

DHAKA THURSDAY APRIL 10, 2025

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 83

CHAITRA 27, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHAWWAL 11, 1446 HIJRI

16 PAGES PLUS CAMPUS: TK 15.00

TRUMP TARIFFS World gets 90-day pause, except China

China levy hiked to 125%; stocks surge after announcement

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump abruptly backed down yesterday in his global trade war with a 90-day tariff pause for most countries -- but slapped even more levies against China in what has become a brutal duel between the world's two largest economies.

Following days of global market turmoil, Wall Street stocks surged in reaction to Trump's sudden announcement on his Truth Social network.

"I have authorized a 90 day PAUSE" on higher tariffs that took effect yesterday, Trump said, adding that he took the decision after more than 75 countries

by raising tariffs on US imports to 84 percent.

"At some point, hopefully in the near future, China will realize that the days of ripping off the U.S.A. and other Countries, is no longer sustainable or acceptable," Trump said.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent insisted that Trump had not backtracked, saying: "This was his strategy all along, and you might even say that he goaded China into a bad position."

He termed China the "most imbalanced economy" in modern history, posing trade problems for the United States and other countries.

The European Union had earlier launched its own counterattack,



- » Base 10% tariffs to stay
- » China slaps 84% tariffs on US
- » Alarm bells ring as bonds tank
- » EU approves its own tariffs

“I know what the hell I’m doing. I know what I’m doing. And you know what I’m doing too.”

DONALD TRUMP, US president



had reached out to negotiate and did not retaliate against the United States.

Only a flat rate of 10 percent tariffs on all countries that took effect on Saturday will remain in place. This marked a stunning reverse from often punishing levies that hit even many of the closest US allies.

But Trump accused China of still "ripping off" his country.

"Based on the lack of respect that China has shown to the World's Markets, I am hereby raising the Tariff charged to China by the United States of America to 125 percent, effective immediately," Trump said.

Trump had only hours earlier ramped up the duties on Chinese goods to a giant 104 percent. China then retaliated

announcing measures targeting some US products in retaliation for American duties on global steel and aluminum exports.

The 27-nation bloc, which Trump has accused of being created to "screw" the United States, will hit more than 20 billion euros' worth of US products, including soybeans, motorcycles and beauty products.

But the EU notably did not retaliate against the separate 20 percent US tariffs on all goods that came into effect a minute after midnight yesterday.

Trump announced a week ago on what he called "Liberation Day" that he would impose a 10 percent baseline tariff on all countries, taking effect Saturday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Oil hits 4-year low, gas prices slide too

REUTERS, Singapore

Oil prices fell to a four-year low and traded below \$60 a barrel yesterday, while several commodities, including coffee, tumbled as the trade war between China and the US escalated.

Asian and European equities fell, and US markets opened slightly lower as the rollout of steep US tariffs deepened fears of a global recession.

The European Commission also said it would press ahead with a first set of countermeasures from April 15 against Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Oil prices dropped to their lowest in more than four years, with Brent futures dipping below \$60 a barrel.

"Fears of weaker global oil demand, combined with the OPEC+ decision to loosen output more quickly than expected, have created a toxic cocktail fuelling concerns of an over supplied oil market," said SEB analyst Ole R Hvalbye.

Brent futures LCO1 were down \$2.47, or 4.8 percent, to \$59.81 a barrel at 1443 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures CL1 were down 4.1 percent, at \$57.12.

Oil has lost about one-fifth of its value since Trump announced higher tariffs on a range of US trading partners on April 2, the biggest five-day drop since March 2022.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Tariff freeze offers relief to RMG sector

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment exporters heave a sigh of relief as US President Donald Trump yesterday announced a 90-day pause on "reciprocal" tariffs.

This pause gives Bangladesh enough time to make preparations, said Mohiuddin Rubel, a former director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

"Bangladesh may be among the highest beneficiaries in the next 90 days as China will face tariffs," he added.

"But in the long run, the future of the industry will depend on how effectively Bangladesh negotiates with the US in the next 90 days," said the owner of a major conglomerate exporting garments.

taxes, the rate will reach 53.5 percent, according to owners of some of the largest garment factories.

They add that most of the garment products made in Bangladesh have less than 20 percent US cotton.

A White House order from April 2 reads, "The [new] rates of duty ... are in addition to any other duties, fees, taxes, exactions, or charges...."

Duty rates will vary by product, but factory owners estimate the average to be around 50 percent.

Bangladesh is the third largest garment exporter to the US, occupying 9.3 percent of the \$105 billion imported clothing market in the US. In 2024, Bangladesh exported garment products worth \$7.2 billion to the US.

As the tariff on Chinese goods stays

“In the long run, the future of the industry will depend on how effectively Bangladesh negotiates with the US in the next 90 days.”

MOHIUDDIN RUBLE, former BGMEA director

Late last night, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus wrote on X, "Thank you, Mr. President, (@POTUS) for responding positively to our request for 90-day pause on tariffs. We will continue to work with your administration in support of your trade agenda."

Several garment factory owners have said they were relieved by the 90-day pause, but concerns remained.

If the tariffs President Trump announced earlier are put in effect after 90 days, Bangladesh's \$40 billion apparel industry will face a major challenge as the exporters will face up to 53.5 percent duty in the US market, industry insiders say.

For a T-shirt containing less than 20 percent US cotton, the duty used to be 16.5 percent. As the latest 37 percent tariff is an addition to the previous

in place, China may flood European markets with cheap clothes, spelling another trouble for Bangladeshi factories that export there, industry insiders fear.

Sharif Zahir, managing director of Ananta Group, said the government should begin intense negotiations with the US authorities.

One of his buyers had cut a previous work order in half amid fears of sales slump in the US, he adds.

Prof Yunus on Monday wrote to President Trump, seeking a 90-day pause for the tariff on Bangladeshi goods.

Commerce Adviser Bashir Uddin sent a separate letter to the US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer offering duty benefit on import of 100 American products in Bangladesh.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus visiting the Bangladesh Satellite Company Ltd stall showcasing Starlink connectivity at the Bangladesh Investment Summit-2025 at the InterContinental Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

ADB sees a 3.9% growth in FY25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank has identified four major risks to Bangladesh's economy, including the potential impact of additional US tariffs and political uncertainty, both of which could hinder growth and fuel inflationary pressures.

