

## Bangladesh moves to deal with US tariff shock

Yunus calls 'emergency' meeting, decides to increase imports to reduce US trade deficit

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

As new US tariffs shake global trade routes, Bangladesh is pursuing a plan to reduce its trade imbalance with the US through targeted import increases, regulatory reforms and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. Bangladesh is not panicking and may even stand to gain, officials said yesterday.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus is also expected to engage with higher US authorities in Washington as part of Bangladesh's broader effort to address trade concerns and maintain favourable market access. Officials said Yunus, widely respected in international policy circles, will support diplomatic outreach at the highest levels to reinforce Bangladesh's case.

He held an emergency meeting at state guesthouse Jamuna in Dhaka yesterday to coordinate the government's response. Advisers, the central bank governor and senior officials from multiple ministries and departments joined the meeting to discuss an action plan for negotiation

with the US. Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed will host a key follow-up meeting today at the secretariat in Dhaka, where the first draft of Bangladesh's negotiation proposal will be presented. BGMEA Administrator and EPB Vice-Chairman

» Yunus to engage with US authorities in Washington

» Dhaka to formally write to Washington

» Govt to reform tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and IP rules

Anwar Hossain said the proposal is being prepared with input from both the public and private sectors and will be used to guide the upcoming talks.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman has already held meetings

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Thousands of people have been returning to the capital from their hometowns as offices reopen today after the Eid holidays. The photo of people disembarking a launch was taken at Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tariff twist leaves exporters on edge

Many fear Bangladesh's effective tariff on garments will jump to 48.56%

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

With a sweeping US tariff order set to take effect on April 9, Bangladesh's garment exporters remain in the dark about exactly how much duty their products will face -- and whether the new rate will be added to or replace existing tariffs.

President Donald Trump's April 2 executive order imposes a 37 percent ad valorem tariff on imports from Bangladesh, but the order provides no product-specific rate table or customs guidance, fuelling confusion across Bangladesh's largest export sector.

If the 37 percent is added on top of existing US duties, as many fear, Bangladesh's effective tariff on garments will jump to 48.56 percent from the current average of 11.56 percent. That would mean a \$100 shipment of T-shirts or jeans from Dhaka would face nearly \$49 in import taxes at a US port, compared to just \$11.56 now.

"We're preparing for the worst-case scenario because the order clearly refers

to this as an 'additional' tariff," said Syed M Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans, one of the country's largest denim exporters. "But we won't know for sure until April 9."

» Bangladesh holds 9% share of US apparel import market

» Nearly 24% of Bangladesh's total garment exports flow into US

The White House statement says the "rates of duty established by this order are in addition to any other duties, fees, taxes, exactions, or charges applicable." But it offers no further breakdown by country or product.

"We are not clear yet," said Mahbubur

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## Trade chaos as Trump tariff takes effect

REUTERS, Washington

US customs agents began collecting President Donald Trump's unilateral 10 percent tariff on all imports from many countries yesterday, with higher levies on goods from 57 larger trading partners due to start next week.

The initial 10 percent "baseline" tariff to be paid by US importers took effect at US seaports, airports and customs warehouses at 12:01am ET (0401 GMT), ushering in Trump's full rejection of the post-World War Two system of mutually agreed tariff rates.

"This is the single biggest trade action of our lifetime," said Kelly Ann Shaw, a trade lawyer at Hogan Lovells and former White House trade adviser during Trump's first term.

Shaw told a Brookings Institution event on Thursday that she expected the tariffs to evolve over time as countries seek to negotiate lower rates. "But this is huge. This is a pretty seismic and significant shift in the way that we trade with every country on earth," she added.

Trump's Wednesday tariff announcement shook global stock markets, wiping out \$5 trillion in stock market value for S&P 500 .SPX companies by Friday's close, a record two-day decline. Prices for oil and commodities plunged, while investors fled to the safety of government bonds.

Among the countries first hit with the 10 percent tariff are Australia, Britain, Colombia, Argentina, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. A US Customs and Border Protection bulletin to shippers indicates no grace period for cargoes

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YUNUS-MODI MEETING

## First step towards easing tensions

Say foreign policy analysts

PORIMOL PALMA

The meeting between Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bangkok on Friday is a stepping stone to easing the strained bilateral relations, say foreign policy analysts.

"The meeting is a silver lining. If the conversation continues frankly, all issues can be addressed," said Prof Niloy Ranjan Biswas, a teacher of international relations at the University of Dhaka.

Modi agreed to the meeting, which lasted for 40 minutes on the sidelines of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Shangri-la Hotel, at the last moment, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

"The meeting should be seen in a positive light. It is a sign of maturity that both leaders could share their concerns," Prof Sreeradha Datta at the Jindal School of International Affairs at OP Jindal Global University, India, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Anti-India sentiment grew in

"The relationship is likely to normalise once there is a democratically-elected government in power in Bangladesh."

Sreeradha Datta, international affairs professor

Bangladesh for India's alleged support for Sheikh Hasina's 15-year authoritarian rule and later sheltering her after she was ousted on August 5 last year.

The interim government said Hasina has been making inflammatory statements via social media and urging her party men to engage in anti-state activities in Bangladesh.

Since the fall of the AL government,

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## Sewage pollution killing city's water bodies

90% of Dhaka city outside Wasa's sewerage network; decade-old master plan for sewage treatment plants remains unimplemented

HELEMUL ALAM

Most parts of the capital remain outside the sewerage network of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), which has yet to implement a master plan adopted a decade ago, resulting in rampant pollution of rivers, canals and other water bodies in and around the city.

The plan recommended setting up five sewage treatment plants across the city, but only one -- the Dasherakandi plant -- was built on 62 acres of land in the capital's Khilgaon at a cost of Tk 3,482 crore two years ago. The plant can treat five lakh tonnes of sewage per day, but it is yet to be connected to Wasa's sewerage network.

Wasa officials could not provide any data on the volume of sewage being discharged into the city's water bodies. According to an estimate by experts, around 20 lakh tonnes of sewage are generated in the city every day.

According to experts' assessment of the existing sewage treatment capacity, more than 90 percent of the megacity is not covered by Wasa's sewerage network. In the absence of proper facilities, people are often left with no choice but to connect sewer lines to stormwater drains, lakes and canals, aggravating the city's water pollution.

A recent study by the River and Delta Research Centre that carried out field surveys and used satellite imagery uncovered alarming levels of pollution in



Untreated wastewater is being channelled into the Buriganga through an outlet in Old Dhaka's Badamtoli area, aggravating river pollution.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

the Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakkhya and Balu rivers encircling the city.

It identified 102 industrial waste outlets, 75 municipal sewer lines, and 216 small private outlets that discharge untreated waste into water bodies.

Moreover, contaminants are being channelled to the rivers through 38 sluice

gates and 62 service canals alongside 441 dumping stations and points. Industrial units, dockyards and kitchen markets further compound the pollution.

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said it's difficult to implement large-scale projects in many city areas due to high population

### WATER BODIES BEING POLLUTED BY

- 102 industrial waste outlets
- 75 municipal sewer lines
- 216 small private outlets
- 441 dumping stations, points
- 62 service canals, 38 sluice gates

SOURCE: RIVER AND DELTA RESEARCH CENTRE

### EXPERTS' SUGGESTIONS

- Mandatory small treatment plants for big housing projects
- Treatment, disposal of sewage on same property where it's generated
- Strict enforcement of building regulations

density and narrow roads.

"It took more than 10 years and crores of taka to build Dasherakandi plant, but the facility is operating outside the sewerage network."

Terming the Wasa master plan unrealistic, he said that drawing up a plan for a new area

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## BNP prepares for demos for election by December

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Frustrated as the chief adviser has yet to clearly specify when the election will be held, the BNP is making preparations to take to the streets with a demand for polls by December.

The party plans to organise rallies and other events in the cities and district towns, according to several top leaders.

The BNP leadership believes there is an ongoing effort to delay the electoral process in order to prolong the interim government's tenure under the pretext of reforms.

But before launching a mass movement, the leadership intends to hold a meeting with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.

The leaders hope they will get an election timeline from the meeting.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "We will discuss the election date with him, and then we will consult our partners and like-minded political parties to finalise our strategy. After that, we will take our message to the people."

In his March 25 televised address on the eve of Independence Day, Prof Yunus said the next election would be held between December this year and June next year.

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## July protester succumbs to gunshot injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Md Ashique Rahman Hridoy, 17, who suffered critical gunshot wounds in his head during the 2024 uprising in Dhaka's Jatrabari area, has died while undergoing treatment in Patuakhali.



Hridoy

Abdur Rauf, the upazila health and family planning officer, said Hridoy was brought to Bauphal Upazila Health Complex around noon on Friday.

"He was in a critical condition. We advised his family to take him to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal immediately, but they couldn't arrange the transfer in time. He died here around 4:00pm," Rauf said.

Hridoy was laid to rest at the family graveyard yesterday morning after a namaj-e-janaja.

The young protester, son of rickshaw-puller Ansar Hawlader of Paschim Jauta village in Bauphal upazila, had been suffering from post-injury complications for months.

According to family members, Hridoy used to work as a labourer

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at an emergency meeting with advisers, the central bank governor and senior officials at the state guesthouse Jamuna yesterday evening to discuss Bangladesh's response to new tariffs announced by the US.

PHOTO: CA'S PRESS WING

## First step towards easing tensions

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India has drastically cut down on visas for Bangladeshis.

The Indian government too expressed concerns over alleged minority repression.

In December last year, Dhaka sought extradition for Hasina, who faces charges of mass killings in Bangladesh during the July uprising.

At Friday's meeting, Yunus did not hesitate to seek an update on Hasina's extradition request, detailing the crimes committed during the July uprising and referring to the UN Fact-Finding Mission's report.

Prof Sreeradha Datta, also a non-resident senior fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, said the extradition process is a complicated one.

Bangladesh will have to initiate legal procedures for a formal request of extradition and India's judicial system will examine the matter closely. Extradition request is a complex issue and any such move will not be easy.

India will not extradite Hasina unless there is serious international pressure, said a diplomatic source.

Yunus raised the issue of Hasina's inflammatory statements at the meeting, but Modi blamed social media for the tensions around her remarks.

Modi also urged that "the rhetoric that vitiates the environment" is avoided.

India has not taken positively the recent remarks by Yunus on northeast India during his visit to China, Datta said.

"I think both sides need to maintain logic and speak based on facts when those involve bilateral relations," she said.

Modi's statement that India believes in people-centric relationships and does not support any particular political party or individual is extremely important, Biswas said.

"To take the relations forward, I would suggest that India ease the visa regime for Bangladeshis at the soonest. This will greatly help normalise the relations."

Yunus rightly invited Indian media to visit Bangladesh and report the facts on minority issues.

"This can help remove any wrong perceptions," he added.

Some of the issues that irritate Bangladesh including the long-pending Teesta water sharing deal, the renewal of the Ganges water treaty and border killing were raised by Yunus in the meeting.

"The frank conversation at all levels between the two countries needs to continue to address the issues," Datta said.

Bangladesh deeply values its relationship with India, Yunus told Modi, describing the historical links and acknowledging India's role in Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Modi reiterated India's support for a "democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh" and highlighted that cooperation between the two countries has brought tangible benefits to the people of both countries and underlined India's desire to forge a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh based on pragmatism.

"These positive comments from both sides are a friendly gesture, but the relationship is likely to normalise once there is a democratically-elected government in power in Bangladesh," Datta added.

## Bangladesh moves to deal with US tariff shock

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With stakeholders across government and industry, including the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He is scheduled to meet today with US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Tracey Ann Jacobson, where he will formally express Bangladesh's concern over the tariff decision and share the outlines of the government's position.

After the meeting convened by Yunus yesterday, Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said at a press briefing that the government will reduce the trade gap with the US by increasing the import of American goods, including cotton, soybean oil, petroleum products and industrial machinery. Trade barriers will also be removed to increase imports from America, he added.

"Our current understanding is that we will not be harmed," he said. "Because if you look at the competitor countries like Vietnam, China, Cambodia, you'll see that they mainly produce the same kind of goods."

"In the apparel sector, we are more diversified than India and Pakistan, even though they have lower tariffs than ours. And the structure or spectrum of our industry is more mature than theirs."

"We believe this may actually open up new doors of opportunity. We had started engaging with them even earlier," the commerce adviser said, adding that High Representative Khalilur visited the US in February on Yunus's instructions.

"Cotton imported from the US required fumigation twice. We amended our import policy through the commerce ministry, requiring fumigation only once. This removed a trade barrier and will boost trade," Bashir Uddin said. "Possibly, we were the first to raise the issue when Khalil went to the US. The US side itself said that we were the first to come forward. That shows our seriousness. We understood the issue earlier than others," he added.

Khalilur said he raised the issue at the US State Department first. "They were very enthusiastic. They themselves arranged meetings with the US Trade Representative, the Agriculture Department, and others."

"That's why I say that there's nothing to fear. We are in very good hands. We are currently in close discussions with them. These talks will continue over the next couple of days. We will send our official

response after intensive consultation with the US authorities," Khalilur said, adding that he had talked to the US Deputy National Security Advisor at the White House during a conversation just a few days ago.

"So they are aware. This is not some kind of bolt from the blue. The chief adviser had foreseen this when the Trump administration came in. And he responded in time," he said.

"We are the first country to take a unilateral initiative, and they [US] have recognised this. Therefore, we expect that when we formally request a review, we will receive a positive response," the high representative said.

US President Donald Trump on April 2 announced the 37 percent tariff on imports from Bangladesh, effective from April 9.

Now the Bangladesh government is seeking to open formal negotiations with the USTR to secure relief from the newly imposed tariffs and address the trade imbalance between the two countries. Bangladesh has assigned its mission in Washington to help arrange a meeting with the USTR, while also observing how other countries impacted by similar measures are preparing to respond.

The commerce ministry, in coordination with the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission, the National Board of Revenue, the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), and other relevant agencies, is gathering trade data and holding consultations to shape the plan.

After the meeting with Yunus, Ashik Chowdhury, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), said that of the \$8 billion in annual exports from Bangladesh to the US, \$7 billion originates from the garment industry, half a billion from leather, and the remainder from plastics and other sectors.

He said he held meetings with the stakeholders of all these sectors from morning to evening yesterday. "We've listened to their concerns and their suggestions. As you can imagine, different people offer different suggestions. We're trying to bring all the feedback together to reach a constructive, collective

agreement and a decision point," Ashik said.

Lutley Siddiqi, the chief adviser's special envoy on international affairs, said, "What the US has actually done is calculate our trade surplus as a percentage of total bilateral trade. That simple percentage figure—74 percent—doesn't mean 74 percent of our imports are now under new duties."

"Our response isn't just about duties or deficits," he said, adding that a report published by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) a week ago mentioned three areas in its chapter on Bangladesh: customs and duties, intellectual property enforcement, and regulatory environment (e.g., use of digital systems).

"These three areas match the reforms we're already working on. So this will be part of the overall package that we're presenting. It includes non-tariff issues as well as our broader reform agenda," he said.

Abdur Rahman Khan, chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR); Md Touhid Hossain, foreign adviser; Ahsan H Mansur, Bangladesh Bank governor; and Khairuzzaman Mozumder, finance secretary, attended the meeting.

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, adviser to the power, energy and mineral resources ministry, road transport and bridges ministry, and railways ministry; Zaidi Sattar, a trade expert; and Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, were also present.

Ashik had earlier held a consultation meeting with a group of businessmen in Dhaka. They included Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals; Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Limited; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and chief executive director of PRAN-RFL Group; Mostafa Abid Khan, former member of Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission; and Zaidi Sattar.

In 2024, Bangladesh exported \$8.26 billion worth of goods to the US while importing only \$2.21 billion, a trade surplus that is nearly three times larger than American exports to Bangladesh.

Local exporters have expressed alarm, warning that the new tariffs could disrupt exports to the US, which remains Bangladesh's single largest export destination.

the rehabilitation of Pagla treatment plant. However, only one has been constructed in Dasherbandi, while the Pagla plant remains in disrepair, running at less than half of its capacity to treat 120,000 tonnes of sewage per day.

Citing a shortage of funds and land as major barriers to implementing the master plan, a top Wasa official said the Dasherbandi plant now processes mainly wastewater, handling between three and five lakh tonnes daily. If brought under Wasa's sewerage network, it could treat up to five lakh tonnes of sewage per day.

It will require Tk 3,000 crore to link the plant to the sewerage network and set up sewage lifting stations. In September last year, a project proposal was sent to the LGRD ministry, which is yet to approve it, said the official.

