yet, Eid is a special occasion that comes only twice a year, and people naturally want to make it meaningful. I plan to do the same," she added. "For those travelling outside Dhaka, I wish them a safe journey. May this Eid bring happiness for everyone."

Pori Moni

Pori Moni shared that all her Eid plans revolve around her two children. "My son Punnoo and daughter Priom are my everything—they are my dreams, my future, and the source of all my happiness. So, naturally, my Eid will be all about them," she told The Daily Star.

"I'll be in Dhaka during the Eid holidays. Even if I go somewhere, I'll take them with me," she said, adding, "During Eid, I miss my late grandfather the most. I will be thinking of him deeply this time. I request everyone



Pori Moni

to keep him in their prayers."

She also extended love to her fans and well-wishers, saying, "Eid is about joy, and I hope that joy spreads to everyone."

Tanjim Saiara Totini

Totini described Eid as a time of great joy and heartfelt emotions. "There's something



Tanjim Saiara Totini

very special about Eid—it brings happiness and a unique sense of celebration," the actress expressed.

"This Eid, I plan to visit Barishal, my hometown. It holds so many memories for me. I haven't been able to go for the past few years due to work commitments, but this time, I made plans in advance," she shared.

"I'm looking forward to spending a few days there and meeting many loved ones. I hope to create some beautiful memories. Barishal is very close to my heart because it's home to both my maternal and paternal grandparents."

In anticipation of Eid, stars from the entertainment industry are embracing the spirit of the season in their own meaningful ways—be it through family gatherings, hometown visits, or connecting with audiences through special programmes.

PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

NEWS

Imagine big to change the world

FROM PAGE 12

because somebody imagined.

"Imagination is more powerful than anything we can bring together."

Prof Yunus encouraged them to imagine the most odd and things that are unheard of.

"The human journey is about making the impossible possible. That is our job. And we can make it happen."

Prof Yunus received an honorary doctorate degree from Peking University (PKU) at the event.

Chair of the Peking University Council He Guangcai and President Gong Qihuang also spoke on the occasion.

In his speech, Prof Yunus said he felt the KPU was his home as he was accepted as an honorary professor there.

Terming the PKU a centre of

knowledge, wisdom, innovation and excellence, the Chief Adviser said he felt honoured.

He then recounted the dream of millions of young people who were the vanguard of the transformational change in Bangladesh last year.

Their vision was to build a new Bangladesh which would be free from poverty and hunger, Prof Yunus said.

Highlighting the reform agenda of his government, Prof Yunus said the administration was working towards building a democratic and resilient Bangladesh.

Mentioning that people are not poor at birth, the chief adviser said wrong economic systems, where all people are not given a fair chance, make them poor.

People suffer due to many wrong ideas prevailing in society, he observed.

Human beings are not born to be job seekers, Prof Yunus said.

He stressed promoting human beings to become entrepreneurs, not to be job seekers. "All human beings are entrepreneurs," he said.

Focusing on the immense potential of women, the Nobel peace laureate said even the poorest woman in Bangladesh can be an entrepreneur taking a loan of just \$20.

Women can be entrepreneurs all around the world, he added.

About the purpose of education, Prof Yunus said, "What should be the purpose of education? The purpose of education is to enable people to go out and bring all creative capacity to change the world."

He stressed the need for carbon free economic systems to protect the planet from destruction.

to his calls, he threatened to release the video on social media and demanded Tk 5 lakh from her father.

OC Nurnabi said police have seized Razzaq's mobile phone and are investigating whether the footage was shared or stored elsewhere.

He added that the case is under investigation, and further legal action will be taken accordingly.

During the Awami League-led government's regime, local businesses and trade were controlled by the ruling party, but after the government's fall, these opportunities have become accessible to all. This has encouraged Bangladeshi expatriates to send money to their relatives, enabling them to become entrepreneurs, said Nurul.

The increasing trend of remittance inflow is another key factor, according to him. He suggested that the government focus on exporting skilled rather than unskilled manpower to maximise remittance earnings.

Industry insiders estimate that around 4.6 million Bangladeshi have gone abroad in the last five and a half years.

as of March 20, up from around \$150 million earlier in the month, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

The gap between the official exchange rate and the unofficial exchange rate has narrowed, which has helped increase remittance inflows, said Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager of Mastercard.

He said hundi, an illegal cross border transaction system, likely declined due to the political transition, leading more remittance inflows to be directed through official channels. He believes remittance inflow will maintain the growth if transactions through the hundi system continue to fall.

Remittance inflow increased by nearly 28.5 percent to \$21.43 billion in the July to March 26 period of the current fiscal year, compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Mohammed Nurul Amin, chairman of Global Islami Bank, told The Daily Star that money launderers

Hasina, eight journos sued

FROM PAGE 12

of people, including the plaintiff's cousin, Saiful Islam, who was among those killed.

According to the case statement, on July 19, the accused attacked the protesters in the capital's Kakrail area.

It said some of the accused directly participated in the attack or ordered the attack, while others are said to have incited the violence. The coordinated shooting and attacks resulted in the killing of Saiful and left many others injured.

The case drew attention after the metropolitan magistrate court took it into cognisance and ordering a probe.

Autorickshaw 'robber' killed

FROM PAGE 12

autorickshaw driven by one Mohsin Mia, 42, in the Tantar area.

In the middle of the journey, one of them assaulted the driver and tried to take the autorickshaw. When the driver screamed, locals caught three of the hijackers and beat them up.

Upon receiving the news, police rushed to the scene and took the injured to the health complex, where one of them died, the OC said.

"Legal action is underway regarding this incident," the OC added.

US moves to shut USAID

FROM PAGE 12

Committee on Foreign Relations denounced the move, saying in a statement that the reorganization "will not only render it impossible for any retained USAID programs to be implemented, but the burden placed on the State Department will cause significant disruption to its core mission."

"This proposal is illegal, dangerous and inefficient," they added.

Prior to its closure, the agency managed an annual budget of close to \$43 billion, accounting for more than 40 percent of the world's humanitarian aid. Most of its staff were placed on administrative leave shortly after Trump took office.

11 dead in drone strikes against Taliban in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Eleven people were killed in drone strikes in northern Pakistan yesterday launched by the army against the Taliban, who had killed seven soldiers a day earlier, police told AFP.

Three drone strikes were carried out on Friday night in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a senior police officer said on condition of anonymity, targeting "Pakistani Taliban hideouts" in the region bordering Afghanistan where violence has erupted in recent months.

"It was only this morning that we learned that two women and three children were among the victims," he said.

TNZ group agrees to Tk 3cr

FROM PAGE 1

the workers would resume their protest with a rally in front of the TNZ group factories on April 7 and a demonstration in front of the Sromo Bhaban the next day.

Earlier in the day, Labour Secretary AHM Shafiquzzaman in the afternoon held a meeting at the capital's Sromo Bhaban with union leaders, TNZ management, and the BGMEA representatives to discuss the payment of due wages and bonuses ahead of Eid.

Following the meeting, Secretary Shafiquzzaman initially announced that the employer would provide Tk 2 crore by selling factory machinery. However, workers rejected the offer and surrounded the secretary.

After being surrounded by protesting workers for nearly 1 hour, Shafiquzzaman was escorted by law enforcement to the ground floor of the Sromo Bhaban.

As he attempted to enter his vehicle, workers surrounded him again, demanding full payment. It was then that Shafiquzzaman raised the amount to Tk 3 crore, but the workers still rejected the offer.

In response, Shafiquzzaman said that all issues, including the outstanding wages and bonuses, would be fully resolved before May Day.

He added that until the situation was resolved, TNZ Group Director Shaheen and two other officials would remain in the custody of the

"In protest, local residents placed the bodies of the victims on the road", saying that they were "innocent civilians" killed in the strikes, he added.

Another police source said that "an investigation is underway to establish whether Taliban fighters were indeed present at the sites at the time of the attack".

It is too early to say whether the places affected were civilian areas or whether they were sheltering Taliban," he added.

The Pakistani Taliban -- known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) -- announced in mid March a "spring campaign" against security forces, threatening "ambushes, targeted attacks, suicide attacks and strikes".

Labour Department

"As we plan for a permanent solution, if needed, we will shut down the factory after paying all the dues," he said. "We will make the necessary arrangements to bring a smile to the workers' faces."

Shahidul Islam, a representative of workers at Apparel Plus Eco, said, "Even with Tk 3 crore, it won't be enough. Many workers have not been paid for three months and are living in dire conditions. If we don't receive at least one month's salary and one bonus before Eid, we will continue our protests."

For nearly a week, TNZ Group workers have been demonstrating in front of the Sromo Bhaban, demanding three months' unpaid wages and Eid bonuses. Yesterday, workers staged a hunger procession.

On Friday, they held a press conference in front of the Sromo Bhaban, saying they were owed Tk 17.78 crore in unpaid wages, bonuses, and allowances.

Only Tk 1.05 crore had been paid on Thursday, they added.