The ADB, in its April Asian Development Outlook, revised Bangladesh's GDP growth forecast for FY25 to 3.9 percent from 4.3 percent, citing persistent economic challenges. The Manila-based lender, however, expects the economy to recover and grow by 5.1 percent in the next fiscal year.

Inflation is projected to accelerate to an average of 10.2 percent in FY25 and ease to 8 percent in FY26.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

3RD-COUNTRY EXPORT India revokes transshipment for Bangladesh Shipments to Nepal, Bhutan via road to be unaffected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has revoked the transshipment facility for Bangladesh's export cargo to third countries transiting through its land borders to Indian airports and ports, but clarified that the measure would not affect Dhaka's trade with Nepal and Bhutan through Indian territory.

The move, however, is likely to increase the cost for Bangladesh's apparel exporters who also deliver export orders to Western markets via India's airport, namely, the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi.

In a notification on Tuesday, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) of India said it rescinded the transshipment of export cargo from Bangladesh to third countries through Land Customs Stations (LCSs) to ports or airports, in containers or closed-bodied trucks.

An Indian circular in June 2020 had allowed this facility.

In its Tuesday's notification, the CBIC said it decided to revoke the 2020 circular with immediate effect, but

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Bangladesh fertile ground for transformative ideas

Says Yunus at investment summit, invites global business

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged global investors to do business in Bangladesh because the country is the best place for investment.

"Bangladesh is a country with crazy ideas to change the world... so we invite you to join that craft not only to change Bangladesh by your business but to change the world," he said while inaugurating the Bangladesh Investment Summit-2025 at Hotel Intercontinental.

The four-day summit is being organised by Bangladesh Investment Development

"If you want to have a business with a purpose, along with the business we do, Bangladesh is the place."

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus

Authority (BIDA).

"If you want to have a business with a purpose, along with the business we do, Bangladesh is the place."

Making money from business is happiness, but making other people happy is super happiness, he said.

"If you have a business in Bangladesh, you will get happiness and super happiness. You will be proud of what you have done."

Prof Yunus said Bangladesh and the whole region had powerful resources.

Foreign investors reaffirm commitment to Bangladesh

B1

How youth-led startups are solving real-world problems

P3



S M Mahbubul Alam, Managing Director of Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC, receiving the prestigious Excellence in Investment Award 2025 from the Honorable Chief Adviser Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

MY DHAKA



PHOTO: COLLECTED

'IN QUEST OF BONO-BIBI'

When art meets folklore

RBR

Experiencing a "kalbaishakhi jhor" inside the mangrove forest of Sundarbans can be both a spine-chilling experience or a romantic one.

In such a death-defying scenario, one cannot help but call upon the divine powers to keep them safe. Even though this is just a hypothetical scenario, if one found themselves in danger in a forest, at the sea, on the mountains and so on, sometimes the only option left is to call upon the guardian spirit of mother earth when they find themselves in times of trouble.

I am of course talking about Bon Bibi or Bono Bibi, the guardian spirit of the Sundarbans' forest dwelling communities.

The revered lady of the forest, Bon Bibi, is now also in Dhaka.

A mixed-media exhibition by Saidul Haque Juise titled "In Quest of Bono-Bibi", organised by Kalakendra, is currently underway. Located at 9/4, Block-D, Lalmonia, the event will remain open till April 20, operating between the

hours of 4:00pm to 8:00pm.

This is a must-visit exhibition because Juise, who is known for his three-dimensional progressive fine art, impeccable craftwork, and beautiful masks, is holding a solo exhibition after a long hiatus.

"Bono Bibi is simultaneously a Muslim Pirani and a Hindu goddess. As tradition goes, if you chant her name in the face of any calamity in the forest, she will protect you. Folklores of Dhukhey, Bon Bibi Dakkhin Rai, Gazi's folk tales are stories I grew up with. So, when I saw how endangered our Sundarbans have become, I began to work on the 'In Search of Bono-Bibi' series. You can say it is my way of saying sorry or paying homage to mother nature," explains Saidul Haque Juise.

You will always find an underlying tone of his political consciousness and his profound love for nature seeping into his works. In this series, he has described his work through Shlokas or verses taken from Bon Bibi literature, alongside stories written by him.

"These compositions were initially

ideas I penned during the pandemic, when hope was but an elusive thing. I just tried to jot down my fleeting moments of grief, rage, and hopelessness in the pages of my sketch book, and coloured them with black, green, red, and blue inks – the shades that represented our loud traditional colours in Bangladeshi folk pottery," Juise explains, adding that later, when he was working on the exhibition, he simply juxtaposed those sketch book paper drawings on frames.

"The whole range of work dealing with Bono Bibi are 2D artworks. Working with paint, pen and ink drawings, paper and newspaper cuttings, and using local icon symbolism, he tried to portray the mystery of the forest and the profoundness of the lady of the forest. His attempt to integrate all this through the rendering of pen and ink collages and linear drawings comes out successfully in this exhibition," according to the exhibition's foreword, written by Azyz Sharafy, professor of Electronic Arts, Studio & Graphic Design at Washburn University in the US.

"The series also features sculptures

that are composed of twisted and grouped wires assimilated masterfully. At the end of the series, you are left with a lingering melody of the spirit of Bono Bibi," says Shagufta Sharmin Tania, an expatriate poet and storyteller.

"As an iconoclast artist, Juise has continually strived to weave Bangalee art form throughout his series, with figures morphing from familiar female forms to animals, birds, and insects, embodying a fluid, organic energy, challenging our perception and explaining in a language of balanced wrath and restrained sorrow. His contemporary works are simple and unpretentious," says Shagufta while describing Juise.

His artistry lies not just in aesthetics, but in blending the form with the thought, and the style with the soul, she adds.

Juise has worked in various mediums, ranging from canvas to wood, bamboo, paper carving, wire, collage, torn paper, pen and ink, and copper and metal.

Under the scorching sun of Chaitra, Juise's imagination and depiction of Bono Bibi is the much-needed diversion that Dhaka people need right now.

World gets 90-day pause, except China

FROM PAGE 1

Additional rates kicked in yesterday for many economies, including China and the EU, but also remote islands that barely trade with the United States -- and in one case an uninhabited territory near Antarctica.

Amid stock market panic, Trump earlier urged Americans to "BE COOL" and said that "Everything is going to work out well."

Wall Street stocks rocketed on Trump's pause announcement.

Minutes later, the S&P 500 surged 6.0 percent to 5,281.44, snapping a brutal run of losses over the past week.