Besides, a feasibility study on a sewage treatment plant in Uttara is underway, mentioned the official, adding that Wasa is struggling to acquire land for its Mirpur and Rayerbazar treatment facilities.

Experts warn that relying solely on large-scale treatment plants could mean waiting decades for results. They advocate immediate action: enforcement of regulations on septic tank installation, setting up of small treatment units, and rehabilitation of existing sewage treatment facilities.

"Without swift action, Dhaka's water bodies will remain dumping grounds ... We need practical and localised solutions to safeguard public health and the environment," said Mujibur.

## PASSPORT INDEX Bangladesh moves up a notch

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has advanced one position in the global passport strength index, moving from 182nd to 181st place, according to a recent report published by Dubai-based global consultancy firm Nomad Capitalist.

As in previous years, Nomad Capitalist has released its Global Passport Index for 2025.

The index ranks passports from around the world based on five weighted criteria: visa-free travel (50%), taxation (20%), global perception (10%), the ability to hold dual citizenship (10%), and personal freedom (10%).

Scores range from 10 to 50, except for the visa category, which is the number of countries that passport holders can enter without needing a visa.

In the global perception category, Bangladesh scored 30. According to Nomad Capitalist, countries scoring below 50 in this metric often face negative reception from locals when their citizens travel abroad, indicating that Bangladeshi travellers may not experience warm hospitality in many parts of the world.

In terms of personal freedom, Bangladesh's score stands at a low 10 — considered the minimum level of personal liberty.

The report notes that those scoring between 10 and 20 enjoy very limited freedom as citizens.

Bangladesh's overall score in this year's index is 38 out of a possible 110.

At present, Bangladeshi passport holders can travel to 50 countries without a visa or obtain a visa on arrival or an e-visa.

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## Tariff twist leaves

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Rahman, secretary at the Ministry of Commerce. "It could be 37 percent, or it could be over 52 percent if added to current Most Favoured Nation [MFN] rates, which for Bangladesh are already above 15 percent on many items."

Sharif Zahir, managing director of Ananta Group, said his company has not received updated tariff information from buyers yet. But different sources suggest both possibilities — that the 37 percent could either replace or stack up on top of existing rates.

BRANDS SIGNAL HIGHER RATES

Anwar Hossain, administrator of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and vice chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau, said one US-bound apparel brand has already informed them that the new rate for Bangladesh may indeed be 48.56 percent.

"We're preparing our strategy based on that assumption," he said. "And the executive order clearly frames it as an additional duty."

Anwar Hossain also said the measure, while framed as a tariff adjustment, is rooted in broader US concerns over persistent trade deficits.

"The US is a trading economy that depends on imports," he said. "This move isn't just about duties. It's about shifting trade flows in Washington's favour," he said.

Experts have estimated how the policy could impact other top apparel exporters. While these numbers have not been released by the US government, they offer a preview of how global sourcing might shift:

## BNP prepares for demos

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He also mentioned that the Consensus Commission is collecting the political parties' input on reforms.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the leaders will discuss the possible meeting with the chief adviser and the protest programmes at the next standing committee meeting.

The BNP held several demonstrations before Ramadan and then there was a lull.

Commenting on the interim government, a senior BNP leader said, "They're using reforms as a pretext to extend their stay in power."

Four days after Prof Yunus's televised address, Fakhrul said, "The lack of an election roadmap reflects [the government's] political inexperience. I am sorry to say this."

Only a clear roadmap will solve the political crisis because the parties will then begin preparing for the election.

Many BNP leaders eager to be members of parliament campaigned in their constituencies during the Eid

holidays.

Party high ups said they told such potential candidates to continue campaigning before a fresh programme is announced.

"A strong push must be made to mount pressure on the interim government to hold the election. We have recently held rallies in various districts to make our position clear. We will take to the streets again and gradually intensify the demonstrations," said a standing committee member.

The BNP is also in discussions with like-minded parties to ensure a coordinated movement.

Party leaders say they will draw an elaborate strategy after the meeting with the chief adviser.

A senior leader said the meeting would take place by this week or the next.

The BNP has been demanding the interim government make the necessary reforms and leave the major ones for the next, elected government. The National Citizen Party and several others want the current administration to carry out all the reforms.

## Trade chaos as Trump tariff

FROM PAGE 1

on the water at midnight yesterday.

But a US Customs and Border Protection bulletin did provide a 51-day grace period for cargoes loaded onto vessels or planes and in transit to the US before 12:01am ET. These cargoes need arrive by 12:01am ET on May 27 to avoid the 10 percent duty.

At the same hour on Wednesday, Trump's higher "reciprocal" tariff rates of 11 percent to 50 percent are due to take effect. European Union imports will be hit with a 20 percent tariff, while Chinese goods will be hit with a 34 percent tariff, bringing Trump's total new levies on China to 54 percent.

Beijing yesterday said "the market has spoken" in rejecting Trump's tariffs after it hit Washington with a slew of countermeasures, including extra levies of 34 percent on all US goods and export curbs on some rare earth minerals.

"China has been hit much harder than the USA, not even close," Trump said yesterday on social media. "THIS IS AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION, AND WE WILL WIN. HANG TOUGH, it won't be easy, but the end result will be historic."

Shortly after posting the comment, Trump was spotted arriving at his Trump

National Golf Club in Jupiter, Florida, reading a New York Post article covering China's retaliation to Trump's tariffs and the stock market "crash."

Some world leaders moved quickly to strike a deal with Trump to avert economic disruption, while others weighed countermeasures.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to visit the White House tomorrow, sources said, as unspecified goods from the country face a 17 percent tariff under the new policy. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was reportedly seeking a telephone conversation with Trump. Tokyo faces a 24 percent levy.

Vietnam, which benefited from the shift of US supply chains away from China after Trump's first-term trade war with Beijing, will be hit with a 46 percent tariff and agreed on Friday to discuss a deal with Trump.

The head of Taiwan's National Security Council was in Washington for talks with the Trump administration that were expected to include the tariffs, a source said. Taiwan President Lai Ching-te huddled with tech executives on Saturday to discuss how to respond to the 32 percent duty it faces on its products.



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## Will need to build a new world with fresh ideas

### Yunus tell CMG

BSS, Dhaka

A new world must be built on fresh ideas, Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus told China Media Group (CMG) during an interview in Beijing as part of his recent visit to China.

Attempts to sustain the old order are futile, he added.

Speaking on Dhaka-Beijing cooperation, Professor Yunus said China

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Two boys cycle on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, that too on the wrong side, in Narayanganj yesterday. Even though there's not much rush of traffic due to the ongoing Eid holiday, such actions could lead to an accident at any moment.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Judiciary must be architect of its own reform

Says chief justice

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Justice Dr Syed Rezaat Ahmed yesterday said the judiciary must be the architect of its own reform -- transparent, accountable, and free from executive influence.

Speaking at a regional seminar in Rangpur, he said, "Judicial reform is no longer a distant aspiration; it is unfolding now. Over the past eight months, we have taken bold and transformative steps to ensure true judicial independence, including the establishment of autonomous judicial bodies, digital innovation, and people-centric services."

"I deeply value the strategic partnership with UNDP, whose continued support has been instrumental in advancing this reform agenda across

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# Hope at a time of uncertainty

## Mixed reactions in Cox's Bazar camps as Myanmar identifies 180,000 Rohingyas for return

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Following reports of Myanmar verifying 180,000 Rohingyas for potential repatriation, a wave of mixed feelings has washed over the camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Although many Rohingyas express a strong desire to return to their homeland safely, they remain apprehensive of Myanmar's ability to guarantee security.

Myanmar authorities on Friday confirmed to Bangladesh that out of a list of 8,00,000 Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh, they have identified 1,80,000 Rohingyas eligible for return to Myanmar.

However, this statement comes at a time when the Myanmar junta government has lost control over much of the Rakhine State, from where Rohingyas were displaced.

The rebel group Arakan Army has taken control of over 80 percent of the Rakhine state. So far, the Arakan Army has seized 14 out of 17 townships in the



**Our homes are now under the control of the Arakan Army. So how will they carry out repatriation? That's something we'll have to see.**

MOHAMMAD SADIQ  
Rohingya journalist

Rakhine state and is continuing its offensive to capture the remaining areas.

Mohammad Zubair, chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, suspects Myanmar of using this repatriation move to mislead the

international community and escape arrest warrants issued in Argentina against its top military officials.

An Argentine court in mid-February issued arrest warrants for the head of Myanmar's military junta and former officials, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, over alleged genocide and crimes against humanity targeting the Rohingyas.

Zubair wondered where the Rohingyas would be placed if repatriated. "The Myanmar government must clarify this matter because most of Rakhine is currently under the control of the Arakan Army."

He stressed establishing a safe zone in Rakhine and ensuring a final agreement that guarantees their safety and citizenship as mandatory preconditions for their repatriation.

Rohingya journalist Mohammad Sadiq said he is

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## Must not burn waste at landfills

Says Rizwana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waste must not be burned under any circumstance, irrespective of whether it is at the Matuail Sanitary Landfill or elsewhere, said Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday.

Speaking to journalists after inspecting Dhaka's Matuail landfill, she stressed that multiple initiatives would be undertaken to safeguard the health and wellbeing of communities living in and around the landfill sites.

While acknowledging that immediate relocation of the Matuail landfill is not feasible, she said two nearby steel mills would be directed to shut down.

She also issued a stern warning against the burning of batteries or extracting lead from them, saying that such activities would not be tolerated.



## Eid holiday ends, thousands flood back to Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People have started to return to the capital and its surrounding districts in droves, as government offices are set to reopen today following a nine-day Eid holiday.

Although many have made their way back to Dhaka over the past two to three days, bus and launch terminals, as well as railway stations, witnessed a huge rush of passengers yesterday.

More than 80 launches arrived in Dhaka from various southern districts, carrying thousands of passengers. Most trains were on time, and there were no reports of traffic congestion on major highways, making the return journey largely hassle-free.

However, there were allegations of overcharging by private bus operators -- a practice that was also widespread during the homebound rush ahead of Eid.

According to transport operators, officials, and experts, homebound journeys were relatively smooth this year, thanks to the extended holiday, staggered closures of garment factories, and improved traffic management.

They also credited the involvement of army personnel in managing traffic at congestion-prone spots, the removal of several highway bottlenecks on north-bound roads, and the opening of the Jamuna Rail Bridge for easing travel pressure.



A rare nine-day Eid holiday began on a Friday, giving people at least three days off before Eid-ul-Fitr on Monday. Normally, people get just one day off before Eid day.

Anwar Hossain, station master of Kamalapur Railway Station, told this correspondent that most trains departed and arrived on time, with the exception of two.

"Passenger numbers rose significantly yesterday compared to the last two or three days," he said. Rangpur Express was delayed by one hour, while Kurigram Express ran two and a half hours behind schedule.

Thousands also returned to Dhaka by launches. The Sadarghat Launch Terminal saw a relatively larger crowd yesterday compared to the last two days.

An official of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) said 87 launches reached Dhaka by 2:00pm, while 41 departed from the capital.

Banks, insurance companies, non-bank financial institutions, and stock markets across the country will reopen tomorrow following the Eid holiday, reports UNB.

As per the Bangladesh Bank's directive, banking hours will be from 10:00am to 3:30pm from Sunday to Thursday.

Trading on the Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange will take place between 10:00am and 2:30pm, followed by a 10-minute post-closing session.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## One killed, 19 hurt as BNP factions clash in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

At least one person died and 19 others were injured in a clash between two rival factions of the BNP in Badarganj upazila of Rangpur yesterday.

The deceased is Lavlu Mia, 50. He passed away while undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital around 4:45pm, said his son, Raihan Ali. Another injured is reported to be in a critical condition.

The incident occurred around 11:30am near the Shaheed Minar area in Badarganj municipal town.

The clash reportedly took place over the distribution of shops and a power struggle between supporters of Mohammad Ali Sarkar, former MP and member of Badarganj upazila BNP, and Shahidul Haque Manik, former joint secretary of the upazila BNP and chairman of Ward 13 in Kalupara union.

Witnesses said the confrontation involved attacks and counterattacks that lasted nearly an hour, resulting in injuries on both sides. Badarganj Police Station OC Atikur Rahman said the situation is currently under control.

Following the clash, Rangpur district BNP convener Saiful Islam and member secretary Anisur Rahman Laku issued show-cause notices to Mohammad Ali Sarkar, Shahidul Haque Manik, and Badarganj upazila BNP senior joint convener Humayun Kabir Manik.

The notices were issued on charges of violating party discipline, attempting to establish dominance through violence, and deteriorating the law-and-order situation.



An abandoned water vessel lies tilted on the banks of the Buriganga near the first Buriganga Bridge and Mitford Hospital. Such derelict boats are refurbished here to turn them into makeshift residential hotels, renting out cramped rooms for Tk 30 to Tk 100 per night. However, running such a business on river water is illegal. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## FLOATING SCHOOLS Rezwan gets Yale fellowship

CITY DESK

Architect  
Mohammed  
Rezwan,  
who



pioneered the concept of floating schools in flood-prone Bangladesh, has been selected as a 2025 Yale World Fellow.

Yale University awards this prestigious fellowship annually to global changemakers addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges, according to a press release.

Rezwan is among 16 fellows chosen from more than 4,200 nominated candidates worldwide.

Rezwan founded Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, a nonprofit organisation that launched the world's first solar-powered floating school in 2002.

Growing up in the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



## MA Haque's 29th death anniv today

CITY DESK

Today is the 29th death anniversary of Mohammad Abdul Haque, former minister, top ranking police officer, writer, and founding president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), said a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhwani has been arranged at the Banani graveyard.

Besides, arrangements have been made to distribute food items among the destitute and orphans. Also, a special prayer will be held at the mosque.

The MA Haque Foundation and the deceased's family members have requested his friends and well-wishers to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

On the occasion, MA Haque Smrity Sangsad has organised a daylong programme at his birthplace in Zakiganj, Sylhet.



Pedestrians crossing with risk over a broken pontoon at Bagerhat-Mongla ferry terminal yesterday. Over the years, the pontoon has been damaged in various places, causing pedestrians to slip and potentially leading to accidents at any time. Thousands of pedestrians cross the river through this pontoon every day.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Man kills brother over fishing dispute

UNB, Satkhira

A man was killed by his brother in a dispute over fishing in the Kalaroa upazila of Satkhira yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mosharraf Hossain, 60, of Boalia village of the upazila, said Shamsul Arefin, officer-in-charge of Kalaroa Police Station. The incident occurred around 7:30am in Boalia village.

"The prime suspect, who is the victim's younger brother, has already been arrested. Efforts are ongoing to apprehend other individuals involved in the crime," the OC said.

According to locals, the dispute began over fishing in a canal near the victim's house. The altercation escalated into a violent confrontation, during which Mosharraf was killed.

Another person was injured in the incident and is currently receiving treatment at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

## Man arrested for stalking 9-year-old in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police detained a man yesterday on charges of stalking a 9-year-old girl in the Bardhali Bazar area of Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila.

The detainee is Shariful Islam, 48, of Lalapur village of the upazila, said police.

Baliadangi Police Station OC SM Shawkat Ali said locals apprehended Shariful and called 999 when they saw him stalking the girl on her way to a tutor.

Upon receiving the emergency call, police went to the scene and took the accused into custody.

The OC quoting locals said the detainee had allegedly molested the victim on March 22 in the bazar area while working at a restaurant owned by the victim's father. He was later released following an arbitration arranged by locals, he added.

The OC said the filing of a case was underway.

NOTICE

SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH  
HIGH COURT DIVISION  
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)  
COMPANY MATTER NO.481 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF:  
An Application under the Section 81(2) read with  
Section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994.  
AND  
IN THE MATTER OF:  
Malaysia Bangladesh Holdings Pte. Ltd.  
.....Petitioner  
-Versus-  
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms,  
T. C. B. Bhaban, 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka  
.....Respondent  
Mr. Binod Kumar Agarwal, Advocate  
.....For the Petitioner

It is a notification for all concerned that the aforesaid petitioner brought an application under section 81 (2) read with section 85(3) of The Companies Act, 1994 before the Hon'ble High Court Division. On 18.03.2025 the Hon'ble judge of the Company Court Mr. Justice Ahmed Sobel admitted the application and kindly gave an order to put Affidavit in compliance publishing the notice duly. Anyone concerned regarding the issue can appear before the Hon'ble court in person or with his learned advocate.