Meanwhile, the industrial police, in a statement, said almost all the factories, including the garment factories, paid half of the salary of March and Eid bonuses.

Only one or two factories could not pay and the labour ministry and BGMEA have been trying to solve the payment to the workers, the statement added.

'We need aid'

Rescuers in Mandalay city plead for help

AFP, Mandalay

Exhausted, overwhelmed rescuers in Myanmar's second-biggest city pleaded for help Saturday as they struggled to free hundreds of people trapped in buildings destroyed by a devastating earthquake.

Friday's shallow 7.7-magnitude quake destroyed dozens of buildings in Mandalay, the country's cultural capital and home to more than 1.7 million people.

In one street, a monastery's clock tower lay collapsed on its side, its hands pointing to 12:55pm -- just minutes after the quake struck.

Among the worst-hit buildings in the city is the Sky Villa Condominium development, where more than 90 people are feared to be trapped.

The building's 12 stores were reduced to six by the quake, the cracked pastel green walls of the upper floors perched on the crushed remains of the lower levels.

A woman's body stuck out of the wreckage, her arm and hair hanging down.

Rescuers clambered over the ruins, painstakingly removing pieces of rubble and wreckage by hand as they sought to open up passageways to those trapped inside.

Elsewhere, rescuers in flip-flops and minimal protective equipment picked by hand over the remains of buildings, shouting into the rubble in the hope of hearing the answering cry of a survivor.

"There are many victims in condo apartments. More than 100 were pulled out last night," one rescue worker who requested anonymity told AFP.

Widespread power cuts have hampered rescue efforts, with emergency personnel relying on portable generators for power.

After more than 24 hours of desperate searching, many are exhausted and desperate for relief.

"We have been here since last night. We haven't got any sleep. More help is needed here," the rescue worker told AFP.

"We have enough manpower, but we don't have enough cars. We are transporting dead bodies using light trucks. About 10-20 bodies in one light truck."

Myanmar is accustomed to regular earthquakes, bisected north to south by the active Sagaing Fault, but the violent fury of Friday's quake was exceptional.

The country has faced at least 16 earthquakes in the last century above 6 in Richter scale.

More than 1,600 deaths have been confirmed already, with nearly 2,400 injured, and with the scale of the disaster only beginning to emerge, the toll is likely to rise significantly.

Myanmar's ability to cope with the aftermath of the quake will be hampered by the effects of four years of civil war, which have ravaged the country's healthcare and emergency systems.

In an indication of the potential enormity of the crisis, the junta has issued an exceptionally rare call for international aid.

Previous military rulers have spurned all foreign assistance even after major natural disasters.



(From left, clockwise) A rescue worker attempts to free a resident trapped under the rubble of a destroyed apartment building in Mandalay; a husband accompanies his wife on their way to the hospital after she was rescued from the rubble of the collapsed apartment building; and people stand near a collapsed temple in Mandalay. Rescuers dug through the rubble of collapsed buildings yesterday in a desperate search for survivors a day after a huge earthquake hit Myanmar.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



MYANMAR QUAKE Why was it so deadly?

AFP, Bangkok

Experts say that the devastating earthquake in Myanmar on Friday was likely the strongest to hit the country in decades, with disaster modelling suggesting thousands could be dead.

Automatic assessments from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the shallow 7.7-magnitude quake northwest of the central Myanmar city of Sagaing triggered a red alert for shaking-related fatalities and economic losses.

"High casualties and extensive damage are probable and the disaster is likely widespread," it said, locating the epicentre near the central Myanmar city of Mandalay, home to more than a million people.

Myanmar's ruling junta said yesterday that the number killed had passed 1,600.

However, the USGS analysis said there was a 35 percent chance that fatalities could be in the range of 10,000-100,000 people.

The USGS offered a similar likelihood that the financial damage could total tens of thousands of millions of dollars, warning that it might exceed the GDP of Myanmar.

Weak infrastructure will complicate relief efforts in the isolated, military-ruled state, where rescue services and the healthcare system have already been ravaged by four years of civil war sparked by a military coup in 2021.

Rebecca Bell, a tectonics expert at Imperial College London (ICL), suggested it was a side-to-side "strike-slip" of the Sagaing Fault.

This is where the Indian tectonic plate, to the west, meets the Sunda plate that forms much of Southeast Asia -- a fault similar in scale and movement to the San Andreas Fault in California.

"The Sagaing fault is very long, 1,200 kilometres (745 miles), and very straight," Bell said. "The straight nature means

earthquakes can rupture over large areas -- and the larger the area of the fault that slips, the larger the earthquake."

Earthquakes in such cases can be "particularly destructive", Bell added, explaining that since the quake takes place at a shallow depth, its seismic energy has dissipated little by the time it reaches populated areas above.



That causes "a lot of shaking at the surface", Bell said.

Myanmar has been hit by powerful quakes in the past. There have been more than 14 earthquakes with a magnitude of 6 or above in the past century, said Brian Baptie, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey.

Ian Watkinson, from the department of earth sciences at Royal Holloway University of London, said what had changed in recent decades was the "boom in high-rise buildings constructed from reinforced concrete".

Myanmar has been riven by years of

conflict and there is a low level of building design enforcement.

"Critically, during all previous magnitude 7 or larger earthquakes along the Sagaing Fault, Myanmar was relatively undeveloped, with mostly low-rise timber-framed buildings and brick-built religious monuments," Watkinson said.



"Today's earthquake is the first test of modern Myanmar's infrastructure against a large, shallow-focus earthquake close to its major cities."

Strong tremors also rocked neighbouring Thailand, where a 30-storey skyscraper under construction was reduced to a pile of dusty concrete, trapping workers in the debris.

Christian Malaga-Chuquiyate, from ICL's civil and environmental engineering department, said the soft ground in Bangkok contributed to the impact on the city, despite being some 1,000 kilometres from the epicentre in Myanmar.

6 dead after clashes in J&K

AFP, Srinagar

Four police officers and two suspected rebels have been killed in Indian-administered Kashmir during a drawn-out firefight that also left several police wounded, security forces said.

The Indian army's Rising Star Corps said in a social media post yesterday that "relentless operations" led to the "elimination of two terrorists", a term commonly used for rebels opposed to Indian rule in Kashmir.

The clash began Thursday in the rugged and forested area of Kathua in the south of the disputed territory when a police foot patrol was ambushed while searching for militants, leaving four police dead, police chief Nalin Prabhat told reporters late on Friday.

Muslim-majority Kashmir has been divided between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, with both claiming the territory in full.

8 Pak soldiers, civilian killed

AFP, Peshawar

At least eight soldiers and a civilian were killed in western Pakistan on Friday in separate attacks along the border with Afghanistan, where violence has erupted in recent months, police told AFP.

Seven soldiers were killed in a security operation against "armed Taliban" in northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a police source said yesterday.

"Fighters hiding in a house fired on security forces," the source said. The army deployed combat helicopters during the hours-long fight, killing eight Taliban fighters, while six other soldiers were wounded, the source said.

A blast from a bomb planted by separatists on a motorcycle also killed a soldier and a civilian further south in Balochistan, police officer Mohsin Ali told AFP.

Indian forces kill 16 Maoist rebels

AFP, Raipur

Indian security forces killed at least 16 Maoists during a fierce gun battle yesterday, police told AFP, as New Delhi ramps up efforts to crush the long-running insurgency.

More than 10,000 people have been killed in the decades-long "Naxalite" rebellion, whose members say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised people in India's resource-rich central regions.

Saturday's skirmish in Chhattisgarh state began after security forces launched a raid in the dense forests of Sukma district, police chief P. Sundarraj told AFP.

"We have so far recovered 16 bodies from the Maoists," he said, adding that the toll may rise further.

Sundarraj said the gunfire was ongoing and that government forces had recovered a cache of arms including rocket and grenade launchers, assault weapons and other rifles.

A crackdown by security forces killed around 287 rebels last year, an overwhelming majority of them in Chhattisgarh, according to government data.

The Maoists demand land, jobs and a share of the region's immense natural resources for local residents.

The movement gained in strength and numbers through the first decade of this century. At its peak, the rebels had an estimated strength of 15,000-20,000 armed cadres and were operating in districts equivalent to nearly a third of India's landmass.

New Delhi then deployed tens of thousands of troops in a stretch of territory known as the "Red Corridor".

The insurgency is a shadow of its former self as a result of years of counterinsurgency operations. Home Minister Amit Shah has vowed to eradicate the last remnants of the movement by early 2026.



Protesters shout slogans as they march through a tunnel after attending a rally called by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in support of Istanbul's arrested mayor Ekrem Imamoglu in Maltepe, on the outskirts of Istanbul yesterday.

Iran faces 'bad, bad things' if no nuke deal

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump said Friday that Iran faces severe consequences if it fails to reach a nuclear deal, after Tehran responded to a letter from the US president calling for talks.

"I sent them a letter just recently, and I said: you have to make a decision, one way or the other, and we either have to talk and talk it out or very bad things are going to happen to Iran," Trump told reporters.