European and Asian stock markets had earlier tumbled along with oil and the dollar as the confrontation escalated.

US bond yields had also risen amid a sharp sell-off -- a major economic red light as sovereign government debt is normally seen as a safe haven for investors

in troubled times.

Before his pivot, Trump said world leaders were rushing to negotiate "tailored" deals with the United States, with Japan and South Korea among those sending delegations to Washington.

"I'm telling you, these countries are calling us up kissing my ass," Trump told a dinner with fellow Republicans on Tuesday night.

But China doubled down.

"The tariff escalation against China by the United States simply piles mistakes on top of mistakes," the Chinese finance ministry said.

Markets fell further after China retaliated. Oil prices plunged to even deeper four-year lows, and US stock index futures fell sharply.

The World Trade Organization chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala yesterday said the US-China tariff war could reduce trade in goods between the two economic giants

by 80 percent.

Earlier, Bessent warned countries at a banking summit that aligning with Beijing "would be cutting your own throat."

Trump believes his policy will revive America's lost manufacturing base by forcing companies to relocate to the United States.

The billionaire former property tycoon has particularly raged against China, accusing it of excess production and "dumping" inexpensive goods on other economies.

China yesterday warned tourists to "fully assess the risks" before travelling to the United States.

And US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth then warned against Chinese "threats" as he visited Panama, whose canal is at the centre of a row between Beijing and Washington.

ADB sees a 3.9% growth in FY25

FROM PAGE 1

Besides the impact of higher US tariffs, Bangladesh may face increased inflation and fiscal deficit due to higher election-related spending and subsidies, the ADB said in the report.

It said persistently high inflation and prolonged monetary tightening may dampen household consumption and private investment, weakening growth momentum. Remittance inflows may decline if political uncertainty persists or if the exchange rate regime fails to offer sufficient incentives for using official channels, which may also hit growth.

Finally, unpredictable weather is a perennial risk, the ADB added.

The growth forecasts were finalised before the US announced new tariffs on April 2, meaning the baseline projections account only for previously existing tariffs.

Speaking to journalists at the report's launch in Dhaka yesterday, ADB Country Director Hoe Yun Jeong said that the full impact of the tariffs will be assessed and published in the bank's July update.

The US is a crucial market for Bangladesh, particularly for its readymade garment sector, so these tariffs could have an adverse effect, he noted.

However, Jeong emphasised that it is still too early to determine the precise scale of the impact on Bangladesh.

Beyond the US, other key export markets, including Europe, may also experience a decline in demand. The overall effect will hinge on the extent of trade disruptions and economic slowdown in those regions, he added.

Jeong mentioned that Bangladesh has already started communicating with US authorities, while other RMG exporters are also facing higher tariffs.

"Engaging and negotiating with the US government is important, but this

is a short-term measure. Bangladesh must diversify its products and markets for exports, which is a long term perspective," he said.

The ADB country director also said that the government can take this opportunity to rationalise its own import tariff structure and reform its non-tariff barriers for all other countries, not just the US, as Bangladesh's tariff regime is overly protective.

He pointed out persistently high inflation as the government's most important challenge since it erodes purchasing power and worsens people's hardship. The government should also focus on mitigating supply chain disruptions.

When asked whether the ADB would work on raising a collective voice among Asian countries as the new US tariffs pose a significant risk to Asia, Jeong said the Dhaka office did not receive any message from Manila.

Apart from US tariffs, the ADB report warned that escalation in the Middle East could lead to renewed supply chain disruptions, as well as higher food and energy prices, global economic uncertainty, and risk aversion.

Continued uncertainty over the war in Ukraine also presents downside risks to the global economic environment, it said.

Regarding the recent economic situation, the ADB said Bangladesh's GDP growth sharply declined to 1.8 percent from 6 percent year on year in the July-September quarter of FY25. The decline was driven by political instability, natural disasters, disruptions at factories due to worker protests, and high inflation, all of which dampened demand.

However, growth is expected to improve in the following quarters, driven by manufacturing. Agricultural growth is also expected to moderate following

repeated floods.

GDP growth is expected to recover in FY26 on higher domestic demand while easing inflation and rising remittances are likely to raise private consumption and investment, the ADB said.

Imports are expected to increase with the central bank lifting restrictions on letters of credit, and export growth will accelerate on expected recovery in the European Union, a major destination for Bangladesh's exports. Net exports are thus likely to add marginally to growth.

On the supply side, higher growth in industry and services is expected to contribute to recovery. Industrial output is likely to expand as investor confidence is anticipated to improve ahead of elections scheduled between December 2025 and June 2026, and due to the interim government's implementation of the reforms.

The ADB said enduring inflation remains a significant hurdle due to market inefficiency brought on by regulatory shortcomings, restrained competition in wholesale markets, insufficient market information, supply chain constraints, and depreciation of the taka.

With expected moderation of global fuel and commodity prices, inflation is expected to ease in the remaining months of FY2025, but the fiscal year average is expected to be in double digits.

However, assuming favourable weather, moderating global oil prices, and tighter monetary and fiscal stances, inflation is projected to ease in FY2026.

The ADB hoped that a move toward an exchange rate system fully determined by the market would provide for automatic adjustments to economic imbalances, enhance monetary policy effectiveness, and increase the inflow of remittances, thereby expanding foreign exchange reserves.

India revokes transshipment for Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

added that cargo that had already entered India can exit the Indian territory.

Explaining the decision, Indian Ministry of External Affairs Spokesman Randhir Jaiswal told reporters yesterday that the transshipment facility to Bangladesh for third country cargo resulted in a "significant congestion" across Indian airports, leading to backlog, delay and a rise in logistics cost for Indian exporters.

But he added, "It has no impact on Bangladesh's trade with Nepal and Bhutan."

His comment came in reply to a question if the move was linked to Bangladesh Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus's recent remarks made in China, seeking extension of the latter's "economic sphere" through northeastern India to Bangladesh to access the Bay of Bengal.

Following the Indian government's decision, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin held a meeting with different stakeholders, and made several decisions to minimise its impacts on the RMG sector.

"We have discussed how we can utilise our own resources and capacity, including using the Sylhet airport and Dhaka airport, so that our apparel buyers do not lose competitiveness.... We will have to hold another meeting headed by the commerce secretary tomorrow [today] and I hope to come to a conclusion about this from the meeting," he told reporters.

India's decision comes at a time when Bangladeshi goods, particularly readymade garments, face higher tariffs when entering the US market, the single biggest destination for Bangladeshi exports.