Binod Kumar Agarwal  
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh Room No. 1013 (Annex),  
Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association Building, Dhaka. Mobile: +88 0171 7941531

## RMG workers block road for reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

RMG workers blocked a road in Chattogram yesterday protesting the termination of nearly 200 workers from three factories in the Chattogram Export Processing Zone (EPZ).

Around 200 workers blocked the main road in the city's Free Port area around noon, said police.

According to Industrial Police and EPZ sources, in light of recent unrest and workers' protests, three EPZ factories terminated nearly 200 workers with their benefits during the Eid vacation.

When the incident came to light, the terminated workers and their colleagues staged a demonstration, blocking the road.

Industrial Police Chattogram-3's Additional Superintendent of Police Saidur Rahman told

The Daily Star, "Excelsior Shoes Limited terminated 40 workers, Chittagong Fashion terminated 36, and JW Apparel sacked 99 workers for different reasons as per company policies."

"Before the Eid vacation, the companies paid salaries to the workers, and the three factories implemented their decisions with the consent of BEPZA authorities. Upon learning of the matter, the workers protested the decision and demanded their jobs back. They blocked the road for nearly 40 minutes, halting traffic movement," said the police officer.

The officer also said, "A meeting will be held tomorrow [today] at the BEPZA office, where police, company officials, BEPZA officials, and an army representative will be present to find a solution."

### Eid holiday

FROM PAGE 3  
OVER 10.7M MOBILE  
USERS LEFT DHAKA

Meanwhile, some 10.7 million mobile users left Dhaka during the extended nine-day public holiday for Eid ul-Fitr, spanning from March 28 to April 3, reports UNB.

This information, based on data from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), covers users of four major telecom operators – Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink and Teletalk.

Faiz Ahmad Tayyab, special assistant to the senior adviser of the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology, shared this data on his Facebook account.

According to his post, during the holiday period, 10.7 million mobile users left Dhaka, while 4.4 million users entered the city.

### Devotees take part

FROM PAGE 5

A folk fair was also organised on the bank of the river.

In 2015, a stampede during the bathing festival resulted in the deaths of ten people. Since then, the authorities have been vigilant and taken all necessary measures to ensure a safe and organised event.

Kurigram, devotees gathered on the Brahmaputra shoal at Chilmari upazila to perform Ashtami Snan.

The upazila administration arranged Ashtami Snan ghats at different points, including Ramna Ghat, Balabari Haat, Raniganj Haat, and Fakirer Haat points on the Brahmaputra River shoal, said Chilmari UNO Sabuj Kumar Basak.

"I have come here to take a bath in the Brahmaputra River to purify myself and

to wash away my sins," said Ramesh Chandra Das, 70, a devotee from Chowdhurani area in Rangpur.

Around three lakh devotees joined the festival in Chilmari, said Sachindra Nath Barman, one of the organisers.

In Mymensingh, hundreds of devotees performed Ashtami Snan at different points, including the Old Gudaraghat area, Kachari Ferry Ghat, and Char Kalibara area.

A special fair on the occasion of Ashtami Snan was also held in the city's Durgabari Road area.

Around 70,000 people performed the rituals on the bank of the Brahmaputra in Mymensingh yesterday, said Advocate Bikash Roy, a Hindu community leader.

[Our Correspondents from Narayanganj, Lalmonirhat, and Mymensingh contributed to the report]

## Couple drowns in Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A young couple drowned in the Padma river in Satbaria area of Sujanagar upazila on Friday evening.

Their bodies were recovered early yesterday, said police.

The deceased were identified as Hridoy Pramanik, 23, and his wife Mou Akter, 19, from Pabna Sadar upazila, said police.

According to locals, around 25 to 30 people, including the couple, went on a boat ride at Kanchan Park in Satbaria.

The boat capsized during the ride, said witnesses.

While most of the passengers managed to swim ashore, the couple went missing.

Locals tried to rescue them but failed.

Md Abdul Alim, officer at Sujanagar Fire Station, said a team of firefighters recovered the bodies from the river yesterday morning.

Md Mojibar Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sujanagar Police Station, said an unnatural death case was filed in this connection. The bodies were handed over to their families at noon, he added.

### Judiciary must

FROM PAGE 3

the country," the chief justice added.

British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke said an independent and efficient judiciary is vital for the rule of law and the foundation upon which the rights and freedoms of individuals rest.

"It is more important than ever as Bangladesh charts the pathway to a democratic, inclusive, and prosperous future," she said while speaking at the seminar.

She reiterated the UK's commitment to justice sector reform and inclusive governance.

She said the chief justice's roadmap is both timely and transformative, offering a strategic vision that responds to citizens' aspirations for a fair, timely, and accessible justice system, according to UNDP.

Bangladesh Supreme Court and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised the sixth regional seminar titled "Judicial Independence and Efficiency," bringing together senior members of the judiciary, legal experts, and development partners to promote transparency, efficiency, and accountability within the justice system.

PRAYER TIMING		APRIL 6			
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4-40	12-45	4-45	6-21	7-45	
JAMAAT 5-15	1-15	5-00	6-24	8-15	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

## Rezwan gets Yale

FROM PAGE 3

remote region of Chalan Beel, he witnessed how seasonal floods would close schools, disrupt lives, and leave families without basic services.

Rather than treating the flood as a setback, he viewed it as an opportunity for innovation.

His floating school model now includes libraries, health clinics, training centres, and floating farms. These boat-based services ensure year-round access to education and support for thousands of families.

The government has included Rezwan's model in its National Adaptation Plan (2023-2050), and the concept has been replicated in eight countries in Asia and Africa.

Emma Sky, Director of Yale's International

Leadership Center, said, "Rezwan's work is not just for Bangladesh – it's for the world. His model shows how local innovation can help communities everywhere adapt to the climate crisis."

Regarding the award, Rezwan said, "This recognition is for all the resilient people of Bangladesh who continually inspire us. Their encouragement has enabled us to prove that innovative solutions can emerge from any corner of the world."

Rezwan's work has received recognition from the United Nations, and a British publication named him one of the world's 20 "Earth Heroes".

His floating school model has also been featured in textbooks in the US, UK, Japan, and Taiwan.

## Hope at a time

FROM PAGE 3

uncertain whether Myanmar is capable of accepting the Rohingya at this moment.

"Our homes are now under the control of the Arakan Army. The junta has been forced to abandon these areas. So how will they carry out repatriation? That's something we'll have to see," he said.

Still, he thanked the Bangladesh government for pushing the repatriation process this far.

"We want to return to our homeland, but only if it is safe to do so."

After the announcement was posted, many Rohingya social media groups lit up with discussion. Although no one is sure when or how repatriation will begin, many expressed hopes at this development.

Mohammad Nur of Kutupalong Refugee Camp said he was delighted to learn that 180,000 Rohingyas have been identified as eligible for return to Myanmar and

that more of their people are pending verification.

"I'm very happy to hear this, and I hope for a safe return of my people."

Bangladesh shelters 1.2 million Rohingyas, most of whom fled the military crackdown in Rakhine State in 2017. Not a single Rohingya could be repatriated to Myanmar despite several attempts over the last eight years.

Instead, about 100,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh since July last year as the conflicts between the Arakan Army and the military junta led to a further displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in the state.

Sources said the relationship between the Rohingya minority community and the Buddhist majority community in Rakhine State remains tense.

In addition to atrocities by the junta, they have frequently faced brutal attacks by local Rakhine groups as well.

## No place for AL in NCP

FROM PAGE 5

the Students Against Discrimination, Akhtar clarified that the NCP, SAD, and the National Citizens' Committee are three distinct and independent entities.

"The NCP will continue its activities as a political party, while the National Citizens' Committee and the SAD -- as political and civil society platforms -- will continue working toward the broader goal of societal transformation," he said.

## Only 2 doctors for 5

FROM PAGE 5

are providing essential services to admitted and incoming patients.

He stressed that with sufficient staff, the hospital could offer better and more comprehensive care.

Shaidul Hasan Shipon, general secretary of Kulaura Sangbadik Samitee, said although the Kulaura Upazila Health Complex was upgraded from 31 beds to 50 beds in 2006, it is not yet fully functional.

For a long time, about five lakh people in the upazila have been deprived of proper treatment due to a shortage of doctors,

shortage of medicines and various mismanagement.

One of the hospital's two ambulances is operational, but the other is out of order due to lack of a driver. The shortage of cleaning staff is even more acute, with only one worker responsible for cleaning the entire hospital, he added.

District Civil Surgeon Dr Md Mamunur Rahman said the issue of doctor shortages across seven upazilas, including Kulaura, has been reported to higher authorities.

He said necessary steps are being taken to address the problem.

## River land grabbed

FROM PAGE 5

Gazi, and Bahadur Shah, have already been revoked as per a notice issued on February 3.

However, while some leases have been cancelled on paper, the land has yet to be reclaimed.

Md Rafiqul Alam, vice-president of the central committee of Bangladesh Nodi Bachao Andolon, said, "According to the foreshore law, the river boundary in port areas includes five feet outside and 30 feet inside the high tide line. No one is allowed within 50 feet of the last high-tide mark.

The government cannot lease such land."

Md Nasim Reza, assistant commissioner (land) in Galachipa, said they have ordered a halt to the soil extraction after being informed of the matter.

Contacted, Md Mizanur Rahman, Galachipa upazila nirbahi officer, said some temporary leases were granted for seasonal watermelon cultivation on newly emerged shoal lands.

"However, there is no scope to build embankments or elevate riverbank. We are looking into the matter," he added.

Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by UNICEF Bangladesh

RFP No. LRPS-2025-9196489: Long Term Agreement (LTA) to provide 'Accommodation, Meetings and Conference Venue services'.

UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested service providers with a proven track record and professional credibility of providing the above-required services under LTA.

- Download the electronic copy of Bid documents from UNGM  
https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/262653

- Alternatively, vendors may request the bid documents via email at 'supplybangladesh@unicef.org' by 13 April 2025.

Deadline for submission of the proposal: Time 11 am (BST: GMT +6) Tuesday, 29 April 2025

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

www.unicef.org/bangladesh

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game



## No place for AL in NCP

Says Akhtar Hossain

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Dinajpur

If any member of Awami League attempts to infiltrate the National Citizen Party, they will be resisted and handed over to the law, said the party's Member Secretary Akhtar Hossain.

"If anyone from Awami League dares to associate themselves with the NCP, they will face consequences. We will take firm action to protect our movement and ideals," Akhtar said.

Anyone who has imposed fascism on Bangladesh has no moral right to participate in the country's politics, he also said.

He made the remarks on Friday night while talking to journalists following a discussion meeting with NCP organisers at the Rangpur Chamber Building.

Akhtar also said the party will never accept any attempt to rehabilitate Awami League, accusing the party of committing genocide and crimes against humanity.

In response to a question about the NCP's relationship with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

# River land grabbed for farming

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Locals have allegedly been encroaching on the Rabnabad river in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila to cultivate watermelon.

During a recent visit to the area near the Galachipa launch terminal, this correspondent observed that a vast stretch of the riverbank had been elevated using soil extracted from the riverbed and riverbank areas to grab the river's land.

Watermelon cultivation has already begun on parts of the occupied land.

Some residents alleged that the illegal grabbing is being carried out without any obstruction from the upazila administration. Sources claimed that some officials of the upazila land office are facilitating the occupation in exchange for bribes.

Saeed Talukdar, a local farmer cultivating watermelon on a portion of the grabbed land, said his wife, Tasmin Akhter Jhumur -- an elected member of Golkhali Union Parishad -- had received a temporary lease of three acres from the upazila administration.

He admitted to elevating the

riverbank to protect the crops from tidal water but could not provide any document or details regarding the lease.

Another farmer said they had to pay the land office to cultivate watermelon on the riverbank area but declined to

mention the amount paid as bribe.

Although some areas were reclaimed at the time, illegal occupation resumed in recent



mention the amount paid as bribe.

In 2009, after a report titled "Markets being built on grabbed river land in Galachipa" was published in a national daily, the then shipping minister directed the ministry secretary to take action against illegal occupation of the Rabnabad river's land. A subsequent

years, this time under the guise of temporary leases.

Harun-or-Rashid, surveyor of Galachipa upazila land office, claimed they were unaware of the soil extraction or elevation of the riverbank.

He said the lease permissions for plots in Badarpur mouza, granted to Abbas Hawladar, Dipankar, Sohel Shah Kamal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Devotees take part in Ashtami Snan ritual

STAR REPORT

Thousands of Hindu devotees yesterday performed Ashtami Snan, a ritual of bathing in the holy waters of the Brahmaputra river in different districts, including Narayanganj, Kurigram, and Mymensingh.

According to Hindu mythology, taking a dip in the Brahmaputra during a specific lunar period purifies sins and earns religious merit.

The Ashtami Snan is celebrated on the eighth day of the lunar month, which falls in the Bangla month of Chaitra. This year's bathing time began on Saturday at 2:08am and ended at 12:45am on Sunday, according to the Hindu Tithi.

In Langalbandh of Narayanganj, devotees from all over Bangladesh, as well as from countries like India, Nepal, and Bhutan, joined the religious event, seeking absolution from sin.

The organisers said bathing arrangements were made at twenty ghats stretching over a three-kilometre area across Bandar and Sonargaon upazilas.

This year, an estimated one million people attended the event, said Joy K Roy Chowdhury, an adviser of the Langalband Bathing Festival Celebration Committee.

Visitors brought with them ritual ingredients such as flowers, grasses, fruits, Tulsi leaves, and mango leaves, as they bathed in the Brahmaputra throughout the day.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## 2 SSC examinees die after Eid day crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The two SSC examinees, who were injured in a road accident on the Eid day in Pabna, died yesterday.

The victims are Nayon Hossain, 17 and Md Hriday Hossain, 17.

They were students of Dorga Bazar High School, said headteacher Rafiqul Islam.

This year's SSC examination is scheduled to begin on April 10.

The two were traveling on a motorcycle on the Eid day. At one point, they lost control over the bike and hit a tree beside Sarabaria Road at Atghoria upazila, said Shafikuzzaman Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Atghoria Police Station.

Nayon was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while Hriday was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Nayon succumbed to his injury around 12:30am and Hriday around 2:00am, said the OC, quoting family members.

## Two found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered two bodies in Tangail yesterday.

In Sakhipur upazila, a man was murdered allegedly by his wife over a family dispute.

Jewel, 38, was reportedly struck with a piece of wood by his wife Tania, 35, during an argument over his extramarital affair. He died on the spot.

Police recovered the body and arrested Tania from their house. Jakir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sakhipur Police Station, said Jewel's father filed a murder case in this connection.

In Kalihati upazila, police recovered the body of a woman from a farm land in Majhipara village.

Foyjul Nechoha, 70, went missing since morning. Later, locals spotted her body in the crop field. Kalihati Police Station OC Abul Kalam Bhuiyan said the body has been sent for an autopsy.



People repair boats near the riverside in the Kushighat area of Sylhet city. Life along these rivers and haors is highly dependent on having a boat for easy travel and access to nearby markets. These boats are also used for fishing. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## KULaura HEALTH COMPLEX

# Only two doctors for 5 lakh people

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Kulaura upazila, the largest in Moulvibazar district, is grappling with a shortage of medical professionals at its upazila health complex, the only reliable healthcare facility for its population of five lakh.

Despite the overwhelming demand, the hospital operates with just two doctors.

The shortage has led to chaotic and insufficient healthcare delivery, with patients waiting in long lines for basic treatments.

The lone paediatric specialist, Dr Abu Bakar Naser Rashu, visits only twice a week. In his stead, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Md Zakir Hossain has been attending to paediatric cases.

The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of medical officers, with only a few on duty to attend to patients in just two rooms of the hospital.

Only three of the ten specialist doctors are currently working at the hospital. The lack of a full-time gynaecologist,



anaesthesiologist, and cardiologist, among others, has left patients without crucial medical guidance.

Many are forced to travel to distant hospitals for more advanced care, resulting in significant financial burdens for families.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw a crowd of women gathered in front of the outpatient department. They were trying to see who would enter the doctor's chamber first.

The waiting women said they had been waiting since morning to see a doctor for

gynaecological problems. Since there was no gynaecologist, a female medical officer was seeing the patients.

Rupali Begum from Sharifpur said she had been waiting since 8:00am. The doctor came around 10:00am and started seeing patients. Lata Begum, Morjina Khatun and many others, who had come from far away like her, had been waiting in front of the room since morning for treatment.

Dr Md Zakir Hossain, the upazila health officer, said despite the challenges, they

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Schoolboy beaten to death

UNB, Sirajganj

A schoolboy was beaten to death allegedly by a man and his son at Old Ferry Ghat Balu Point of Hossainpur in Sirajganj town on Friday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Md Ashiq Hossain, 15, a 10th-grade student and son of Dulal Hossain of the Hossainpur.

