

For decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike.

Donald Trump
US president

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

Star

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US tariff storm bears down on Bangladesh

The country's exports to US face a 37% levy, one of the harshest rates

- ➔ The penalties unleashed turbulence across world markets
- ➔ Condemnation from countries facing the end of an era of trade liberalisation

HOW TRUMP SLAP STARIFFS ON ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIES



"The immediate priority is damage control, as the reciprocal tariffs are already in effect, with no time allowed for a smooth transition."

Zahid Hussain, ex-lead economist of World Bank's Dhaka office.



How are Trump tariffs calculated?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As US President Donald Trump yesterday unfurled his list of tariffs targeting most of America's trading partners, he repeatedly stressed that each nation's rate was reciprocal.

But he said little about the methodology behind those calculations.

A possible answer emerged later. Each

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YUNUS-MODI MEET Restoring mutual trust key objective

The two to sit together today

PORIMOL PALMA and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Restoring confidence in Dhaka-Delhi ties will be the key objective of the meeting between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bangkok today, diplomatic sources said.

According to an official involved in the chief adviser's visit to Thailand, the meeting is set to begin at 12:15pm local time and will last for approximately 20 to 25 minutes following the BIMSTEC summit.

When asked about the agenda, the official said that while all aspects of the bilateral relationship would be discussed, the primary focus would be on rebuilding trust and strengthening mutual confidence.

It will be the first one-on-one meeting between the two leaders since the political changeover in Bangladesh last year.



Prof Yunus, Narendra Modi at BIMSTEC leaders' dinner.

They met each other, along with other BIMSTEC leaders, at a dinner hosted by Thailand Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra last evening.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain met Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar twice -- once in New York in September last year and in February in Oman this year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US President Donald Trump yesterday stood in the White House Rose Garden, pointing to an oversized placard with details of levies he is set to impose on imports from America's trading partners. The reality quickly set in: Trump dramatically ratcheted up his trade war. And Bangladesh is among those countries whose labour-intensive export industries will receive a heavy blow.

Under Trump's "reciprocal tariffs" policy, Bangladeshi exports to the United States now face a 37 percent levy -- a move that threatens to strain trade with its largest single-country export market.

Trump has targeted nations, accusing them of putting disproportionate barriers to American exports. He imposed 10 percent universal tariffs on all US trade partners as well as additional, heavier duties on 60 countries he deemed the "worst offenders" of unfair trade practices. The universal tariffs will start on Saturday before the country-specific, higher reciprocal tariff takes effect from April 9.

The penalties unleashed turbulence across world markets and drew condemnation from many countries facing the end of an era of trade liberalisation that has shaped the global order for decades.

While significant for Bangladesh, this move aligns with similarly stringent



tariffs across the region, suggesting a broader strategic intent rather than targeting Bangladesh alone.

Notably, Vietnam, a close competitor for Bangladesh in the international

MORE ON STAR BUSINESS SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

RMG EXPORTS TO US Competitors' lower tariff worrying

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The US's reciprocal tariff announcement will most definitely impact Bangladesh as its nearest competitors in apparel supply to the American market are facing lower tariffs, said exporters and economists yesterday.

Apparel accounts for 90 percent of Bangladesh's exports to the US, where it is the third-largest supplier behind China and Vietnam.

As per the new schedule, Bangladesh will face a 37 percent tariff, China 65 percent and Vietnam 46 percent.

However, India and Pakistan, not China and Vietnam, are Bangladesh's main competitors in apparel supply to the US, said AK Azad, chairman

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



"The consequences [of US tariffs] will be dire for millions of people around the globe."

Ursula von der Leyen
president of the European Commission



BIMSTEC SUMMIT 2025 Economists optimistic about the outcomes

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of seven countries surrounding the Bay of Bengal will be meeting in Bangkok today with the hope of reinvigorating regional cooperation in a largely fragmented world faced with a trade war and a breakdown of multilateralism.

Economists and foreign relations analysts are optimistic about the outcomes of the sixth summit of the BIMSTEC leaders, where for the first time, some important decisions will be taken that can lead to substantial progress in trade and the economy.

BIMSTEC foreign ministers, including Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, at the pre-summit meeting in Bangkok yesterday, signed an agreement on maritime transport cooperation, marking a significant

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Tariff issue will be resolved through talks

Yunus hopes

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has expressed strong hope that there will be positive progress in resolving the tariff issue through talks with the US government.

"We are studying it. Since it is negotiable, we will negotiate, and I am sure we can craft out the best deal," said the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam, quoting Prof Yunus.

Talking to BSS in Bangkok about the 37 percent tariff imposed by the US on Bangladeshi products, Shafiqul Alam said, "The whole issue is still at the early stages of discussion. We are reviewing it and we are hopeful that the steps we are taking will help make our relations with the US stronger in the coming days."

He said the interim government hopes that it will be able to move towards a solution that would be a win-win situation for both countries.

"We will do something that will protect the interests of both the US and Bangladesh," the press secretary said, adding that Bangladesh continues to communicate with the US to this end.

In the morning, Shafiqul said Bangladesh is reviewing its tariffs on products imported from the United States.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Buses stopping haphazardly in the middle of the Chittagong Road near Kanchpur Bridge to pick up and drop off passengers, creating the risk of gridlocks and accidents. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CTG-COX'S BAZAR HIGHWAY Finally patched after spate of fatal crashes

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Following three major accidents at the same location between Monday and Wednesday, authorities in Chattogram's Lohagara sub-district have implemented urgent measures to prevent further incidents on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway.



The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is currently widening the narrow two-lane road by two feet on both sides and has installed rumble strips along the accident-prone stretch in the Jangalia area, said to Pintu Chakma, executive engineer of RHD's Chattogram South division.

"Officials are also considering the installation of mirrors at turning points to improve visibility for drivers," he said.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2 SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



How corporate gifting boosts a thriving industry

RBR

As Ramadan concluded at the end of last month, beckoning the arrival of Eid festivities, there was a lot of buzz on social media regarding "Eid gifts". Eid gifts, not the same as "salami", from your loved ones are always bundles of happiness wrapped in love. However, when such gifts arrive from your business contacts, it can be a delightful surprise as well.

Corporate houses usually send festival goody bags, gifts, and even meals to their priority clients as a gesture of goodwill and token of appreciation to preserve connections within their business networks.

For me, it all started maybe a decade ago, when a prominent institution started giving out large fruit tree saplings to promote greenscaping in the city. It came as a part of your grocery shopping from certain superstores. The reason that I remember this is because I still cherish my pink guava tree that I received from such an unexpected source.

Nowadays, sharing corporate gifts has become a well-thought-out process, and the trend has opened up a new business opportunity — corporate gift planners, whose entire job is to make a customised gift box branded with the logo and cards, telling the story of the respective company who has commissioned them.

"Corporate gifts impact the brand image rather than immediate sales. The idea has emerged as a strategy for fostering business relationships and enhancing brand visibility, which is highly valued during special occasions. Initially, the corporate gifts were very simple such as branded mugs, T-shirts, diaries, calendars, etc. This trend has become so popular that there are now online and offline businesses dedicated to offering different types of creative ideas for bulk orders. There are boxes with a range of items depending on the occasion. It's no longer limited to expensive corporate gifts, but rather focused on the most creative, new innovative ideas because receivers happily post on social media, creating a different kind of hype," says Tanzir Dilshad Ditan, corporate brand marketing expert and founder of KrayonMag.



Long gone are the days when banks, government offices, and media houses received plastic bags full of dates for the month of Ramadan.

As the corporate gifting fad grew in the city, it evolved, and creativity took centre stage. The packaging became a point of concern and prestige, and a subtle competitiveness was marked in ideation, as to whose gift was the best of the season.

From Baishakhi narus and murals, to Shab-e-Barat gift bags of sugar, cardamoms, and ghee; these gifts grew to become lavish in order to spoil the ones receiving them.

This year's Ramadan also saw a flurry of gift boxes being delivered to special clients by public relations department of big corporations.

"For many of us, we didn't need to go grocery shopping. I have secretly started to wait for these unexpected gifts and yummy delights," says an anonymous homemaker jokingly.

She, however, also pointed out one shortcoming

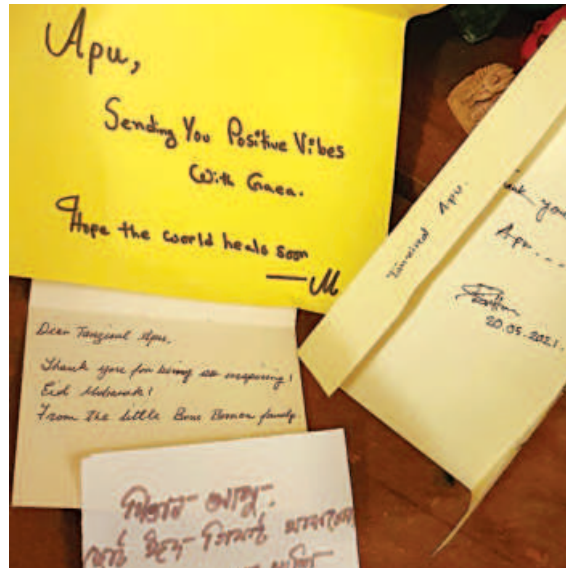


PHOTO: COURTESY

she observed in the "iftar boxes" that came her way.

"Most iftar boxes came from five-star hotels, catering to corporate offices. Amid all the fancy iftar menus, I noticed what was missing was our local sweets. Gurer Sandesh, Chhana, Balushai were replaced with pistachio Baklava, rolled date cookies, Kanafah, Basboosa, which are typically Middle Eastern desserts," she pointed out.

All these huge iftar boxes carried similar menus, with zero variation in presentation or taste, she said, adding that regardless of what was in the box, such corporate gift boxes are still fun to receive and are well appreciated.

"Companies and marketers have long relied on the power of gifting to secure better relationships with potential and existing clients to show appreciation for their businesses. Due to the importance of the corporate gift culture, a whole new industry has emerged in Bangladesh, offering different designs and customised gift options," Ditan quips.

LOHAGARA ACCIDENT

2 orphaned victims fighting to survive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

College student Tasnia Islam Prema, who was severely injured in a road accident on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway in Chattogram's Lohagara upazila, is battling for her life in the intensive care unit of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The 18-year-old sustained multiple injuries in the crash, which claimed the lives of her parents and two sisters.

Her maternal aunt Jesmin Rahman was seen anxiously waiting outside the ICU yesterday afternoon.

"The girl's parents and sisters are all gone. She has no family left.... All we ask from Allah now is that she survives. We want nothing else.

"My niece's condition is very critical. She isn't stable enough to be transferred to Dhaka. Since her admission here [CMCH], she hasn't responded. The doctors are trying their best to treat her."

The tragic accident occurred on Wednesday morning when a passenger bus collided with a microbus, killing 10 people and critically injuring three others.

All the victims, both deceased and injured, were passengers of the microbus. They were travelling to Cox's Bazar for the Eid holidays.

Another survivor, seven-year-old Araddhya Biswas, remains in critical condition at CMCH. She was moved to the ICU yesterday afternoon after her condition worsened.

Araddhya has suffered multiple injuries, including broken legs and a severe head injury.

Her uncle, Ashit Kumar Baroi, said, "No one could have imagined such a tragedy.

"Araddhya's parents died in the accident. For now, her treatment will continue in Chattogram. We will consult the doctors to decide the next steps."

Her cousin Durjoy, who was injured in the same accident, is also receiving treatment at CMCH for serious injuries, including fractures in his left arm and right leg, as well as a head injury.

Tulip slams ACC for 'smear campaign'

STAR REPORT

British MP Tulip Siddiq has accused Bangladeshi authorities of orchestrating a smear campaign by making "false and vexatious claims" against her in the media without ever reaching out to her directly.

In a statement posted on X on Wednesday, Tulip said, "The Bangladesh authorities have been making false allegations about me to the media for months, but they have never contacted me directly."

The Labour MP for Hampstead and Kilburn resigned as a Treasury minister in January after being named in several corruption inquiries in Bangladesh.

Tulip, a niece of Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, said her lawyers wrote to Bangladeshi authorities more than two weeks ago, urging them to stop briefing the media with "baseless allegations." Her lawyers

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Finally patched after spate of fatal crashes

FROM PAGE 1

Faruk-e-Azam, adviser to the Liberation War affairs ministry, visited the site on Wednesday afternoon and instructed the RHD and the Chattogram District Administration to implement further safety measures.

Lohagara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Inamul Hasan said that as speed bumps can sometimes have adverse effects on highways, authorities are also planning to install a road divider as a long-term solution.

He, however, emphasised that a permanent solution would require expanding the highway to four or six lanes, which will take time.

Additionally, authorities are exploring measures to prevent salt-laden trucks from making the road slippery in the mornings, including the possibility of shifting salt transportation to river and sea routes.

A total of 15 people were killed and 21 others injured in the recent accidents.

On Monday, five people died, and 10 were injured in a head-on collision between two passenger buses. The following day, a microbus bound for Cox's Bazar plunged into a roadside paddy field, injuring eight people. On Wednesday, a passenger bus ran over a microbus, killing 10 people and critically injuring three others. The victims were on their way to Cox's Bazar for Eid holidays.

The bodies of the 10 deceased from Wednesday's crash have been handed over to their families.

Dohazari Highway Police Station returned the remains of eight victims, while Panchlaish Police Station handed over the other two.

Shuvo Ranjan Chakma, officer-in-charge of Dohazari Highway Police Station, confirmed that relatives and acquaintances collected the bodies on Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority has announced compensation of Tk 5 lakh for the families of each deceased and Tk 3 lakh for each injured person.

The Chattogram District Administration will provide an additional Tk 50,000 to the families of the deceased and Tk 15,000 to those injured, said Deputy Commissioner Farida Khanam.

US tariff storm bears down on Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

Walmart and Target to pass the tariff costs onto us," he said. To counter this, it is crucial for sellers to collectively agree not to accept a reduction in prices to offset the tariff. The relevant association must closely monitor renegotiated prices and enforce penalties for non-compliance with this agreed position, Hussain said.

"Additionally, we should explore the possibility of qualifying our exports for duty exemptions by emphasising their status as low-priced essential products."

TRADE REALIGNMENT
Analysts point out this escalation is part of broader regional trade realignment, as neighbouring India and Pakistan also face reciprocal tariffs of 27 percent and 29 percent, respectively. Cambodia faces the highest tariff at 49 percent closely followed by other Asian countries.

China, the primary focus of Trump's trade agenda, will face a 34 percent reciprocal tariff, which stacks atop an existing 20 percent fentanyl-related duty and separate levies on categories like solar panels. That brings the effective tariff rate on many Chinese goods to well above 50 percent.

India said it was studying the impact of the new tariff and vowed to push for a trade deal this year, signalling a conciliatory tone despite failing to get relief from Trump's trade policy.

New Delhi's response came hours after Trump announced the drastic tariffs that piled more stress on an ailing global economy and sent world stock markets and oil prices tumbling.

India's export competitiveness would be less impacted than that of key rivals due to its position in the middle of the tariff rates, said the country's industry bodies, Assocham and the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

The tariffs would remain in effect until Trump determined that the "threat posed by the trade deficit and underlying non-reciprocal treatment is satisfied, resolved, or mitigated," the White House said.

The US has a trade deficit of \$46 billion with India.

But the reciprocal tariff will pile pressure on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who counts himself among Trump's friends, to find ways to get India off the hook. Last week, Reuters reported that

New Delhi is open to cutting tariffs on US imports worth \$23 billion to mitigate the impact on its exports in sectors like gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and auto parts.

Modi's administration has taken a number of steps to win over Trump by lowering tariffs on high-end bikes, bourbon and dropping a tax on digital services that affected US tech giants.

Before the reciprocal announcement, the simple average US tariff rates were at 3.3 percent, compared with India's 17 percent, the White House said.

Ajay Sahai, director general at the Federation of India Export Organisations, said the reciprocal tariff on India was lower than that of key competitors like Vietnam and Bangladesh, which could help Indian apparel and footwear sectors.

These tariffs signal a calculated shift in US trade policy aimed at addressing "trade imbalances and reshaping international trade practices".

Economists and trade groups have voiced concerns that these moves may invite retaliatory tariffs, potentially igniting trade conflicts and raising costs for businesses and consumers.