"This is going to affect us. Our opportunity for shipment will shrink, and our costs will go up," said Faruque Hassan, a former president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

He mentioned that the volume

of garments shipped via India is not significant. "But it is a setback for the industry. India should not have made this decision."

On February 15, 2025, India's Apparel Export Promotion Council (APEC) requested the CBIC to revoke the transshipment facility for third country exports from Bangladesh.

"Given the vital role this facility has played in facilitating trade and reducing costs, the sudden move will likely increase the logistical burden on Bangladesh, potentially impacting its competitiveness in regional markets."

He said that this decision appears to be a response to growing competition in sectors such as readymade garments, but it underscores a broader issue of trade dynamics between neighbouring countries.

"Such a move is not even consistent with World Trade Organisation."

He said that as the global trade landscape becomes more complex and competitive, cooperation between developing countries like Bangladesh and India is more important than ever.

The two countries share a long history of economic and cultural ties, and maintaining a smooth flow of trade is essential for both, he added.

"India is among the top trading partners of Bangladesh, and this change in policy is not consistent with the future prospects of an enhanced bilateral relationship. We sincerely hope that India will reconsider its position and engage in dialogue to find a solution that benefits both countries," said Raihan, also a professor of economics at Dhaka University.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), said the development can be seen as a major blow to regional integration and cooperation.

"Ironically, it comes so soon after the BIMSTEC Summit, only to demonstrate the lack of genuine commitment to promoting trade within the region."

Commenting on how the readymade garment industry flourished, he said Bangladesh was a country of farmers many of whom were landless.

He also focused on the need for zero unemployment, saying the young generation can change the world as they have technology and innovative ideas.

Carbon emission is a self-destructive system, he said, adding that making money was fun, but concentration of wealth was the most dangerous thing to the human race.

He also focused on the need for zero unemployment, saying the young generation can change the world as they have technology and innovative ideas.

Commenting on how the readymade garment industry flourished, he said Bangladesh was a country of farmers many of whom were landless.

"Some crazy young guys from the universities dared to enter into something which is [now] happening in the country because of the business interest of other countries."

Bangladesh's ground is very fertile. Put a little bit of seed, it becomes global."

He remembered Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and said 1974 was a year "we cannot forget" as about 1.5 million people died in a famine.

At the time, most of the people of the country were farmers who used to grow a single crop a year.

Bangladesh has come a long way from there, he said.

"It's an amazing journey...that Bangladesh came a long way in a very short time."

ABU SAYED KILLING

ICT investigators find evidence against 26
Investigation agency gets another 2 months to submit report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal's investigators have found the involvement of 26 people so far in the killing of student Abu Sayed in Rangpur during the 2024 uprising.

They included police personnel and members of Juba League, Chhata League, and other groups, prosecutor Mizanul Islam told the tribunal yesterday.

Although the prosecution was scheduled to submit the probe report on the killing yesterday, it requested more time to complete the investigation, noting that evidence against 26 people had been collected.

Later, the three-member tribunal, led by its Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, granted a two month extension and ordered the investigation agency to submit the report on June 16.

Four of the accused were produced before the court during the proceedings.

They are former assistant sub-inspector Amir Hossain, constable Sujan Chandra Roy, Begum Rokeya University proctor Shariful Islam, and Chhata League activist Emran Chowdhury.

Court freezes Bangabandhu trust's bank account

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the authorities to freeze a bank account of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her children Sajeeb Wazed Joy and Saima Wazed Putul, and her sister Sheikh Rehana, and their affiliated organisations over allegations of corruption.

Hasina and the others are accused of depositing Tk 16,12,50,000 to an account of NCC Bank PLC in the name of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust.

চুক্তি এ রিপার্সেড রিমিটেড পার্টি
প্রিয়জনের প্রয়োজনে...
যেকোনো শাখা থেকে রোমটিল গ্রহণ করলেই
পাবেন সরকার নির্ধারিত ২.৫% প্রয়োদনা
সাথে অ্যারও আরু নিচের আত্মস্থীয় পুরস্কার
* শর্ত প্রযোজন

ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূর্বালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

It's festival time in the hills

MD ABBAS, from Rangamati

Rangamati, one of Bangladesh's most picturesque hill districts, has come alive with vibrant colours, music, and festivities as indigenous communities celebrate their biggest traditional festival marking the advent of the new year.

The Boisabi festival -- an umbrella term encompassing Biju, Sangrai, and Boisu, celebrated by the Chakma, Marma, and Tripura communities -- is observed across the Chittagong Hill Tracts, alongside other indigenous celebrations such as Bishu, Bihu, Sangkran, Changkran, and Pata.



Together, they reflect the unity and cultural diversity of the hill communities.

The celebrations began in Rangamati town on Tuesday morning with a festive inauguration ceremony at the municipality, where Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Kajal Talukder released colorful balloons, officially launching the four-day festivities.

Indigenous artists from different ethnic groups -- including Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, and Pangkhua -- performed traditional dances and songs, showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



People catch up with the daily headlines of various newspapers that are plastered across this wall before boarding a train in Narayanganj yesterday. Even in the digital age, print media matters as people depend on it for accurate news, facts and analysis. The photo was taken near the train station.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Declare AL a 'criminal org'

Say NCP, Hefazat at meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party and Hefazat-e-Islam have reached a consensus on demanding the trial of the Awami League and the suspension of its political activities until the trial is concluded.

At a meeting held yesterday at the NCP's temporary central office in Banglamotor, both parties emphasised the need for transparency in the prosecution process ahead of the national election and proposed declaring the Awami League a "criminal organisation".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

CONSENSUS COMMISSION 2 more parties submit opinions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Odhikar Parishad and a faction of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh have submitted their written opinions regarding key reform proposals to the National Consensus Commission.

Representatives of both parties separately submitted their opinions to the commission's vice-chairman, Prof Ali Riaz, at the commission's office in the National Parliament building yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

We will certainly want a specific roadmap for the upcoming national parliamentary election before December from the chief adviser.

The party also plans to discuss various other issues, including the ongoing reform process.

The meeting is scheduled to take place at 12:00pm at the state guesthouse Jamuna, confirmed BNP Standing Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed to The Daily Star.

Party leaders said BNP wants to understand the government's plan and end the growing uncertainty surrounding the election; hence, they want to meet the chief adviser and get clear answers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

As this launch navigates the waters of the Buriganga river, it leaves behind a trail of foam, a clear sign of pollution. For decades, the Buriganga has been a victim of mindless dumping of untreated waste and effluents that contain heavy metals and residues of toxic chemical. This photo was taken from the Postogola Bridge yesterday.