Sirajganj Sadar Police Station OC Md Humayun Kabir said Ashiq went to bathe at a water pump owned by Al-Amin around 4:00pm on Friday.

Al-Amin and his son Rifat, 15, of Hossainpur Bou Bazar area, reportedly forbade him from doing so, triggering an altercation.

Ashiq was struck in the neck with a bamboo stick. He died on the spot.

Following this, Al Amin and his son fled the area.

Upon receiving information, police recovered Ashiq's body from the scene in the evening and sent it to Shaheed M Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The body was handed over to the family after a post-mortem yesterday morning. The process of filing a case over the incident is underway, the OC added.

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**ASSET DEVELOPMENTS**

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Director Sylhet M.A.G Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet

Memo No. SOMCH/TS/2025/5261

Date: 05/04/2025

### Invitation for Re-Tender for Cochlear Implant

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from bonafide experienced Manufacturer/Agent/Importer/supplier to supply Medical Equipment as per PPR-2008. Terms and conditions are as follows:

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Social Welfare
2.	Agency	Sylhet M A G Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet
3.	Procuring entity name	Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
4.	Procuring entity district	Sylhet
5.	Invitation for	Medical Equipment (For Cochlear Implant)
6.	Tender Ref. No.	SOMCH/TS/2025/5261 Date: 05/04/2025
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
8.	Procurement method	Open Tender Method (OTM)
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
9.	Budget and source of funds	GOB (Devolverment)
10.	Development partners	N/A
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
11.	Project/program code	N/A
12.	Project/program name	Cochlear implant program Sylhet M.A.G Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet
13.	Tender name	Procurement of Medical Equipment (For Cochlear Implant)
14.	Tender publication date	05/04/2025
15.	Tender last selling date	20/04/2025 up to 12.00 Noon
16.	Tender closing date and time	21/04/2025 at 12.00 Noon
17.	Tender opening date and time	21/04/2025 at 12.30pm
18.	Name and address of the offices	
a)	Selling tender schedule	Office of the Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
b)	Receiving tender schedule	(1) Office of the Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet. (2) Deputy Commissioner Office, Sylhet and (3) Superintendent of Police, Sylhet.
c)	Opening tender schedule	Office of the Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
19.	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	N/A
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
20.	Brief description of goods	Medical Equipment (Cochlear implant device, Otologic Drill system - attachment & Burs, Motorized chair, Disposable Gown etc.)
21.	Brief description of related services	Not applicable
22.	Procedure of payment of tender schedule	Through Treasury Challan, Taka 2,000/- (Two thousand) to be paid at Bangladesh Bank/Sonali Bank against Code No. (1) (2)(7)(X)(1)(0)(0)(0)(0)(0)(2)(3)(6)(6). Tender schedule should be collected from SOMCH office on submitting the original challan.
23.	Tender earnest money	Taka 6,65,000.00 (six lakh sixty-five thousand only) Bank Draft or Pay Order in favor of Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>		
24.	Name of official inviting tenders	Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
25.	Designation of official inviting tenders	Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.
26.	Address of official inviting tenders	Office of the Director, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet
27.	Contact details of official inviting tenders	Programme Director, Cochlear Implant, Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, Sylhet.



**Director**  
Sylhet M.A.G Osmani Medical College  
Hospital, Sylhet  
Email: magomch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

GD-820



## Disney puts live-action ‘Tangled’ plans on hold after ‘Snow White’s’ box office performance



Disney has reportedly decided to pause development on its live-action adaptation of *Tangled*, the much-loved 2010 animated film. However, according to The Hollywood Reporter, insiders claim that the studio is now taking a step back—likely influenced by the underwhelming performance of its most recent live-action remake, *Snow White*.

Despite its \$270 million budget, *Snow White* underperformed with \$145 million worldwide.

*Tangled* had progressed with *The Greatest Showman* director Michael Gracey and a script penned by Jennifer Kaytin Robinson (*Thor: Love and Thunder* and *Do Revenge*).

The decision to shelve *Tangled* signals broader concerns over Disney’s hit-or-miss live-action remake formula and the future of the production is uncertain, as Disney appears to be reassessing its strategy amid viewer fatigue.

## South Indian industry shows interest in ‘Jongli’ remake

Siam Ahmed starrer Eid release *Jongli*, directed by M Raahim, has drawn attention not only from local audiences but also from the South Indian film industry. Known for its gritty storyline and visually striking presentation, the film features Siam in a rugged look with a long beard and a scarred lip—prompting comparisons with South Indian film stars.

The film features Bubly, Prarthana Fardin Dighi, Dilara Zaman, Shahiduzzaman Selim, and Rashed Mamun Apu in key roles.

Recently, during a promotional campaign, Zahid Hasan Abhi, producer and CEO of Tiger Media, revealed that Malayalam and Telugu filmmakers have expressed interest in acquiring the remake rights for *Jongli*.

Co-producer Mukhtar Ibn Rafique later confirmed ongoing discussions, noting that early conversations began during post-production in Kolkata, where the teaser and poster caught the



attention of regional filmmakers

“They were initially under the impression it was an Indian film, and after being introduced to the narrative, they showed keen interest,” Rafique told The Daily Star. While no official deal has been signed yet, financial terms have been discussed, and producers remain hopeful.

The *Jongli* team anticipates that a final decision regarding the remake will be reached within a week or two, marking a potential milestone for Bangladeshi cinema’s cross-border recognition.

## ‘Please stop this media trial’: Pori Moni responds to abuse allegations

Actress Pori Moni has responded to allegations of physically assaulting her domestic help, Pinky Akter, who filed a GD at Dhaka’s Vatara Police Station claiming abuse over a feeding issue involving the actress’ daughter.

Last Friday night, Pori came live on Facebook and expressed concern over being subjected to a “media trial” and urged the media to avoid one-sided reporting.

Referring to past false unlawful accusations against her, Pori stated that while she has evidence, she will respect the legal process.

The actress highlighted her long-standing relationships with other staff and questioned the credibility of the new helper Pinky’s claims. She pleaded for peace and accountability, stating that her staff are like family.



### WHAT’S THE HAP?

#### Open mic: Grilled Comedy Jam

Get ready for a night of laughter as Grilled kicks off this month’s comedy season in Dhanmondi with an open mic event. Tonight, both fresh faces and seasoned comics will take the stage to entertain a vibrant audience.

The entry tickets, priced at Tk 50, are exclusively available online.

DATE: SUNDAY | APRIL 6

TIME: 8PM ONWARDS

VENUE: GRILLED, HOUSE 21/A, DHANMONDI 27



## ‘Squid Game’ star O Yeong-su sentenced to one year in prison

South Korean actor O Yeong-su, known for his role as Player 001 in Netflix’s *Squid Game*, has been sentenced to one year in prison for indecent assault.

The 80-year-old was accused of molesting a woman on two occasions in 2017, which he has denied.

Initially given an eight-month sentence with probation, a recent ruling increased it to a year.

Prosecutors described him as abusing his seniority in the theatre scene, while his legal team claimed the evidence was inconsistent.

O Yeong-su expressed regret, calling the situation humiliating, and said he did not believe his actions amounted to assault. A final verdict is due June 3.



## SHAMIM HASAN SARKAR shares his wedding pictures

Last Friday night social media was abuzz with two celebrity couples announcing their marriages online. Among them was TV actor and content creator Shamim Hasan Sarkar.

Known for often sharing photos dressed as a groom, the *Double Pera* star initially left fans guessing whether his official wedding photos was another skit. However, he later confirmed that he got married on Friday in an intimate ceremony at his Mirpur residence.

Dressed in traditional beige and red coloured wedding wear with his

wife, Shamim captioned the photos with, “Alhamdulillah, I am married. Please keep us in your prayers.”

His bride, Afsana Akter Prity, is currently a university student. The couple met a few months ago.

Alongside acting, Shamim is recognised for his work as a content creator on the YouTube channel Mango Squad.

Three of his Eid special works, namely, *Varate Swami*, *Chorer Ghore Chummi* and *Titanicke Eid Jatra* are on YouTube.

# NEWS

### Bangladesh ready

FROM PAGE 12  
chairmanship of BIMSTEC.

He expressed hope that the regional bloc would witness renewed dynamism under Bangladesh’s leadership.

The chief adviser also met former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and sought support in strengthening bilateral relations and contributing to the resolution of the Rohingya crisis to help bring lasting peace to the region.

During a meeting at the Shangri-La Hotel in Bangkok, Yunus thanked Shinawatra for his efforts to expand Thai-Bangladesh trade and cooperation during his time as the prime minister of Thailand.

They also discussed the global trade issues and expansion of microcredit and social businesses in rural Thailand, said Chief Adviser’s Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder.

Yunus also enquired about the health of Thaksin, an old friend of his.

Soon after taking office in 2001, PM Thaksin visited Bangladesh and Grameen Bank with his colleagues and designed a microcredit programme for Thailand inspired by the success of the Grameen Bank microcredit programme.

Yunus had been invited by Thaksin as the chief guest in the national launching of the programme that year.

They also discussed the possible re-launch of the airline route between Chiang Mai and Chattogram, which had brought the flight time between Bangladesh and Thailand to one hour.

Prof Yunus sought Thaksin’s support for Bangladesh’s plan to become an ASEAN member.

### AL should be tried

FROM PAGE 12  
will accept it, Salahuddin added.

There has been no visible progress in the cases filed with the International Crimes Tribunal against those charged with genocide and crimes against humanity—including Sheikh Hasina, her cabinet members, lawmakers, and her cronies, he said.

The nation eagerly expects these cases to be resolved quickly, and therefore, the manpower of the tribunal should be increased. “If necessary, it can be assessed whether tribunals can be established at the divisional level,” he added.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir chaired the meeting with Hefajat that began around 8:30pm and ended around 9:50pm.

## Disaster risk funding

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh’s current fiscal buffers, which is the fiscal space available to cover unexpected expenditure increases, are at the level that is sufficient to meet the needs of the annual average cost of immediate disaster response and relief.

Strengthening fiscal buffers will support closing the short-term financing gap for moderate disasters, while putting in place contingent lines of credit would help create fiscal space for more severe disasters, it said.

In addition, Bangladesh could consider insurance of public assets, including critical public infrastructure and large assets under public-private partnerships, to control fiscal risks associated with natural disasters.

The government could also integrate disaster risk financing need

considerations in its medium-term budget framework and conduct a public expenditure review of disaster-related expenditures to reveal the true fiscal cost of natural disasters in Bangladesh, the report said.

The roles and responsibilities regarding disaster risk management are clearly defined in the country’s 2019 Standing Order on Disasters.

However, the country would benefit from mainstreaming the national disaster risk financing strategy into the National Plan for Disaster Management and the five-year national development plan.

“The government could also develop a comprehensive implementation plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework and establish a timeline for mid-term review and update of the national disaster risk financing strategy,” it added.

## Bangladesh moves up

FROM PAGE 2

### WORLD’S MOST POWERFUL PASSPORTS

Ireland has topped the index this year, with a score of 109. Irish passport holders can travel to 176 countries either visa-free or with a visa on arrival.

Switzerland and Greece share the second position, both scoring 108.5. Citizens of these countries enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 175 destinations worldwide.

Portugal is placed fourth, while Malta and Italy jointly hold the fifth position in the global ranking of powerful passports.

### SOUTH ASIA: REGIONAL COMPARISON

Among South Asian nations, the Maldives holds the strongest passport, ranking 104th globally with a score of 65.5.

Maldivian passport holders enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 101 countries.

At the other end of the spectrum, Afghanistan has the weakest passport both globally and within South Asia. It ranks 199th with a score of 27.

Pakistan follows closely, ranking 195th with a score of 32, placing it among the five weakest passports in the Nomad Capitalist list.

Bangladesh ranks just ahead of Pakistan, with Nepal in 180th position, scoring 39.5.

## Petition filed before SC challenging amendment

FROM PAGE 12

Khan, who is accused of alleged irregularities in the functioning of the Delhi Waqf Board between 2016 and 2021, had earlier claimed that the government brought the bill to capture 123 waqf properties located in prime locations.

“Union Home Minister Amit Shah said 123 Waqf properties are in prime location. They want to capture these properties. They will capture those land which are not under Waqf in revenue records... Do they plan to seize these properties, just as they did with the graveyard at Mata Sundri Road and the buildings behind Lal Masjid? If a property is not recorded as Waqf in the revenue records, the government will claim it as its own,” Khan had said.

The Waqf Amendment Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha after a marathon debate that lasted over 29 hours combined. In both the houses, the opposition vehemently opposed the bill, alleging it was an attempt by the BJP-led government to keep the society in a state of permanent polarisation.

However, the government defended the bill, saying it was necessary as there were several anomalies in the 1995 Act.

Shah, while speaking in the Lok Sabha during the debate, also accused the opposition of spreading misinformation regarding the Waqf Amendment Bill among Muslims.

There are around two dozen Waqf boards across India, owning some 9,00,000 acres (365,00 hectares), a multi-billion dollar property empire that makes them one of the biggest landholders alongside the railways and the defence forces.

The government introduced the revised bill after incorporating the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, which examined the legislation introduced in August last year. The bill seeks to amend the act of 1995 and improve the administration and management of waqf properties in India.

### ISLAMIST ORGS IN BANGLADESH PROTEST

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami

Andolan, and Hefajat-e-Islam in Bangladesh have strongly protested the passing of the controversial bill.

In separate statements, the three Islamist organisations said Narendra Modi-led Indian government has been taking one controversial step after another targeting minority Muslims. As part of this, the highly controversial Waqf Amendment Bill has paved the way for state takeover of Muslim-endowed religious institutions, including mosques, madrasas, and orphanages.

Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar in a statement said yesterday, “The anti-Muslim Waqf Amendment Bill and the BJP government’s ongoing anti-Muslim policies are a matter of serious concern. The controversial bill passed in the Indian Lok Sabha on April 3 is yet another heinous example of the Modi government’s calculated efforts to strip Muslims of their religious freedom, ownership, and rights.”

Through this law, government intervention and takeover of Muslim-endowed religious properties such as mosques, madrasas, graveyards, and shelters has been enabled, he added.

He further stated that under the amendment, inclusion of two non-Muslim members in both the Waqf Boards and the Central Waqf Council has been made mandatory, which significantly weakens the authority of the boards and poses serious concerns for Muslims.

“This move opens the door to blatant interference in Muslim religious institutions. We believe this bill was passed with a politically malicious intent.”

“We urge the BJP government of India to refrain from these anti-Muslim activities and take effective and comprehensive measures to ensure the safety, property, and all interests of Indian Muslims,” the Jamaat leader said.

Hefajat Ameer Muhibullah Babunagari and Secretary General Sajedur Rahman in a statement on Friday slammed the Modi government

for targeting minority Muslims and strongly condemned the passing of the controversial Waqf Amendment Bill.

Sheikh Fazle Bari Masud, joint secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, in a statement on Friday termed the recently passed Waqf Bill in India a gross violation of human rights.

“The BJP government passed this bill to directly interfere in Muslim property. It goes against the fundamental principles of the Indian constitution and is a clear injustice to Muslims, undermining the so-called secularism of the state.”

He said the Modi government wants to establish control over Muslim property under the pretext of reform.

“Despite widespread opposition, the BJP government has passed the bill to incite further communal unrest and facilitate the killing of Muslims. The bill must be repealed without delay.”

### July protester

FROM PAGE 2

in Dhaka. He joined street protests during the quota reform protests and was shot in the head by police on July 18 in Jatrabari.

Three bullets hit him, but due to fear of arrest under the then Sheikh Hasina-led government, he initially received treatment in secret.

After the government was overthrown on August 5, Hridoy was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors managed to remove two bullets from his head.

However, one remained lodged, and he never fully recovered. Family members said he would often suffer from intense headaches and fevers. He fell seriously ill again last Wednesday.

“I couldn’t afford better treatment for my son. I sold my rickshaw and a cow to bear the medical expenses,” said Ansar.

“If we had support to send him abroad, maybe he would still be alive.” Hridoy’s elder brother Md Sohag Islam Anis said, “The bullet inside his head caused him unbearable pain and fever. No one came forward with help for his advanced treatment.”





I have reiterated our position to Prime Minister Modi that Sri Lankan territory will not be allowed to be used by anyone to undermine India's security.