Washington's friends and foes united in criticism of measures they fear will deal a devastating blow to global trade. China, the world's No. 2 economy, vowed countermeasures, as did the European Union.

"The consequences will be dire for millions of people around the globe," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said, adding the 27-member bloc was preparing to hit back if talks with Washington failed.

US Treasury Chief Scott Bessent earlier warned any retaliatory moves would only lead to escalation.

Among close US allies, the European Union was targeted with a 20 percent rate, Japan with 24 percent, South Korea with 25 percent and Taiwan with 32 percent. Even some tiny territories and uninhabited islands in the Antarctic were hit by tariffs, according to a list posted by the White House on X.

"This is not the act of a friend," said Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia, a nation often described as America's "deputy sheriff" in Asia.

"The [Trump] administration's tariffs have no basis in logic and they go against the basis of our two nations' partnership."

Restoring mutual trust key objective

FROM PAGE 1

But bilateral relations have remained strained.

India has repeatedly expressed concerns over alleged attacks on religious minorities in Bangladesh, which the Bangladeshi government has termed interference in its internal affairs.

Bangladesh has witnessed growing anti-India sentiment for different reasons, including New Delhi's alleged support to Sheikh Hasina during her 15-year rule. She fled to Delhi after losing power on August 5 last year.

New Delhi has not responded to Dhaka's request to extradite the former prime minister to face trial for killings committed during the mass uprising.

Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka has substantially reduced the number of visas for Bangladeshis, citing a staff shortage.

Against this backdrop, the meeting between Prof Yunus and Prime Minister Modi could serve as a confidence-building measure, even amid lingering concerns between the two nations on various issues, diplomatic sources said.

"We want to have a good relationship with India, a good working relationship," Adviser Touhid told the media recently.

Foreign ministry officials emphasised the deep interdependence between Bangladesh and India, warning that strained relations hinder progress on both bilateral and regional fronts.

According to diplomatic sources, the Bangladesh side would touch upon at least nine points, starting with Bangladesh's appreciation of historical ties with India and recent diplomatic courtesies, and acknowledge India's role as a trusted neighbour and development partner.

The sources said the chief adviser would reaffirm the interim government's commitment to a smooth democratic transition, stability, and regional peace, while stressing the importance of policy continuity in existing bilateral commitments, particularly in security, trade, and connectivity.

They said Bangladesh would express readiness to engage in deeper political and economic cooperation and propose convening the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC), a foreign secretary-level dialogue, soon. "We would propose relaxing visa requirements for students, patients,

and business communities, especially to introduce more flexible and expedited visa processing for medical, educational, and business purposes," one of the sources said.

Bangladesh may also request removal of Non-Tariff Barriers and enhanced market access for Bangladesh exports, propose accelerating progress on BBN (Bangladesh Bhutan, India Nepal) motor vehicle agreement, BIMSTEC transport corridors, and energy grid connectivity.

Dhaka would also highlight the importance of train connectivity for trade, tourism, and people-to-people ties, while proposing the resumption of Bangladesh-India cross-border train operations, which have remained suspended.

It would stress improved cooperation on border security, with the emphasis on avoiding civilian casualties.

Sources said Dhaka would suggest enhancing joint patrols and information sharing to prevent untoward incidents.

Bangladesh will also urge India's active diplomatic role in facilitating the safe, dignified, and voluntary repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar, a diplomatic official said. It would mention the challenges Bangladesh has been facing in sheltering 1.2 million refugees. Dhaka would also highlight the regional security challenges the refugee crisis poses.

The official said Prof Yunus would reaffirm Bangladesh's commitment to strengthening BIMSTEC cooperation, suggest joint projects in disaster management, climate change adaptation, and energy security, and express optimism about opening a new chapter of trust and collaboration.

He may also formally invite Modi to visit Bangladesh.

An Indian diplomat from New Delhi said India was eager to advance mutual interests and priorities, but it is crucial for India that Bangladesh pays due attention to their security and strategic concerns in the region.

"We will continue to work with Bangladesh on this," he told The Daily Star.

The diplomat emphasised that beyond trade and economic ties, stability in Bangladesh is crucial for regional security. Therefore, fostering a constructive and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh is essential for safeguarding India's borders.



A young girl takes a dip in a waterbody inside Suhrawardy Udyan, trying to cool off amid the ongoing heat wave. According to the meteorological office, soaring temperatures could continue throughout this month with the possibility of reaching the level of a severe heat wave. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Three held for harassing female journo in Rampura

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-3 yesterday arrested three individuals, including the prime accused, in a case filed over the harassment of a female journalist in Rampura.

The prime accused, Shoaib Rahman Zishan, 25, was arrested from Meradia, Rampura, early yesterday. Following information, law enforcers arrested Md Raisul Islam, 21, in the Bailey Road area and Md Kawsar Hossain, 21, from Gendaria.

The arrests were made following an investigation, Sanad Barua, senior assistant superintendent of police, said in a press release.

According to Rab-3, the incident, which occurred on Wednesday night, went viral on social media, triggering widespread outrage. Upon noticing the matter, they launched a shadow investigation.

A case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act was filed at Rampura Police Station against the named and unidentified accused.

The arrestees are currently in police custody, and legal proceedings are underway, Rab-3 officials confirmed.

Rafia Tamanna, a journalist with New Age, was sexually harassed, and her two companions, including her brother, were assaulted by a group of unruly youths in Rampura on Wednesday night.

341 held in joint operations

Says ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army, in coordination with other law enforcement agencies, arrested 341 people across the country between March 27 and April 2, according to an Inter-Services Public Relations press release yesterday.

The arrestees included listed criminals, extortionists, individuals with multiple cases, muggers, teenage gang members, and drug traffickers, it added.

The operations were conducted by various infantry divisions and independent brigades of the army.

The security forces recovered 15 illegal firearms, 53 rounds of ammunition, drugs, locally made weapons used in crimes, stolen phones, SIM cards, counterfeit currency, and cash.

One in every 41 births a stillborn

Say UN reports on Bangladesh; at least 1 lakh children die before reaching 5

ISSUES

- High home delivery rates
- Limited access to specialised care
- Shortage of trained midwives
- Inadequate postnatal care
- Unregulated private healthcare

BANGLADESH RECORDS OVER 63,000 STILLBIRTHS ANNUALLY, HIGHEST IN SA



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in primary healthcare
- Need more trained professionals
- Take action to improve maternal, newborn health
- Expand newborn care units
- Strengthen healthcare system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recent UN study revealed that Bangladesh records over 63,000 stillbirths each year, meaning there is one stillborn in every 41 births, the highest rate in the region.

Meanwhile, another study showed that over 1 lakh children in Bangladesh die before reaching five, with nearly two-thirds of those deaths occurring within the first 28 days of being born.

The new reports were published by the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) recently. While progress has been made since 1990, Bangladesh continues

to record the highest rate of stillbirths in South Asia.

Experts said Bangladesh faces significant challenges in maternal and newborn care, with the country needing to save an additional 28,000 newborns annually to meet its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target.

"Over 1,00,000 newborns in Bangladesh die annually from preventable causes such as premature birth, complications during delivery, and infections like sepsis and pneumonia," said Farook Adrian Doomun, deputy representative (operations) of Unicef in Bangladesh.

This violates their basic need -- the right to survive and thrive,

he said. He stressed the need for increased investment in strengthening the healthcare system, particularly in primary healthcare, and expanding the number of trained professionals, including midwives, to ensure safe births.

WHO Representative in Bangladesh Dr Ahmed Jamsheed Mohamed, said, "Stillbirths and preventable child deaths remain a heartbreaking reality. While Bangladesh has made significant progress in maternal and child health, disparities in access to quality and timely care persist."

He emphasised that implementing WHO's prenatal,

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Extortion main cause of violence in CHT: adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Affairs Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said strict action will be taken to stop extortion and terrorist activities in the hills.

"Extortion is the root cause of various forms of violence and problems in the hills, and without putting an end to extortion, the issues in the region cannot be resolved," he said while talking to reporters at the Rangamati Sector Headquarters of Border Guard Bangladesh.

"We have directed law enforcers to stop extortion, and no extortionist will be spared," he added.

The adviser warned against taking the law into one's own hands and urged citizens to seek assistance from law enforcers if they face any problems.

He said some Indian media outlets are dedicated to spreading false information about Bangladesh, and the response to this should come through truthful reporting by Bangladesh's media.

The home boss mentioned that the weapons looted from various police stations during the August mass uprising have not yet been recovered.

He said if these weapons can be retrieved, the problem will be significantly reduced.

Jahangir said the number of BGB camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is being increased to ensure security and prevent arms smuggling along the border. Before talking to reporters, Jahangir visited various BGB camps, shared Eid greetings with the force members, and also met with local dignitaries.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma and BGB Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, among others, were present.

'Treat political ties of judges as misconduct'

Recommends reform commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Judiciary Reform Commission has recommended that any judge showing political allegiance or expressing political views be considered guilty of misconduct and face disciplinary measures under the relevant code of conduct.

It also said judges must remain free from all forms of political influence and involvement.

Under the constitution, any judge of the Appellate or High Court Division of the Supreme Court can be removed from office for "misconduct" or "incapacity".

President Mohammed Shahabuddin removed Justice Khizir Hayat from his post as an HC judge for "misconduct" or "incapacity" under Article 96(6) of the constitution on March 18 this year, according to a notification issued by the law ministry on March 19.

The commission also stressed the need for political parties to make a clear commitment that they will not interfere



RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures against politically aligned judges

Judges must be free from political influence

Commission for SC judge appointments

Prevent political activities on court premises

in the selection of candidates in elections of bar associations and the Bangladesh Bar Council.

The commission said the SC must issue clear directions to prohibit gatherings, processions, demonstrations, boycotts, or besiege activities within court premises, in line with a 2005 HC judgment, and must ensure compliance with this directive.

In its final report, submitted to the chief adviser on February 5, the reform body, led by Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman, proposed introducing an independent commission

to appoint Supreme Court judges. This would prevent appointments based on political considerations and free the judiciary from the negative influence of party politics.

The report noted that the existing constitutional framework lacks proper provisions to safeguard judicial independence, leading to a growing trend of judicial politicisation over the last few decades.

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Conspiracies on to obstruct uprising trials

Says ICT chief prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal Muhammad Tajul Islam yesterday alleged that individuals accused of crimes against humanity during the July uprising made significant financial investments to obstruct the trial.

"We have received specific information indicating that when these accused and their associates realised their trials were inevitable, they engaged in various conspiracies," he told a private TV channel.

He claimed that the accused fabricated stories to discredit the tribunal and undermine its credibility. "To support their propaganda, they launched targeted projects and made financial investments," he added.

Tajul urged the public to stand by the tribunal against the impending wave of propaganda, warning that without public support, it would be difficult for the investigation agency and prosecution to ensure justice for the martyrs.

"Any lapse in our efforts could disrupt the investigation and judicial proceedings," he emphasised.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Ex-EC secy Helal under scrutiny for Rohingya NID scam

ACC to probe 2018 polls irregularities

DIPAN NANDY

The Anti-Corruption Commission has launched an investigation into financial transactions that allegedly enabled 55,310 displaced Rohingyas to obtain Bangladesh's national identity cards and irregularities in the 2018 parliamentary elections.

As part of the probe, the ACC is scrutinising Helal Uddin Ahmed, who was the Election Commission secretary at the time.

Multiple ACC sources confirmed this development to The Daily Star.

An ACC director general, speaking anonymously, said the investigation began after police recovered a Bangladeshi NID smart card from Nur Alam, a Rohingya who was killed in a reported gunfight in February 2019. The card had been issued by the regional election office in Chattogram.

The ACC has sent letters to multiple government offices, including the Election Commission, requesting records of Helal's tenure and activities, as well as details of NIDs issued to him and his family.

"Subsequent media reports revealed that Nur obtained the NID through financial transactions, prompting the ACC to investigate. Initially, Helal Uddin Ahmed's name did not appear in the probe, but later findings pointed to the involvement of high-ranking officials in facilitating fraudulent NID issuance for Rohingyas," the ACC official said.

On June 17, 2021, ACC Assistant Director Sharif

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Sand-laden barges stay docked by the bank of the Shitalakshya. With the Eid holidays underway, most of the workers are yet to return to the capital. The photo was taken in Demra yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Man, daughter die as bus hits bike in Jashore
Mob sets bus on fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole

Two people on a motorcycle were killed and three others injured when a bus ran them over in the Pulerhat area of Jashore yesterday.

The deceased are Rubel Hossain 32, and his daughter, Oishi, 10, of Mujgunni in Khulna, said Jashore Kotwali Police Station OC Kazi Babul.

Rubel's wife, Jasmine Begum, 28, their other daughter, Tayba, 5, and a pedestrian, Osman, 19, were also injured in the incident, he said.

After the accident, a mob set the bus on fire.

The incident took place in the afternoon when the family of four was returning home to Khulna's Mujgunni after visiting Jasmine's parents, said police and witnesses.

When they reached the Pulerhat area of Jashore, a local bus hit them from behind. Rubel and Oishi were crushed to death under the wheels of the bus while Jasmine and Tayba were seriously injured.

When the bus was trying to flee after the accident, it ran over and injured Osman.

Locals at that time caught the bus and set it on fire. Later, fire service personnel brought the fire under control.

The injured are being treated at the Jashore General Hospital.

OC Babul said the bodies of the deceased have been sent to the Jashore General Hospital morgue for autopsy. An investigation is currently underway and legal action will be taken, he said.

3-year-old boy drowns in ditch

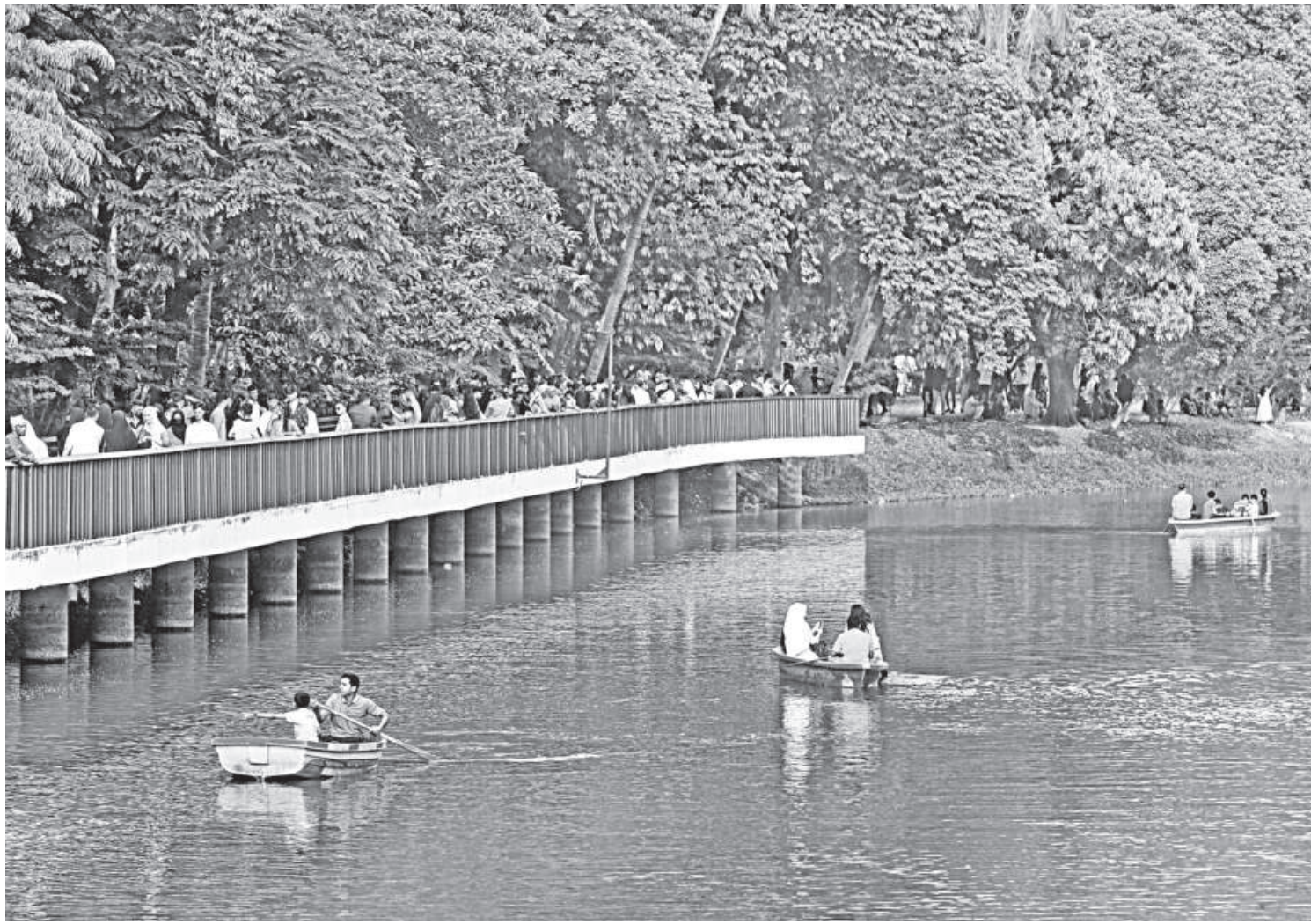
OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

A three-year-old boy drowned in a ditch at Lahiri Singia village in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila yesterday.