Poachers kill elephant for tusks in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Poachers killed a wild elephant and took its tusks and claws in Banskhali upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The male elephant, around 7-8 years old, was found dead inside a protected forest area in Chechuria, a part of Jaldee Range under Chattogram South Forest Division.

"On information, a team from the forest department reached the scene for inspection and confirmed that the poachers had stolen the tusks and claws after killing the elephant," said Abdullah Al Mamun, divisional forest officer of Chattogram South Forest Division.

"The elephant was killed with a sharp weapon. There are multiple stab wounds on its back and chest," he added.

'A gentleman in the truest sense'

Say speakers on Prof Arefin Siddique at memorial event

DU CORRESPONDENT



Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique will be remembered for his charismatic personality and exceptional capacity for empathetic listening, said speakers at a memorial ceremony yesterday.

The ceremony was held in remembrance of the late Prof Arefin Siddique, former vice chancellor of Dhaka University, at DU. It was organised by the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism.

At the event, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan said, "Arefin Siddique was a true gentleman. All his friends, and even his adversaries, if they reflect honestly, will admit this."

"In our society, it is difficult to maintain composure and proper conduct while holding a powerful position -- especially knowing that one will eventually have to leave the role. Arefin Siddique handled this remarkably well," he added.

"He could always see the bigger picture, even under stress and emotional pressure -- a vital quality for someone in his position," Prof Niaz said.

Prof Mamun Ahmed, pro-vice chancellor of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Man dies near B'baria border

Family alleges BSF torture

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A farmer from Bijoynagar upazila in Brahmanbaria died after allegedly being detained and assaulted by India's Border Security Force (BSF) near Sejamura border on Tuesday evening.

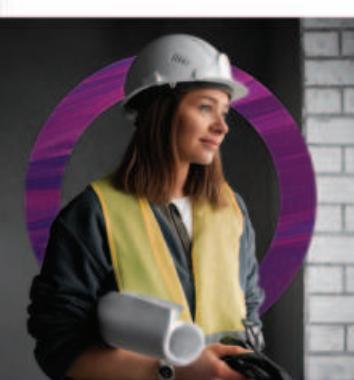
The Bangladeshi border guards, however, have not confirmed detention or assault and said an investigation was under way.

The deceased was identified as Muradur Rahman Munna of Sejamura village.

The deceased's wife Ratna Akter said their family's farmland is located 150 to 300 yards inside the barbed-wire fence along the border.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

bjt The Daily Star
STELLAR WOMEN SEASON 2



Engineering (Civil, Structural, Water Resource & MEP)

- At least 2 implemented projects with positive social impacts
- A well-organized PDF/ PPT with details about career & social contributions in this field
- Last Date of Submission: 30th April 2025



Banking & Financial Institutions

- Currently employed in banking or a financial institution
- Positive contributions to society in your career in this field
- A well-organized PDF/ PPT with details about career & social contributions in this field should be submitted with the form
- Last Date of Submission: 31st May 2025



Healthcare

- Female physicians conducting research in her field of expertise
- Details of their contributions to the society through their career
- Last Date of Submission: 30th June 2025

REGISTER NOW!

For Queries Register via:
013 228 90 097 www.bjistarstellarwomen.thedailystar.net

A JOINT INITIATIVE BY



building
technology
& ideas ltd.
in pursuit of excellence...

The Daily Star

TELEVISION PARTNER



SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Spark Your Inner Power!

Tanzir Fahim's death anniv

CITY DESK

Today is the 15th death anniversary of Tanzir Fahim Jumma (Ovi), eldest son of Sajjatu Jumma, the founder chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited and former senior vice president of DCCI, said a press release.

Tanzir passed away in Fort Lauderdale, US on April 10, 2010 aged 29.

He obtained degrees in management and marketing from the US and was employed in an investment company as a senior executive.

He is the grandson of late national leader AHM Quamaruzzaman, one of the organisers of the Liberation War.

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 10
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:45 6:24 7:45
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 5:00 6:28 8:15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

It's festival time

FROM PAGE 3

A discussion followed under the slogan: "Let us strengthen our movement to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord to ensure the existence of indigenous Jumma people."

The event was chaired by Prakriti Ranjan Chakma, president of the Bangladesh Indigenous Forum (CHT) and convener of the celebration committee.

Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Devasish Roy attended as chief guest.

Speakers highlighted how these traditional festivals foster unity, joy, and cultural pride, transforming hill villages into vibrant hubs of celebration with sports, rituals, and communal gatherings.

Later in the morning, a colourful rally brought the town to life. Dressed in traditional attire, men, women, and children marched from Rangamati municipality to the District Shilpkala Academy, passing through Banarupa and other key areas.

The celebration committee has organised a four-day programme from

April 9 to 12. Traditional Jumma sports will be held at Rangamati Mari Stadium on April 10, followed by Boli Khela (wrestling), poetry recitation, and cultural performances on April 11. The much-anticipated Fool Bihān (flower-floating ceremony), symbolising purity and renewal, will take place on April 12.

In the early hours of April 12, young Chakma men and women will gather at Dibachari spring in Dighinala to collect flowers for Phul Bijū – a cherished ritual that signifies cleansing and hope.

The Rangamati Hill District Council has also organised a week-long fair at the Cultural Institute of Ethnic Minorities from April 3 to 9.

The main Bijū celebration will be held on April 13, while April 14 will mark Pahela Baishakh.

On the same day, the Tripura community will observe Boisū, while the Marma community will host Panikhili – a traditional water fight symbolising purification and happiness.

Poachers kill

FROM PAGE 3

Shah Alam, ranger of Jalde Range, estimated that the elephant was probably killed two or three days ago.

The incident again highlights the alarming rise of poaching in the region and raises concerns over safety of wildlife species even in protected areas.

According to data from the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, at least 102 wild elephants were either killed or died in the Chattogram region alone in the past decade till January 2025.

At least 16 elephants died from electrocution, five were shot dead, 17 died from accidents, 53 died from "old age complications or natural causes" such as heart failure, while the causes of the remaining deaths could not be determined.

During this period, 44 people died in human-elephant conflicts in the region.

Conservationists, however, argue that all the elephant deaths resulted from human intervention.