"I don't want that to happen. My big preference -- and I don't say this through strength or weakness -- my big preference is, we work it out with Iran. But if we don't work it out, bad, bad things are going to happen to Iran."

Trump, who in 2018 pulled the United States out of an agreement to relieve sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on its nuclear program, now says he is open to talks on a deal that could reduce the risk of military escalation.

Wishing all a safe and joyous Eid

Let us spread the joy of Eid around through charity and generosity

As Ramadan draws to a close, let us carry forward the valuable lessons it instils in us. As a nation, we should strive to be more charitable, moderate, and grateful—virtues that Ramadan inspires. These values should not be confined to the month of fasting but should guide our actions throughout the year, fostering a more compassionate and just society. Let us hope that, as the month of Ramadan nears its end, we will have rekindled these values within ourselves and, indeed, passed them on to others.

At the same time, the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr is fast approaching. In anticipation of celebrating with their loved ones, tens of thousands of people have already begun leaving Dhaka by train, bus, and launch. Reports indicate that this year's Eid journey has been relatively smoother for most travellers, thanks to the strategic measures implemented by the authorities. The introduction of special train and bus services, along with enhanced traffic management, has helped ease congestion. We commend the government for its efforts to improve the transport sector and hope that such measures continue to be refined and expanded in the future.

However, despite these improvements, there have been reports of passengers being overcharged in certain areas. We urge the authorities to remain vigilant and take strict action against those exploiting travellers during this festive season. Additionally, with a significant exodus from major cities—particularly Dhaka—law enforcement agencies must remain extra cautious to ensure that law and order are maintained. The risk of accidents, extortion, and theft increases during this period, and it is crucial for security personnel to remain on high alert on highways, in public transport hubs, and across both urban and rural areas.

We also call on citizens to prioritise their safety and security during this time. Travellers should be cautious while commuting and follow traffic and safety guidelines. Moreover, as we embrace the spirit of Eid, let us extend a helping hand to those less fortunate. Many underprivileged individuals struggle to partake in the celebrations due to financial constraints. We urge individuals, businesses, and organisations to come forward with donations, food assistance, and support so that the joy of Eid is shared by all, regardless of economic status.

Eid-ul-Fitr is a time of unity, compassion, and generosity. Let us ensure that these values remain at the core of our actions—not just during Eid, but throughout the year—so that Bangladesh continues to progress as a nation built on empathy, harmony, and social responsibility. We wish everyone a safe and joyous Eid.

What if a major earthquake strikes Dhaka?

Myanmar earthquake should serve as a wake-up call

We are deeply saddened by the loss of life and widespread devastation caused by a major earthquake that struck Myanmar and parts of Thailand on March 28. Reportedly, a 7.7-magnitude quake occurred northwest of Sagaing, a city in central Myanmar, followed just minutes later by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock. The quakes caused extensive destruction, including collapsed buildings, damaged bridges, and buckled roads across large areas of Myanmar. Mandalay, the nation's second-largest city with a population of over 1.7 million, was particularly hard hit. The death toll in Myanmar has already exceeded 1,000, with nearly 2,400 individuals injured. The full extent of the catastrophe is yet to emerge as the rescue efforts are still ongoing.

This earthquake, one of the most powerful to strike Myanmar in decades, serves as a stark reminder of Dhaka's earthquake vulnerability. Reportedly, Bangladesh is located in one of the world's most tectonically active regions, where the Indian, Eurasian, and Burmese Plates converge. The Myanmar earthquake occurred along the Sagaing Fault, which is part of the Indo-Burma subduction zone, and Bangladesh also sits in it. Therefore, experts have warned that, without urgent preparatory measures, Dhaka could face catastrophic consequences in the event of a major earthquake.

Research also revealed that the Indo-Burma subduction zone, covering Sylhet and Chattogram, is building up stress that could trigger a powerful earthquake of up to magnitude 8. Similarly, the Dauki Fault remains a highly active seismic area. Over the past decade, the region has witnessed 550 earthquakes of magnitude 4 or above. Experts warn that these frequent smaller tremors could be a precursor to potentially larger quakes.

Dhaka also faces a high risk of catastrophic earthquake damage due to dense urbanisation, poor building regulations, and its geological location. A RAJUK study indicates that a 6.9-magnitude earthquake along the Madhupur Fault Line could destroy 865,000 buildings, resulting in up to 210,000 deaths, 229,000 injuries, and financial losses exceeding \$25 billion, with \$44 billion required for rebuilding.

We, therefore, urge the government agencies concerned to expedite our earthquake preparedness before it is too late. A comprehensive plan should be developed to demolish unsafe buildings across the city and conduct regular inspections to ensure structural safety. Using earthquake-resistant technologies in new constructions and strictly implementing the building codes has become crucial at this stage. Additionally, we need to design and implement extensive awareness and training programmes, including regular drills in schools, offices, etc., as part of preparedness. Let's not neglect the threat of a major earthquake.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Failed assassination attempt against Reagan
On this day in 1981, in Washington, DC, barely two months after his inauguration as the 40th president of the United States, Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously wounded by would-be assassin John W Hinckley, Jr.

EDITORIAL

DHAKA'S EARTHQUAKE GAMBLE

Built on sand, bribery, and blind faith



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

If Dhaka were a person, it would be that overconfident, pedestrian jaywalking across the highway—blind to danger, immune to consequence, and utterly convinced that trucks will swerve in time. But nature doesn't believe in last-minute swerves. Nature, like a strict schoolmaster, has a way of reminding cities that arrogance has a price. And Dhaka, with its labyrinth of high rises, its tangled mess of traffic, and its people who live life with an enviable mix of bliss and oblivion, stands precariously on the edge of a seismic disaster.

Every few months, we feel a tremor. Some shake our coffee cups, others rattle our windows, and a few make us rush to Facebook to post dramatic status updates about how we "almost died." But as quickly as these discussions arise, they dissipate, like a morning fog evaporating under the glare of the midday sun. After all, we are a resilient bunch. We survived decades of political instability, relentless traffic, floods that turn streets into Venice, and power outages that make candlelit dinners a daily routine. Surely, a little shaking of the ground beneath our feet is nothing to panic about?

The true marvel of Dhaka isn't just its resilience but its sheer talent for ignoring imminent doom. The 2015 Nepal earthquake was a wake-up call, but in typical Dhaka fashion, we hit snooze and went back to constructing high-rises on sand and silt. Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (RAJUK), our esteemed urban planning body, continues to dish out building permits like candy at a carnival, often with about as much concern for structural integrity as a roadside jhalmuri seller has for hygiene standards.

Experts have been screaming from their ivory towers (which, ironically, might be the first to collapse in a major quake) that Dhaka is sitting atop an active seismic zone. But what are facts in the face of real estate profit? The show must go on! Developers keep building, officials keep approving, and the citizens? Well, we continue our existence in a city where roads double as garbage dumps and public parks are an endangered species.

One might assume that, with all the warnings, the government has at



least a half-baked plan to deal with a large-scale earthquake. You'd be half-right—because the plan is indeed half-baked. The official response strategy is a dazzling display of bureaucratic optimism. It involves emergency drills that are conducted once in a blue moon, usually with more photo-ops than actual training. The fire department, bless their hearts, is already struggling to reach burning buildings in the city's daily gridlocks; in an earthquake scenario, it's more likely that rescuers will need rescuing themselves.

The roads, those narrow veins of chaos, will become impassable within minutes. Collapsed buildings, broken bridges, and fallen metro rails will ensure that emergency services are as effective as an umbrella in a tsunami. And let's not even talk about hospitals. Most are already overwhelmed by a normal day's patient load. What happens when thousands are crushed under debris, waiting for help that will never come?

Let's not put all the blame on the government. We, the residents, have our own admirable level of apathy. Our emergency preparedness strategy consists of reciting religious verses and

hoping for the best. Earthquake safety training? Most people don't even know where the emergency exits are in their own apartment buildings (spoiler: most buildings don't have them). In fact, if an earthquake were to strike during rush hour, you'd find half the city live-streaming the disaster while the other half debates on social media whether this is a punishment for our sins.

Old Dhaka, fires break out as gas lines rupture. There's no water to douse the flames—because, let's be honest, even in normal times, many areas barely get running water. The death toll rises not just from collapsed buildings but from stampedes, panic, and lack of medical care. The lucky ones are those who die quickly. The unlucky ones wait under rubble, their cries for help

FILE VISUAL: STAR

fading into silence.

The greatest tragedy of all? We know this will happen. We have the data, the research, the expert opinions. We have seen what happened in Nepal, in Turkey, in Mexico, and recently in Myanmar-Thailand. Yet, we continue to build recklessly, live carelessly, and plan inadequately. We place our faith in fate, in luck, in divine intervention—anything but actual preparedness.