ANURA KUMARA DISSANAYAKE  
President of Sri Lanka



Far-right protesters attend a rally to support South Korean ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. Yoon Suk Yeol was ousted on Friday by the Constitutional Court, ushering in an election after it upheld parliament's impeachment over his imposition of martial law that sparked the nation's worst political crisis in decades.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tariff hikes 'hurt the poor, vulnerable': UN

AFP, Geneva

Increased global trade tariffs will hurt the most vulnerable and poor people, the UN's trade and development agency said Friday, after US President Donald Trump's measures sparked global alarm.

The ensuing trade turbulence "hurts the vulnerable and the poor", said UNCTAD chief Rebeca Grynspan in a statement.

"Trade must not become another source of instability. It should serve development and global growth," Grynspan said.

Trump has unveiled a barrage of import duties against dozens of countries, raising the risk of global recession.

"Global trade rules must evolve to reflect today's challenges, but they must do so with predictability and development at their core, protecting the most vulnerable," Grynspan added. "This is a time for cooperation -- not escalation."

Iran VP fired over Antarctica trip



AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday dismissed his deputy for parliamentary affairs over a costly trip to Antarctica, as the country grapples with hyperinflation amid a biting economic crisis.

A photo shared on social media in recent days showed the now former vice-president, Shahram Dabiri, alongside a woman identified as his wife, posing near the Plancius cruise ship.

The Dutch-flagged vessel has offered luxury expeditions to Antarctica since 2009, with one agency pricing an eight-day trip at 3,885 euros per person.

"In a context where economic pressure on the population remains high... expensive leisure trips by officials, even if paid out of their own pocket, are neither defensible nor justifiable," the Iranian president wrote in a letter published Saturday by the official IRNA news agency, which noted that Dabiri was dismissed.

Dabiri, a 64-year-old physician by profession and a close confidant of Pezeshkian, had been appointed to the post in August.

The government faced strong criticism after the photo was published, and several of Pezeshkian's supporters urged him to remove the official.

IRNA, late last month cited a source in Dabiri's office as saying that he had made the trip before he held a governmental position.

The controversy is another major blow for Pezeshkian, who was elected last year on a promise to revive the economy and improve the daily lives of his fellow citizens.

Modi clinches defence, energy deals in Lanka

Colombo confers country's highest civilian honour to Indian PM

AFP, Colombo

India secured defence and energy deals with neighbouring Sri Lanka yesterday during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, seen as a move to counter rival China's growing influence in the region.

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake rolled out the red carpet for Modi and conferred on him the country's highest civilian honour for "the deep personal friendship" shown to the smaller neighbour.

"We believe that our security interests are aligned," Modi said during a televised ceremony from Disanayake's office in the capital.

"Our security is interdependent and interconnected."

A five-year defence cooperation agreement provides training of Sri Lankan military personnel in India as well as information and technology sharing.

Disanayake applauded what he called "India's rise as a world power, not just a regional power".

"I have reiterated our position to Prime Minister Modi that Sri Lankan territory will not be allowed to be used by anyone to undermine India's security," he added.

India has previously objected to Chinese submarines and research vessels which have called at the main seaport in Colombo.

Sri Lanka has not allowed Chinese submarines to dock since 2014, after India raised concerns over two such visits.

Last year, Colombo imposed



a ban on foreign research vessels following New Delhi's accusations that Chinese ships were being used to spy on India.

Yesterday, Disanayake welcomed Modi -- the first foreign dignitary to visit Colombo since the leftist leader swept to power last year -- with a 19-gun salute.

The two leaders also celebrated the start of construction of a 120-megawatt solar power project, developed as a joint venture between the two nations.

The solar plant had been stalled for years but was reinvigorated with New Delhi's backing.

Modi's visit comes as Colombo grapples with the competing interests of New Delhi and Beijing.

India has become concerned about China's influence in Sri Lanka, which it sees as falling within its sphere of interest.

Disanayake's first foreign visit was to New Delhi in December, but he followed it with a visit to

Beijing in January, underscoring Sri Lanka's delicate balancing act.

China has emerged as Sri Lanka's largest single bilateral creditor, accounting for more than half of its \$14 billion bilateral debt at the time the island defaulted on its sovereign debt in 2022.

Beijing was also the first to restructure its loans to Sri Lanka, a move that helped pave the way for the island to emerge from its worst economic meltdown.

In January, Colombo announced it had signed an agreement with a Chinese state-owned company to invest \$3.7 billion in an oil refinery in the island's south.

The deal would mark Sri Lanka's largest single foreign investment and is seen as crucial for its economic recovery.

Modi's visit to Sri Lanka followed a summit in Thailand and a string of meetings with leaders of neighbouring nations as he sought to shore up India's regional ties.

MYANMAR QUAKE  
UN calls for help as toll hits 3,354

REUTERS, Bangkok

The United Nations yesterday called for the world to rally behind quake-hit Myanmar as the death toll rose to 3,354, while a former USAID official said a US aid team had received notice they were losing their jobs after arriving in the disaster zone.

In addition to those killed by the March 28 earthquake, 4,850 people were injured and another 220 are missing, state media said.

During a visit to Myanmar's second-biggest city, Mandalay, which was near the epicentre of the 7.7 magnitude quake, UN aid chief Tom Fletcher appealed for international support.

"The destruction is staggering. Lives lost. Homes destroyed. Livelihoods shattered. But the resilience is incredible," he said in a post on X.

"The world must rally behind the people of Myanmar."

Myanmar's neighbours, such as China, India and Southeast Asian nations, are among those that dispatched relief supplies and rescuers to aid the recovery effort in quake-hit areas that are home to about 28 million people over the past week.

Meanwhile, the leader of the military government, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, reaffirmed to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the junta's plans to hold "free and fair" elections in December when the two met in Bangkok, Myanmar state media said yesterday.

The United States, which was until recently the world's top humanitarian donor, had pledged at least \$9 million to Myanmar to support earthquake-affected communities, but current and former US officials say the dismantling of its foreign aid program has affected its response.



Ukraine still hitting energy sites: Russia

REUTERS

Russia's defence ministry yesterday said Ukraine had increased its attacks on Russian energy infrastructure, hitting targets 14 times in the last 24 hours, despite a US-brokered moratorium.

In a statement published on Telegram, the ministry said Ukraine "multiplied the number of unilateral attacks using drones and artillery shells on the energy infrastructure of Russian regions".

It said the strikes had caused damage in Russia's Bryansk, Belgorod, Smolensk, Lipetsk and Voronezh regions, as well as the Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Kherson, parts of which Russia controls.

Russia and Ukraine agreed last month to a U.S. proposal for a 30-day moratorium on striking each other's energy infrastructure. Both sides have since repeatedly accused each other of violating the deal.

PROTEST AGAINST TRUMP POLICIES

Thousands join rallies across US



Thousands of demonstrators march during the "Hands Off Massachusetts! Rally" in Boston, Massachusetts yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Washington

Thousands of people descended yesterday on Washington's National Mall and other cities across the United States in opposition to the policies of Donald Trump, in the largest protests since he returned to the presidency.

A big "HANDS OFF!" banner stretched across the stage of an outdoor theatre just a few blocks from the White House, with protests holding signs that read "Not My President!", "Fascism has Arrived," "Stop Evil," and "Hands Off Our Social Security."

Jane Ellen Saums, 66, said she was dismayed to see the Trump administration dismantling America's long-standing democratic institutions.

"It's extremely concerning to see what is happening to our government, and all of the checks and balances that have been put in place that are being totally run over -- everything from the environment to personal rights," said the real estate worker who showed up at the protest dressed as Mother Nature, wrapped in ivy and holding a globe.

At a time of spreading global resentment against the Republican president, rallies took place earlier in international capitals, including Paris, Rome and London.

A loose US coalition of dozens of left-leaning groups like MoveOn and Women's March organised "Hands Off" events in more than 1,000 towns and cities and in every congressional district, the groups say.

The unifying theme: the growing resentment of what the group Indivisible has called "the most brazen power grab in modern history," led by Trump, his advisor Elon Musk "and their billionaire cronies."



## Yunus-Modi meeting a positive step

Realism must be the guiding premise towards a win-win relationship

A long-awaited meeting has taken place between Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Summit in Thailand. The meeting comes as a positive sign for the Bangladesh-India relationship, which has been strained since the political changeover in August, resulting in the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. The April 3 meeting between Modi and Yunus, the first in-person engagement in the last seven months, raises hope for improved ties between the two neighbouring countries.

Yunus and Modi have known each other for a long time, and Yunus's presentation of the picture of the two leaders from 2015 to Modi must have been a reminder of the cordial relationship that exists between them. This perhaps opened the doors for the candid dialogue that followed. Both sides were forthright in sharing their concerns and acknowledged the importance of the historic, cultural, and trade links between the two countries. Professor Yunus brought up border killings, water-sharing treaties, and Dhaka's request to extradite Sheikh Hasina, among other issues. PM Modi stated that they do not support any particular political party and wish to maintain a people-to-people relationship, which is what we expect. The Indian prime minister, on the other hand, shared their concerns regarding the minority situation in Bangladesh. While Yunus reiterated his assurance that the interim government is addressing the issue, he also pointed out the fake and exaggerated presentation of the issue in Indian media. Though the meeting did not offer immediate solutions for any problems that exist between the two nations, it undoubtedly launched a dialogue, which, we hope, will result in follow-up steps. This is especially crucial for Bangladesh as a lower riparian country, as the Ganges Water Treaty is soon to expire, and the Teesta Water Treaty has seen no headway for years.

We also hope that, following this meeting, the negative discussion in the Indian media regarding Bangladesh will stop. Given the importance of a strong India-Bangladesh tie, realism must set in our bilateral relations, and insensitive rhetoric of all sorts should be avoided. Dialogues with our Indian counterparts should be fact-based and realistic, leading to decisions that mutually benefit both parties. We hope that both governments will strive to build a win-win relationship between the two neighbours.

## Rohingya repatriation long-overdue

BIMSTEC should step in to address the crisis

With the Rohingya repatriation process stalled and international funding to support them significantly reduced, the chief adviser has rightly urged the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to take visible actions for their repatriation. He called on member states to initiate dialogue between Myanmar's conflicting parties and work towards restoring stability in Rakhine State. Unfortunately, despite several attempts over the past eight years, not a single Rohingya sheltered in Bangladesh has been repatriated to Myanmar. Instead, around 100,000 more Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since July last year, driven by escalating conflicts between the Arakan Army and Myanmar's military junta. Against this backdrop, it is crucial for international forums, including BIMSTEC, to actively engage in addressing this protracted crisis. The chief adviser has also cautioned that, if left unresolved, the situation has the potential to create instability in the entire region.

Bangladesh has been hosting approximately 1.2 million Rohingya, most of whom fled Myanmar during the military crackdown in Rakhine State in 2017. Following the military takeover in 2021, Myanmar descended into civil war, with the Arakan Army gaining control of nearly 90 percent of Rakhine State. Recently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a warning about an imminent famine in Rakhine. In light of these developments, the chief adviser has called for the establishment of a humanitarian channel in Rakhine to provide essential supplies to the people and prevent further displacement. This also raises the question: can the repatriation process realistically begin under such dire circumstances in Rakhine?

Reportedly, Myanmar authorities have identified 180,000 Rohingya as eligible for repatriation out of a list of 800,000 Rohingya currently sheltered in Bangladesh. The Chief Adviser's Press Wing stated that the original list was submitted by Bangladesh in six phases between 2018 and 2020. U Than Swe, Myanmar's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, further confirmed that the final verification of an additional 70,000 Rohingya is pending further scrutiny of their photographs and names. He also indicated that the verification process for the remaining 550,000 Rohingya on the original list will be expedited. While these assurances from Myanmar are promising, significant efforts are still required to guarantee the safe and dignified return of the Rohingya.

Myanmar must ensure a conducive and secure environment in Rakhine to facilitate the safe return of the Rohingya. The authorities there must grant them full citizenship, freedom of movement, access to employment opportunities, and other basic human rights. Bangladesh, which is already under considerable strain in supporting the Rohingya refugees, is facing additional challenges due to the reduction in foreign aid. Thus, the sooner the repatriation process can start, the better it will be for both Bangladesh and the region.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### Olympics revived

Pierre, baron de Coubertin, a founder of the International Olympic Committee and its president from 1896 to 1925, realised his goal of reviving the Olympics when the first modern Games opened in Athens this day in 1896.



### AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and currently employed at a nonprofit financial intermediary in the US. He previously worked for the World Bank and Harvard University.

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

In recent years, the Bangladesh economy has weathered three major external shocks: Covid, the Ukraine War, and the July uprising. Now, another storm is brewing on the horizon. The first three came without any warning. The new one coming is Trump's tariff war. It is not entirely a surprise, and the country has had enough time to prepare for it, but its impact on commodity prices and the taka/dollar exchange rate is yet to be seen as of the first week of April.

Bangladesh is a "small country." And I do not use the adjective "small" in terms of the size of its population, nor regarding its influence on regional politics. Bangladesh is characterised as a small country in technical terms, in the parlance of the "theory of international trade and finance." Why so? Because our terms of trade and foreign currency exchange rate are given, or determined by external forces beyond our control.

Since taking oath in January, US President Donald Trump has made raising tariffs on foreign goods a cornerstone of his foreign policy as well as domestic policy. During his first presidency, Trump's goal was to reduce US trade deficits. This time, he seeks to punish Canada, Mexico, and China, putatively for sending drugs and migrants to the US. It might seem that a small country like Bangladesh may escape the wrath of this misguided policy.

Bangladesh, as we all know, does not export drugs or send illegal migrants to the US. As a small country, we are able to buy and sell as much of our imports and exports, respectively, without any impact on the price of goods in the global market.

In the realm of foreign exchange, it is a little more complicated. A small country's economy and trade volume are generally too small to have a significant, immediate impact on the global foreign exchange market, or the taka's exchange rate against the dollar,



US President Donald Trump delivers remarks on tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, DC, US, April 2, 2025.

PHOTO: REUTERS

which is the world's reserve currency. But the government tried to keep our exchange rate pegged at a high rate.

A rise in tariffs, or a threatened rise, will lead to volatility in the foreign exchange market. Bangladesh's foreign exchange rate was considerably overvalued in the past, and under the interim government is easing towards a market-based exchange rate regime. The effect of growing unease among traders is evident in the recent rise in the price of gold in Bangladesh.

So, at first sight, it may appear that Bangladesh has nothing to fear about the latest round of the tariff wars. But is that really so? Emboldened by the positive outcome of the tariffs levied on China during his first presidency, Trump is escalating the war and is now handcrafting several variations of import taxes to serve his purpose. These fall into three categories: a) basic tariffs; b) reciprocal tariffs; and c) secondary tariffs.

Basic tariffs are used to raise the cost of imported products. They can be applied uniformly across the board,

but some countries gain exemptions. Reciprocal tariffs are imposed in retaliation for tariffs levied on US exports. If Bangladesh imposes tariffs on cotton imports from the US, it could face some retaliation in the future.

Trump is now opening up another front by talking about "secondary" tariffs on specific countries and their exports. Venezuelan and Russian oil are

and threatened to use tariffs as a tool of its foreign policy, or as a "bamboo stick," Bangladesh and countries in a similar situation have reasons to feel caught in the crossfire.

While no place is truly insulated from global economic problems, some regions and economies are more resilient and have better tools to manage shocks than others. But the interconnectedness of the global economy means that even seemingly isolated areas can be affected.

While Bangladesh's products are not yet directly affected by the recent tariffs, continued economic uncertainty will upend financial markets. We have to keep an eye on the timing. As always, Bangladesh can benefit from the "migration" of investment and factories from China. The 35 percent tariff on RMG originating from China provides an opportunity for Bangladeshi exporters to increase their market share for this commodity.

We can learn from Vietnam, which is in competition with Bangladesh in some spheres but also enjoys a symbiotic ecosystem in others, and appears to be taking countermeasures to mitigate the effects of some of the possible turbulence in the global economy.

The New York Times, in a report entitled "How Trump's Tariffs Could Reorder Asia Trade and Exclude the US," provides some interesting possible outcomes of the tariff war. The Asian Development Bank is expecting a positive turn because supply chains can become more regional, and if countries are open to trade and investment among themselves, then there's a measure of safety or protection.

First, we could provide a welcome mat to Chinese firms and other companies trying to avoid the US tariffs. Secondly, Bangladesh can look at Asian markets as an alternative to the US and EU. Finally, Bangladesh may form trade partnerships with countries in the region.