Despite the scale of the crisis, only 18 cases have been filed for the killing of elephants.

BNP to meet

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier in the day, speaking to reporters at the party chairperson's office in Gulshan, Salahuddin said, "We will certainly want a specific roadmap for the upcoming national parliamentary election before December from the chief adviser."

"Given the confusion due to various statements from different parties, we will urge him to clearly present the roadmap through a proper process to remove the sense of instability and uncertainty," he said.

Salahuddin said the roadmap should be formally presented to the nation to help restore political stability and boost economic activity. "Earlier, we discussed with the Election Commission, and they said preparations would be complete by June. The chief adviser also assured us they are working to hold the election by December,"

The rally will start at 4:00pm from the party's Nayapaltan central office and move through Kakrail, Shantinagar, Malibagh, and Moghbazar before ending at Bangla Motor.

A gentleman

FROM PAGE 3

DU, shared, "I had the opportunity to work with him [Prof Siddique] through the Dhaka University Teachers' Association during a very difficult time when four of our colleagues were imprisoned."

"Though our working styles were different, our goal was the same – to bring back the detained teachers and work for the university's betterment."

"During DUTA meetings, we often disagreed, but afterward he would come to me and say, 'You're right in your position, and I'm right in mine.' His humility and respectful nature made him exceptional," Prof Mamun added.

Prof Akhtar Sultana, former chairperson of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, said, "He wanted to stay close to students. Even as vice chancellor, he regularly taught classes in this department while managing his administrative duties."

"He supported me personally during my tenure as chair. He never interfered or pressured me for anything irrational," she said.

"He had true team spirit. He never dominated the workplace. It's difficult to be like him. He was a gentleman in the truest sense. His memory will remain with us," she added.

Faculty members and students from the

2 more parties

FROM PAGE 3

After submitting their opinions, Gono Odhikar Parishad said they agreed with 85 percent of the key proposals made by the five reform commissions.

BNP has proposed constitutional changes to restore balance within the state, including reinstating the caretaker government system by reverting the constitution to its pre-15th amendment form.

"But we have not

called for abolishing secularism. That has been misinterpreted," he said.

In another development, BNP yesterday announced plans to hold rallies in the capital and major cities today in solidarity with the people of Gaza and Rafah in Palestine.

The rally will start at 4:00pm from the party's Nayapaltan central office and move through Kakrail, Shantinagar, Malibagh, and Moghbazar before ending at Bangla Motor.

Declare AL a criminal

regarding the trial of Awami League as a party for its role in genocide, the suspension of its political and organisational activities until the trial is complete, visible legal progress before the election, and declaring Awami League a criminal organisation.

Hefazat Secretary General Sajedur Rahman, Senior Joint Secretary General Junaid Al Habib, and Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque attended the meeting.

However, he said the topic of elections was not discussed.

According to meeting sources, Hefazat leaders also discussed the need for joint efforts to withdraw what they described as false and harassing cases filed against religious scholars and opposition activists during AL's tenure.

Man dies near

FROM PAGE 3

husband told us that BSF personnel took him to their camp and beat him."

Lt Col Farah Mohammad Imtiaz, commanding officer of BGB Battalion 25 in Sarail, said preliminary reports suggest Munna had illegally crossed into Indian territory.

"We have yet to verify whether he was detained or assaulted by BSF," he said, adding that an investigation was underway.

EC mulls hybrid

FROM PAGE 5

teams presented their findings.

Representatives from Dhaka University, Buet, MIST, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, and other relevant bodies participated.

The commissioner stated, "We have examined the advantages and disadvantages of the three

methods. Regardless of which method we choose, expatriates will first have to register online. For Bangladesh, a single method won't suffice – a hybrid approach will be necessary. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. Mock testing will be required for all of them. Most likely, all methods will need to be implemented on a limited scale initially on a pilot's

322 killed in 315 road crashes

FROM PAGE 5

The statistics indicated that road accidents during this Eid decreased by 21.05 percent compared to the previous year, with fatalities down by 20.88 percent and injuries reduced by 40.41 percent.

As in previous years, motorcycles were found to be the most accident-prone mode of transport. At least 135 motorcycle-related accidents resulted in 151 deaths and 155 injuries, accounting for approximately 42.85 percent of all road accidents and 46.89 percent of all fatalities.

An analysis of the reported accidents revealed that motorcycles accounted for 32.27 percent of accident out of all vehicles, followed by buses at 16.56 percent, battery-powered rickshaws at 14.86 percent, trucks and covered vans at 14.43 percent, private cars and microbuses at 8.06 percent, Nasimon-Karimon vehicles at 7.21 percent, and CNG-run auto-rickshaws at 6.58 percent.

On the waterways, four accidents resulted in 10 deaths, one injury, and one person reported missing. In addition, at least 20 people were killed and eight injured in 21 railway accidents during the same period.

Mozammel said the Eid journey was smoother this year compared to previous years, attributing this to better road conditions and the active efforts of law enforcement agencies and other authorities.

"In past years, decisions made in pre-Eid coordination meetings led by transport owners and leaders, along with law enforcement agencies, were rarely implemented on the ground.

While transport owners and workers had a voice in the meetings, passengers did not," he said.

"This year marked a shift – passenger representatives were included, and their concerns were heard. With less influence from transport groups, Eid travel this year was noticeably smoother," Mozammel added.

ADN Telecom signs multi-year Telesat Lightspeed partnership agreement



TELESAT

ADN Telecom Ltd. and Telesat signed and jointly announced a multi-year partnership to deliver Telesat Lightspeed's low Earth orbit (LEO) connectivity solutions across Bangladesh and South Asia.

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC)
BARC Complex, Farmgate
Dhaka - 1215, Bangladesh

Vacancy Announcement

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) is inviting application for the following positions [to be recruited from the citizens of Bangladesh]:

1. Communication and Media Officer
2. Librarian

Details of appointment notice, qualification and experience, terms and conditions, salaries/allowances, facilities and benefits, etc. shall be available at the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), BARC Complex, Farmgate, Dhaka - 1215, Bangladesh and in website: <http://www.sac.org.bd>.

Application in English with complete "Curriculum Vitae" with two copies of recent passport size photographs, photocopies of all certificates and other documents (education, experiences, trainings, NID, etc.) should be submitted to Director, SAARC Agriculture Centre, BARC Complex, Farmgate, Dhaka - 1215 within 20th April 2025 at 12:00 P.M.

Canvassing of any form will disqualify the candidate.