There is still time to act, but not much. Retrofitting weak buildings, enforcing stricter construction laws, creating open spaces, and conducting genuine emergency drills could save thousands of lives. But will we do it? Or will we continue our blind march forward, whistling a happy tune, hoping that the ground beneath our feet remains merciful?

Dhaka is a city of miracles, a place where logic takes a backseat, and hope is the currency of survival. But hope alone won't save us when the earth decides to remind us who's really in charge. And when that day comes, the only question left will be: did we do enough to save ourselves, or did we simply wait for disaster with open arms and empty plans?

Should Bangladesh be divided into four provinces?

Tayeb Husain
is a retired college teacher and business executive based in Sweden.

TAYEB HUSAIN

Recent media reports suggest that the Public Administration Reform Commission of Bangladesh has proposed dividing the country into four administrative provinces as a means of decentralisation, aiming to establish a more efficient administrative system. However, it remains unclear whether this proposal also entails replacing the existing unitary parliamentary democracy with a federal system of governance. While federalism may be advantageous for vast nations such as the US, Russia, Indonesia, and India—where diverse social, cultural, and religious groups coexist—it is entirely unnecessary for a small and relatively homogeneous country like Bangladesh. A unitary parliamentary democracy remains the most suitable model for our governance.

What Bangladesh truly requires is an effective and manageable administrative framework rather than an expansion of the flawed system we currently endure. The administrative structure we have inherited, dating back to colonial rule in 1793, is profoundly obsolete and continues to hinder national progress, exacerbating poverty and contributing to social, cultural, and political deterioration.

No modern, civilised nation retains such an antiquated system, which bestows excessive power upon administrative officials—such as upazila nirkabi officers (UNOs), deputy commissioners (DCs), and divisional commissioners—who function almost as viceroys. While certain superficial

fully autonomous administrative unit tasked with implementing and enforcing its decisions. This unit would oversee essential public services, including primary and secondary education, healthcare, infrastructure, law and



FILE VISUAL: SHEIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

modifications have been made, the core structure remains largely unchanged and retains its colonial character. In essence, the UP would bear direct responsibility for the well-being of every citizen. A more in-depth discussion of the advantages of a strengthened UP system warrants further exploration.

It is imperative that we dismantle this antiquated framework and transfer all administrative authority to the union parishad (UP), thereby eliminating the district and upazila administrative tiers. The UP should be reconstituted as the primary governing authority at the local level. Urban and rural areas alike should be divided into UPs, with all members and the chairperson elected through a party-list proportional representation system (PRS), where feasible. The UP should function as a robust local legislative body, complemented by a

order, social welfare, and employment opportunities for both men and women. In essence, the UP would bear direct responsibility for the well-being of every citizen. A more in-depth discussion of the advantages of a strengthened UP system warrants further exploration.

By abolishing the offices of the DCs and UNOs, we would effectively curtail excessive bureaucratic dominance, ensuring that governance is truly by the people and for the people. Rather than being subjected to distant bureaucratic rule, citizens would be served by locally accountable representatives within the UP.

Dividing Bangladesh into four provinces would necessitate an expansion of the bureaucracy at both the

central and provincial levels, inevitably leading to increased administrative expenditures, corruption, nepotism, and favouritism. The long-term financial, social, and moral transformation of Bangladesh—particularly in rural areas—can only be achieved through a robust local government, not through the reinforcement of the colonial administrative "iron frame." Advanced nations owe much of their stability and efficiency to the strength of their local governance structures. The US and UK, despite their imperfections, remain effective democracies largely due to the resilience of their local government systems.

Introducing a federal structure in Bangladesh would be catastrophic, not only due to the financial burden of sustaining multiple layers of government but also because of the nation's low levels of education and the deeply entrenched culture of political corruption. Such a transition would drive Bangladesh towards fragmentation, particularly given its sensitive geopolitical reality.

Therefore, Bangladesh requires a strong central government wherein authority is concentrated within a single national framework—eschewing regional governments while ensuring that local UPs are empowered to function under national directives. Laws and governance must remain uniform across the nation and should be executed solely by the local government (UP) through its own independent administrative apparatus. The sooner we abolish the ineffective and corrupt DC and UNO offices, the sooner Bangladesh can progress towards a truly people-centric governance system, underpinned by an efficient and accountable UP administration.

Sanjida Khatun: Different and defiant



Mofidul Hoque
is an author, researcher and
publisher, and a trustee of the
Liberation War Museum.

MOFIDUL HOQUE

It is not easy to draw a portrait of Sanjida Khatun as she is a person with many identities and a lady with 10 hands, like the *dashabhuja* of Bangla myth. She is a singer par excellence; her renderings of Tagore songs are those of a maestro; she holds a special place along with Nilima Sen, Kanika Bandyopadhyay, Rajeshwari Dutta, and others. Usually, singers have no claim to scholarship on Tagore's songs, his music, literary works, or philosophy of life. From that perspective, Sanjida Khatun holds a special place among the Tagore scholars and her book *Rabindra Sangiter Bhabasampad* (The Richness of Tagore's Songs) has become a classic in its own right. She embodies the combination of a singer and a scholar, a rare feat that distinguishes her from all others in her respective field.

These two achievements are enough to define one as an accomplished person with a place among successful ones—but Sanjida Khatun has performed other tasks of importance. She was a professor of Bangla literature at government colleges and later joined Dhaka University. She left behind many students whom she had introduced to literature. As an academic, she stands tall among many with her analytical mind and

eloquent way of presentation. In 1978, she earned a PhD from Visva Bharati, the university of Tagore. In the mid-1950s, she completed her MA in Bangla literature at the same university, which was highly exceptional at that time. As an academician, she continued her pursuit of new knowledge and earned a Doctor of Literature degree from Visva Bharati with her research on poetics based on phonetics, pronunciation and transformation—meaning of words in poetry. This highly original work was lauded by scholars when it was published from India.

Sanjida Khatun, the scholar, has penned many other books on

It is through songs and music that Sanjida Khatun observed the world around her. Music nourished her soul and drove her to embrace the challenges of life, both personal and social/national. But more than anything else, Sanjida Khatun was a cultural interlocutor, a defender of Bangalee national identity.

literature, culture and society. Most of these books are based on Tagore's song. It is through songs and music that Sanjida Khatun observed the world around her. Music nourished her soul and drove her to embrace the challenges of life, both personal and social/national. But more than anything else, Sanjida Khatun was a cultural interlocutor, a defender

key organiser of the "Buddhir Mukti" or "Freedom of Intellect" movement of 1920s in Dhaka. A friend of Kazi Nazrul Islam, his literary writings have earned a place of its own. He played Esraj and promoted music in the family. From early life, his daughter Sanjida Khatun distinguished herself as a cultural activist and a performer

or activity were allowed. It was a long era of darkness that was shattered in 1961 by people's initiative to observe Tagore's birth centenary by organising public programmes with songs and dance-drama. Tagore centenary was celebrated in other towns like Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet, Rajshahi etc. Soon after the organisers in Dhaka felt the urge to keep the cultural activities alive and Chhayanaut was established with poet Sufia Kamal at the helm and Sanjida Khatun as its motor. Chhayanaut established a musical school to raise new generations of artists with a commitment to uphold the rich tradition of Bangalee culture. Sanjida Khatun dedicated herself to teaching, learning, and inspiring disciples to be skilled singers with commitment to serve the people in times of crisis. Chhayanaut, as a seat of learning and centre of public performance, ushered in a new upsurge in the cultural arena, especially with the early morning celebration of Bangla New Year under the banyan tree at Ramna Park. First held in 1967, this became the symbol of Bangalee people's resistance against Pakistani domination by upholding their cultural identity. In a short time Pahela Baishakh turned to be the largest secular festival of the nation.

Since 1980, with the establishment of Rabindrasangeet Sammilon Parishad she embarked on a journey to take music lessons to the districts and small towns all over the country. She conducted workshops, teaching and touching the hearts of young aspirants and made a lasting impact. The Parishad, with more than 60 branches all over the country, organises annual conference alternatively in a district town, which

exemplifies her commitment to the spread of cultural practices.

In 2001, an extremist religious group violently attacked the Baishakh festivities in the park, causing the death of many innocent spectators. The brutality caused deep pondering in Sanjida Khatun's mind, and she decided to add a new chapter in her work. She and her colleagues started a formal school with a medley of education and culture based on learning with pleasure. Nalanda added a new dimension to the concept and practice of education.

Sanjida Khatun embraced other tasks to rejuvenate the society with meaningful cultural practices. She headed the Bangladesh Bratachari Samity to organise camps promoting the practice of Bratachari. Pronunciation and recitation are other areas of her interest. She was a master tutor in this art and conducted workshops in Kanthashilon. Various domains of Sanjida Khatun's work represent the breadth of her philosophy and praxis of life.

In totality, she dedicated herself to building a society rooted in its culture and tradition, imbued with a secular liberal humanist spirit whereby to be a Bangalee meant to be universal also. She aspired to create a generation that could steer through the complexities of the modern world with a firm footing in its own culture and tradition.