The victim, Noman Ali, 3, had been playing in the courtyard of their house since morning while other family members were occupied. At one point, he fell in the ditch adjacent to the courtyard.

After noticing his absence, family members and neighbours started searching for him. Around noon, they found his body in the ditch, said Inspector Dibakar Odhikari of Baliadangi Police Station.

An unnatural death case was filed.



People enjoy various activities such as boating at the Ramna Park, while others look on to enjoy the sights and scenes. On the fourth day of Eid yesterday, people continued to enjoy the holidays in full swing.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Watermelon farming on rise in Ctg region

MD NAZRUL ISLAM, Chattogram

The popularity of watermelon cultivation has been steadily on the rise in the Chattogram region.

Among the five districts in the Chattogram agricultural region, Noakhali recorded the highest watermelon cultivation this year, followed by Lakshmipur.

The absence of rain during the growing season has contributed to the increased yield, as experts note that heavy rainfall can damage the harvest.

Various watermelon varieties, including Victor Sugar, Ocean Sugar, Gori, Banglalink, Blackberry, and local types, have been cultivated in the region this year.

Statistical data from the Chattogram agricultural extension department over the past three years show that in 2023, watermelon was cultivated on 9,723 hectares of land in the five districts of the Chattogram agricultural region.

In 2024, the cultivated area dropped to 7,381 hectares but increased again to 7,814 hectares in 2025, marking a rise of 433 hectares compared to the previous year. The districts under the Chattogram agricultural region include Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Feni, Noakhali, and Lakshmipur.

In Noakhali alone, watermelon was cultivated on 7,590 hectares in 2023. However, the cultivated area has been declining since then, dropping to 5,327 hectares in 2024 and 3,304 hectares in 2025.

In contrast, Lakshmipur ranked second in cultivation, with 993 hectares in 2023 and a slight decrease to 891 hectares in 2024. However, in 2025, the cultivated area surged



to 2,936 hectares, ensuring a good harvest for farmers.

Feni has recorded the highest yield in the Chattogram agricultural region this year, producing 46 tonnes per hectare. Noakhali follows with 45 tonnes per hectare, while Chattogram recorded 43 tonnes, Cox's Bazar 40 tonnes, and Lakshmipur 26 metric tonnes per hectare. The harvest in Lakshmipur is expected to continue for another month.

Md Nasir Uddin, additional director of the Chattogram Regional Agricultural Extension Department, said, "Since there has been no significant rain this year, farmers have achieved a good yield. In areas without irrigation facilities, light rain can be beneficial

for watermelon production."

He said Mirsharai in Chattogram, Noakhali, and Lakshmipur have seen good yields this year, with production ranging from 40 to 46 tonnes per hectare.

In Chattogram district, watermelon has been cultivated on 674 hectares, with Mirsharai upazila leading with 480 hectares. Farmers in the coastal areas of Ichakhali and Saherkhali in Mirsharai have engaged in large-scale watermelon farming.

Siddiq Ahmed, a watermelon farmer from Saherkhali in Mirsharai, said farmers from Subarnachar in Noakhali are leasing land in the area for commercial watermelon farming due to the favourable farming and marketing facilities.

Youth dies after 'being thrown off building' in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth died after allegedly being thrown off the sixth floor of an under-construction building in Dhaka's Mirpur area on Wednesday afternoon.

The deceased is Sahidul Hasan Jitu, 23, a day labourer.

The incident took place on Isha Khan Road in Paikpara. Sahidul was found in a bloodied state at the bottom of the building's open elevator shaft. He was taken to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedic Rehabilitation where he died while undergoing treatment, said Mizanur Rahman, assistant commissioner of police (Mirpur zone).

Police arrested one person named Md Sabbir, 23, after the victim's mother filed a case against him and two other unnamed persons, the police official said. During initial interrogation, the arrestee admitted to killing Sahidul.

Sazzat Romon, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said Sahidul and Sabbir were friends.

A dispute ensued between Sahidul and Sabbir over admitting Sahidul's father to a drug rehabilitation centre, which led to multiple altercations between them.

According to police, Sabbir called Sahidul to meet him in front of the 10-storey under-construction building saying he wanted to settle their dispute. As Sahidul arrived there at around 3:30pm, Sabbir took him to the sixth floor where two or three unidentified individuals were waiting.

An argument ensued, and at one stage they pushed Sahidul into the building's open elevator shaft.

One in every 41 births

FROM PAGE 3

labour and delivery, and postnatal care recommendations, along with strengthening healthcare systems, is essential to reversing these trends.

The reports identify several factors contributing to high newborn mortality and stillbirth rates in Bangladesh. One of the key issues is the high number of home deliveries, which account for 30 percent of all births in the country. Many of these births take place without skilled medical assistance, increasing the risk of complications.

Another major concern is the limited access to specialised care for small and sick newborns. Many rural areas lack proper healthcare facilities, leaving newborns without essential medical attention.

The shortage of trained midwives also remains a critical issue. Many women do not have access to skilled birth attendants near their homes, making normal vaginal deliveries riskier, the report said. Additionally, inadequate postnatal care and the absence of 24/7 quality healthcare services at the upazila level contribute to preventable deaths.

The unregulated private healthcare sector further complicates the situation, as inconsistent medical practices can lead to substandard care, the report said. It added that poor prenatal and labour care, along with the lack of prevention and management of pregnancy-related

diseases, exacerbated the crisis. Insufficient funding and limited resources continue to hinder progress in reducing maternal and child mortality rates.

With only five years left to achieve the SDG targets, experts stress the need for immediate action. WHO and Unicef urged the interim government of Bangladesh to increase the number of facility births attended by skilled professionals, including midwives at the union level.

Expanding newborn care units in hospitals and community clinics is also crucial.

More trained nurses and midwives are needed to ensure better maternal and newborn care. Enhancing prenatal, delivery, and postnatal services can significantly improve survival rates.

Additionally, boosting funding for medical staff, essential drugs, and life-saving equipment is necessary to strengthen the healthcare system.

"Through strong government commitment, sustained investment in primary healthcare, and adherence to global best practices, we can prevent these tragic losses and build a healthier future for every child," said Jamsheed Mohamed.

Despite commendable progress, Bangladesh's healthcare system requires urgent reforms to curb preventable deaths and ensure a safer future for mothers and children, the report said, adding that the time to act is now.

TODAY MARKS THE 29TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF Late Salahuddin Ahmad
(May 6, 1926-April 4, 1996)

Your memory has not dimmed, your presence felt evermore.....May Allah (SW) grant you Jannatul Ferdous and rest your soul in eternal peace.

We humbly request all our relatives, friends and acquaintances to remember late Salahuddin Ahmad in their prayers.

Wife, children and grandchildren

রেজিস্ট্রার
গোপালগঞ্জ বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
গোপালগঞ্জ-৮১০৫।

ফোন নং: ০১৭৬৬৮৬/১১/২০২৪/০৩(১)/০৯৭
তারিখ: ২০ টার ১৪০৩
০৪ এপ্রিল ২০২৪

পেস্ট হাউজ ডাড়া নেওয়া সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অতিরিক্ত করে জানিয়ে দে, গোপালগঞ্জ বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ-৮১০৫ এর পোস্ট হাউজ হিসেবে ব্যবহারের জন্য কাম্বি, কলকাতা, বিন্দো, পানদারী কলকাতা ৩/৪ বেকস, ডুই, ডুইনি এবং পাসবোর্ডের সুবিধাসহ ২৪০০ থেকে ৩০০০ পর্যন্ত পেস্টের ডাড়া নেওয়া থাকবে। ডাড়া নেওয়ার জন্যে অর্ডার ডাড়া অফিস/কলকাতা ডাড়া পূর্ণ বিকল্পী, ডাড়া নেওয়া, সুবিধাসহ অতিরিক্ত ডাড়া এবং অন্যান্য ডাড়া উপস্থাপনের সঙ্গে কাস্ট অফার করতে আগামী ২০/০৪/২০২৪ তারিখ বিকল্প ০৪:০০ টার মধ্যে নিম্নলিখিতকরণের নিকট অবশেষে/স্বাক্ষর প্রাপ্ত ই-মেইলে বেস্টমেন অফ নোটারি জন বিদ্যেভাষে অর্পণ করা যাবে।

(স্বাক্ষর) রেজিস্ট্রার (কাম্বি)
ই-মেইল: registrar@gstu.edu.bd
GD-819

Ex-EC secy Helal under scrutiny

FROM PAGE 3

Uddin filed a case against 13 Rohingyas, a police officer, and three police personnel. Sharif was later dismissed from his position.

The ACC has now expanded its inquiry to include Helal's alleged role in the scheme.

Contacted, ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain said the commission is investigating various electoral irregularities, financial transactions, and vote rigging related to the 2018 elections. Further details will be disclosed upon completion of the probe, he added.

Following the Awami League government's ouster on August 5 last year, police arrested Helal from Chattogram on October 23.

As part of the ongoing investigation, the ACC has sent letters to multiple government offices, including the Election Commission, requesting records of Helal's tenure and activities, as well as details of NIDs issued to him and his family.

The ACC has also sought information on the 55,310 Rohingyas registered as voters, including their names, fathers' names, and addresses.

Additionally, it has requested authenticated copies of any investigation reports conducted by the EC or other agencies regarding the inclusion of Rohingyas in the voter list.

According to ACC sources, an assistant director has been appointed as the lead investigator into

Helal's alleged corruption. Before Eid, the ACC sent letters to the EC and the LGRD ministry seeking all relevant information about him.

Following the AI government's ouster, renewed discussions on the 2018 elections have led to multiple investigations into electoral irregularities.

Several agencies are now scrutinising district commissioners and police superintendents involved in the election, with the ACC also reviewing their tax records.

Helal joined the civil service in 1988 and held several key positions, including senior secretary to the Local Government Division, EC secretary, and a member of the Public Service Commission.

Conspiracies on to obstruct

FROM PAGE 3

He stated that once the prosecution presents its findings in court, the nation will understand the significance of their work. "There will be many surprises," he remarked.

"We cannot reveal everything at this moment. Premature exposure of

investigative findings could allow the accused and fugitives to mislead the proceedings and exploit the situation, harming case management," he cautioned.

He asserted that the evidence against the accused is entirely based on the truth

and urged not to make the trial unnecessarily controversial.

"We will prove each accused person's responsibility in court through the truth. The judicial process cannot be undermined, questioned, or harmed," Tajul concluded.

A haven for hoolock

FROM PAGE 5

colour differences between males and females. Their white eyebrows further set them apart," said Shyamal Debbarma, who has been involved in multiple studies on the primate species.

An adult hoolock gibbon typically measures between 60-90 centimetres in length and weighs between 6-9 kilogrammes. While males and females are similar in size, their body colours differ significantly. Males have black skin with white eyebrows, whereas females have grey-brown fur, with darker patches near the throat and neck. Females also have distinctive white fur around their eyes and mouth, resembling a mask.

Hoolocks give birth after 6-7 months of gestation. The babies are initially covered in fuzzy white fur, which darkens to black or brownish-grey within six months, depending on the sex. They reach adulthood at around 8-9 years of age and can live up to 25 years.

"The gibbons' existence is severely threatened due to rampant deforestation, habitat destruction, and food shortages. These primates are territorial and do not mix with other groups. They survive on

fruits such as figs, chapalish (wild breadfruits), cowpea, berries, and banyan, as well as bamboo leaves and young tree shoots," said Md Shahidul Islam, former range officer of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department.

To ensure the gibbons' survival, conservation efforts have ramped up in Lawachara. Authorities are planting fruit-bearing trees such as figs and chapalish to ensure a stable food source for the gibbons. These efforts have seen the primate population gradually rise in Lawachara, unlike other areas where their populations are dwindling.

However, experts warn that habitat loss and food shortages continue to threaten the survival of the species and call for urgent action to protect these primates before they disappear from the country's forests entirely. This includes sustained habitat protection, reforestation efforts, and stringent policies to curb deforestation.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), these gibbons are classified as critically endangered both nationally and globally.

Treat political

FROM PAGE 3

It urged the formulation and strict enforcement of laws to regulate political programmes, including processions, rallies and sit-ins on court premises.

The commission also said lawyers must refrain from political activities that disrupt judicial proceedings. It proposed that such activities within court premises be deemed professional misconduct, with disciplinary action enforced through the Bar Council, requiring necessary amendments to the Bangladesh Legal Practitioners and Bar Council Order, 1972.

While the judiciary cannot be entirely detached from politics, its independence and impartiality of individual judges must be ensured for the proper administration of justice.

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 4

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:40	12:30	4:45	6:21	7:45

JAMAAT 5-15 1-15 5-00 6-24 8-15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

A haven for hoolock gibbons

Around 50 endangered primates thrive in Lawachara forest



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Lawachara National Park, a protected forest spanning 1,250 hectares in Moulvibazar district, is home to rich biodiversity and is one of the last remaining strongholds of the critically endangered hoolock gibbons in the country.

In 1996, the government officially declared Lawachara forest a national park under the Wildlife Act of 1974, recognising its immense ecological value.

The forest currently hosts 460 species of flora and fauna, including 167 species of plants, four amphibians, six reptiles, 246 birds, and 20 mammals.

The park has garnered international attention for the critically endangered primates thriving there, particularly the hoolock gibbons.

Once widespread in the country's natural forests, the hoolock gibbon population plummeted by around 80 percent, from over 3,000 to approximately 400, due to deforestation

and habitat loss over the past 30 years, according to Forest Department sources.

A recent study by researchers from Jagannath University found that 13 hoolock gibbon families, comprising approximately 48 primates, are currently thriving in the forest. More hoolock gibbon families have been identified in the adjacent Kalachara and Chautali forests.

"My latest survey found 48 primates from 13 gibbon families in the Lawachara forest.

Still, there is room for more gibbons to thrive in Lawachara. Proper habitat management initiatives are urgent for gibbons in this semi-evergreen habitat," said Sabit Hasan, a researcher.

Although the population density of gibbons in Lawachara is higher than in other forests, their habitat is still facing anthropogenic pressure from habitat destruction, he added.

"Hoolock gibbons closely resemble monkeys but are distinguished by their tailless bodies, long limbs, and striking

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: SABIT HASAN

Man dies two weeks after being shot in clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man died while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Chattogram yesterday. He had been shot during a clash between Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal members over hanging an Eid banner in Chattogram city's GEC area on March 21.

Jihadur Rahman Jihad died at the ICU of Metropolitan Hospital at 7:00am, said Khulshi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Aftab Hossain.

"Police conducted the inquest report and sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for autopsy," said the OC.

Police said the clash on March 21 erupted between supporters of Shah Alam, joint convener of Chattogram City unit BNP, and supporters of Mir Helal, BNP's central assistant organising secretary, in the Debar Par area of Kushum Bag.

During the clash, Jihad sustained two bullet wounds.

Police have arrested three people in connection with the incident so far, and a case has been filed.

Youth stabbed to death in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A teenage boy was stabbed to death allegedly over prior feud in Dakshin Raghavpur Colony area of Pabna Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased Md Arafat, 18, son of Md Omor Ali of the area, had a longstanding enmity with a local group of youths.

Over the rivalry, a group of youths attacked and stabbed Arafat on Wednesday night, leaving him critically injured, said Md Abdus Salam, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station.