All rights reserved by the authority.

Director, SAC

GD- 847

INVITATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TENDER (IFIT)

1	Procuring Entity Name	IsDB-BISEW
2	Invitation for	Procurement of External Building Façade Work, Civil and Architectural Finishing Materials and Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)
3	Invitation Ref. No.	IsDB-BISEW/Tender-IDB Bhaban-2/TP-05
4	Publication Date	10 April 2025
KEY INFORMATION		
5	Procurement Method	Competitive Tendering among eligible Tenderers: One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method (OSTETM) under Least Cost Basis (LCB).
FUNDING INFORMATION		
6	Source of Funds	IsDB-BISEW and Government of Bangladesh
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
7	Project Name	Construction of IDB Bhaban-2 comprising of Multi-Storied Twin Tower and 4-Storied Multi-Purpose Business Center with Common 3-Level Basement at Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
8	Tender Package No.	Tender-IDB Bhaban-2/TP-05
9	Tender Package Lots Name	Lot-1: Supply, Installation, Fitting and Fixing of Building External Façade Work Lot-2: Supply of Civil and Architectural Finishing Materials Lot-3: Supply and Installation of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)
10	Last Date of Issuing Tender Documents	04 May 2025 upto 5:00 PM
11	Date & Time of Pre-bid Meeting	12 May 2025 at 11:30 AM
12	Place of Pre-bid Meeting	Office of the Chief Executive Officer, IsDB-BISEW, IDB Bhaban (4th Floor), E/8-A, Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
13	Last Date & Time of Tender Submission	20 May 2025 upto 12:00 Noon
14	Opening of Technical Offer of Tender (Date, Time & Place)	20 May 2025 at 12:30 PM at the Office of the Chief Executive Officer, IsDB-BISEW, IDB Bhaban (4th Floor), E/8-A, Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh. Intending Tenderers or their Authorized Representatives may remain present during opening of Technical Offer.
15	Name and Address of the Office Selling Tender Documents	Office of the Chief Executive Officer, IsDB-BISEW, IDB Bhaban (4th Floor), E/8-A, Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
16	Name and Address of the Office for Receiving Tender	Office of the Chief Executive Officer, IsDB-BISEW, IDB Bhaban (4th Floor), E/8-A, Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh.
17	Brief Description of Works	Lot-1: Building External Façade Work: Supply, Installation, Fitting and Fixing of Aluminum Framing and Glazing Work including all Accessories, Hardware, Sealant (External, Internal) Glazing Bit etc. Lot-2: Civil and Architectural Finishing Materials: Supply of Marble, Granite and Tiles Flooring and Wall Cladding Works & External Limestone Cladding etc. Lot-3: Sewage Treatment Plant (STP): Supply, Installation & Commissioning of 85 KLD Bio Tube STP based on SBR Technology comprising Manual Bar Screen, Air Lifting Module, Air Blower, Fit Pump, Media Filter, Carbon Filter, UV Filter, Flow Meter etc.
18	Price of Tender Document & Issuance of Tender Documents	Issuance of Tender Documents: Tenderers intending to obtain Tender Documents shall have to apply along with a Non-refundable Pay Order/Bank Draft for an Amount of BDT 50,000 (Fifty Thousand) or equivalent in USD in favour of IsDB-BISEW (IDB Bhaban-2). The Tender Security furnished by a Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh must be counter guaranteed by a Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh.
19	Tender Security Amount	Lump Sum BDT 3 (Three) million or equivalent USD in the form of Pay Order/ Irrevocable Bank Guarantee from any Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh in favour of IsDB-BISEW (IDB Bhaban-2). The Tender Security furnished by a Foreign Bank must be counter guaranteed by a Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh.



Neaz Khan
Chief Executive Officer
Islamic Development Bank-Bangladesh Islamic Solidarity Educational Wakf (IsDB-BISEW)
IDB Bhaban (4th Floor), E/8-A, Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka
Phone No.: +880 2223 374 601 & +880 9638 917 000
Website: www.isdb-bisew.org, E-mail: [tender@isdb-bisew.org</](mailto:tender@isdb-bisew.org)

'Cultural healing' and 'inclusivity' key in Bangla New Year celebrations as ministry announces plans

'Shobhajatra' to display solidarity with Palestine

DOWEL BISWAS

"The upcoming Pahela Baishakh and Chaitra Sankranti celebrations will be a bold affirmation of Bangladesh's cultural inclusivity, with active participation from communities across the country", announced Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, renowned filmmaker and cultural affairs adviser to the government.

In two back-to-back press briefings held yesterday at the National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) and later at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka, the cultural adviser outlined the government's plans for this year's festivities, describing them as a deeper journey into cultural harmony.

He said that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs is prioritising cultural healing and inclusiveness, aiming to restore the unity that once defined the nation's vibrant cultural fabric. He noted that the ministry is working both directly and indirectly to ensure that significant cultural and religious events are celebrated with equal respect by all communities.

Farooki declared that this year's Bengali New Year celebrations would bring together not just Bengali citizens, but also 27 ethnic communities from across the country. "Diversity is our most powerful and beautiful asset," he



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

said. "From the hill tracts to the plains, people of every identity will represent their culture and heritage with pride."

As part of this inclusive initiative, 12 districts will host traditional Sadhu Melas, while Suhrawardy Udyana in Dhaka will stage a grand concert featuring ethnic musical bands such as F Minor (Garo), Larong (Marmia), Iman (Tripura), Unity (Khasi), and Invocation (Chakma), performing alongside Bengali bands including Miles, Warfaze, Lalon, Vikings, AvoidRafa, and Dalchhut.

The capital will also see a range of other events: daylong programmes at Shilpakala Academy, Chhayanaut's

annual musical gathering at Charukola, Shurer Dhara's performance at Rabindra Sarobar, and the iconic Mangal Shobhajatra (newly termed as 'Shobhajatra' at the briefing) by Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts.

This year's Shobhajatra will include a segment dedicated to solidarity with Palestine, where musicians will carry the Palestinian flag and sing songs of resistance, especially the song *From the river to sea, Palestine will be free*. A drone show, financed by the Chinese Embassy, will be held under the theme "New Bangladesh in New Year", and Bangla Academy will host a fair as part of the national celebration.

As for the 27 ethnic communities, for the first time, Biju and other ethnic New Year festivals—celebrated by the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts—have been declared executive holidays.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma expressed his gratitude to the government, noting that Rangamati, Khagrachhari, and all upazilas in the region are preparing for the festivities with unprecedented enthusiasm. "No one should doubt the government's commitment to inclusivity," he said.