All her life, she worked with 10 hands, excelling in various acts, and enriching us with her dedicated, multifaceted contribution. She is part of the cultural history of Bengal and Bangladesh and will remain a source of inspiration for nation-building.



Sanjida Khatun (April 4, 1933 - March 25, 2025).

PHOTO: COURTESY

of Bangalee national identity. From her college days, she was an activist, took part in the language movement, practised music, joined in all kinds of musical events and started a life-long journey with Tagore songs.

Surprisingly, she never received any formal lesson in music. She was raised in a liberal, secular, enlightened and musical environment. Her father Dr Kazi Motahar Hossain, a great scholar and professor of mathematics at Dhaka University, was one of the

with promise. She returned from Shantiniketan with a master's degree and as an accomplished singer. It is not that she studied music at Shantiniketan, but as she said, music was always in the air and environment of Shantiniketan. At that time, the Pakistani ruling coterie did their best to confront the national struggle, both politically and culturally. This culminated in the imposition of military rule in 1958, all political parties were banned, civil rights curtailed, no political meeting

"need" that piece of clothing? Our surroundings have been propagating this cycle of overconsumption, making us purchase the next thing and the next and then the next. By simply saying no to fast fashion, we can make the biggest impact! Question whether you truly need this purchase and if you will wear this at least 30 times. This "30 wears"

When possible, explore secondhand options first, without stigma! The habit of swapping clothes in your networks is also an excellent one. The environmental impact of a second-hand purchase is dramatically lower than buying new, as it requires no additional manufacturing resources.

Material selection is also very important when we do customise

typically require more intensive bleaching and chemical processing during their manufacturing to achieve this bright colour, which means more chemicals are leached into the environment while they are produced.

Choose natural fibres like linen, which requires less water than cotton and can thrive without intensive pesticides or fertilisers, alongside other not-so-common options like hemp, which requires fewer chemicals to produce. Avoid synthetic materials like polyester in your fabric which shed microplastics on washing.

And for the eventuality of disposal, never discount how helpful repurposing your textiles is. Turn it into a kantha or quilt; remake that old saree into a dress!

Consumers are not the only group with a responsibility to do better, it is also on the producers to rethink the way they produce clothing. For designers and clothing producers, sustainable thinking can enhance their creativity. Reducing waste starts at the beginning, with every scrap of clothing saved, when materials are selected sustainably and with innovation focus. Even fabric scraps can be reincorporated into new products through techniques like fibre recycling, among others.

Achieving zero waste in fashion requires collaboration between producers and consumers. This symbiotic process can only start when we start thinking about the "real" cost of our textiles.

Let's ask ourselves the next time we make bulk purchases, "Do we really need that extra piece of clothing?"

durability of the clothing, reducing waste in the production process, using sustainable and non-toxic materials and providing fair wages to their suppliers? I, myself, seldom think about these perspectives while purchasing that really cool kameez set, or when I am swayed by that gorgeous piece of saree, or when that influencer is swaying my decision to



The global fashion industry produces 92 million tons of textile waste, and one extra clothing purchase contributes to that.

FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

purchase something needlessly. It's just a piece of clothing, and for some reason, I really "need" it. I do not think about its life with me.

The model of *fast fashion* is the leading cause of clothing waste. Remember how I said that I really

test helps break the habit of impulse purchasing.

When you cannot wear the item 30 times (it happens; who is going to wear that poofy lehenga 30 times?), invest in higher quality, durable items that last longer.

our own clothing. When we choose dark coloured clothing, especially black, it can hide stains and requires less washing, whereas lighter colours show stains more, eventually leading to higher washing and faster replacement. Light coloured clothes

In the grand scheme of things, with rising expenses for everything else, clothing often does not seem like a thing to consider or bother about. Although the days of Tk80 t-shirts seem like a thing of the past, the cost of clothes isn't a burning issue for us. There are always options for different buyers, from broke students to the handful of luxury item purchasers.

Let's go through the life of a t-shirt. For a typical Bangalee, the t-shirt will stay with its owner for a few years, with maybe around a hundred or so washes, and then it will eventually end up as a rag to clean the house. And one day, it will be too torn up and washed up to even use as a cleaning rag. And when it is thrown away, someone else will use it in some other way.

While the life-cycle for a single t-shirt seems nice, imagine the mounds of thrown-away t-shirts when every single person owns not one but an increasing number of t-shirts, oblivious to the true cost of clothing. The true cost might not come from our pockets directly, but the price is paid by our rivers and our environment that have been polluted through the entire clothing-making cycle. The cost of clothing is always hidden in its lifecycle, something we never really think about much.

The average person today buys

60 percent more clothing items than they did 15 years ago, while keeping each garment for half as long, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Textile matters because it is an integral part of human life. Responsible use of textiles is something that each person in this world should be accountable for, be it from a consumer's perspective or from a producer's perspective.

March 30, 2025, will be observed as the International Day of Zero Waste with the theme "Towards zero waste in fashion and textiles." The global fashion industry significantly contributes to resource consumption and carbon emissions, requiring 79 billion cubic meters of water annually (about 20 percent of the world's total water consumption), generating 1.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide (almost 10 percent of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions), and producing 92 million tons of textile waste (equivalent to a truckload of clothing being incinerated or sent to landfills every second).

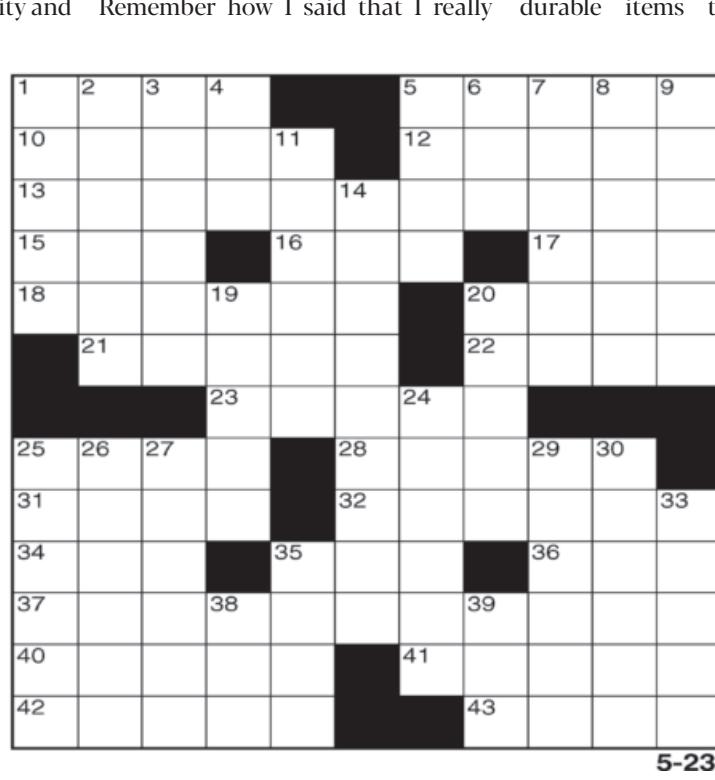
When big celebrations like Eid come up, we purchase a lot for our loved ones, limiting our behaviour only through a monetary lens. When was the last time you asked yourself if your favourite designer/brand had thought about the sustainability and

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

1	Rams' mates
5	Base eight system
10	Valleys
12	Pack animal
13	Billing leeway
15	Paris pal
16	Tissue layer
17	Programming error
18	Soprano Scotto
20	Glass section
21	Museum piece
22	Early carmaker
23	Bakery workers
25	Pew of cartoons
28	Track contests
31	Arkin of "Argo"
32	Peripherals
34	Mule of old song
35	Utmost
36	Mauna N
37	Compact items
40	Fancy tie
41	Ocean's motions
42	Oozes
43	Wyoming city

DOWN

1	Painter Degas
2	Appliance for buns
3	Pal of George and Jerry
4	Brief time
5	Follow, as orders
6	Nasty dog
7	Of the clan
8	In the area
9	Ski resort buildings
11	Bacteria-ridden
14	Diner souvenirs
19	UFO flyer
20	Did some modeling
24	Cardinal's symbol
25	Successfully imitate
26	Go by
27	Royal home
29	Sword-making city
30	Was a noisy sleeper
33	Pert
35	Brooklyn team
38	Member of the force
39	Tayback of "Alice"



FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

T	A	P	E		S	I	D	E	B
E	C	R	U		P	R	I	M	E
S	H	I	P		O	O	M	P	A
L	E	G	H	R	N		O	D	E
A	S	S	O	R	T	S	R	E	L
R	A	Y			V	I	A	L	
F	R	A	I	L		L	I	A	R
L	I	S	A		V	I	C		
A	C	T			C	A	S	T	E
W	H	O			A	U	T	O	M
E	A	R	F	U	L	R	E	B	A
D	R	I	E	S	T	I	N	I	T
D	A	N	E	S		A	D	D	S

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dsoopinion@gmail.com.