He was taken to Pabna General Hospital where doctors declared him dead. The body has been kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy, the OC also said.

"Police are trying to arrest the culprits while filing of a case in this connection is underway," he added.

Meanwhile, agitated locals later vandalised the house of one Shahid Member in the area.

Illegal stone extraction ravages Patgram rivers

Defying ban, syndicates continue the illegal practice in Lalmonirhat

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Ignoring a government ban, organised groups are allegedly extracting stones from the Dharla, Saniajan, and Singimari rivers, causing severe environmental damage in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila.

Despite drives by the local administration to curb the illegal activity, syndicates remain active in at least 30 villages, alleged locals.

Extractors are lifting stones along with large amounts of sand, which they pile up to obstruct the rivers' channels. In addition to the river areas, unscrupulous businesspeople have expanded their operations into nearby arable lands.

The local administration has expressed concern that a significant portion of Patgram upazila is at risk of a major landslide, as mechanical extractors, including dredgers, are lifting stones from the rivers and adjacent areas at depths of over 100 metres, creating hollow spaces underground.



"The district and upazila administrations conduct regular drives against them, but somehow they continue their activities with political backing," said UNO Jilur Rahman of Patgram.

Citing an example, he said although 50 stone-extracting dredgers were destroyed during several drives last month, some



unscrupulous people continued operations at night.

Lalmonirhat Water Development Board Executive Engineer Shunil Kumar said stone extraction should not be carried out without assessing the soil structure. "The three rivers in Patgram are nearly dead due to illegal stone extraction," he added.

Patgram Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ashrafuzzaman Sarker said police had lodged four cases against illegal extractors in the past month.

"Illegal stone extraction from the rivers is the main problem in Patgram. Dodging strict vigilance, syndicate members continue extracting stones at night," he said.

Locals alleged that whichever political party comes to power, its members take control of stone extraction from the rivers.

The syndicates, they claimed, always manage to gain the support of ruling party figures to continue their illegal business.

Without political backing, no one would dare to extract stones, they said. Fearing the influence and ruthlessness of the extractors, locals avoid protesting and instead demand strict action to stop the illegal activity immediately.

Asked why the illegal practice could not be stopped, Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner and District River Protection Committee President H M Raqib Hayder said most individuals involved in illegal stone extraction had direct or indirect political affiliations.

"They are accustomed to making huge sums through illegal extraction. We have decided to take stern action to protect the environment and the rivers," he said.

CTG DOUBLE MURDER

Two including shooter arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested two individuals, including the shooter seen firing a gun in CCTV footage, in connection with Sunday night's double murder in Bakalia, Chattogram.

The arrestees, Md Belal and Manik, were held from Bahaddarhat in the city and from Fatikchhari upazila respectively, said police.

"Belal, wearing a cream-coloured T-shirt, was seen firing at the private car. We have identified several others involved and are working to arrest them," said Mozammel Haque, inspector (investigation) of Bakalia Police Station.

Police will seek a 10-day remand for them, he added.

Ittehar Uddin, officer-in-charge of the police station, said efforts are underway to recover the firearms used in the attack.

According to a police officer, Manik acted as a middleman, linking contract killers from Fatikchhari with another group. Investigators said a group of five to six professional hitmen, along with others, executed the attack.

Thirteen criminals on six motorbikes carried out the targeted killing, but their intended target, Sarwar Hossain Babla – a known criminal from the Bayezid Bostami area – managed to escape. The shooting was part of a battle for supremacy in Bayezid Bostami and surrounding areas and an act of revenge for the arrest of another top criminal, Sazzad Hossain, alias Choto Sazzad.

Investigators believe the attack was orchestrated by Sazzad Ali Khan, alias Shibir Sazzad, another top criminal from Bayezid Bostami who is currently abroad.

In the early hours of Sunday, just before Eid-ul-Fitr, two men were shot dead by men on motorbikes chasing a private car along Bakalia Access Road. The driver, Bakhtiar Hossain Manik, 28, and Abdullah Al Rifat were killed in the attack.

Police said the shootout spanned nearly three kilometres.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

Outrage as BCC imposes entry fee at children's park

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Barishal City Corporation (BCC) has introduced a Tk 10 entry fee for Green City Park, a popular children's park in the city, sparking widespread dissatisfaction among residents.

The sudden imposition of the ticket system ahead of Eid has drawn sharp criticism, though BCC authorities claim the revenue will be used for maintenance and development.

According to BCC sources, Barishal has seven children's parks: Swadhinata Park at Amtala Mor, Green City Park in Bell's Park, Planet World Children's Park adjacent to Bell's Park, Shaheed Shukur Gofur Park in Amanatganj, Shaheed Sukanto Babu Children's Park near the TV Clinic, and Shaheed Kanchan Udayan on Kalibari Road. Another recently constructed park, Muktiyoddha Shahanara Parvin Park on CNB Road, was demolished on August 5 following public outrage.

Among these, only Planet World Children's Park has been leased out, while the others remained free for children. However, from Eid day, BCC introduced an entry fee at Green City Park, located near Bell's Park.

Arif Kazi, a resident of Bangla Bazar, said, "I came here with my child, and for the first time, I had to buy a ticket. If BCC implements this system across all parks, it will severely impact underprivileged children. We demand the immediate withdrawal of this decision."

Pankaj Roy Chowdhury, president of Khelaghor's Barishal district committee, said, "Providing entertainment for children is the city's responsibility, not a commercial venture. We hope this ticket system will be revoked."

Gazi Zahid Hossain, convener of Sachton Nagorik Committee, echoed him.

Nurul Islam, an inspector from BCC's haat and bazar division, said the ticket system was enforced from March 31 (Eid day). "Two public toilets have been built, and the rides have been repaired. The funds generated from ticket sales will be used for ongoing maintenance and cleanliness," he said, adding that 1,500 tickets were sold on Eid day alone.

1 dead, 2 missing as boat capsizes in Jamuna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A boat carrying around 40 farmers capsized in the Jamuna river in Jamalpur's Islampur upazila yesterday morning, leaving one person dead and two others missing. The deceased is Billal Mondal, 40, of Kulkandi Madhyapara in the upazila.

The incident took place around 11:00am at the Kulkandi ferry ghat, said Majharul Islam, station officer of Islampur Fire Station.

"The farmers were on their way to Charkulkandi to work in fields. The boat sank midway while crossing the river from Kulkandi Zero Point ferry ghat. While most of them managed to swim ashore, three went missing," Majharul said.

A diver team of the fire service started a rescue operation around 11:30am and recovered Billal's body. Search for the other two missing farmers is ongoing.



Artists performing at an event in Rangamati Cultural Institute. In anticipation of the Biju-Sangrai-Boishu-Bishu-Bihu festival, a key cultural celebration for the indigenous communities of the hill tracts, the seven-day Biju festival kicked off yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tariff issue

FROM PAGE 1

"The National Board of Revenue is identifying options to rationalise tariffs expeditiously, which is necessary to address the matter," he wrote on a Facebook post this morning.

Shafiqul said the United States is a close friend of Bangladesh and its largest single-country export destination.

The interim government has been working with the US since the Trump Administration took over to enhance trade and investment cooperation between the two countries, he said.

"Our ongoing work with the US government is expected to help address the tariff issue," the press secretary said.

The United States has recently announced a 37 percent tariff on goods imported from Bangladesh as part of US President Donald Trump's new "reciprocal tariff" policy.

Competitors

FROM PAGE 1

of top garment exporter Ha-Meem Group, which mainly ships to the US. India's tariff would be 26 percent and Pakistan's 29 percent. Indonesia, another competitor for Bangladesh, will be subjected to a 32 percent tariff, while Turkey will face the base rate of 10 percent.

"It is too early to say what the real impact would be," Azad said, adding that both India and Pakistan are enjoying cash incentive facilities from their governments, which will make them more competitive in the American market.

Bangladesh, however, will enjoy some advantages in its trade with the US, although the effective tariff rate is more than 52 percent if the current 15.62 percent tariff is factored in, said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"But this move from the Trump administration will make clothes pricier and may reduce the overall demand for clothes," he said.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development, echoed the same.

"Obviously, there will be some negative impacts on Bangladesh. But China's market share will definitely erode, and this is a silver lining for us," he added.

Bangladesh may get more benefit here because of the lower production cost and prices.

Bangladeshi garment items' price in the international market is so low that the retailers and brands can even offset the higher tariffs.

The production cost in India is higher than that of Bangladesh because of shortage of skilled workforce and a national minimum wage.

Pakistan is strong in the home textile and denim segment but not as strong as Bangladesh in woven and knitwear exports. Also, Pakistan's cost of production is higher than that of Bangladesh.

Small exporter Sri Lanka faces higher tariffs than Bangladesh, at 44 percent, and Cambodia, 49 percent.

Most all economists and exporters urged urgent negotiations with the Trump administration for a reduction of duty on garment items, at least for those made from cotton imported from the US.

Anwar Hossain, the administrator at the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and vice-chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau, said he has already collected data as he is scheduled to sit in a meeting on Sunday to discuss the possible way out of the huge tariff burden.

There are three pillars based on which the trade negotiations can proceed with the Trump administration: duty, currency devaluation and non-tariff barriers.

The duty issue is negotiable, as Trump has already said that any country can discuss it. Bangladesh is not involved in currency devaluation as the US dollar is almost market-oriented and the non-tariff barriers are too low in US Bangladesh trade.

One non-tariff barrier was double fumigation of US cotton and it was removed by Bangladesh two years ago.

Bangladesh is one of the major importers of cotton from the US and this could be a major point of negotiation to convince the US to reduce the tariff rate.

In 2024, the US's total goods trade with Bangladesh amounted to \$10.6 billion, with Bangladesh importing goods worth \$2.2 billion, according to data from the United States Trade Representative, the chief trade negotiation body of the US government.

Bhutan building

FROM PAGE 12

In keeping with its emphasis on prosperity, Bhutan is developing a sustainable wellness hub in the country's south, near the border with India's Sikkim region.

Gelephu Mindfulness City is a visionary pathway to creating new opportunities in connectivity, education, and green investments for its citizens, all while boosting Bhutan's GNH.

Death toll hits 3,000

FROM PAGE 12

Naypyitaw, she added. People were camping outdoors in temperatures of 38°C (100°F) because they were too scared to go home, and many hospitals were also setting up temporary facilities there. Vuolo told Reuters from Naypyitaw.

Skin disease, malaria and dengue were among the diseases that could result from prolonged crises, such as in Myanmar, she said.

But conditions could get even tougher for the huge relief effort, after weather officials warned that unseasonal rain from Sunday to April 11 could threaten the areas hardest-hit by the quake.

"I've heard that in the next day or two there are rains (expected)," Titon Mitra, the Myanmar representative of the United Nations Development Programme told Reuters by telephone, during a visit to Sagaing.

"If that hits, we've got people, lots of people now, in temporary shelters, makeshift camps out on the streets, and that's going to be a real problem," he said, also flagging the UN's concerns about an outbreak of waterborne disease.

Despite the devastation, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing will leave his disaster-stricken country on Thursday for a rare trip to a regional summit in Bangkok, state television said.

It is an uncommon foreign visit for a general regarded as a



People line up for food aid being distributed in Sagaing yesterday, following the March 28 earthquake. PHOTO: AFP

pariah by many countries and the subject of Western sanctions and an International Criminal Court investigation.

The weather extremes will add to the challenges faced by aid and rescue groups, which have called for access to all affected areas despite the strife of civil war.

The military has struggled to run Myanmar since its return to power in a 2021 coup that unseated the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

The generals have been

internationally isolated since the takeover and Myanmar's economy and basic services, including healthcare, have been reduced to tatters amid the strife.

On Wednesday state-run MRTV said a unilateral government ceasefire would take immediate effect for 20 days, to support relief efforts after the quake, but warned authorities would "respond accordingly" if rebels launched attacks.

The move came after a major rebel alliance declared a ceasefire on

Tuesday to assist the humanitarian effort.

Nearly a week after the quake, searchers in neighbouring Thailand hunting for survivors combed a mountain of debris left after a skyscraper in the capital, Bangkok, collapsed while under construction.

Rescuers are using mechanical diggers and bulldozers to break up 100 tons of concrete to locate any still alive after the disaster that killed 15 people, with 72 still missing.

Thailand's nationwide toll stands at 22.

Palestinians flee Rafah again

FROM PAGE 12

troops were taking an area he called the "Morag Axis", a reference to an abandoned former Israeli settlement once located between Rafah on Gaza's southern edge and the adjacent main southern city Khan Younis.

Gazans who had returned to homes in the ruins during the ceasefire have now been ordered to flee communities on the northern and southern edges of the strip.

They fear that Israel's intention is to depopulate those areas indefinitely, leaving many hundreds of thousands of people permanently homeless in one of the poorest and most crowded territories on earth.

The security zone includes some of Gaza's last agricultural land and critical water infrastructure.

Since the first phase of the ceasefire expired at the start of March with no agreement to prolong it, Israel has imposed a total blockade on all goods reaching Gaza's 2.3 million residents, recreating what international organisations describe as a humanitarian catastrophe after weeks of relative calm.

Israel's stated goal since the start of the war has been the destruction of the Hamas group which ran Gaza for nearly two decades.

But with no effort made to establish an alternative administration,

Hamas-led police returned to the streets during the ceasefire. Fighters still hold 59 dead and living hostages which Israel says must be handed over to extend the truce; Hamas says it will free them only under a deal that ends the war.

Israeli leaders say they have been encouraged by signs of protest in Gaza against Hamas, with hundreds of people demonstrating in north Gaza's Beit Lahiya on Wednesday opposing the war and demanding Hamas quit power. Hamas calls the protesters collaborators and says Israel is behind them.

Israel's military campaign has so far killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, Gaza health authorities say.

Rafah residents said most of the local population had followed Israel's order to leave, as Israeli strikes toppled buildings there. But a strike on the main road between Khan Younis and Rafah stopped most movement between the two cities.

Movement of people and traffic along the western coastal road near Morag was also limited by bombardment, said residents.

"Others stayed because they don't know where to go, or got fed up of being displaced several times. We are afraid they might be killed or at best detained," said Basem, a resident of Rafah who declined to give a second name.

Greed will destroy us

FROM PAGE 12

businesses should not be greed-driven and that is the first condition of the new, future civilisation.

"Greed will destroy us ... Our country is moving forward. Our GDP is growing and all that ... growth rate is so high. So what? This gets concentrated in a few hands. They become richer and richer, and we call it development. We call it growth; we call it a fantastic economy," said the chief adviser, adding that this is how the seeds of self-destruction are planted.

He said this is one reason why civilisation cannot be sustained, and this is also destroying the planet.

Prof Yunus, who established the Grameen Bank in 1983, told youth to challenge the system to change the world.

"You cannot create the [new]

world with the same system. If you want to change the world, you have to change the system. There's no other option for you. If you go by the same road, you'll always get to the same destination. If you want to go to a new destination, you have to build a new road," he said.

The chief adviser said human beings are not born to work under anybody else, but they were born to be entrepreneurs.

Terming today's youth "the most powerful generation in human history," Yunus urged them to do something for themselves other than "taking orders from somebody else".

Highlighting the importance of access to credit, Yunus said, "You cannot achieve all the rights unless you establish the right to credit."

How are Trump tariffs calculated?

FROM PAGE 1

country's new tariff rate appeared to have been derived by taking America's trade deficit with that nation and dividing it by the US imports from that country. Then, the percentage number was cut in half.

For Bangladesh, this meant dividing the US trade deficit of \$6.2 billion by the total purchases from Bangladesh (\$8.4 billion). That comes to about 74 percent. The

calculated figure was then halved to 37 percent, the "discounted reciprocal tariff".

Trump previously said each nation's tariff rate would be "the combined rate of all their tariffs, non-monetary barriers and other forms of cheating".

Those non-monetary barriers include a host of hard-to-quantify laws and other policies that Trump sees as the primary reason that

"The moment you have the right to credit, other rights will be established by themselves by people themselves. You don't have to bring it from outside," he added.

Prof Yunus urged the young generation to build themselves as "three zero persons" to protect the planet from destruction.

"If we want to provide service, we will have to go to a new civilisation of three zeros - zero carbon emission, zero waste and zero wealth concentration," he said.

He said the world is approaching a self-destructive civilisation as carbon emission, waste generation, and wealth concentration are plaguing the old economic models.