The beneficial impact of US tariffs on Chinese goods may cancel out if the former raises tariffs on our exports now or in the aftermath of our transition from LDC status next year. Currently, US tariffs on Chinese garments might not boost our exports since these are non-competitive items, but Bangladesh will still be able to create an edge. To do so, it needs to enhance enterprise-level productivity, streamline trade facilitation, and improve compliance.

# Dhaka's traffic through a visitor's eyes



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

SAYEED AHMED

"Having worked in Manila, Hanoi, Lahore, Delhi, Bangkok, and many other large cities notorious for traffic congestion, I didn't expect Dhaka to be different. But I was wrong," chuckled Lucy, a girls' education consultant and a long-time friend with an ever-positive attitude. The drive to the hotel, only seven kilometres away, took two hours, she recounted over coffee at a local cafe.

Slowness aside, what baffled her most was the complete unpredictability of movement. "In other cities, traffic follows some basic patterns—it moves in lanes, stops at red lights, gives way to emergency vehicles," she explained. "Here, it's as though every driver is following a different rulebook—or no rulebook at all." Vehicles create improvised lanes, turning two-lane roads into four or five lanes of tightly packed cars, buses, rickshaws, and motorcycles, some driving in the opposite direction. Traffic signals, when present, are entirely optional. Vehicles stop randomly in busy streets to pick up or drop off passengers. Drivers communicate through a complex language of honking.

"And the motorcycles!" Lucy exclaimed, her eyes widening. "They're everywhere." They ignore every conventional traffic rule—driving on sidewalks, going against traffic, zigzagging between vehicles at dangerous speeds. They carry entire families of four, weaving through bumper-to-bumper traffic, frequently missing collisions by inches, not one helmet among them. Even Hanoi—famous for its sea of motorcycles—

maintains certain patterns and unwritten rules, but not Dhaka.

What most perplexed Lucy was the disconnect between written regulations and street reality. Bangladesh has comprehensive rules on paper, including requirements for driver licensing, vehicle certification, and traffic behaviour. But the streets are

cross fast-moving, chaotic traffic because no safe crossing is nearby. The footbridges are mostly empty—too steep, far apart, and sometimes unsafe.

Pedestrians in Dhaka have a sixth sense—a split-second timing for when to dash between vehicles. Those who can't move quickly—older people, people with disabilities, and parents with young children—face nearly impossible challenges. "It's survival of the fittest in its purest form," Lucy noted wryly.

What truly sets Dhaka apart is the sheer number of unauthorised vehicles. Many vehicles have questionable legal status, from thousands of unregistered autorickshaws to buses running without proper permits. Getting a driving licence is arduous and time-consuming, forcing people to find "other" ways to obtain one. The result is predictable: constant

**Bangladesh has comprehensive rules on paper, including requirements for driver licensing, vehicle certification, and traffic behaviour. But the streets are full of rickshaws with no license plates, buses in visibly dangerous condition, drivers without formal training, and vehicles that would never pass a basic safety inspection anywhere else.**

full of rickshaws with no license plates, buses in visibly dangerous condition, drivers without formal training, and vehicles that would never pass a basic safety inspection anywhere else.

"It's not that there's no enforcement," Lucy observed. "It's selective enforcement. I noticed how luxury vehicles of government or political high-ups are given free passage, while others are occasionally stopped." This pattern reveals something deeper about how the city functions—the rules apply differently depending on who you are and your connections.

Lucy's work often focuses on safety issues in school attendance. In Dhaka, she was stunned by the dangers that pedestrians, especially schoolchildren, face daily. Young girls in school uniforms

near-misses, frequent accidents, and a pervasive sense of danger.

Lucy's observation is spot on: Dhaka's traffic shows a pattern of inequality and adaptation with two simultaneous transportation systems. "For the wealthy and connected, there are private vehicles with drivers, air-conditioned ride-shares, and the privilege of ignoring rules without consequences. For everyone else, there are overcrowded buses, rickshaws, and long walks along roads without proper sidewalks."

This division reflects broader social inequalities. People with low incomes spend a disproportionate amount of time and income on transportation, face greater physical danger, and endure more stress and struggle in their daily commutes. "It actively limits

opportunity. I met girls who couldn't attend better schools because safe transportation wasn't available. Women couldn't accept jobs far from home because of the risks and harassment they'd face on public transportation," Lucy explained.

Despite her shock at the traffic conditions, Lucy was impressed by how Dhaka's residents have adapted to this challenging environment. They have developed remarkable navigation skills, created informal systems to move through the chaos with knowledge of shortcuts, unwritten rules about when certain routes are passable, and creative solutions to seemingly impossible obstacles. Delivery persons on bicycles navigate through bumper-to-bumper traffic. Street vendors turn traffic jams into business opportunities, moving between stopped vehicles to sell everything from bottled water to mobile phone accessories. "There's an extraordinary resilience here," she said, "but that comes at a tremendous cost in time, safety, and quality of life."

Dhaka's traffic is a microcosm of larger governance challenges. The same patterns—nominal rules undermined by selective enforcement, the power of connections over regulations, the ingenuity of ordinary people in navigating broken systems—appear in many aspects of urban life.

"The traffic isn't just a transportation problem," she concluded. "It's a governance problem, an equality problem, a public safety problem, and ultimately a development problem. When basic mobility becomes difficult and dangerous, it affects everything else—education, healthcare, economic opportunity, social cohesion." Her last words: "I am grateful to this unique city because it has taught me to be humble, for I don't have to endure the struggle its residents must face daily."

Lucy was about to disappear through the departure terminal gate when she popped out her head, "Look right, left, front, and back while crossing the road, would you?"



# An unfinished struggle: Democracy, identity and reform

Professor Ali Riaz, head of the Constitution Reform Commission, talks to Monorom Polok of The Daily Star about Bangladesh’s democratic struggles and the constitutional rights of individuals.

Recently, we have seen attempts to reshape the historical narrative of the Liberation War. What is driving these efforts, and how might they impact the future?

History is never a singular narrative. Every historical event has multiple perspectives. Take 1947, for example—there isn’t just one version of what happened. States often try to impose an official narrative, whether in Pakistan, India, or elsewhere. Similarly, in Bangladesh, governments have shaped the narrative of 1971 to suit their interests. However, history is not linear or the product of any single party or individual. The independence movement was the result of a long historical process—events like the election of 1970, the mass uprising of 1969, and the military rule of 1958 were all stepping stones. In academia, history is always open to reinterpretation, but in Bangladesh, we have lacked the academic freedom to discuss historical complexities openly.

I disagree with the idea of a “regime-centric” history. While regimes leave their mark, history is shaped by broader forces. Since 1972, three themes have defined Bangladesh—the quest for democracy, economic development, and identity formation. Now that we have the opportunity to discuss these issues, different interpretations are emerging. There may be concerns about how some are revisiting history, but we should encourage open discussions rather than impose a singular, linear narrative. History is always subject to interpretation, and there is no “correct history,” only correct facts.

If someone asked whether we have collectively failed to preserve or articulate the history of the Liberation War, I would say it is debatable. How do we preserve history? Even government documentation efforts have gaps. While official records exist, the voices of ordinary people—rural fighters, women in various capacities, and the working class—are often missing. This is not unique to Bangladesh. In India, it took decades to recognise the contributions of subaltern voices in the independence movement. When I showed my students the film Gandhi, they immediately asked, “Where are the women?” The same issue arises in Bangladesh’s historical records. We’ve not done enough to preserve oral histories or document grassroots participation comprehensively. That said, history doesn’t disappear—it resurfaces over time. The challenge is ensuring that all

perspectives are acknowledged, rather than forcing a singular narrative.

It is widely accepted that political parties in power have selectively preserved or manipulated historical narratives to suit their interests. Does this distance us from the true essence of independence? We must first ask: was there ever a single understanding of independence? Different groups had different expectations. For the emerging Bangalee middle class, independence meant economic opportunity. For farmers, it was about fair prices for their crops. For students influenced by past struggles, it was about creating an egalitarian society. Leftists envisioned a socialist state. The one unifying goal was independence from Pakistan. That consensus has never been questioned. What has been debated is whether the post-independence state met the expectations of those who fought for it.

Our proclamation of independence identified key principles—equality, human dignity, and social justice. These ideals resonated with different social groups in diverse ways. But building a state that reflects these principles requires continuous debate and democratic engagement, which has often been denied.

**Drawing a parallel to 1990, do you think there was a similar consensus on August 5, when Hasina’s rule was widely seen as authoritarian and spiralling out of control? And are we now searching for a collective identity once again?**

In part, I agree. There was a common enemy—not an individual or party, but an authoritarian regime eroding democracy and dismantling institutions to create a personalistic autocracy. That much was widely recognised.

But there is a crucial difference between 1990 and 2024. In 1990, the movement focused on removing General Ershad and holding fair elections, assuming the state would function properly afterward. No one questioned the constitutional framework. However, in 2024, the movement goes beyond removing a single regime. Over the past decade, it has become clear that the system itself needs reform. That is why we now see widespread calls for structural change rather than just leadership change. August 5 was the beginning of this process.

**The constitution has been amended 17 times, yet democracy in Bangladesh**



ALI RIAZ

**continues to face frequent threats. As part of the Constitutional Reform Commission, what challenges did you face in addressing this issue?**

Our main challenge was designing institutional safeguards to prevent future autocratisation. The 1972 constitution lacked strong accountability mechanisms. The prime minister held immense power with virtually no checks. Even after 1990, when Bangladesh transitioned from a presidential to a parliamentary system, the 12th amendment simply transferred all executive powers to the prime minister, creating a Westminster-style system with excessive centralisation.

In 1988, I wrote that Bangladesh was heading towards constitutional autocracy. By 1998, it was clear that removing a dictator was not enough—real reform was needed. Yet, the 12th amendment failed to introduce necessary checks and balances. Article 70, which prevents MPs from voting against their party, effectively turned the legislature into a rubber stamp. The judiciary also lacks independence. Courts have been heavily influenced by the executive, with politically motivated judicial appointments and interference in legal proceedings. True democracy cannot exist without an independent judiciary.

People often tell me, “Balance the power between the president and prime minister.” But the issue is not about two offices—it’s about creating institutions that ensure accountability. Power must be distributed so that if one branch fails, others can check it.

**Even if institutional reforms are introduced on paper, can we expect these**

**institutions to function autonomously given their history of political influence?**

If you’re asking about the next six months, of course not. Institutional change is a long-term process. A well-written constitution alone does not guarantee democracy. Political culture matters. Political parties must commit to upholding democratic norms.

However, if the constitution itself enables authoritarianism—by concentrating power in one office, undermining judicial independence, or preventing parliamentary scrutiny—then reform is essential. Right now, the prime minister controls the legislature, the judiciary, and the party. If we do not change this framework, democracy will remain vulnerable.

Ultimately, real change requires both constitutional reform and a shift in political culture. Institutions must be strong enough to resist political manipulation. Until then, the struggle for democracy will continue.

But it’s not only about the next six months. The point is that if you’re thinking of an immediate fix, it is very difficult and possibly close to impossible. But we must think in the long term and create those pathways. If not today, then tomorrow; if not tomorrow, the day after. If you create an independent judiciary, a secretariat free from executive influence, and fiscal independence, then you’re starting the work. If you establish a judicial appointment commission with a fair and transparent selection process, while it may not happen tomorrow, in two or three years, it will bear fruit.

So, how do we go through this transition process? That’s the challenge. That is where leadership is required and consensus needed. This is how reforms can be done—not just for the judiciary but also for the administration, the police. How do we make them independent and accountable? Not by changing individuals, but by creating systems. Transition is always painful—it has to be. Otherwise, it’s just the status quo. People did not die for that—16 years of oppression, extrajudicial killings—they should not have died in vain.

**Could you address the role of secularism in our constitution—how it has been defined and interpreted historically, and how it has evolved over time?**

The notion of secularism has transformed over the years. The 19th-century idea of secularism mostly concerned the relationship

between the state and religion. It emerged from a European context where religious institutions once dominated politics. We borrowed aspects of this model, but the interpretation of secularism has changed over time. In Bangladesh, secularism has sometimes led to Islamophobia, with the state treating Islamic practice as contrary to its ideals. Does this mean we should discard secularism entirely? No. But we need to ensure the protection of individuals because of their faith. Pluralism means recognising ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, and protecting marginalised communities. Expanding secularism to include pluralism ensures equal treatment for all.

Instead of removing secularism, we should expand it to embrace pluralism under a broader umbrella. Political leaders embedded their ideals in the 1972 constitution, and while secularism was part of the state principles, it hasn’t been consistently implemented. The real guiding ideals of 1971 were dignity, equality, and social justice, which should continue to define our future.

Has secularism reduced minority persecution in Bangladesh? Despite the 5th and 15th amendments, religious minorities have faced persecution. Minority persecution often stems from social and economic marginalisation, not just religious ideology. Secularism alone doesn’t protect minorities; pluralism does. It provides a broader framework for protection—not just for religious minorities but for all marginalised groups. The state must play an active role in ensuring this protection.

**In Bangladesh, an individual’s access to constitutional rights seems to be restricted by financial class or family background. How can individuals truly access and practice their constitutional rights?**

A crucial factor in protecting individual rights is accessible judicial recourse. The Constitution Reform Commission and the Judiciary Reform Commission recommended decentralising the judiciary. Legal processes should be affordable and accessible to all citizens. Rights must be enforceable and understandable, which is why we recommended simplifying the constitution to make it clearer for everyone. A constitution should be a social contract between citizens and the state, a guide for the nation, and a safeguard against oppression.

# The evolution of poverty research in Bangladesh



HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

Hossain Zillur Rahman is an economist and political sociologist, and executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

It is striking that poverty is now such a well-understood phenomenon. Four decades ago, in the 1980s, there was hardly any basic work on poverty. Poverty reports of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) were usually three to four years late in publication. The analytical framework was also limited. But it was also a time of great intellectual ferment.

At BIDS then, and even earlier in the 1970s, debating development trends and seeking a better understanding of realities and trends on the ground was a passion for many of us. I particularly remember Mahabub Hossain, who passed away on January 3, 2016, as a role model for empathetic and committed scholarship, who always sought to put the spotlight on the often-ignored constituency of farmers.

Mahabub Hossain’s room was next to mine at the Agargaon campus of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). I had then come back to Bangladesh in 1986 after finishing my PhD at the University of Manchester. The World Bank at that time was focused on the so-called structural adjustment programmes and had little focus on poverty issues. There was a group among the donors who called themselves the Like-Minded Group—Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, and Canada. A colleague from the Danish embassy—Shireen Huq—got in touch with me and requested collaboration on developing a new framework for researching and understanding rural poverty. It was about adding some basic work on fundamental indexes used to measure poverty. Naila Kabeer worked with me on this.

Once we developed the concept paper, the Like-Minded Group of donors proposed to support a large-scale longitudinal research study on rural poverty to be implemented by BIDS. Mahabub Hossain had by then (1989) become the director-general of BIDS and actively encouraged the initiative. It was the largest research project of its kind at that time. Though Mahabub *bhai* was the DG, he agreed for me to be the project director, with



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

himself, Omar H Chowdhury, Rushidan Islam, Binayak Sen, and Shamim Hamid as team members. The story of the Analysis of Poverty Trends (APT) project, based on a 62-village national sample, has resounding lessons for today’s knowledge scene as Bangladesh looks to shape its post-July uprising future.

Foundational input for designing the research project came not only from the pre-project conceptual work supported by Danida but also from a post-flood countryside tour in the wake of the devastating floods of 1987 and 1988. These inputs proved an invaluable resource when we launched the APT project at the end of 1989, recruiting at the time the largest team of fresh university graduates. The report of the study was eventually

published as an international publication by SAGE Publications, with the title *Rethinking Rural Poverty*, with myself and Mahabub Hossain as editors and key contributors. The report became the basis for perhaps the first national-level poverty conference in 1992, which was inaugurated by none other than the then prime minister of the country, Begum Khaleda Zia, at the BIDS grounds. Mahabub Hossain had by then left BIDS,

but we continued the APT project with a smaller survey covering 18 villages in 1992 and 1993. The reports from these surveys, titled *Rural Poverty Updates*, were important inputs at the aid consortium meetings then annually held in Paris. Subsequently, we again did a repeat survey of 62 villages in 1995, from which another major volume and a policy brief under the title *Dynamics of Rural Poverty* were produced, which also proved influential in shaping the evolving poverty discourse.