How chronic stress fuels the rise of diabetes

RAISA MEHZABEEN

With relentless deadlines and outdated expectations, stress has become a constant companion for millions. While its toll on mental health is well acknowledged, its impact on physical health—particularly blood sugar regulation—remains under recognised. This hidden risk may have serious consequences for many.

When the body encounters stress, it triggers the “fight or flight” response. The brain signals the adrenal glands to release stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones mobilise energy reserves, enabling the body to respond swiftly. While vital in short bursts, repeated stimulation from chronic stress can be harmful.

Cortisol is the key player in stress-induced blood sugar imbalance. During stress, it prompts the liver to release glucose through gluconeogenesis, ensuring immediate energy. However, cortisol



also reduces insulin sensitivity, impairing glucose absorption and raising blood sugar. Over time, this can contribute to insulin resistance and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Chronic stress exacerbates blood sugar regulation. Prolonged cortisol elevation can lead to persistent hyperglycaemia, a driver of metabolic disorders. Studies show that those facing ongoing stress—from work pressures to financial strain—are more prone to insulin resistance.

Stress also fuels poor habits: unhealthy diets, lack of exercise, and disrupted sleep, all of which worsen blood sugar control.

Though stress is inevitable, its effects can be managed. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and relaxation techniques like meditation help lower cortisol and stabilise blood sugar. Workplaces must also support mental well-being to reduce stress-related health risks.

Reducing stress is not only vital for mental peace—it's essential for metabolic health.

The writer is the founder & CEO of Nutrition For Change. E-mail: raisameh20@gmail.com



NUTRITION SUMMIT 2025

A national call to action for better health

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Aiming to raise public awareness about nutrition, the Nutrition Summit 2025 was held for the first time in Bangladesh on 31 January and 1 February at the Shaheed Abu Sayeed International Conference Centre, Shahbagh, Dhaka. The two day event was inaugurated by National Professor AK Azad Khan, President of Badas and Chief Advisor of the Summit.

Nearly 1,000 participants, including renowned nutritionists, dietitians, academic experts, representatives from national and international food and nutrition organisations, and safe food producers, joined the summit. Across eight scientific sessions, 24 distinguished speakers presented 25 topics. Additionally, open sessions were held for the general public, where leading nutritionists discussed 12 topics, correcting common misconceptions and educating attendees on how nutrition can prevent disease. Interactive sessions included demonstrations on healthy cooking, and more than 500 attendees received personalised diet plans from clinical nutritionists.

In his inaugural remarks, Chief Coordinator Dr Md Fazlurabi Khan explained the rationale behind the summit. He highlighted the alarming rates of malnutrition among mothers and children in Bangladesh. Citing the

Global Hunger Index, he noted that 24% of Bangladeshi children under five are stunted, and 11% are wasted. “We have limited understanding of nutrition. Most people don't know what to eat, what to avoid, or how much energy they need daily based on their weight and height,” he said. He emphasised the need for a collective effort to address this gap and called for the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform involving all stakeholders.

Professor AK Azad Khan remarked that malnutrition now encompasses both undernutrition and overnutrition, with rising rates of overweight and obesity, compounded by micronutrient deficiencies. He called for the accreditation of nutrition professionals and suggested forming a separate council for nutrition if required.

Notable attendees at the inaugural session included M Saifuddin Ahmed, Secretary General of Badas; Md Saidul Arefin, Director of INF, University of Dhaka; Dr Zeba Mahmud, Country Manager at Alive & Thrive, FHI 360; Shamsun Naher Mohua, Chief Nutrition Officer at BIRD; Dr Nazma Shaheen, Professor at INF, University of Dhaka; and Prof Dr Zahid Hasan, Registrar at BUHS. The session was chaired by Safina Rahman.

On the second day, a roundtable titled “Empowering All to Build a Healthy Nation” brought together

stakeholders to recommend ways forward. Participants included National Prof AK Azad Khan, Dr Mushtuq Husain, Dr Md Iqbal Hossain, Dr Abu Jamil Faisel, Prof Syeda Saliba Sultana, and representatives from FHI 360, Nutrition International, BIRD, and the National Press Club.

Following a lengthy discussion, the summit produced ten key recommendations, including:

1. Integration of nutrition into the national health system.
2. Nationwide awareness campaigns on diet and disease.
3. Curriculum reform for nutrition education.
4. Accreditation and regulation of nutrition professionals.
5. Structured career paths for nutritionists.
6. Inclusion of age-appropriate nutrition content in school curricula and healthy school meals.
7. Creation of nutritionist posts in hospitals nationwide.
8. Development of a national nutrition data repository.
9. Mandatory display of nutritional information in food outlets.
10. Establishment of a national nutrition surveillance agency.

The summit concluded with a strong call for collaboration, innovation, and policy reform to address Bangladesh's evolving nutritional challenges.

STUDY FINDINGS

Too much salt linked to higher risk of obesity

New research to be presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO 2025) in Málaga, Spain (11–14 May), reveals a strong link between dietary sodium intake and both general and abdominal obesity. Conducted by Annika Santalahti and colleagues from the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, the study analysed data from over 5,000 Finnish adults.

Findings showed that participants with the highest sodium intake—measured via food frequency questionnaires and urine samples—were significantly more likely to have obesity. Women in the highest sodium intake group were over four times more likely to have general obesity and 3.4 times more likely to have abdominal obesity compared to those in the lowest group.

Similar trends were found using urine sodium concentration. For men, results were statistically significant when based on urine sodium: those in the highest quartile were six times more likely to have general obesity.

Most sodium came from everyday processed foods such as bread, cheese, and processed meats—not just junk food. Researchers emphasise the need for systemic change, including collaboration with the food industry, to reduce population-level sodium consumption. They call for further research into the biological mechanisms linking salt intake to obesity.

Source: *The Lancet*



Mum's Health Matters: How early-life factors shape obesity risk

A new study suggests that factors beyond individual control—such as socioeconomic status and maternal health—can significantly influence the likelihood of becoming overweight or obese later in life. Led by Glenna Nightingale of the University of Edinburgh, the research was published on 26 March 2025 in PLOS ONE.

Using data from the 1958 National Child Development Study, which tracked over 17,000 people born in one week



in March 1958 across England, Scotland, and Wales, researchers examined weight outcomes at ages 16 and 42. They considered a range of early-life and social factors, including birth order, delivery method, job type, maternal smoking, and maternal obesity.

The study found that if a mother smoked or was obese, her child had a significantly higher risk of being obese or severely obese—both as a teenager and as an adult. These associations remained strong even before and after the rise in obesity rates in the UK, indicating that individual behaviours alone do not explain the current obesity crisis.

Researchers conclude that early-life and societal risk factors should be considered in obesity prevention efforts, and call for new studies focused on community-level drivers behind the global obesity epidemic.

Source: PLOS ONE

Unmasking the bitter reality of sugar

JANNATUN NAYMA

When we hear the term ‘silent killer’, conditions like high blood pressure or cancer often come to mind—illnesses that do severe damage without early symptoms. But there's another culprit quietly fuelling today's global health crisis: sugar.

Yes, sugar is a silent assassin. It's not just in obvious treats like soft drinks, sweets, and junk food—it's also lurking in so-called “healthy” items like yoghurts and granola bars. Shockingly, around 80% of packaged foods in supermarkets contain added sugars. With over 61 names for sugar listed on food labels, many of us unknowingly consume far more than we should. Why? Because sugar is addictive—and the food industry profits from that addiction.

Excessive sugar intake can lead to beta cell burnout, resulting in type 2 diabetes, requiring lifelong insulin. It also fuels inflammation, damages mitochondria, and harms your heart, liver, brain, and kidneys. As the saying goes: You're blind to diabetes—until you go blind from it.

An estimated 18 million deaths annually are linked to sugar-related illnesses—14 times higher than global road accident deaths. Sugar not only affects your physical health—causing obesity,

heart disease, stroke, cancer, and tooth decay—but also wreaks havoc on your mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and mood swings.

So, how can you take control without giving up everything you love (yes, even ice cream)? Try these practical tips:

Follow the 80/20 rule: Eat healthy 80% of the time, leave 20% for indulgences.

Stay hydrated: Often, thirst disguises itself as hunger.

Avoid sugary drinks: Swap for water, herbal teas, or black coffee.

Create distance: Keep sugar-laden foods out of reach at home.

Read food labels: Know how to identify hidden sugars.

Start your day with protein, fruits, and vegetables: Stabilise blood sugar early.

Exercise daily: Boost mood-enhancing hormones and improve insulin sensitivity.

Your health is in your hands.

You don't need to live in fear—but you do need to be informed. You're the CEO of your body. Make smart choices today to avoid hospitals tomorrow. A small change now can prevent a massive health crisis later.

The article is compiled by Jannatun Nayma. E-mail: keyamahashina1985@gmail.com

SHARNALI SHINES

Bangladesh unveils homegrown solution to childhood malnutrition

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Recently icddr,b and UNICEF co-hosted a seminar titled “Effectiveness Trial of Locally Developed Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food in Treating Severe Acute Malnutrition in Rohingya Camps” at icddr,b's Sasakawa Auditorium.

Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, Executive Director of icddr,b, chaired the event, joined by Chief Guest Ms Nurjahan Begum, Adviser to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Special Guest Ms Rana Flowers, UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh.

Highlighting persistent child stunting in Bangladesh, Dr Ahmed introduced Sharnali—a locally developed Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) made from ingredients like rice, lentils, chickpeas, and

milk powder. He noted: “We can't hospitalise every malnourished child. Sharnali offers a community-based, cost-effective solution.”

Dr Md Munirul Islam presented promising trial results from Rohingya camps, showing both Sharnali-1 and Sharnali-2 formulations effectively treated severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in children aged 6–59 months.

Ms Flowers lauded the breakthrough: “Sharnali literally saves lives.” She called for scaling it up at the community level, adding, “It's not whether Bangladesh can afford it—but whether we can afford not to.”

Ms Begum compared Sharnali's potential to that of ORS, calling for reduced production costs and better maternal nutrition to fight SAM nationwide.

Source: icddr,b

REVOLUTIONISING REHAB

The rise of robotic physiotherapy in Bangladesh

BIJOY DAS

available locally, facilitating home-based therapy for stroke and mobility-impaired patients.

Innovations in affordable bionic limbs also mark progress toward inclusive, tech-driven rehabilitation. However, challenges remain: high costs, lack of trained personnel, and infrastructural limitations hinder widespread adoption.

Strategic investment and training programmes are essential for scaling up robotic rehabilitation.

Globally, robotic rehabilitation is booming. Valued at \$428 million in 2024, the global market is projected to reach \$50 billion by 2033. Ageing populations, healthcare workforce shortages, and AI-driven innovations fuel this growth. In the UK, for example, researchers at the National Robotarium have developed “ARI”—a rehabilitation robot to support overburdened NHS services.

As Bangladesh embraces this future-forward approach, collaboration with the private sector, international partners, and the healthcare community will be crucial. With the right support, robotic physiotherapy could revolutionise rehabilitation and redefine recovery across the nation.

The writer is the Head of the Physiotherapy Department at Ashulia Women & Children Hospital. Email: dr.bijoy@gmail.com



in March 1958 across England, Scotland, and Wales, researchers examined weight outcomes at ages 16 and 42. They considered a range of early-life and social factors, including birth order, delivery method, job type, maternal smoking, and maternal obesity.

The study found that if a mother smoked or was obese, her child had a significantly higher risk of being obese or severely obese—both as a teenager and as an adult. These associations remained strong even before and after the rise in obesity rates in the UK, indicating that individual behaviours alone do not explain the current obesity crisis.

Researchers conclude that early-life and societal risk factors should be considered in obesity prevention efforts, and call for new studies focused on community-level drivers behind the global obesity epidemic.

Source: PLOS ONE

BFF contacts
Shome, calls up
young overseas
talents

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the successful introduction of Sheffield United midfielder Hamza Choudhury into the Bangladesh national team and the hype created by the England-based footballer's arrival and performance against India, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is spreading out its search for more Bangladeshi-origin footballers from Europe and other parts of the world.

Along with Hamza, there are quite a few overseas players' whose names have been spoken of with much fervour by the Bangladeshi football fan base for quite a long time. Among them is Shamat Shome, a Canada-based footballer of Bangladeshi origin who has played for Canada's age-level teams as well as the national team. However, his two appearances for Canada's senior team came way back in 2020.

BFF's vice-president Fahad Karim said that they have contacted Shamat to know whether he would be interested in representing Bangladesh.

"We have contacted with Shamat Shome yesterday [Friday] and wanted to know whether he was interested to play for Bangladesh. He asked for two weeks' time to talk to his coach and others to decide on the issue," Karim told The Daily Star.

According to sources inside the BFF, the 27 year-old midfielder had previously shown reluctance to commit to Bangladesh, but now with Hamza coming, he may have a change of mind, which is what prompted the game's local governing body to contact him again.

As the inclusion of senior players who have represented another country takes a long process to complete, BFF is focusing more on scouting young players who play at a decent level in top leagues around the world.

"We are trying our best to find and nurture talent, whether foreign-based or local. There is a round-the-year scouting for talents by BFF coaches inside Bangladesh. Now we are reaching out, for the first time, to foreign-based players," Karim said.

The BFF vice-president informed that they have called for a four to five-day-long trial towards the end of June to try out around 30 players from Europe and North America.

"These players, who are all aged between 16 and 20, play between second and fourth tiers in their respective countries of residence. We will take their trial and let the technical committee decide on the next course of action. Most of them are from Europe, but there are a few from North America as well."



In Miami, legends cross paths



Argentina great Lionel Messi and his family watched tennis legend Novak Djokovic dominate Grigor Dimitrov in the Miami Open semifinal yesterday. After the match, Messi visited the locker room, meeting Djokovic and Czech teen Jakub Mensik. The 19-year-old, starstruck, joked about not washing his hand after shaking Messi's, believing it brought him luck. Inspired, Mensik stunned Taylor Fritz to secure a Masters 1000 final against Djokovic. After his win, he scribbled, "Thank you Leo" on the camera. Meanwhile, Djokovic, chasing his 100th title, expressed his delight on social media: "An honor to meet greatness."

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Struggling Brazil left reeling: Who will replace Dorival Junior?

AGENCIES

Once the gold standard of world football, Brazil are now a team in crisis -- rudderless, rattled, and searching for direction.

The five-time world champions hit a new low this week, sacking head coach Dorival Junior just three days after a crushing 4-1 defeat to eternal rivals Argentina. It was not just a loss -- it was a humiliation that symbolised the Selecao's ongoing decline, exposing tactical confusion, a lack of identity, and a widening gap between past glory and present reality.

Dorival's brief stint, which began in January 2024, was meant to steady a ship already shaken by post-World Cup uncertainty. Instead, it added to Brazil's spiraling woes.

Since crashing out of the 2022 World Cup to Croatia on penalties, Brazil have looked increasingly ordinary. Negative records piled up: their first-ever home qualifying loss, first defeats to Colombia and an African nation, and a Copa America exit to Uruguay on penalties -- all under a rotating cast of interim and permanent coaches.

With Brazil currently clinging to fourth in South America's qualifying table -- just a point above the final automatic slot --

Brazil are enduring their worst-ever World Cup qualifying campaign, sitting fourth in South America with 21 points -- just one above sixth-placed Colombia.

They've suffered a record five losses in 14 games, conceding 16 goals -- both all-time qualifying lows.

Their 1-0 loss to Argentina in 2023 marked Brazil's first-ever home defeat in World Cup qualifying.

Under Dorival, Brazil managed only six wins in 14 matches and exited the Copa America in the quarterfinals to Uruguay.



panic has replaced pride.

Carlo Ancelotti had long been seen as the ideal candidate, but the Italian legend reaffirmed his commitment to Real Madrid until 2026. That opens the door to a new round of speculation. Al Hilal's Jorge Jesus leads the shortlist, while Palmeiras' Abel Ferreira, another Portuguese tactician with Brazilian experience, is also in contention.

But Brazil's crisis is not just about the coach but an identity struggle. Despite a roster filled with stars like Vinicius Junior, Rodrygo, and Raphinha, the team lacks the flair and cohesion that once defined them. Injuries to key figures like Neymar, now struggling with age and fitness, have further highlighted the generational transition underway.

Dorival's lone bright moment -- a debut win over England at Wembley -- feels like a distant memory. His Copa America campaign flattered to deceive, and ultimately, his inability to reignite Brazil's attacking soul sealed his fate.

Whoever takes over next faces more than just qualifying pressure -- they must restore belief. Brazil have not lifted a major trophy since the 2019 Copa America and have not tasted World Cup glory since 2002. For a nation obsessed with beautiful football, pragmatic results alone will not suffice.

DPL clubs brace for key absences in business end

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The ongoing Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League (DPL) has struggled to generate excitement this year, with issues such as a sharp decline in players' salaries, a lack of competitive matches, and the challenges of travelling long distances during the month of Ramadan -- when players tend to fast during games -- dominating discussions rather than the cricket itself.

As the league enters its business end, with eight rounds completed and only three remaining before the Super League and relegation battles, the competition faces another setback as the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr break will be followed by player absences.

The national team are set to host Zimbabwe for a two-match Test series from April 20 to May 2, with preparations beginning as early as April 10. As a result, DPL clubs will soon lose key players selected for the Test squad, forcing them to rely on less experienced backups.

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) has already issued the itinerary for the remaining three league rounds, with matches resuming on April 6 before the Super League phase begins on April 15. According to Prime Bank Cricket Club head coach Talha Jubair, national team players will be available until April 9.

"What I know is that Test squad members can't play any matches in the league [after April 9]. We can't do anything about it," said Talha, whose side are currently in fourth position with 10 points from eight games.