Stressing that life is about preservation and protection, he emphasised preserving nature to sustain society.

Prof Yunus said once five persons get together, they can create a three-zero club and commit that they will not personally contribute to carbon emission, waste generation and wealth concentration.

"You cannot change the world in a day...if you want to change, start from your village," the chief adviser said.

The BIMSTEC Young Gen Forum was attended by young business leaders who exchanged ideas and explored possibilities in business areas.

The forum was organised as part of the sixth BIMSTEC Summit and related meetings between April 2 and 4.

BIMSTEC consists of seven member countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

that the trade deficit that the US has with any given country is the sum of all the unfair trade practices and "cheating" that country has done.

"The legitimacy of this tariff - whether reciprocal or punitive - depends on the accuracy of the US Trade Representative's calculations. This method's arbitrariness is difficult to comprehend," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay and the Thai Prime Minister.

The theme of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit, which is being held three years after the 5th Summit in Sri Lanka is "Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC".

According to foreign policy analysts and economists, BIMSTEC has not achieved much in its journey of 27 years.

The combined economic size of BIMSTEC members stands at around \$4.7 trillion, highlighting the bloc's vast potential for boosting intra-regional trade, but its intra-regional trade accounts for just 7 percent of its total trade, which is 25 percent for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

Prof Mustafizur Rahman said the framework agreement of BIMSTEC was signed in 2004, but the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) could not be signed yet. The member countries failed to reach consensus on crucial trade issues, specifically regarding rules of origin and trade in goods and services.

Md Sufiur Rahman, senior research fellow, South Asian

Brace for severe

FROM PAGE 12

HEATWAVES, CYCLONE LIKELY In its monthly weather outlook for April, BMD said two to four mild to moderate heatwaves and one to two severe ones are likely to occur over the country this month.

Besides, one to two low pressure systems are likely to form over the Bay of Bengal and one of them may intensify into a depression or cyclone, according to the outlook released last week.

On the other hand, there are possibilities of light to moderate thunderstorms with hail over a 5- to 7-day period, and severe thunderstorms with hail at places over the country over a 1- to 3-day period.

Rainfall during the month is likely to be below normal over the country, while day and night temperatures are likely to be above normal.

The water flow of the main rivers may be normal this month.

However, the water levels of the rivers in the northeast may increase rapidly due to moderate to heavy rainfall in the region and adjacent catchment areas in the second half of this month.

Besides, the average daily evaporation may be 3.5-5.5mm, and the average daily sunshine may be between 6.5 and 8.5 hours this month.

Tulip slams ACC

FROM PAGE 2

also invited the authorities to submit any legitimate questions.

"The deadline to respond has expired, and the Bangladesh authorities have not replied," her post reads. "Instead, they continue to smear me with false and vexatious claims in the media."

She said she has "provided detailed rebuttals to all the allegations made through the media, acting in good faith despite the lack of return courtesy. Their silence speaks volumes."

Tulip criticised the "so-called Anti-Corruption Commission in Dhaka" for knowing how to contact her but choosing not to.

"Here in the UK, we have due process, the rule of law, and a tradition of fair play. I would happily respond to any legitimate questions, but I will not be drawn into dirty politics, nor will I allow their witch hunt to undermine my work as a British citizen and proud member of the UK Parliament," she said.

Later on Wednesday, in her first public comments since leaving government, Tulip told Sky News that she is still waiting to hear from Bangladeshi authorities.

Asked whether she regretted her apparent links to the Awami League, Tulip responded, "Why don't you look at my legal letter and see if I have any questions to answer?"

Last month, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, told Sky News that Tulip had "wealth left behind" in the country and "should be made responsible."

The allegations against Tulip focus on her connections to Hasina, who served as Bangladesh's prime minister for 20 years before fleeing in August 2023 amid deadly protests.

Tulip lived in several London properties linked to the Awami League, which her aunt still leads.

She referred herself to UK Prime Minister's standards adviser Sir Laurie Magnus, who found "no evidence of improprieties" but said she should have been more mindful of reputational risks.

Tulip later resigned, calling her role "a distraction" but maintaining that she had done nothing wrong.

55-yr-old man

FROM PAGE 12

On Wednesday, police arrested the accused after the victim's mother filed a case with the Khoksha Police Station.

Hossain Imam, the resident medical officer of the hospital, said the girl was out of danger but is traumatised by the incident.

In Kishoreganj, two teenagers have been sued for raping a six-year-old boy on the night of Eid in Bhairab.

The victim's family filed a case with Bhairab Police Station on Wednesday afternoon, alleging that the child was raped with his hands, feet, eyes and mouth tied up there.

Police arrested one of the teenagers yesterday morning.

The child's father said that he went to the house of the two accused, aged around 15 each, and sought justice from the family members, but they threatened him instead.

Some are proposing a settlement through arbitration, he said.

Bhairab Police Station OC Khandaker Fuad Ruhani said a primary investigation found the truth of the complaint.

In Noakhali, a 16-year-old teenager was arrested in a case filed over the rape of a six-year-old girl in Dhanshalik union of Kabirhat upazila.

The girl's mother filed the case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on Wednesday, said Kabirhat Police Station OC Shaheen Miya yesterday.

According to the case statement, on March 23, the accused took the girl to an abandoned tin-shed room and raped her while her parents were busy at home.

Afterwards, the child fell sick, and the mother filed the case.



Palestinians make their way with belongings as they flee their homes after the Israeli army issued evacuation orders in the Shujaiya neighborhood of Gaza City yesterday. Inset, a family leaves the Shujaiya neighborhood. Story on page 12.
PHOTO: REUTERS

'Catastrophe' if Iran is attacked

Says Russia, terms US threats against its ally 'unacceptable'

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday said that threats of military strikes against its ally Iran were unacceptable and warned that attacking the Islamic Republic could lead to potentially catastrophic results if nuclear installations were bombed.

US President Donald Trump threatened Iran on Sunday with bombing and secondary tariffs if Tehran did not come to an agreement with Washington over its nuclear program, and the United States has moved additional warplanes into the region. Asked about Iran's nuclear programme and the dangers in the current situation, Russia's foreign ministry said that Moscow was committed to finding solutions to Iran's nuclear programme which respected Tehran's rights to peaceful nuclear energy.

"The use of military force by Iran's opponents in the context of the settlement is illegal and unacceptable," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the ministry, told reporters.

"Threats from outside to bomb Iran's nuclear infrastructure facilities will inevitably lead to an irreversible global catastrophe. These threats are simply unacceptable."

Western powers accuse Iran of having a clandestine agenda to develop nuclear weapons capability by enriching uranium to a high level of fissile purity, above what they say is justifiable for a civilian atomic energy program. Tehran says its nuclear program is wholly for civilian energy purposes.

Russia and Iran signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership agreement" in January, though there is no mutual defence clause. Under the agreement, if one party is attacked, the other will not help the aggressor.

Israel steps up strikes on key Syria structures

Says Ankara trying to turn Syria into a Turkish protectorate

REUTERS, Damascus/Jerusalem

Israel stepped up airstrikes on Syria overnight, declaring the attacks a warning to the new Islamist rulers in Damascus as it accused their Turkish allies of trying to turn the country into a Turkish protectorate.

The strikes, targeting air bases, a site near Damascus and the southwest, put renewed focus on Israeli concerns about the Islamists who deposed Bashar al-Assad in December, with Israeli officials viewing them as a rising threat at their border.

The Israeli army, which seized ground in the southwest after Assad was toppled, said its forces killed several militants who opened fire on Israeli troops operating in that area overnight. Syria's state news agency SANA said that Israeli shelling had killed nine people in the area.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the airstrikes late on Wednesday evening were "a clear message and a warning for the future - we will not allow the security of the State of Israel to be harmed".

Katz said in a statement that

Israel's armed forces would remain in buffer zones within Syria and act against threats to its security, warning Syria's government it would pay a heavy price if it allowed forces hostile to Israel to enter.

Reflecting Israeli concerns about Turkish influence in the new Syria, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar accused Ankara of playing a

aggression".

Israel bombed Syria frequently when the country was governed by Assad, targeting the foothold established by his ally Iran during the civil war.

The strikes late on Wednesday night were some of the most intensive Israeli attacks in Syria since Assad was toppled.

The Syrian foreign ministry said Israel struck five separate areas within a 30-minute window, resulting in the near-complete destruction of the Hama air base and wounding dozens of civilians and soldiers.

The Israeli military said it had struck remaining military capabilities at air bases in Hama and Homs provinces, in addition to remaining military infrastructure in the Damascus area, where Syrian media and officials said the vicinity of a scientific research facility was hit.

In Hama, a Syrian military source told Reuters a dozen strikes had demolished the runways, tower, arms depots and hangars at the military airport. "Israel has completely destroyed Hama air base to ensure it is not used," the source said.



"negative role" there, in Lebanon and other regions.

"They are doing their utmost to have Syria as a Turkish protectorate. It's clear that is their intention," he told a press conference in Paris.

The Syrian foreign ministry said the Israeli strikes were an unjustified escalation aimed at destabilising the country, calling on the international community to put pressure on Israel to "stop its

AI could impact 40% of jobs: UN

AFP, Geneva

The global artificial intelligence market is projected to reach \$4.8 trillion - roughly the size of Germany's economy - by 2033, the UN said yesterday, warning nearly half of jobs worldwide could be affected.

While AI is transforming economies and creating vast opportunities, the technology also risks deepening existing inequalities, the UN trade and development agency UNCTAD warned in a report.

In particular, the report cautioned that "AI could impact 40 percent of jobs worldwide, offering productivity gains but also raising concerns about automation and job displacement".

While previous waves of technology mainly impacted blue-collar jobs, UNCTAD highlighted that knowledge-intensive sectors would be left most exposed by AI.

This means advanced economies will surely be hardest-hit, it said, adding though that these economies were better positioned to harness the benefits of AI than developing economies.

"The benefits of AI-driven automation often favour capital over labour, which could widen inequality and reduce the competitive advantage of low cost labour in developing economies," UNCTAD said.

In a statement, the agency chief Rebeca Grynspan underlined the importance of ensuring people are at the centre of AI development, urging stronger international cooperation to "shift the focus from technology to people, enabling countries to co-create a global artificial intelligence framework".

Major child sexual abuse image platform busted

AFP, Berlin



German investigators said Wednesday that they had dismantled a major platform for the distribution of child sex abuse images with 1.8 million users worldwide in an international operation coordinated by Europol.

The move to shut down the "KidFlix" streaming service was "one of the biggest blows against child pornography in recent years, if not ever", said Guido Limmer, deputy head of the Bavarian criminal police.

The probe was led by German police and supported by authorities in 38 countries and was coordinated by Europol.

In all, "KidFlix" is said to have hosted more than 91,000 videos with images of child sex abuse, totalling around 6,288 hours of film, according to Bavarian police.

Authorities were able to identify almost 1,400 individual users of the platform, which was hosted on the so-called darknet.

Police in March carried out searches at locations in 31 countries in the "largest operation ever" organised by Europol, according to Limmer.

A joint raid by German and Dutch authorities resulted in the seizure of a hard drive with around 72,000 videos of child sex abuse.

In Germany, police carried out raids at 96 locations, targeting 103 individual suspects, the Bavarian criminal police said.

Police arrested a 36-year-old man in the eastern German city of Chemnitz in January 2024 who had searched for abuse images on "KidFlix". The man had also "offered his young son for games", Limmer said. The child had been handed over to child protection services.

Investigators had also been able to identify a "serial" abuser in the United States, Limmer said.

Rubio reaffirms US commitment to Nato

Says Europe must spend more on defence

REUTERS, Brussels

The United States is as committed to Nato as ever but demands that European allies spend substantially more on defence, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday, while adding that the US would give allies some time to do that.

Rubio spoke as he met fellow Nato foreign ministers gathered in Brussels, with Europeans hoping he would dispel doubts about the US stance even with tensions rising over President Donald Trump's steep new trade tariffs.

The Trump administration's words and actions have raised questions about the future of Nato, the transatlantic alliance that has been the bedrock of European security for the past 75 years.

"The United States is in Nato ... The United States is as active in Nato as it has ever been," Rubio told reporters, dismissing doubts about that commitment as "hysteria".

Rubio added that Trump was "not against Nato. He is against a Nato that does not have the capabilities that it needs to fulfil the obligations that the treaty imposes

upon each and every member state."

Trump has said the military alliance should spend 5% of gross domestic product on defence - a huge increase from the current 2% goal and a level that no Nato country, including the United States, currently reaches.

Washington has also bluntly told European countries that it can no longer be primarily focused on the continent's security.

European allies have been anxiously seeking details on the timeframe and extent to which the US aims to reduce its engagement in Nato for weeks, in order to coordinate the process of a European defence ramp-up to avoid security gaps in Europe.

In Brussels, Rubio brought some element of response on that.

"We do want to leave here with an understanding that we are on a pathway, a realistic pathway, to every single one of the members committing and fulfilling a promise to reach up to 5% of spending," he said, adding that this included the United States.

"No one expects that you're going to be able to do this in one year or two. But the pathway has to be real."



Survivor Tin Maung Htwe is comforted by his sister as he receives treatment yesterday, a day after his rescue from the ruins of a hotel in Sagaing following the March 28 earthquake. Entombed under his hotel bed for five days in the debris, two things enabled teacher Tin Maung Htwe to survive Myanmar's devastating earthquake: old school lessons and his own urine.
PHOTO: AFP

Take steps to tackle new US tariffs

Bangladesh must evolve with the changing global trade landscape

We are deeply concerned by US President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariff policy announced on April 2 against all trading partners of the US, including Bangladesh. The policy comes as a shock to the world and signals a shift from the decades-long established global trading pattern. Under the new policy, a base 10 percent tariff will be applied to all foreign goods in the US, while goods from many countries will face higher rates depending on their trade imbalances with the US.

Ironically, it was the US that was the prime mover of the idea of open and free trade by reducing trade barriers through the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) treaty, which later evolved into the World Trade Organization (WTO) with 166 member nations. But Trump's latest move is a complete reversal of the US's previous position and strikes at the core of globalisation as opposed to protectionism. The policy adds an extra layer of uncertainty to the already complex global trade economy, which has been hit by geopolitical tensions and lingering inflation.

As the world prepares for this new economic reality, Bangladesh must undertake measures to protect its interests. The 37 percent reciprocal tariff the US imposed on Bangladeshi exports will undoubtedly strike the RMG sector hard, as the US has historically been the top destination for our garment products. Last year, \$8.4 billion worth of goods were exported to the US and only \$2.2 billion were imported from the country, indicating a trade balance in our favour. While some of our main competitors, including China and Vietnam, face higher tariffs than we do, others, such as India, face lower tariffs, which may give them a built-in advantage. This raises concerns about losing the US RMG market to Indian competitors.

However, the government has already made a positive move by initiating a review of tariffs on goods imported from the US. A thorough re-examination of the trade relationship with the US and a re-assessment of the tariff structure, including the removal of tariffs on a select number of US goods, will hopefully send a positive signal to the Trump administration. Experts suggested offering lower tariff offers through the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa) to open the doors for further negotiation. However, Bangladesh needs to gear up its negotiation skills and strategies and strengthen ties with key partners through bilateral and multilateral agreements to face the increasingly unpredictable global trade regime. In the long run, Bangladesh needs to diversify both its markets and products and increase efficiency and productivity to retain its competitiveness in the global market. Trump's tariff policy is undoubtedly a shock, but we must not shy away from employing creative and innovative strategies in handling this matter.

Why do Eid festivities always turn tragic?

The usual trend of holiday road crashes continues

The joy and festivities of Eid-ul-Fitr this week invariably turned tragic as road crashes claimed a number of lives across the country. According to a report in this daily, between March 31 and April 2, at least 41 people were killed in road crashes. It is suspected that the actual death toll could be higher. This is a sad state of affairs that has unfortunately become a common occurrence in Bangladesh. But it cannot be normalised, and the authorities have to find a way to make roads safer during Eid holidays.

While all preventable losses of life are devastating, some incidents leave a deeper mark due to their effects. Take, for example, the death of 26-year-old Roni Sikder, a constable under Gazipur Metropolitan Police who was on his way to his pregnant wife, who was scheduled for a surgery. An autorickshaw coming from the opposite side hit Roni's motorcycle, before he fell and died on the spot. He was buried in his family cemetery an hour after his son was born.