This seminal research shaped policy thinking in multiple areas. Mahabub Hossain brought out the catalytic role of infrastructure—roads and electricity—as

well as remittances in the process of poverty alleviation. I brought up the fundamental dimension of vulnerability in the poverty experience, putting the spotlight on the problem of *monga* (an extreme poverty pocket) and lumpy healthcare expenditures, which are now referred to as the out-of-pocket health expense burden. It was mine and Binayak Sen’s early work on the differentiation between moderate and extreme poverty—



highlighted in the *Rural Poverty Updates* produced from the APT project in the early 1990s—that began to bring into focus the separate problem of extreme poverty in Bangladesh. BRAC’s founder, Abed *bhai*, told me on several occasions how useful he found our work for his own programming ideas.

A fellow traveller in this engaged knowledge journey was the visionary leader of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), the late engineer QI Siddique, with whom both Mahabub Hossain and I developed a deep and lasting bond. When we drew the curtain on the APT project in 1998 through an international conference on poverty, the venue was the LGED. Internationally famous

economists and social scientists—Teodor Shanin, Amit Bhaduri, Nurul Islam, Mick Moore, among others—attended.

Though our institutional paths diverged—I established the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) in 1996, and Mahabub Hossain served in a succession of international institutions, eventually coming home as the executive director of BRAC—our professional conversation never ceased. He was kind enough to be on the founding board of PPRC, and we separately continued the work on the 62-village framework. Our separate institutional paths did not sever the intellectual conversation on the dynamics of poverty. When, at PPRC, we became convinced of the need to address the issue of urban poverty and launched again a long-term research project with the support of the World Bank, one of the key people I was talking to was Mahabub Hossain.

I remember visiting Manila in the early 1990s for an ADB consultancy and made it a point to take a taxi to Los Baños to meet Mahabub *bhai* in his International Rice Research Institute abode. Our shared interest had a strong meeting point in field research to extract new insights from the field data. There were lighter—but no less significant—dimensions to our collaboration too. I was concerned with the ethical issue of how to recompense our survey respondents for the innumerable times we intruded into their lives, taking up three to four hours of their busy daily schedule for our research purposes. The APT team came up with the idea of recompensing not the individual but the community and launched a programme called micro-level community-oriented schemes. Somehow, we improvised to extract some funds from our research budget for these schemes. One of these schemes was a passenger shed for bus passengers in Mujib Nagar village of Meherpur district, which local people had requested from us during our research visit to the village. It was perhaps the only time when two national personalities—Mahabub Hossain, the BIDS DG, and Professor Rehman Sobhan, the BIDS mentor—agreed to join me to make the arduous field trip to inaugurate a humble bus passenger shed in the distant border of Bangladesh.

I miss this camaraderie, this thirst for knowledge as adventure, this urge to converse and connect, this quest to illuminate in the hope of doing good that is even more needed now as Bangladesh strives to craft its new journey of inclusivity, justice, empathy, and prosperity.



## Scrolling into sadness: How screens disrupt teen sleep and mood

In today's digital world, screens are everywhere—from phones and tablets to computers and TVs. For many teenagers, hours spent online have become a normal part of daily life. But experts are increasingly warning that too much screen time may be affecting more than just eyesight or attention spans—it may also be harming sleep and mental health.

A new study published in *PLOS Global Public Health* has found that excessive screen use among adolescents can lead to poor sleep, which in turn raises the risk of depression—particularly in girls.

Researchers from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet followed 4,810 students aged 12 to 16 for a year. They tracked the teens' screen habits, sleep quality, and signs of depression



at three points in time. The results showed that teens who spent more time on screens experienced worse sleep within just three months. They went to bed later, slept less, and had lower-quality sleep overall.

This disturbed sleep pattern was closely linked to rising depression symptoms over time. For girls, sleep problems explained nearly half of the connection between screen time and depression. Among boys, screen time also disrupted sleep, but it had a more direct (though weaker) link to depression.

The findings support existing advice—like that from Sweden's Public Health Agency—that teens should limit leisure screen time to 2–3 hours daily. Reducing screen time, researchers say, could help improve both sleep and mental well-being in young people.

## WORLD HEALTH DAY 2025 Spotlight on women and babies' survival, urging solidarity at a critical moment for global health

### STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has officially announced the theme of World Health Day 2025, **Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures**, which will focus on improving maternal and newborn health and survival.

World Health Day is marked around the world on 7<sup>th</sup> April, the anniversary of WHO's founding in 1948. Each year, it draws attention to a specific health topic of concern to people all over the world.

"The focus of this campaign comes at a crucial moment, aiming to help countries regain lost progress while showcasing new research and evidence that will enhance the health of women and babies globally," said Dr Anshu Banerjee, Director of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at WHO. "It will also be an opportunity to step up support and collaboration for global health – and deliver hope to those in urgent need of lifesaving care."

### Helping every woman and baby survive and thrive:

According to the most recent estimates, close to 300,000 women lose their lives due to pregnancy or childbirth each year; over 2 million babies die in their first month of life, and around 2 million more are stillborn. This is roughly 1 preventable death every 7 seconds – losses which bring tremendous sadness and heartache to millions of families around the world.

While maternal and newborn deaths occur in all regions, the vast majority are in the poorest countries and those facing conflict and other crises. When healthcare facilities close, are attacked, or supplies are disrupted, pregnant women and babies face severe, often life-threatening risks.

Based on current trends, 4 out of 5 countries are off track to meet



the United Nations' global targets for improving maternal survival by 2030; 1 in 3 will fail to meet targets for reducing newborn deaths. Current funding constraints could further jeopardise progress, as many programmes providing critical health services have stalled alongside important medical research.

This year's campaign, which will run until 2026, will urge governments, donors and the health community to invest in proven, high impact interventions. These include pregnancy-related services to detect complications and lifesaving emergency obstetrics, as well as special care for small and preterm babies. Complications relating to prematurity are now the leading cause of death of children under 5 worldwide.

WHO will also highlight the evolving need for health systems to address the many underlying health issues that impact maternal and newborn health. These include not only direct obstetric complications but also mental health conditions, malnutrition, and an increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases.

### Listening to women and supporting families:

The campaign will urge increased global attention to women's longer-

term health and well-being. This includes advocating for laws and policies that safeguard their health and rights, such as paid maternity leave, employment protections, and access to family planning services.

"It is not sufficient that women survive childbirth; they must also be able to enjoy their lives in good health," said Dr Pascale Allotey, Director for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research at WHO.

Efforts are also needed to address the particular risks of climate change for pregnant women and newborns.

### An investment, not a cost:

In low- and middle-income countries, every US\$1 invested in maternal and newborn health is estimated to yield US\$9 to 20 in return.

WHO is supporting maternal and newborn health programmes through:

- Intensive support to 55 countries through the Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere initiative;
- Guidance across pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period;
- Research to improve clinical care;
- Support during humanitarian emergencies;
- Strengthening the role of midwives.

Source: World Health Organisation

## Next-gen insulin could ease type 2 diabetes

Living with type 2 diabetes often means constant effort — checking blood sugar levels, planning meals, and injecting insulin daily. For many, this routine can be overwhelming. But a recent study offers hope in the form of smarter technology that can ease this burden.

Published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the study looked at automated insulin delivery systems — small wearable devices that continuously monitor blood sugar levels and adjust insulin doses throughout the day and night. This technology has been available for people with type 1 diabetes for years, but until now, it had not been widely studied for those with type 2 diabetes who rely on insulin.

For people who switched to these



systems, managing diabetes became simpler and more stable. They no longer had to guess how much insulin they needed or worry as much about sudden spikes or drops in blood sugar. Instead, the system did the adjusting for them, helping maintain a steadier blood sugar level throughout the day.

This is particularly encouraging for those who struggle to keep their diabetes under control, even with multiple medications or traditional insulin pumps. The study showed that the benefits were seen across different types of patients — including older adults and those with other health conditions.

While this technology may not yet be accessible to everyone due to cost or availability, it represents a step forward in diabetes care. For individuals managing type 2 diabetes with insulin, it could mean fewer injections, better blood sugar control, and improved quality of life.

## PRE-DIABETES: a second chance to take control of your health

### STAR HEALTH DESK

Many people underestimate pre-diabetes, often dismissing it as a minor issue. But the truth is, pre-diabetes is a critical warning sign—and an opportunity to make lifestyle changes before serious health problems develop.

### What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. According to global estimates, millions of people are living with pre-diabetes, many without even knowing it. Left unaddressed, pre-diabetes can lead to type 2 diabetes and significantly increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney problems, and nerve damage.

### Warning signs you should not ignore:

Pre-diabetes often develops gradually and may not present obvious symptoms. However, there are some subtle signs that can signal a problem with blood sugar regulation, such as:

- Unexplained weight gain
- High blood pressure
- Persistent cravings for sugary or processed foods
- Frequent heartburn or acid reflux
- Elevated cholesterol levels
- Fatigue or occasional blurred vision

Recognising and responding to these symptoms early can prevent long-term complications and may even reverse pre-diabetes altogether.



### Why early action matters:

Pre-diabetes represents a turning point. One path leads toward chronic disease and medication. The other offers a chance to restore health and prevent future illness. The good news? Making small, consistent lifestyle changes can have a significant impact.

Research shows that people with pre-diabetes who adopt healthy habits—such as improving their diet, increasing physical activity, and losing even a modest amount of weight—can reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by more than 50%.

### Your plan for reversing pre-diabetes:

There is no single "cure" for pre-diabetes, but comprehensive lifestyle adjustments can bring blood sugar levels back to a healthy range. Here are six key steps to consider:

1. Prioritise regular check-ups - Routine

blood tests, including A1C, fasting glucose, and cholesterol, help you track your progress and stay informed.

2. Cut sugary beverages - Sodas, fruit juices, and energy drinks can quickly spike blood sugar. Swap them out for water, herbal teas, or unsweetened drinks.

3. Choose whole foods - Limit processed foods, refined carbs, and sugary snacks. Focus on vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats.

4. Move daily - Regular physical activity helps the body use insulin more effectively. Even 30 minutes of walking per day can make a big difference.

5. Break harmful habits - Quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake, and avoid late-night eating. These behaviors can worsen insulin resistance.

6. Stay positive and committed - A positive mindset helps reinforce healthy routines. Set realistic goals and celebrate small wins along the way.

### The takeaway:

Pre-diabetes does not have to progress to type 2 diabetes. With timely intervention, it is often possible to reverse the condition. By taking control of your health today—through nutrition, movement, and regular monitoring—you can lower your risk of future complications and improve your overall well-being.

Pre-diabetes is not a diagnosis to fear, but a call to action. The power to change the future of your health is in your hands—starting now.

### MAZHARUL ALAM

World Health Day, observed on April 7, is often portrayed as a day to highlight the limitations of traditional healthcare systems. While such critique is necessary for progress, the day should also inspire ideas for improving human health. Four major noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)—cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes—account for over 80% of premature NCD-related deaths.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that 85% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, making NCDs the leading cause of mortality globally. This rising burden demands effective prevention strategies. Yoga and pranayama have emerged as scientifically validated tools for disease prevention and overall well-being. This article explores their effectiveness in tackling NCDs, economic benefits of prevention, and how countries have incorporated yoga into public health.

### The growing burden of NCDs:

NCDs are responsible for approximately 41 million deaths annually, making up 74% of all global deaths. Major risk factors include:

- Unhealthy diet
- Physical inactivity
- Tobacco use and alcohol consumption
- Chronic stress and mental health disorders

### Global statistics on NCD mortality:

- Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs): 17.9 million deaths annually.
- Cancer: 9.6 million deaths per year.
- Chronic respiratory diseases: 4 million deaths, mainly COPD and asthma.
- Diabetes: 1.5 million deaths yearly.

### How yoga counters NCDs:

Yoga provides natural, cost-effective methods to improve physical health, mental clarity, and emotional balance.

1. Cardiovascular diseases and yoga - Yoga reduces stress, improves heart rate variability, lowers blood pressure, and decreases LDL cholesterol. A meta-analysis of 32 studies found significant reductions in systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

2. Yoga in cancer prevention and recovery - Yoga enhances immunity, reduces inflammation, and improves patients' quality of life. A trial showed breast cancer patients practicing yoga experienced a 50% reduction in stress-related cytokines.

3. Respiratory diseases and yoga therapy - Pranayama increases lung function, reduces

airway resistance, and strengthens respiratory muscles.

4. Yoga's role in diabetes management - Yoga improves insulin sensitivity, regulates glucose metabolism, and lowers HbA1c. It also helps lower blood sugar in non-insulin-dependent diabetics and reduces medication needs. Yoga is now included in many cardiac rehab programmes.

### Investment in prevention vs. treatment:

Treating NCDs could cost over \$47 trillion by 2030. Investing in preventive measures like yoga significantly reduces healthcare costs and enhances quality of life.

### Global adoption of yoga in public health:

- U.S.: AHA recommends yoga; NCI supports research; workplaces report reduced stress and absenteeism (Frontiers in Public Health, 2024).
- Canada, Japan, Germany: Yoga included in public initiatives, workplace wellness, and insurance programmes.
- Nordic Countries: Promoted in schools and workplaces for holistic health.
- India: Through International Day of Yoga and AYUSH Ministry.
- UAE and Saudi Arabia: Integrated into national health strategies.

### Why WHO and policymakers should promote yoga:

While existing healthcare investments are essential for NCD management, they have not been sufficient to curb their rising prevalence. Despite trillions spent on treatments, NCD rates continue to rise, highlighting the urgent need for cost-effective preventive approaches like yoga. Yoga stands out as an effective solution because:

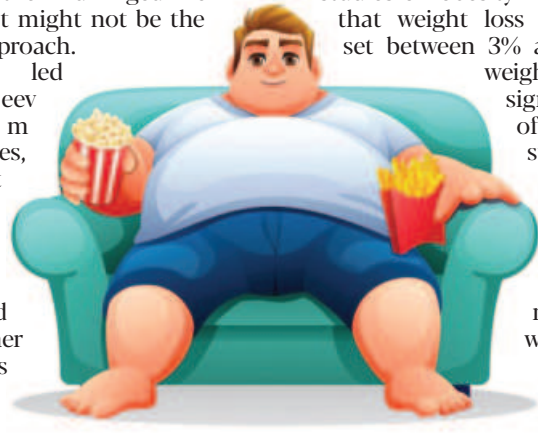
- Yoga is easy to learn and practice. It requires minimal guidance and can be taught within weeks.
- Yoga is cost-effective. Unlike pharmaceutical treatments, yoga needs no continuous expenditure, making it ideal for low-income nations. Yoga requires no machines or expensive equipment, making it a low-investment intervention.
- Yoga is accessible to all ages. Even elderly individuals can practise gentle yoga techniques. Yoga is a proven preventive tool against NCDs. By prioritising yoga in public health strategies, we can reduce disease prevalence, lower costs, and improve well-being worldwide.

The writer is a yoga therapist and founder of Yogistan Bangladesh. Email: yogistan.bd@gmail.com

## Rethinking weight loss targets in obesity treatment: A shift toward holistic health

New research to be presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO 2025) suggests that focusing on percentage weight loss as the main goal for obesity treatment might not be the most effective approach.

The study, led by Dr Sanjeev Sockalingam and colleagues, highlights that weight loss programmes often fail to meet their set targets and overlook other important factors like improving obesity-related



health issues, quality of life, and physical and social well-being.

The research, which reviews 30 studies on obesity management, finds that weight loss goals are mostly set between 3% and 10% of body weight. However, a significant number of participants struggle to achieve these goals. Some studies show that only one-third of participants reach a 10% weight loss target. The review reveals that the commonly

used 5% weight loss goal, originally based on a small number of studies, is often unrealistic for many people with obesity.

Instead of focusing solely on weight reduction, the authors suggest that obesity treatment should emphasise improving health outcomes related to obesity, such as reducing complications, enhancing quality of life, and improving physical and social functioning. This patient-centred approach would provide a more meaningful measure of success.

This work has been reviewed for presentation at the ECO 2025 conference and underscores the importance of broadening the scope of obesity management beyond just weight loss to better address the complexities of living with obesity.

Source: European Congress on Obesity, ECO 2025



## No contracts yet for Ritu & 17 others

SPORTS REPORTER

There has apparently been no resolution regarding the impasse between women's footballers and the team's head coach as six senior players are leaving to play in the Bhutan National Women's League today, a day prior to Peter Butler's return from England.

Sabina Khatun, Ritu Porna Chakma, Monika Chakma, Matsushima Sumaya, Masura Parvin and Rupna Chakma will leave for Bhutan this morning for the league, which is scheduled to begin on April 15.

The former four will play for Paro FC while the latter two have been roped in by Transport United. Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Tabith Awal, along with women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron and other members of the executive committee, sat for a meeting with the six players.