Talha admitted that while his team have backup options, replacing potential Test call-ups like Zakir Hasan, Shahadat Dipu, Hasan Mahmud, and Khaled Ahmed would not be easy.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) cricket operations in-charge, Shahriar Nafees,



also confirmed the unavailability of the Test squad members in the DPL Super League.

"I think the selectors will announce the squad just after Eid," Nafees informed The Daily Star.

"Apart from the national team, there will be no scarcity of players for other international commitments. The preparations for those series (New Zealand A and South Africa's Emerging Team's Bangladesh tour in May) will begin after the end of the Super League."

Nafees further informed that the foreign coaches will be arriving before the preparatory camp -- by April 7 or 8 -- while assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin and spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed's contract extensions are almost finalised.

"[Regarding Salahuddin's contract] It would have been confirmed during the board meeting, but it couldn't take place due to the health situation of Tamim [Iqbal]. It will definitely be a long-term contract, whereas Mushtaq's contract will be 130 days per year," he informed.

Rizwan rues 'change of momentum' in NZ defeat

AGENCIES

A dramatic collapse after a promising start handed Pakistan a 73-run defeat in the first ODI against New Zealand in Napier yesterday -- a result that left skipper Mohammad Rizwan ruing 'three-four overs' of play that turned the tables on them in the contest.

Mark Chapman struck a career-best 132 off 111 balls and Pakistan-born Muhammad Abbas hit a 26-ball 52 -- the quickest half-century ever on ODI debut -- as the hosts posted 344-9 at McLean Park after being sent to bat first.

In the chase, the tourists looked on track at 249-3, at that point needing 96 runs to win, with more than 11 overs remaining.

But after Babar Azam, who made highest 78 off 83 balls, became Abbas' maiden ODI wicket, the Pakistan innings crumbled as they lost their final seven wickets for



a convincing defeat in a match, they were on track to win.

"We started with good intent with the bat. But at the end, pressure got built. When you're closer to the target, there's more pressure. Three-four overs changed the momentum," Rizwan said at the presentation ceremony.

Player-of-the-match Chapman said that after being reduced to 50-3, they rode their luck with the bat and then the cameo from Abbas powered the Black Caps to a winning total.

"It was tricky early on [conditions], we probably aimed at something lower than this, but we then kicked on and got to a good total," Chapman said. "We just absorbed the pressure and then got into a position to put the pressure back on them. We rode our luck, got a platform and set things up for debutant Abbas to put the icing on the cake, it was a solid innings from him," he added.

just 22 runs and were all out for 271 after 44.1 overs.

Seamer Nethen Smith, who finished with 4-60, claimed three of the final four wickets which fell for just four runs as Pakistan conceded



HAMZA DAZZLES ON CLUB RETURN

Hamza Choudhury [R] celebrates with Gustavo Hamer after scoring the opener in Sheffield United's 3-1 win over Coventry City in an EFL Championship fixture at Bramall Lane yesterday. Despite not scoring, the midfielder, fresh from his international debut for Bangladesh, received a standing ovation in front of a 30,000-plus crowd in the 89th minute as he was substituted, following a superb all-around performance that helped Sheffield move to the top of the table.

SONY TEN 2

FA Cup
Preston vs Aston Villa
Live from 6:30 pm
Bournemouth vs Man City
Live from 9:30 pm

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

IPL
Delhi vs Hyderabad
Live from 4:00 pm
Rajasthan vs Chennai
Live from 8:00 pm

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Imagine big
to change
the world
Prof Yunus asks
students at PKU



BSS, Beijing

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged students to imagine big things and aim to change the world.

"Imagination is the greatest power of the earth. If you imagine [something], it will happen. If you do not imagine, it will never happen," he said, addressing a function at Peking University (PKU) in Beijing yesterday morning.

Asking students to look back in history, he said great things happened

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Shahbagh intersection was almost empty around noon yesterday, as many city dwellers have left the city to celebrate Eid in their hometowns or villages. Tailbacks on all four streets are all too common here.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

NEWS ANALYSIS

Remittance up as rates stabilise

Crackdown on money laundering also helps

MID MEHEDI HASAN

Steady growth in remittance inflow has helped the interim government arrest the decline in foreign currency reserves, leading many to wonder why the remitters are sending more and more money back home.

Remittances have risen consistently each month since the political transition in August 2024, with the remittance in March on track to cross \$3 billion and set a new record for the highest single-month inflow.

Bangladesh received a record \$2.94 billion in remittances during the first 26 days of the month, driven by the largest Muslim festival, Eid-ul-Fitr.



The interim government has gained the remitters' trust, which is why they are sending more money through banking channels.

Mohammed Nurul Amin
chairman, Global Islami Bank

Central and commercial bankers and foreign exchange dealers believe multiple factors have contributed to the rising trend of remittance inflow in recent months.

These include a stable foreign exchange rate, a reduced gap between the rates on formal and informal markets, the government's crackdown on money laundering, improved banking services, Bangladeshi expatriates' trust in the interim government, growing manpower exports, and strict monitoring by the central bank.

"We are observing that Bangladeshi expatriates who previously did not send their money through banking channels are now using formal channels," said Arif Hossain Khan, Bangladesh Bank spokesman and executive director.

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Eid diaries
with showbiz
stars

P6

Prime Bank

HSBC
ISLAMIC BANKING



PRAYER
TIMING
MARCH 30

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:36 12:45 4:45 6:14 7:45
JAMAAT 4:46 1:15 5:00 6:29 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI,IFTAR TIMING
RAMADAN MARCH SEHRI IFTAR
29 30 6:14
30 31 4:34 6:15



Holidaymakers throng the ticket counters of trains to Jamalpur, Netrakona and other nearby districts at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday. Tickets for trains to these districts are not sold online or in advance.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Three brothers killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Three brothers, two of whom are children, were killed after a bus ran over a motorcycle in Barguna's Patharghata upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Md Naimuzzaman Shuvo, 22, Md Shanto, 14, and Md Nadim, 8, sons of Md Nasir Khan of Tikikata union under Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur.

The incident took place around 7:30am in the Sonar Bangla area of Raihanpur union.

Police and locals said the three brothers were travelling from their maternal uncle's house in Mathbaria to another uncle's residence in Patharghata upazila's Keramatpur on a bike.

On their way, a Dhaka-bound Rajib Paribahan bus collided head-on with their motorcycle, killing all three on the spot.

Yakub Hossain, inspector (investigation) of Patharghata Police Station, said the bodies were recovered and sent to Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Till the filing of the report, police were yet to seize the bus or make any arrests.

Legal action will be taken after an investigation, the inspector said.

SEPARATE RAPE CASES One jailed, one held

STAR REPORT

One man was sent to jail while another was arrested yesterday on charges of rape in two separate cases in Thakurgaon and Lalmonirhat.

In Thakurgaon, a court sent Rashidul Islam, 30, of Sadar upazila's Ghonibistapur village, to jail in a case filed over the rape of an eight-year-old girl.

The court recorded the victim's statement under Section 22, court inspector Belal Hossain said, adding that Senior Judicial Magistrate Rajib Kumar Roy then passed the jail order.

AKM Nazmul Kader, officer-in-charge of Ruhia Police Station, said the incident took place in a village in Thakurgaon Sadar on Friday afternoon.

According to the case statement, Rashidul lured the girl into a maize field near his in-laws' house and raped her. After returning home, she informed her family.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

US moves to shut USAID

Trump admin formalises plans, fires remaining USAID staff

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump's administration announced plans Friday to effectively close the US international development agency USAID, formalising widely criticised plans to dramatically cut foreign aid spending.

"Today, the Department of State and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have notified Congress on their intent to undertake a reorganisation

that would involve realigning certain USAID functions to the Department by July 1, 2025," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

The State Department, he said, also plans on "discontinuing the remaining USAID functions that do not align with Administration priorities."

"Unfortunately, USAID strayed from its original mission long ago," he said. "As a result, the gains were too few and the costs were too high."

Trump's administration told Congress on Friday it would cut nearly all remaining jobs at the USAID and shut the agency, even as Trump promised that the US would provide assistance to Myanmar following a devastating earthquake.

Senate Democrats on the



After taking office in January, Republican President Donald Trump signed an executive order freezing US foreign aid for 90 days.

Dramatic cuts to various USAID programs followed, with some exemptions granted for vital humanitarian aid.

The aid freeze has caused shock and dismay at the independent agency created by an act of the US Congress in 1961.

Senate Democrats on the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Autorickshaw 'robber' killed in mob beating

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A man was killed in a mob beating after he allegedly attempted to hijack an autorickshaw in Tantar area of Munshiganj's Sreenagar upazila yesterday.

Md Zahid, 35, a resident of Gazaria upazila succumbed to his injuries at the Sreenagar Upazila Health Complex around 11:00am.

Two of his associates -- Jafar, 32, and Arif Sikdar, 33, -- were seriously injured in the beating, and their condition is critical, said police.

Sreenagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shakil Ahmed said, "Four people boarded an

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