Perhaps the most tragic incident reported so far is the holiday trip to Cox's Bazar that turned catastrophic. Ten members of a family—who were travelling from Kushtia—died in a crash in the Jangalia Chunati area on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway when their microbus collided head-on with a bus. Among the survivors are a young girl who has lost both her parents. It is terrifying that this crash was one of three incidents that took place in the same spot within 48 hours, killing at least 15 people. Locals said the two-kilometre stretch on the highway is accident-prone due to the treacherous nature of the hilly and slippery road. In fact, at least 28 people have been killed in road crashes in this same spot since January this year. The authorities have taken some urgent measures to prevent further crashes, but what we want to know is why, when this road is already notorious for the high risk of road mishaps, preventive measures were not planned beforehand?

This situation cannot continue to persist. Unfortunately, looking at how road safety has been handled over the years, making the roads safe has not been a priority for any government in this country. We can only hope that, in the new reality of Bangladesh where reforms are being proposed to rebuild the country, road safety will finally get the attention it desperately needs. Only then will we be spared from unnecessary and preventable deaths on our roads, and Eid holidays can be what they're supposed to be: an occasion only for merriment and reunions.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Martin Luther King, Jr assassinated

On this day in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr, a leader of the American civil rights movement, who was in Memphis, Tennessee to support a strike by the city's sanitation workers, was assassinated by James Earl Ray.

The urgent need for a worker database



Dr Ishrat Zakia Sultana is assistant professor of sociology at North South University.

ISHRAT ZAKIA SULTANA

Do we know the number of garment workers in Bangladesh? Do we have statistics on their age and gender? Do we know how many of them die at the workplace because of work related accidents and how many die outside? How many hatcheries do we have, and how many workers sell their labour in the shrimp, poultry, and other hatcheries in Bangladesh? How many workers are there in the leather, shipbreaking, and other industries? How many of the youth work as delivery persons? Do we know the number of people engaged in app-based work contributing to the economy? Have we categorised the workers of formal and informal sectors? The list of questions can be longer. Regardless, the objective of raising them is to revisit our position, action, and attitude towards the workers who run the wheel of Bangladesh's economy.

In the last one and a half decades, "digital Bangladesh" was probably one of the most uttered terms that is now found useless because of the absence of a digital information storage and management system in most sectors just like the labour sector. Both the limitations of our legal framework and the absence of a database have jeopardised labour rights and protection.

Although we have a legal framework—the Labour Act, 2006—the execution of its clauses involves a complicated process discouraging workers to claim benefits at the court. Let us take the case of Minara, a garment industry worker who was killed in a road accident in Banani on March 10. According to the Act, one has to be in service for at least two years and die while at work to make their family eligible for compensation. Is it then Minara's fault that she was hit by a truck on the road? Are workers like Minara disposable? Aren't they



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

We must keep in mind that the united efforts of the informal sectors' workers are one of the key forces that keep the wheel of our economy running.

citizens of this country, too?

But the situation of the informal sector workers is even worse. Most of their work has not been even recognised by the Labour Act. Yet this is the work that adds value to the economy of the country. They are the drivers of personal and organisational vehicles as well as app based drivers, domestic workers, cleaners, gardeners, security guards, construction workers of personal properties, labourers in agriculture, fisheries and other sectors, tea workers, home deliverers, etc. Since we cannot deny the importance of their contribution to both formal and informal economic sectors, is it not a responsibility of the government to ensure their rights and protection?

Bangladesh has recently amended some of the policies regarding the rights of trade unions according to the recommendations of the International Labour Organization

(ILO). But can these changes touch those workers who are not even recognised by law? Bangladesh urgently needs to revisit its policies to make them more worker-friendly.

Research can provide us with data to develop long and short-term plans for the informal labour market and get a clearer picture of the volume of contribution of these workers to the

database is also helpful in tracking violations, wage theft, unsafe working conditions, discriminations, etc., enforcing laws, protecting workers, ensuring transparency and accountability at the workplace, empowering workers, and most importantly, formulating data driven policies.

A database can provide significant benefits for workers in the informal sector, who often lack job security, contracts, and legal protections. However, our labour ministry is yet to take any initiative on developing a database for the industries and for the labour force of the country. We do not know the number of people working as labourers in different categories, both within and outside Bangladesh. Addressing discrimination based on gender or disabilities is a distant goal.

Seeing garment industry workers on the street demanding their wages before Eid is a common sight in our country every year. And they are categorised as the formal sector's workers. What about informal sector workers? Have we thought of the consequences a food delivery boy has to face in case of an accident involving his bicycle? Or a private car driver who is the only breadwinner of a five-member family and has lost his job without any notice just because the car owner's son had an argument with him?

We take actions only when we are pressured by ILO and other influential organisations. We should ask whether the government is doing favour to the workers by granting their rights by the law or is it a duty of the government to ensure the rights and protection of the workers regardless of their status? We must keep in mind that the united efforts of the informal sectors' workers are one of the key forces to run the wheel of our economy. We all saw how remittance declined during the July revolution just because of the united efforts of our migrant workers.

If workers in a country are well-paid and secure, they spend more, boosting business profits, which leads to more job creation—a cycle of economic growth. Therefore, including the informal sector's workers in the Labour Act, 2006 and developing a database for them, which is actually essential for the government, is a duty of the government.

To combat poverty, we need to revamp social protection

Farah Kabir is country director at ActionAid Bangladesh.

Nazmul Ahsan is lead of Youth and Just Society at ActionAid Bangladesh.

FARAH KABIR and NAZMUL AHSAN

A Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) report published this year states that around 19.2 percent of the population is living below the poverty line. Two-third of the population in this category are likely to be under the age of 30. According to the BBS report, Narsingdi, Pirojpur, Kishoreganj, Chapainawabganj, Jhalakathi, and Panchagarh are the most poverty-stricken districts.

Stamping out poverty has been a core development agenda in Bangladesh, with programmatic interventions taken in the last five decades. However, poverty remains the biggest adversary despite government, international and local NGOs, and the private sector efforts. Besides, climate change and vulnerability, with gender, social, and power dimensions, have repeatedly negatively impacted the poor.

According to the 2024 Multidimensional Poverty Index by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 6.5 percent of the Bangladeshi population suffers from severe multidimensional poverty, and 18.2 percent of the population is vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The Covid pandemic pushed a significant number of the population below the poverty line. Many of them continue to struggle to return to the previous life standard they used to maintain. Three years later, they are facing high inflation and limited job opportunities, resulting in dire consequences, particularly for the low-income group. A 2024 study by the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID) highlighted

that over the past two years there has been a real income reduction due to ongoing inflationary pressure thereby pushing at least 7.8 million people into the poverty bracket, and around one crore people are at risk of slipping below the poverty line.

A 2022 study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) reveals that out-of-pocket expenditures for basic services have added an extra burden. Soaring healthcare expenses pushed 61 lakh people into the poverty bracket. Out-of-pocket health expenditure increased by 73 percent in 2021 compared to 56 percent in 1997. It is the second highest in South Asia after Afghanistan, which may be attributed to the pandemic years. Meanwhile, the out-of-pocket expenditure increased by 51 percent for secondary education and 25 percent for primary education, as per a study conducted by Education Watch in 2023. In addition, the Global Education Monitoring Report 2022 reveals that Bangladeshi families bear 71 percent of the total education expenses. Such increases in cost perpetuates the existing poverty cycle. Challenges such as corruption, inefficiency, and accessibility issues are impacting the poverty cycle repeatedly.

Social safety net projects run by the government may have mitigated the difficulties to some extent. Yet, these measures are far from actually removing the complex challenges faced by the poor. Moreover, the efficacy and efficiency of the various projects remain questionable. Recipients' complaints about the pilferage of resources and inadequacy on all levels

often make the projects ineffective.

Besides, many marginalised groups face multiple levels of exclusion in their public and private life. Therefore, the communities at the frontline, affected by the exclusion, are calling for a comprehensive social protection mechanism to challenge poverty. One suggestion has been to revamp

The efficiency of the social protection mechanism depends on the programme itself. In the present context, is it aligned with the national adaptation strategy? The climate crisis is not a matter of the future but a reality today; therefore, government schemes and interventions have to factor in climate risk. Global warming has impacted all aspects of the value chain in different production sectors, thus putting work/jobs at risk.

existing public service institutions to provide quality public services and design new ones for vulnerable groups. In addition, an extensive review of the existing programmes suggests adjustments should be a prerequisite. A recently published study (November 2024) by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) suggests operationalising universal basic income in Bangladesh to promote social equity, streamline government processes and advance social protection mechanisms among others.

How the social protection mechanism could be made efficient

remains a major question. In 2015, the government adopted the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), which encompasses strategies for environmental protection and climate change management, disaster management, children with special needs, elderly, and widows, etc. Now, it requires review and deep critical analysis with solutions.

The efficiency of the social protection mechanism depends on the programme itself. In the present context, is it aligned with the national adaptation strategy? The climate crisis is not a matter of the future but a reality today; therefore, government schemes and interventions have to factor in climate risk. Global warming has impacted all aspects of the value chain in different production sectors, thus putting work/jobs at risk. The informal sector mostly has unskilled and semi-skilled employees, which has created a level of vulnerability that calls for new and varied measures. Poor people cannot afford not to work; thus, in extreme heat and amid pollution, they continue working. This impacts their productivity and health, consequently increasing their expenses, including health-related ones.

Accountable governance practices and quality public service delivery mechanisms are the two most essential elements, along with progressive taxation policy for resource mobilisation to address the plight of the poor. These elements also help achieve the full potential of the social safety net meant to contribute to the most marginalised communities and enable the realisation of their basic rights by following the life-cycle approach. Quality education, health, agriculture, and other livelihood-related services may contribute to developing comprehensive and inclusive social protection mechanisms for the most marginalised communities and build their resilience to reduce vulnerabilities.

Dhaka's urban planning must balance growth and conservation



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SABILA BINTA SAIF SONDHI

As Dhaka's skyline rises, its agricultural lands and waterbodies are sinking under relentless urban sprawl. The capital, already one of the most densely populated in the world, is expanding in ways that threaten its own ecological and food security. To address this, the concept of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) presents a powerful opportunity. It can help balance development and conservation, ensuring that growth does not come at the cost of Dhaka's natural assets.

Dhaka, one of the world's fastest growing megacities, is facing an unprecedented crisis. Its rapid and often unplanned urbanisation has led to a stark decline in natural and agricultural landscapes. The Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) found that Dhaka lost nearly 50 percent of its waterbodies between 1980 and 2020. Besides, according to a newspaper article, 60 percent of wetlands in Dhaka city have been lost in the last 30 years of which 23 percent were lost between 2010 and 2019. Simultaneously, agricultural land around the city has shrunk by 11,070.8 ha during the years 1978-2018, impacting not only local food production but also the broader ecological balance.

The consequences of such environmental degradation are dire. The World Bank estimated that the majority of Dhaka's residents face waterlogging each monsoon, leading to annual economic losses worth Tk 1,39,000 crores. Wetlands, which historically mitigated flooding by absorbing excess rainwater, are increasingly being filled for construction, further exacerbating urban flooding.

Another reason behind this crisis is

decreasing flood flow zones. Flood-flow zones, crucial for maintaining Dhaka's ecological balance, are rapidly vanishing, leaving the city increasingly vulnerable to waterlogging, loss of groundwater recharge, and potential flooding. A study by the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) revealed the illegal filling up of Dhaka's wetlands in the last decade, contributing to a severe rise in surface runoff and drainage issues. Meanwhile, BIP found that 36 percent of the water bodies in Dhaka have been lost to earth filling. And if this trend continues, all of Dhaka's temporary wetlands will disappear by 2035, which is alarming. Without strategic intervention, these trends could lead to an even more severe urban and environmental crisis.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a market-driven urban planning tool that helps preserve critical areas while accommodating growth where it is needed. It works by designating "sending areas" (agricultural or ecologically sensitive zones) and "receiving areas" (zones earmarked for higher-density development). Landowners in the sending areas are compensated by selling their development rights to developers who can then build more intensively in the receiving areas. This is a business-based approach and creates a win-win scenario where conservation is economically incentivised.

International practices and experiences demonstrate TDR's potential to succeed in preserving agricultural or ecologically sensitive areas. In Mumbai, for instance, TDR facilitated the redevelopment of slums while conserving green spaces. The

programme generated a huge amount of transferable development rights, promoting both affordable housing and environmental conservation. The United States has over 283 TDR programmes, among which the majority is aimed at conserving farmland, forests, and water resources. China's Chongqing Land Quotas Trading programme has successfully balanced urban growth with farmland preservation. In the aforementioned cases,

York, Dhaka's informal settlements and complex land ownership patterns would require careful stakeholder engagement and targeted incentives. For Dhaka, TDR could prioritise areas like the Turag River Basin as "sending areas" while promoting higher density development along major transportation corridors. This would not only conserve wetlands but also support the government's transit-oriented development

general public.

The Detailed Area Plan 2022-2035 for Dhaka Metropolitan Region (DMR) has mentioned that TDR will be mainly applicable in preserving agricultural land, floodplain or sensitive areas in the DMR area. However, implementing TDR in Dhaka will not be without challenges. Corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and potential market resistance could undermine its effectiveness. Therefore, building institutional capacity and ensuring transparency should be top priorities. Learning from the shortcomings of other TDR programmes globally, Dhaka must develop clear criteria for designating sending and receiving areas and avoid speculative land transactions that could sideline conservation goals.

The benefits of implementing TDR go beyond environmental preservation. A well-designed TDR programme could stimulate the economy by promoting well-planned urban densification and reducing the economic losses associated with waterlogging and heat stress. According to research by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Dhaka's adaptation to climate risks could boost its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through improved infrastructure and resilience. ICCCAD estimated that the average annual loss due to climate change impacts in Bangladesh is one to two percent of GDP. Additionally, preserving agricultural land would contribute to food security. With Bangladesh already facing challenges in food imports due to global supply chain disruptions, maintaining local production capacity is critical. By protecting peri-urban agricultural zones, TDR can help stabilise food prices and reduce dependency on external markets as well.

The introduction of TDR into Dhaka's urban planning strategy could redefine how the city grows, offering a balanced path that values both development and conservation. As policymakers consider the future of Dhaka, they must prioritise innovative tools to build a city that is not only livable but also resilient.



To conserve wetlands in Dhaka, the Transfer of Development Rights programme can prioritise areas like the Turag basin as sending areas.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

clear policies, strong market demand, and government oversight were the key.

To implement an effective TDR programme, Dhaka must first identify sending and receiving areas. The learnings from the global practices could act as a framework for implementation. However, Dhaka's situation demands a tailored approach, adapting the existing models to local realities. For instance, unlike New

York, Dhaka's informal settlements and complex land ownership patterns would require careful stakeholder engagement and targeted incentives. For Dhaka, TDR could prioritise areas like the Turag River Basin as "sending areas" while promoting higher density development along major transportation corridors. This would not only conserve wetlands but also support the government's transit-oriented development

Tax education should be included in school curriculum

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MD MONIRUZZAMAN and SYED MAHIN

A country's economic development is dependent on its citizens' civic responsibility, which includes the submission of taxes. However, the long, complicated, and painstaking procedure of tax return submission often causes fear and confusion among many people when submitting tax returns. Bangladesh is no different. The complication of filing taxes and lack of full awareness about tax return submission process results in errors and non-compliance. To submit tax return, we often seek help from tax return preparers (TRPs) or lawyers. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) of Bangladesh publishes an updated manual on tax submission each year. However, few people can invest the sufficient time and effort to read and understand the often seemingly complicated tax manuals. The inclusion of tax-related lessons in the educational curriculum can help our citizens confront their fear of tax return submission and raise civic awareness.

Tax education should be a part of our financial literacy programme and included in the secondary school curriculum. Classes



VISUAL: STAR

9-10 are the perfect time to teach young minds since they have enough cognitive and mathematical ability to understand and calculate taxes. Moreover, equipped with this new knowledge, students can help their parents and other family members submit tax returns. Most importantly, those young minds will be better aware of their civic responsibility to the nation and will better contribute through taxation by themselves soon. Thus, introducing tax education in the curriculum will maximise the impact on the overall population.