BFF's media committee chairman Amirul Islam Babu told the media that it was a courtesy meeting with the players where the president wished them good luck. However, when asked whether there has been any decision made regarding the players' contract with the federation, the BFF spokesman did not give an answer.

He, however, hinted that the senior players will be called up ahead of the team's departure for the Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, which will be held from June 29-July 5 in Myanmar.

The 18 senior players boycotted training under Butler since he started camp on January 29, alleging him of disrespecting the players and driving a wedge among them. Subsequently the seniors, led by Sabina, were excluded from the squad for two friendly matches away to UAE in February-March. The federation brought 36 other players in the camp - mostly juniors - under contract, leaving the seniors out of the payroll.

The BFF high-ups, however, had said before the Eid break that all 50-plus players will be called up for camp and that the 18 senior players will sign contracts. However, with Butler scheduled to return tomorrow and slated to start the camp thereafter, the departure of the six key players of the side only indicates that not much headway has been made in this regard.

Ritu Porna, the best player of last year's SAFF Women's Championship, told The Daily Star that there has been no discussion in the meeting regarding contracts.

"The federation has told us that it would call us up when there will be national engagement," Ritu Porna said, adding that she was looking to play all four months in the Bhutanese league.

"The president wished us well just like a guardian wishes well for their children," Ritu Porna said. "There hasn't been any discussion on our contract though."



Bangladesh players, seated in a relaxed mood, pose for a group photo at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore yesterday. The Tigresses will take on Scotland in a warm-up fixture at the Lahore City Cricket Association Ground today (3pm Bangladesh time), ahead of the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 Qualifier starting April 9 in Pakistan.

PHOTO: BCB

## Hridoy embarks on unexpected captaincy journey

SPORTS REPORTER

Captaining the star-studded Mohammedan Sporting Club in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League (DPL) was probably the last thing Towhid Hridoy expected to do this year.

Veteran Tamim Iqbal led the big-budget team in the first eight rounds of the league before suffering a major heart attack during the match against Shinepukur Cricket Club at the BKSP in Savar on March 24.

Tamim fortunately survived the heart attack but will require a few months to recover from the incident, ruling him out from rest of the DPL season.

With Tamim not in the picture, the captaincy baton was expected to be handed to an experienced player like Mahmudullah, Mushfiqur Rahim or Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

However, Mahmudullah has some injury concerns as Mohammedan could avail his services in only two games thus far while the latter duo is expected to represent the national side in the upcoming two-Test series against Zimbabwe and won't be available for Mohammedan after April 9.

Thus, the coaching staff and team officials decided to name in-form batter Hridoy, who has made 266 runs this season so far at an average of 88.66, their skipper for the rest of the season.

As Mohammedan was preparing to take on Prime Bank Cricket Club in a high-voltage match scheduled today in Mirpur, Hridoy was asked about the challenge of captaining the side after their practice session yesterday.

The 24-year-old, who has captained

age-level teams and also the 'A' team, relished the unexpected opportunity and was eager to take the challenge.

"I have captained age-level teams and also the A team. Sometimes these things are not in your hands. The responsibility was handed to me by the team and I have to respect to it. As a professional player, one has to take the challenge," Hridoy told reporters at the National Cricket Academy premises.



"Every sector has its own challenge. I will try to enjoy my role and try to contribute as much as possible in this department [captaincy]," he added.

Although Mohammedan are the highest spenders in the current edition of the DPL, things have not panned out exactly how they would have liked so far.

Mohammedan currently stand third in the points-table with 12 points from eight matches, trailing leaders Abahani Limited by two points and matching second placed Gazi Group Cricketers in terms of points but falling behind them in net run rate.

Mohammedan will begin a crucial

phase in their campaign as they are set to face top sides like Prime Bank Cricket Club (fourth), Agrani Bank Cricket Club (fifth) and table-toppers Abahani in their next three matches and they still need at least two victories to earn a place in the Super League phase.

On top of that, the absences of important members have left Mohammedan in a vulnerable spot. But Hridoy remained optimistic and claimed that the vacuum created by these absences was an opportunity for their bench players to step up.

"We need to adjust to the situation and do whatever is best for the team. It's a big-budget team. Probably, a few players will leave for national duty. But it's a positive sign for our back-up players as they are also players and they also need to get opportunities," said Hridoy.

Despite regularly featuring in both white-ball formats for Bangladesh, Hridoy is yet to make his Test debut. The batter is unlikely to get that opportunity in the Zimbabwe series as well as selectors have hinted they are unlikely to experiment with the squad against Zimbabwe.

Still, Hridoy, who averages 45.65 in first-class cricket, spoke about his dream of representing Bangladesh in Tests one day.

"Every player wants to play Test matches. It's a dream for me to play in the red-ball format. If I get the opportunity, I will definitely play. Just like any other player, I also want to play in this format. If I can do well in the domestic red-ball matches, hopefully then I will be able to play for the national side."

## Man United look for double over City

STAR SPORTS DESK

*It has been a disappointing season for both Manchester clubs but the 196th instalment of the Manchester derby is still a cause for excitement. While City are fighting for a top-four finish, United, positioned 13th, are well away from a European spot and will hope for a strong finish to the season to add wind into Ruben Amorim's sails.*

● Man City have won more Premier League away games against Man Utd than any other side. Five of their nine wins have come under Guardiola, the most of any visiting manager in the competition.

● The Red Devils are also looking to complete their first Premier League double over City since 2019-20, following their victory away from home earlier this season.

● But home advantage counts for little in the Manchester derby. The away team have won 10 of the last 18 Premier League meetings between the two sides (D2 L6). Since 2015-16, the only top-flight fixture with more away wins is Crystal Palace versus Liverpool (12).

● In all competitions this season, only Leicester City (26) have conceded the opening goal in more matches among all Premier League sides than United (23).



Everton's Idrissa Gueye makes a lunging tackle on Arsenal's Mikel Merino during a 1-1 draw in their Premier League fixture at Goodison Park yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Gunners trip up at Everton

REUTERS, Liverpool

Everton did neighbours Liverpool a massive favour by holding title-chasing Arsenal to a 1-1 Premier League draw at Goodison Park on Saturday when Iliman Ndiaye's penalty cancelled out a Leandro Trossard opener for the visitors.

Second-placed Arsenal have 62 points from 31 games, 11 behind leaders Liverpool, who have a game at hand when they go to Fulham on Sunday. Arsenal took the lead in the 34th minute with the first shot on target in the game as a poor header in midfield allowed Raheem Sterling to race clear and feed Trossard, who took a touch and drilled his shot low into the far right corner.

Everton were awarded a penalty two minutes into the second period when Myles Lewis-Skelly hauled down Jack Harrison in the box and Ndiaye netted his ninth goal of the season in all competitions to leave Arsenal's flagging title hopes in tatters.

## Black Caps wrap up happy home summer in style

AGENCIES

New Zealand capped off a dominant home summer with a commanding 43-run victory over Pakistan in the third and final ODI at Mount Maunganui, securing a 3-0 series whitewash. In a rain-shortened clash, the Black Caps showcased their depth and composure, led by stand-in skipper Michael Bracewell, who impressed with both bat and leadership.

Bracewell, who smashed a brisk 59 off 40 balls, praised the team's complete performance and the character shown across the series. "It was an enjoyable day, always nice to finish the season on a high... it was great to see different guys step up at different times," he reflected post-match.

The bench strength shone again, with Rhys Mariu backing up another classic half-century. But it was the young pace trio of Ben Sears, the man-of-the-series who became the first New Zealander to claim five wickets in successive



**"It's a disappointing series. I will give credit to New Zealand, they played really well in all departments of the game. They are like true professionals in all departments. And we need to improve and that's it, we need to play better against the new ball."**

Pakistan captain  
**Mohammad Rizwan**

ODIs, Jacob Duffy, and Nathan Smith who stole the show throughout the series. Sears, in particular, dazzled with back-to-back five-wicket hauls, including 5/34 in the finale that crushed Pakistan's chase.

the team's growing depth ahead of a packed international calendar. With new faces rising to the occasion and leaders stepping up, the future looks bright for New Zealand cricket.



KL Rahul of Delhi Capitals greets Chennai Super Kings' MS Dhoni with a handshake following their Indian Premier League match at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday. Delhi won by 25 runs, with Rahul playing a pivotal role, scoring 77 runs off 51 balls to help his team post a total of 183 for six. Meanwhile, the 43-year-old Dhoni, whose family [inset], including his parents, were in attendance -- a rare sight -- made 30 runs off 26 balls in a subdued performance by both him and his team.

PHOTO: REUTERS



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## MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE

# Bangladesh ready to send more aid: Yunus

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has assured Myanmar's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing that Bangladesh stands ready to extend further humanitarian support to victims of the recent earthquake in Myanmar.

He conveyed condolences and sympathy to the people of Myanmar over the tragic loss of life caused by the March 28 earthquake, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

The commitment was made during a meeting between the two leaders on the sidelines of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok on Friday.

During the talks, they discussed Bangladesh's ongoing humanitarian efforts, which include the deployment of rescue teams to assist Myanmar following the disaster.

"We remain ready to provide further humanitarian support. Our ships are ready," Prof Yunus said.

Min Aung Hlaing, who also serves as prime minister and chairman of Myanmar's State Administration Council, congratulated Professor Yunus on assuming the



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The holy Ashtami Snan, a Hindu ritual, is being performed in the holy waters of the Brahmaputra at Langalbandh in Narayanganj. The celebration takes place on the lunar month's eighth day, which was yesterday.

PHOTO: SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

## INDIAN WAQF BILL

# Petition filed before SC challenging amendment

### Islamist bodies in Bangladesh condemn bill

STAR REPORT

Amanatullah Khan, a member of the Legislative Assembly from the Aam Aadmi Party, yesterday moved to the Supreme Court to challenge the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was passed by both Houses of Parliament in India recently.

In his petition, the Delhi Waqf Board chairman stated that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, curtails the religious and cultural autonomy of the Muslims, enables arbitrary executive interference, and undermines minority rights to manage their religious and charitable institutions, reports The Statesman.

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## Dozens of crude bombs go off as AL men clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

At least seven people were injured in a clash between two factions of Awami League in Shariatpur's Zajira early yesterday, during which, at least 100 crude bombs were detonated, police said.

The clash broke out in the Mulai Bepari Kandi and Durbandanga areas of Bilaspur union between supporters of Kuddus Bepari, Zajira upazila AL member, and Jalil Madbar, former president of the union's Swechhchasebak League, over establishing supremacy in the area, they added.

Both the leaders have 8-10 explosive and murder cases filed against them, the police said.

Shariatpur Superintendent of Police Md Nazrul Islam said at least seven people were injured due to the blasts. However, their injuries were not life-threatening.

Two video clips of the clash have gone viral on social media.

Police have deployed additional force in the areas to maintain law and order, he said.

In one of the videos, verified by police, groups of men were seen running haphazardly carrying red buckets. Some of them were wearing helmets. The video showed two groups of people hurling objects at each other which detonated upon impact and created smoke. Multiple explosions could be heard.

Kuddus Bepari did not receive phone calls but over texts, he denied involvement in the clash and blamed the other group for attacking his men.

Jalil Madbar, currently in jail, and his brother Md Abu Salek Madbar could not be reached for comments.

# Disaster risk funding inadequate

Says IMF's recent report on Bangladesh

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh's vulnerability to natural disasters has placed significant strain on its economy and financial resources, with about \$5 billion needed in the short term for relief and early recovery, according to the International Monetary Fund.

About \$15 billion is required for reconstruction in the medium term, said the technical assistance report titled "Bangladesh: Disaster Risk Financing" unveiled yesterday.

Between 2000 and 2003, disasters caused an estimated \$13.6 billion in damages, affecting 130 million people.

Subsequently, there is a pressing need for enhanced financial mechanisms to address medium-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

"Disasters in Bangladesh have profound economic impacts, affecting agriculture by destroying crops and fisheries, disrupting industries, damaging infrastructure like roads and buildings, and leading to loss of lives and displacement of people," the report said.

The country being in the low-lying delta region makes it particularly vulnerable to these disasters.

The total funding needed in response to a repeated event that occurs once every two years is estimated at \$4.7 billion,

### IMF'S PRESCRIPTION FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- ➔ \$4.7b needed for events that occur every two years
- ➔ \$5b needed in short-term for severe disasters
- ➔ \$15b needed in medium-term for reconstruction
- ➔ Only \$1.5b can be mobilised at present under existing policy mechanisms

which is about 1 percent of annual GDP.

This comprises immediate response and early recovery efforts, including food, shelter, health, and income recovery support for floods and cyclones of \$1.2 billion and medium-term costs for rehabilitation and reconstruction of \$3.5 billion.

The total resource requirements are

expected to increase significantly for more severe natural disasters such as those that occur once in 50 years.

The needs would amount to \$20 billion or about 4 percent of annual GDP and are comparable in magnitudes to the 2004 floods and the 2007 Cyclone Sidr in terms of the share of GDP.

With the policy mechanisms that are already in place, as much as \$1.5 billion can be mobilised for the immediate response and early recovery phase of disaster response.

However, for moderate disasters such as those occurring every three to five years, the government faces a financing gap.

For a one-in-five-year disaster event with a 20 percent chance of occurrence in a year, the financing gap for immediate relief and early recovery is \$0.9 billion, and the mid-term reconstruction financing gap is \$4 billion.

For catastrophic disaster events, the financing gap increases significantly -- a one-in-fifty-year disaster event leads to a short-term financing gap of \$3.5 billion and a reconstruction financing gap of \$11.8 billion.

The IMF report emphasises the importance of strengthening fiscal policy mechanisms to close these gaps.

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## Celestial 'music' may point to our origin

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The "music" of stars could help explain how galaxies form, according to scientists.

The stars that we see in the night sky are undergoing continuous "starquakes" which means their brightness fluctuates all the time.

Those fluctuations can be turned into frequencies, like those in music, scientists say. The frequencies, in turn, can help us understand how old and massive a star is, as well as other characteristics.

Researchers say they can listen to the changes in those frequencies, like the altering pitch of a piece of music, to understand the story and origins of stars.

"Starquakes occur in certain stars, leading to a continuous cycle of brightening and dimming. By carefully observing these tiny fluctuations in brightness, we can listen to a star's musical rhythm," said Claudia Reyes, from Australian National University.

"These fluctuations are like musical notes, similar to the vibrations of a string or the hum of a drum, that can be translated into frequencies. Each frequency tells us more about the star's size, chemical composition and internal structure."

In the study, researchers looked at a cluster of 27 stars 2,700 light years away, examining the "sounds" they made. They were chosen because they are all siblings: they were born in the same gas cloud, four billion years ago, having similar chemical compositions but different masses.



## 'AL should be tried for committing genocide'

Says Salahuddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League should be brought to trial on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity over the massacre during the July uprising, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

"We have presented it as a proposal before the people. We want the Awami League to be held accountable for genocide and crimes against humanity. For this, laws can be enacted in accordance with Article 47 of the Constitution or existing law can be amended," he said while talking to reporters after a meeting with representatives of Hefajat-e-Islam at the BNP chairperson's political office in the capital's Gulshan last night.

If the political fate of the Awami League is determined through judicial proceedings, the people of this country



Fishermen on dinghies catch shrimp fry at daybreak on the Shibsra river near the Sundarbans in Dacope, Khulna. They sell every 1,000 young shrimps to farmers for around Tk 900. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Israel 'deliberately' attacked Gaza aid workers

### Shows new video footage

AFP, Gaza City

A video recovered from the cellphone of an aid worker killed in Gaza alongside other rescuers shows their final moments, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent, with clearly marked ambulances and emergency lights flashing as heavy gunfire erupts.

The aid worker was among 15 humanitarian personnel killed on March 23 in an attack by Israeli forces, according to the United Nations and the Palestinian Red Crescent.

The Israeli military has said its soldiers "did not randomly attack" any ambulances, insisting they fired on "terrorists" approaching them in "suspicious vehicles".

Military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said that troops opened fire on vehicles that had no prior clearance from Israeli authorities and had their lights off.

But the footage released by the Red Crescent yesterday appears to contradict the Israeli military's claims, showing ambulances travelling with their headlights on and emergency lights flashing.

The six minute 42 second video, apparently filmed from inside a moving vehicle, captures a red firetruck and ambulances driving through the night amid constant automatic gunfire.

The vehicles stop beside another on the roadside, and two uniformed men exit.

In the video, the voices of two medics are heard -- one saying "the vehicle, the vehicle", and another responding: "It seems to be an accident."

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