Now, one may argue that tax education is not going to replace professional TRPs and lawyers, so what is the point of having it in the curriculum? The answer to that is, doing

so will ensure an informed population with substantial knowledge on tax submission. They will be much more aware of their tax returns than we are now. At least, people will be more aware of the loopholes that lawyers often use. The objective should be to create a more informed population, not to replace the professional tax lawyers.

Another issue that the naysayers may raise is that any high school graduate is capable enough to read and understand the tax manuals published by the NBR. So, what is the point of giving separate training on tax submission? As argued before, we barely get enough time and guidance in our work life to help navigate the complex system of tax submission that allow us to get the maximum

amount of facilities. Learning tax submission during the school years will give us the necessary training and confidence to help us file taxes later in life.

There are examples of tax submission process being taught in school in a number of countries. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the tax-collecting authority in the United States, provides resources for teachers to teach taxation customised for middle school, high school and community college students. The Australian Taxation Office provides resources that can be taught along with school curriculum or at home under the initiative "Tax, Super + You." Likewise, the UK government's His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) provides "Tax Facts," free resources for teachers and parents. HMRC has relevant teaching materials on tax education adjusted for different ages of young students. Jamaica initiated the "Schools Tax Education

Programme" (STEP); Kenya introduced the "Schools Outreach" programme. The Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (IRBM) organises tax education camp for secondary school children.

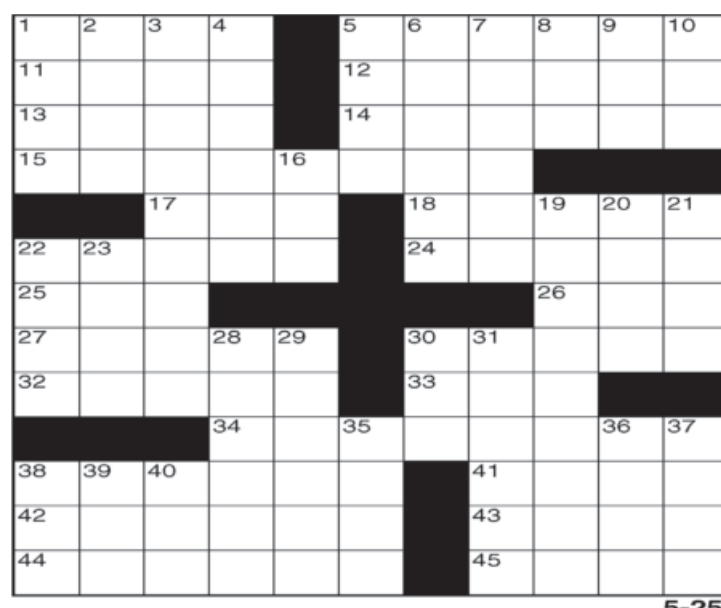
Like the above-mentioned countries, we can adopt such financial literacy programmes for school children in Bangladesh, where they can learn about taxation and look at various case studies where they can calculate taxes of different individuals with different types of financial conditions. In addition to learning tax submission theoretically, tax camps can give our students the life lessons needed as conscious tax-paying citizens. Thus, those future taxpayers will be more confident about their financial decisions. Young entrepreneurs, especially those who do business online, will be better able to navigate how they should conduct business to their benefit while improving their tax compliances.

Tax education in the secondary school system will create a culture of voluntary tax compliance and increased community services. Informed citizens will have greater trust in the state since they will be able to understand the seemingly opaque tax systems and will have less apprehension towards submitting tax returns. As income tax is one of the key pillars of domestic resource mobilisation, tax education will help the government implement more ambitious fiscal plans. Moreover, a learned tax-paying population will be more aware of the institutional quality of a country. Thus, tax education can maximise social benefit, ensuring sustainable economic development.

Tax education in the secondary school system will create a culture of voluntary tax compliance and increased community services. Informed citizens will have greater trust in the state since they will be able to understand the seemingly opaque tax systems and will have less apprehension towards submitting tax returns.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Anthropologist Margaret
 - 5 Singer Ronnie
 - 11 Car bar
 - 12 New York tribe
 - 13 Brazenness
 - 14 Off the path
 - 15 Copies
 - 17 Opening
 - 18 Diving positions
 - 22 Crow
 - 24 Spending binge
 - 25 Colony member
 - 26 Binary digit
 - 27 Feeds the pigs
 - 30 Accords
 - 32 Pancake topper
 - 33 Swearing-in vow
- DOWN**
- 1 Christmas travelers
 - 2 Final, for one
 - 3 Big reptile
 - 4 River areas
 - 5 Castle circler
 - 6 Detail maps
 - 7 Abates
 - 8 Polite address
 - 9 Oklahoma city
 - 10 Fork over
 - 16 Fitting
 - 19 Big reptile
 - 20 English county
 - 21 Espies
 - 22 Deep voice
 - 23 Just
 - 28 This is one
 - 29 Kitchen goofs
 - 30 Snap
 - 31 Cherished
 - 35 Mosquito or gnat
 - 36 Different
 - 37 Scorch
 - 38 Sleuth Spade
 - 39 "How was - know?"
 - 40 General who's a foe of Superman



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS





LAW VISION

Upcoming challenges of the ship recycling industry in Bangladesh

Amongst the existing ship recycling yards in Bangladesh, most are non-compliant, preventing them from recycling ships once the Hong Kong Convention takes effect. As a result, the industry's capacity to employ thousands will lessen significantly.

SHAIKH MD MUJAHID UL ISLAM

Bangladesh ratified the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships 2009 in June 2023, and it will enter into force in June 2025. Hence, it is crucial to tackle the challenges of effective implementation of this Convention.

Since its inception in the 1980s, the ship recycling industry in Bangladesh has contributed to the nation's economy by supplying scrap to rerolling mills and creating employment opportunities. Data indicates that this industry supplies 60% of the raw materials for the iron industry. The economic livelihood of millions is directly tied to this sector, providing a steady income for both regular and casual labourers. After the Hong Kong Convention comes into effect, except for at the certified Green Ship Breaking Yards, no ship can be dismantled elsewhere in Bangladesh. According to the Ship Breaking Association, there are five to seven classification society-certified Green Ship Recycling Yards, including PHP Ship Recycling Yard, SN Corporation, and KR Ship Recycling Yard. Furthermore, 15 other ship breaking yards are struggling to comply with the standard and are investing significant funds to make necessary improvements.

Amongst the existing ship recycling yards in Bangladesh, most are non-compliant, preventing them from recycling ships once the Hong Kong Convention takes effect. As a result, the industry's capacity to employ thousands will lessen significantly. Moreover, if scrap supply becomes limited, rerolling mills will ultimately cease production, jeopardising

job creation. Additionally, to maintain the steel supply, the government will need to import raw materials, which will deplete foreign currency reserves and affect Bangladesh's macroeconomic context.

Additionally, as a result, this will allow India and Pakistan to thrive in this business, as India, supported by its government, showcases more compliant green yards, shifting the international community's focus on ship dismantling to there. In Gujarat, India, there are numerous shipbreaking yards claiming to be green, attracting global attention towards ship recycling.

Another compliance issue regarding the Convention that requires a solution is the need for the establishment of a TSDF (Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility), which is essential for hazardous waste disposal. Although establishing a TSDF is a compliance requirement for the HKC 2009, there are insufficient efforts to complete it by June 2025. Currently, the initiative is only at the land acquisition stage, making prompt establishment unlikely. Consequently, this leads to ongoing environmental pollution from the industry, while the Green Ship Breaking Yards have established hazardous waste storage facilities at their own expense to comply with the HKC 2009. The issue of environmental pollution remains a significant concern for Bangladesh and requires urgent government action to establish a TSDF, a critical commitment in the HKC 2009 and a demonstration of government activism to promote this industry for the benefit of the environment and economy.

Furthermore, the ship recycling industry in Bangladesh faces regulatory challenges. In line

with the commitment to fulfill the obligations under the Convention and following the directives of the Honorable High Court Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court in a Writ Petition filed by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), the Government of Bangladesh adopted the Ship Building and Recycling Rules 2011. This was peculiar because no law was enacted by the Parliament at that time that could give the rule-making power to the government. After a long delay, in 2018, the Parliament enacted the Bangladesh Ship Recycling Act 2018, establishing a Ship Recycling Board and granting it all regulatory power. Unfortunately, despite the passage of long time, board members have not been appointed due to bureaucratic constraints. Moreover, as per section 37 of the 2018 Act, without the board's authorisation, no court will take cognizance of any case filed under this Act. Thus, all administrative and judicial functions related to ship recycling rely on the board's action under this Act, which is yet to be fully constituted.

It can be said that the Hong Kong Convention disproportionately places responsibility on the Ship Recycling State rather than the flag state. This criticism is substantiated when significant stakeholders, such as cash buyers or Ship Broker Agents, are excluded from responsibility. In this context, to address both socioeconomic and environmental interests, the government must take steps to overcome the administrative, infrastructural, and environmental challenges for the application of the Convention in Bangladesh.

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LAW REFORM

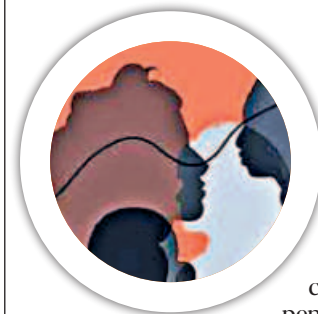
Changing the understanding of Rape

SOEB AKTAR

Rape is a heinous sexual violence and a violation of an individual's dignity. The Penal Code 1860 (PC) is the primary law in Bangladesh that defines most of the crimes and specifies the penalties. The Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain 2000 is one of the special laws that was passed in response to the large number of violent incidents relating to violence against women and children. Section 9 of this Act lays down the punishment of rape, whereas section 2 of the Act gives the definition by referring to section 375 of the PC. Section 375 of the PC states that a man commits rape if he engages in sexual activity with a woman under certain circumstances e.g., against her will, without her consent, when her consent is obtained by putting her in fear of death or hurt, etc. Age, marriage status, and other factors are also included. However, the Code does not provide a thorough definition of "sexual intercourse".

Remarkably, the explanation in this section claims that sexual activity necessary to constitute the offence of rape requires penetration. However, the type and degree of penetration, as well as the use of foreign bodies, oral and anal sex, have not been incorporated. The court held in *State v Shahidul Islam alias Shahid* (2006) that complete penetration is not necessary to prove

It needs to be noted that the definition of rape evolved in the United States and the United Kingdom in response to shifting societal demands. Even in India, the definition of rape has been changed to hold offenders legally accountable following the Nirbhaya case.



rape; even small or partial penetration, with or without semen emission and hymen rupture, or even an attempt at penetration, is sufficient.

Indian courts considered penile-vaginal penetration to be the strict requirement prior to the Nirbhaya case. Later, the Supreme Court of India has ruled in numerous cases that even partial penetration is enough to constitute rape. In *Aman Kumar & anr v State of Haryana*, it was determined that for rape, it is adequate if the penis partially penetrates the *labia majora*, without causing semen to be released. Things further changed after the Indian Penal Code was amended in 2013. In *Santhosh v State of Kerala* (Criminal Appeal no. 1311 of 2016), where the court ruled that a woman is raped if someone penetrates her between the thighs. As per the court, such penetration creates a result similar to that in a typical penile-vaginal intercourse. However, Bangladesh has not adopted these reforms and continues to adhere to the outdated "penile-vaginal" definition of rape included in the Penal Code, in contrast to the USA, UK, and India. Unfortunately, the existing definition of rape under section 375 of the Code does not directly cover all grave forms of sexual assault, other than penile-vaginal penetration, as rape.

Now the approved draft of the Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ordinance 2025 seeks to widen the definition of rape by moving beyond the penile-vaginal understanding of rape. This could prove to be a step in the right direction, provided the criminal justice actors are duly sensitised to the change and its potential.

The writer teaches law at American International University-Bangladesh.

CRIME AND JUSTICE

Compensation for victims of international crimes

MOHAMMED ASHRAFUL BARI

The International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973 did not contain any provision regarding compensation for victims. The sentence, as outlined in section 20 of the Act, only prescribed death or other form of punishment, with no mention of compensation to the victims. The International Crimes Tribunal (Amendment) Ordinance 2024, promulgated last November, marks the beginning of a new chapter in the legal landscape of new Bangladesh.

Notably, as per the newly added section 20A of the International Crimes Tribunal Act inserted by section 17 of the 2024 amendment, the tribunal is authorised to impose on the perpetrators compensation amount as they deem suitable. Such compensation is to be recovered from the perpetrators, from their current assets, or when both are missing, any assets they may acquire in future.

The fundamental transformation of International Crimes Tribunal regarding its criminal justice approach deserves praise for several justifiable reasons. First, victim's right to compensation, in conjunction with rights to protection, participation, and



rehabilitation, forms the foundation of a just and fair redressal mechanism. The criminal Justice system of Bangladesh has failed to acknowledge the critical importance of these rights for long. Insertion of such compensatory provision sets a legislative good practice example. Second, compared to administrative assistance of monetary

nature, judicial compensation is preferable due to its personal, holistic, and preventive nature.

Third, by providing compensation to the victims of international crimes ensures that the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh is in harmony with recent evolution of compensatory mechanism

observed across several other international crimes trials. For instance, International Criminal Tribunals of Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR) had supported the rights of the victims to be compensated. Moreover, global documents, such as 1998's Rome Statute (Article 75) and Draft Articles on Prevention and Punishment of Crime against Humanity 2019 (Article 12), also recognise victim's rights to obtain compensation. In line with such development, in February 2024, a record-breaking number of 49,772 victims were awarded with collective reparation of more than 52 million Euro by the International Criminal Court in *Prosecutor v Dominic Ongwen*.

Finally, provision regarding victim's compensation is crucial to ensure the Tribunal adopts a victim-centric approach. In the past, lack of such an approach, among others, has had a negative impact on the tribunal, leading to loss of credibility and reducing it as a state apparatus aimed at political persecution.

Inclusion of provision regarding victim's compensation, though commendable for the aforementioned reasons, is not without shortcomings. The notion of reparation in the legislation centers only on victim's

right to compensation, entirely neglecting the necessity to rehabilitate the victims of July. It is not only the short-term financial restitution that is required, but also the long-term aid intended for rehabilitation of the victims that is necessary.

Another drawback is that section 20A of the Act fails to put in place a formal mechanism to manage the extensive undertaking of disbursing the compensation funds to the victims. Previous mechanisms, including Trust Funds for Victims of International Criminal Court and Victim Support Section of Khmer Rouge Tribunal, have demonstrated successful models of achieving such tasks.

In conclusion, although incorporating a more contemporary approach within the International Crimes Tribunal is advantageous, its execution is not just imperative, but essential for meaningful redressal for the victims of July Revolution. To ensure the realisation of such progress, it is the concerned stakeholders of criminal justice system who have the responsibility to take proactive steps.

The writer is Intern at Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST).



Mukul, Jesy in Lahore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi umpires Masudur Rahman Mukul and Shathira Jakir Jesy are among 10 umpires selected for officiating the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 Qualifier in Pakistan, scheduled from April 9-19.

Mukul has been a regular feature at ICC events in recent years, including the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cups of 2020 and 2024.

On the other hand, Jesy, who featured in two women's ODIs during her playing career, is looking forward to her maiden appearance at a senior ICC event.

Jesy officiated the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup in Malaysia earlier this year and became the first woman umpire from the country to officiate in a Cricket World Cup at any level.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Jesy confirmed her arrival in Lahore for the six-team tournament.

"I arrived in Lahore yesterday [Wednesday]. Mukul bhai and I came on the same flight, but I am yet to know about the match allocations for me," she said.

Women's ODI WC Qualifiers 'We want to win all five games'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team head coach Sarwar Imran said that the Tigresses will take one game at a time but the aim is to win all five games in the upcoming Women's ODI World Cup qualifiers in Pakistan.

The Tigresses left the country yesterday for the all-important mission and with only two qualifying spots up for grabs, the competition is going to be intense, especially in presence of West Indies and Pakistan in the six-team qualifying tournament.

The Tigresses underwent a camp before and during the Eid festivities with match scenario-specific training. There were separate objectives regarding batting in the Powerplay, the middle overs and death overs. Sarwar said that if the wickets in Pakistan are batting friendly as they are expected to be, the team can score big totals.

But the bowling will be under



the scanner, given that there would not be much sideways movement for pacers and spinners cannot just rely on the surface and hit a certain length to keep opposition batters quiet.

Asked about the bowling, Sarwar said: "We are aware of it [difficulty in bowling on batting surfaces] and we underwent specific work in this regard during the camp. How to bowl

and bat on batting wickets, what the strike-rate should be were in focus during practice.

"If there are batting wickets, there will be 250-plus scores and I am hoping that our batters would be able to score 250-plus," Sarwar added.

It would be a huge challenge against Pakistan, who are hosting the qualifiers and West Indies, who beat Bangladesh at their home recently. But Sarwar backed his troop to attain maximum number of wins.

"We have five games there and one by one we want to win all five games. We have two strong teams in West Indies and Pakistan with us and the other teams like Ireland aren't ones we will be looking down upon. We want to fight with everyone one by one and win five games to qualify," he said.

The Tigresses will play a few warm-up matches before taking on Thailand in their first match in Lahore on April 10.

PSL-bound Rishad wants to be third-time lucky

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh's Rishad Hossain garnered global spotlight with an impressive haul of 14 wickets in seven matches in last year's ICC T20 World Cup, leading to the leg-spin all-rounder becoming one of the most sought-after names in franchise cricket.

Just after the end of the T20 World Cup, Rishad was picked for Global T20 Canada by Toronto Nationals, while he was also picked by Hobart Hurricanes for the Big Bash League 2024-25.

Coincidentally, both Toronto and Hobart became champions in their respective tournaments, but Rishad was unable to be part of any of these franchise meets due to separate reasons.

In a few days' time, the 22-year-old is set to embark on another major challenge as he prepares to leave for Pakistan to take part in the 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), beginning on April 11. This time, he will be representing two-time champions Lahore Qalandars, a team stacked with stars like Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, Daryl Mitchell, Sam



Billings, and Fakhar Zaman.

As Bangladesh have no white-ball fixtures during PSL time, Rishad has already obtained a full-season no-objection certificate (NOC) from Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), and now he is eyeing to showcase his mettle in the star-studded team.

"I will be going to PSL on April 6 or 7. The flight timing is yet to be confirmed," Rishad told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Getting a chance on any side gives you great pleasure. I'm really feeling well to be part of the tournament... Actually, we are a very good side. Normally, it's difficult to get into a side like this. I will try my best to adjust to the team as early as possible," he said, adding that Lahore's new head coach, Russell Domingo, who previously worked as Bangladesh head coach, had already communicated with him.

"Yes, we have talked. Before the start of any tournament, coaches usually talk to their players, and it was no different," said Rishad, who also thinks that he will enjoy the battle against two of his national

teammates, Liton Das and Nahid Rana, who were picked by different franchises - Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi, respectively - for the tournament.

Liton will leave for Pakistan on April 7 while Nahid will leave after the first Test against Zimbabwe (April 20-24).

"It's really an exciting matter. They are my national teammates, and in PSL, we will be playing in separate teams. I hope to enjoy the battle against these two."

Rishad, however, is not thinking too far ahead about the national team's next white-ball assignment in Pakistan in May, where they are expected to play five T20Is, as he is keeping his focus only on PSL at the moment.

"Actually, I'm not thinking about this at this moment. The national team matches are still far ahead. Now I'm only focusing on the PSL. Hope to deliver a good performance there," he added.

With his confidence high and ambitions set, Rishad is ready to embrace the PSL challenge, hoping that this time, luck will finally be on his side.

SHORT CORNER

FIFA plans 48-team Women's WC in 2031



FIFA president Gianni Infantino announced on Thursday that it has planned to increase the number of participating teams at the Women's World Cup from 32 teams to 48 in time for the 2031 tournament. The United States is the sole bidder for the 2031 Women's World Cup, and the United Kingdom is set to host the 2035 tournament, Infantino also said at the UEFA Congress in Belgrade on Thursday.

Bangladesh up two places in FIFA ranking

Bangladesh have taken a small but encouraging step forward in the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking, climbing from 185th to 183rd after their goalless draw against India in a AFC Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers fixture on March 25.

Prosecutors demand jail term for Ancelotti for tax fraud

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti's tax fraud trial wrapped up Thursday in Spain, with public prosecutors maintaining their demand he be jailed for four years and nine months for allegedly hiding income from the tax office. Ancelotti denied having intentionally committed tax fraud when he took the stand on Wednesday on the opening day of the trial at the High Court of Justice in Madrid, saying he "never considered committing fraud".

Messi and Miami stunned by LAFC

Los Angeles FC sent Lionel Messi and Inter Miami spinning to their first defeat of the season on Wednesday, scoring an upset 1-0 victory in their CONCACAF Champions Cup quarter-final first-leg clash. A 57th-minute strike from Los Angeles-born El Salvador international Nathan Ordaz handed LAFC a precious advantage heading into next Wednesday's return leg in Florida.

Mourinho grabs Galatasaray coach's nose after losing Istanbul derby

Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho could be in trouble again after grabbing the nose of the Galatasaray manager at the end of another fiery Istanbul derby in which his side lost 2-1 at home in the Turkish Cup quarter-final on Wednesday. A mass scuffle had broken out between both sets of players, with the referee sending three players off, two from Galatasaray, and after the final whistle Mourinho appeared to pinch Okan Buruk's nose who then fell dramatically to the ground.

*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

Too early for treble talk, says Flick

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona manager Hansi Flick was keen to keep talk of trophies in check after his side booked their spot in the Copa del Rey final against rivals Real Madrid with a hard-fought 1-0 win at Atletico Madrid on Wednesday.

Barcelona are on a 21-game unbeaten run across all competitions and are the only team in Europe's top-five leagues yet to lose in 2025 as they bid for three titles playing some of the best football the fans have seen this season. But Flick remained cautious about their chances of winning the treble and urged his players to maintain a next-game mentality, warning that the club have little margin for error.

"I know everyone wants us to talk about the final, it's a 'Clasico', I get that, but I don't live in the past or in the future and our focus should be Betis, who are our next opponents in LaLiga," Flick told a press conference.

"Yes, we are in a great moment but I've been in this business enough time

to know how everything can change in a heartbeat, so we need to keep focused.

"Dreaming is allowed but first we need to work really hard and stay focused so we can keep that dream alive."

Barcelona are top of the LaLiga standings with 66 points, three ahead of Real, with third-placed Atletico six further points back in the title race with nine games left. Real will travel to London to face Arsenal in the Champions League quarter-finals next week while Barca will host Borussia Dortmund.

They will meet in the Copa del Rey final on April 26 before they clash again at Barcelona on May 11 in a game that could decide the LaLiga title.

"Tonight I'll stick with this formidable win which made me really happy," Flick said.



Manchester City star Jack Grealish dedicated his long-awaited goal in Wednesday's 2-0 win against Leicester to his late brother. Grealish netted from close-range in the second minute at the Etihad Stadium, scoring in the Premier League for the first time in 16 months. It came on the 25th anniversary of the death of his younger brother Keelan, who died at the age of just nine months. "This day is always hard in the family, but I was happy to score," Grealish said. "My mum and dad were here. This day is always difficult in the family. So to score and to win was brilliant."

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rejuvenated Siraj praised for 'fire in his belly'

AFP, Bengaluru

Praise was heaped on Mohammed Siraj Thursday after his match-winning spell for Gujarat Titans at his former club Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL.

Siraj, who was dropped by India for the Champions Trophy, looked like a man with a point to prove to the national selectors and the RCB management as he took 3-19 at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday, a venue that was his home for seven seasons.

RCB released Siraj after last season and the India fast bowler was bought by Gujarat for \$1.4 million in the November auction. Siraj has begun to justify his price tag by taking five wickets in three matches this season, bowling with pace and accuracy.

Former India opener Virender Sehwag said Siraj's IPL form was motivated by his omission from the Champions Trophy last month, which India won in Dubai.

"Somewhere I feel he is hurt that he wasn't part of the Champions Trophy squad, and I saw that fire," Sehwag said on website Cricbuzz.

"That's what we expect from a young fast bowler: 'Yeah, you didn't pick me? Now I will show you.'"

New Zealand's Kane Williamson, commentating on JioStar, said: "He bowled with real fire in his belly, led the attack with aggression, and bowled with some excellent pace."

Siraj's bowling helped restrict Bengaluru to 169-8, a total Gujarat overhauled by eight wickets with 13 balls to spare as England's Jos Buttler hit an unbeaten 73 off 39 deliveries.

"(Siraj) was deservedly named player of the match," Williamson added.

"While Jos Buttler was outstanding and back to his best in the second innings, Siraj set the tone early on, making a significant impact."

Siraj, 31, removed left-hander Devdutt Padikkal with a delivery that nipped away to hit off stump.

He then bowled Phil Salt after the England batsman had hit him for a six on the previous ball.

Siraj finished his spell with the wicket of England's Liam Livingstone, caught behind for 54.

"It was emotional because I played for seven years here," Siraj said of returning to Bengaluru.

"There was some nervousness and some emotion but the moment I got the ball in my hand, it was full on."

It was Gujarat's second straight win and Bengaluru's first defeat this season.



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Greed will destroy us

Prof Yunus warns youth against concentration of power, wealth at BIMSTEC

UNB, Bangkok

Highlighting the risks of concentrated wealth and power, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said that a society would eventually collapse if it experiences such concentrations.

"Unless wealth is shared, you cannot sustain a society," he said while delivering his keynote speech at the BIMSTEC Young Gen Forum.

Prof Yunus, a pioneer of microcredit and social business and a Nobel Peace Prize winner for his work in alleviating poverty, is on a two-day visit to Thailand to attend today's BIMSTEC Summit.

Thailand is hosting the 6th Summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and Bangladesh will assume the chairmanship of the group today.

Thailand has taken over the BIMSTEC Chairmanship from Sri Lanka since 30 March 2022.

Addressing the youth summit, Prof Yunus said

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HIDDEN GEMS OF THE FOREST

Deep in Fatikchhari's Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary, the elusive grey peacock-pheasant, or Burmese peacock-pheasant, moves through the undergrowth. Found in lowland and hill forests of Bangladesh, Northeast India, and parts of Southeast Asia, these birds prefer dense forests and bamboo thickets, foraging for seeds, fruits, and small invertebrates. The males, adorned with iridescent, eye-like spots, perform elaborate courtship displays. Unlike most pheasants, they are monogamous, forming lifelong bonds. Their soft hoots and whistles echo through the trees, often revealing their presence before they are seen. Despite their striking plumage, they remain masters of camouflage, blending seamlessly into their surroundings -- a rare gem hidden within the forest's shadows.



PHOTO: KOMOL DAS

MYANMAR QUAKE Death toll hits 3,000 Heat, rains fuel disease risk

REUTERS, Bangkok

Extreme heat and heavy rain in Myanmar could cause disease outbreaks among earthquake survivors camping in the open, global aid bodies warned yesterday, complicating rescue efforts made difficult by a civil war, as the death toll surpassed 3,000.

Last Friday's 7.7-magnitude quake, one of Myanmar's strongest in a century, jolted a region home to 28 million, toppling buildings such as hospitals, flattening communities and leaving many without food, water and shelter.

Deaths rose to 3,085 yesterday, with 4,715 injured and 341 missing, the ruling junta said.

The World Health Organization flagged a rising risk of cholera and other diseases in the worst-affected areas, such as Mandalay, Sagaing and the capital of Naypyitaw, while it prepared \$1 million of relief supplies, including body bags.

"Cholera remains a particular concern for all of us," said Elena Vuolo, the deputy head of its Myanmar office, pointing to an outbreak last year in Mandalay.

The risk was worsened by damage to about half of healthcare facilities in the quake-hit areas, including hospitals destroyed by the quake in Mandalay and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

ISRAEL'S NEW 'SECURITY ZONE' Palestinians flee Rafah again

Hundreds of thousands seek shelter as Israel advances into 'last refuge' city in Gaza; 97 killed in 24hrs

REUTERS, Cairo/Gaza

Hundreds of thousands of fleeing Gazans sought shelter yesterday in one of the biggest mass displacements of the war, as Israeli forces advanced into the ruins of the city of Rafah, part of a newly announced "security zone" they intend to seize.

A day after declaring their intention to capture large swathes of the crowded enclave, Israeli force pushed into the city on Gaza's southern edge which had served as a last refuge for people fleeing other areas for much of the war.

Gaza's health ministry reported at least 97 people killed in Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours, including at least 20 killed in an airstrike around dawn in Shejaia suburb of Gaza City.

Rafah "is gone, it is being wiped out," a father of seven among the hundreds of thousands who had fled from Rafah to neighbouring Khan Younis, told Reuters via a chat app. "They are knocking down



what is left standing of houses and property," said the man who declined to be identified for fear of repercussions.

After a strike killed several people in Khan Younis, Adel Abu Fagher was checking the damage to his tent. "Is anything left for us? There's nothing left for us. We're being killed while asleep," he said.

The assault to capture Rafah is a major escalation in the war, which Israel restarted last month after effectively abandoning a ceasefire in place since January.

Israel has not spelled out its longterm aims for the security zone its troops are now seizing. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Brace for severe heatwave this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mild heatwave swept over 10 districts yesterday, and the country may experience a severe one this month, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

The highest temperature in the country was recorded in Rajshahi at 38 degrees Celsius, the level of a moderate heatwave.

The other districts experiencing the heatwave were Pabna, Sirajganj, Naogaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Moulvibazar, Rangamati, Jashore, and Chuadanga.

According to BMD, a mild heat wave is considered when maximum temperature stays between 36 and 37.9 degrees Celsius, moderate between 38 and 39.9 degrees Celsius, severe between 40 and 41.9 degrees Celsius, and very severe 42 degrees Celsius or above.

According to BMD data, the country's normal maximum temperature in April is 33.2 degrees Celsius, the highest among all months.

The present weather conditions with soaring temperatures could continue for two to three days, BMD Meteorologist Hafizur Rahman told The Daily Star. The mercury may start to fall afterwards.

Some areas may experience rainfall in the next few days, he said, adding that there was a noticeable amount of rainfall in the Sylhet district over the past few days.

In its weather bulletin, BMD also said Sylhet was the only district to see rainfall with 5mm of rain in the 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday.

It said rain with lightning flashes and temporary gusty winds were likely to occur at one or two places over Mymensingh, Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions during a 24-hour period from this morning.

During the period, weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country.

BMD also forecast rainfall in different areas of the country for the next three days.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Severe heatwave means highest temperature between 40 and 41.9 degrees Celsius



Despite railway authorities' efforts to prevent rooftop travel, many were seen getting on and off the roof of a Prabal Express train at Chittagong Railway Station yesterday. Recently, two men died after falling from the roof of a moving train in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura. Inset, the station remained packed with holidaymakers bound for Cox's Bazar even yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



55-yr-old man held over rape of 8-yr-old Teens arrested for raping 6-yr-olds

STAR REPORT

Police have arrested a 55-year-old man in a case filed over the rape of an eight-year-old girl in Kustia's Khoksa upazila.

Afzal Ali, 55, was apprehended on Wednesday from Khoksa Railway Station while he was trying to flee to Dhaka, said Khoksa Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sheikh Moinul Islam.

Earlier, locals vandalised Afzal's house after the allegation of rape against him spread in the locality.

According to police and locals, on Tuesday, Afzal took the victim and some others to his house to cut freshly picked onions. Though the other children left the house, he tricked the victim to stay at the house and later raped the girl.

The victim is currently undergoing treatment at the 250-bed Kustia General Hospital. She underwent some tests, the OC said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Bhutan building wellness hub with airport



AGENCIES

Tucked away in the Himalayas, the Kingdom of Bhutan is often regarded as one of the happiest nations in the world. It's the last stronghold of Vajrayana Buddhism, and even measures the collective wellbeing of its citizens through a Gross National Happiness Index (GNH).

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BGMEA Election 2025-2027
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Election Notice (Revised)

This is to inform all members of BGMEA that the upcoming BGMEA Election 2025-2027 will be held as per the following schedule:

Last date for payment of subscription	: 29 March 2025
Last date for submission of voter nomination	: 09 April 2025
Last date for submission of nomination of candidature	: 26 April 2025
Last date for withdrawal of candidature	: 06 May 2025
Date of election	: 31 May 2025

NB. The earlier Notice published on 09 March 2025 is hereby cancelled.

Secretary, Election Board
Email: electionboard@bgmea.com.bd