Farooki added that he will personally attend the Fagua Utsab with tea garden workers in Sylhet to honour their cultural traditions. Emphasising the broader humanitarian message of the celebrations, he urged the nation not to forget about the 1.2 million Rohingyas currently residing in Bangladesh, or the genocide taking place in Palestine. "What you feel and do for the oppressed is a true measure of your culture," he said. "This year, we will celebrate their identities as part of our own."

When questioned about participation from Islamist groups, Farooki stated, "Vilification of Muslims will no longer be tolerated in Bangladesh. This year's New Year celebration is for everyone. However, I don't think any group, political or cultural, will be attending the rally with any banner. This is a people's rally and it will remain as such."

A major concert at Manik Mia Avenue, in collaboration with the Shilpakala Academy and Dhaka North City Corporation, will round off the festivities. With events scheduled from April 10 to 14, this year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations aim not only to welcome the new year with joy but also to reaffirm the country's commitment to cultural unity, diversity, and non-sectarian values.

'Borbaad' earns Tk 27cr in 7 days of ticket sales



The Shakib Khan-led *Borbaad* has taken the box office by storm since its Eidul Fitr premiere.

On its ninth day in theatres, production house Real Energy Production announced that the film raked in Tk 27.43 crore in ticket sales within just seven days—matching the one-month earnings of *Priyotoma* (2023).

The film remains a crowd-puller, with around 65 shows running across Dhaka and strong performance in 112 single-screen cinemas nationwide.

The Mehedi Hassan Hridoy directorial *Borbaad* stars Idhika Paul opposite Shakib Khan, alongside Mamunur Rashid, Shahiduzzaman Selim, Intekhab Dinar, Misha Sawdagar, and Jissu Sengupta.

Adviser Mahfuj Alam proposes turning BFDC into a hybrid film city



Adviser to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Mahfuj Alam, has proposed transforming the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) into a hybrid film city, aiming to bring all filmmaking processes—shooting, editing, dubbing, and post-production—under one roof.

During his visit to BFDC on April 8 (Tuesday), he toured shooting floors, met staff, and addressed a gathering at the Zahir Raihan Auditorium. He also visited the Directors' Guild and Bangladesh Film Artiste Association, where veteran actress Anwara Begum welcomed him.

The adviser highlighted the underutilised potential of BFDC, citing its prime location and existing infrastructure. He also referenced ongoing developments at both BFDC and Kabirpur Film City, expressing hopes to resolve challenges and ensure resource efficiency.

BFDC Managing Director Masuma Rahman and actor Nayem also spoke during the programme.

NEWS

23 killed in political violence in March

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, the alarming 40 incidents of "mob beating" include torturing of a 28-year-old man to death on suspicion of stealing a mobile phone in Habiganj's Bahubal.

At one point, the mob set him on fire.

In another development, 30 women and girls were gang raped, and 102 were subjected to sexual harassment.

Besides, 20 women were killed in

domestic violence, while 207 children were tortured and 18 of them were killed.

Five workers also died in workplace accidents last month, while an underage domestic help died due to torture by the employer.

Also last month, two Bangladeshis were killed and two more injured as India's Border Security Force (BSF) personnel opened fire along the Bangladesh-India border.

Besides, 41 journalists faced

torture and harassment last month in at least 29 incidents that left at least 23 of them injured.

A female journalist was gang-raped in the capital while collecting information.

Also, four inmates died in prison, and at least three attacks on minority communities left two injured.

In various "political cases", police arrested at least 1,665 people, including at least 1,644 AL leaders and activists.

times more electricity in 2030. And the electricity we use from the grid is not clean. That is why we are planning for alternative energy," he said.

He said there are around 22,000 Grameenphone base stations and some data centres across the country. "It's not possible to install solar plants in all those locations. That is why we need a concentrated location where green energy would be produced."

"When the adviser said the MPP is allowed, it comes as a music to my ear. Now I am thinking it is possible to achieve our targets," he added.

"Only the rooftop solar options wouldn't meet our [suppliers] electricity demand. We will need 2,500MW solar just to cover the present use of electricity in our suppliers [garment factories]. Today's MoU wouldn't be able to meet our demand, it is only a start," she said.

Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of Pran RFL Group, said they have 300 acres of water body in Moulvibazar, which would be used for aquaculture and a floating solar power plant.

"I figured that it is a very good business for us as there was no problem with fundings. The IFC and the European Investment Bank were there and there were customers like H&M," he said, adding that the pricing of the electricity from the plant would be cheaper than that of the grid.

Tanveer Mohammad, chief corporate affairs officer of Grameenphone, said they had taken a very aggressive target to reduce the carbon footprints to 50 percent level in 2030 of what they had in 2019, but did not find a way forward.

"The challenge is in our mobile phones. We are using more and more data, and will be consuming three

times more electricity in 2030. And the electricity we use from the grid is not clean. That is why we are planning for alternative energy," he said.

Youngone made history as the first investor in Bangladesh's textile and apparel export sector in May 1980. The company also played a key role in promoting female employment in the industry, contributing to Bangladesh's evolution into a global garment production hub.

Youngone's factories, located in Dhaka and Chattogram's export processing zones, produce high-quality jackets, trousers, sports shoes, and leather goods for international markets.

Currently, the company employs about 73,000 people across Bangladesh, making it one of the country's largest employers. In total, Youngone has approximately 95,000 employees globally. The company has invested \$650 million and has annual exports worth \$1 billion.

Sung served as president of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF) for the 2018-2020 term.

Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary to the chief adviser, highlighted Sung's unparalleled contribution in a Facebook post:

"Sung has done something for Bangladesh that very few foreign investors do. He not only created jobs for 72,000 Bangladeshis in KEPZ in Chattogram but also reinvested all of Youngone Corporation's earnings back into Bangladesh."

With the honorary citizenship, Kihak Sung joins an esteemed group of dignitaries, including Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mohammad Ali, Father Richard Marino, Valerie Ann Taylor, and Gordon Greenidge, wrote Azad.

ACC Public Prosecutor Ruhul Islam Khan moved the application on behalf of the anti graft body.

Kihak Sung

FROM PAGE 12

Expressing his gratitude, Sung said, "I am truly honoured to receive this honorary citizenship."

Sung's rise in the textile industry is closely linked to the success of Youngone Corporation, which he established in 1974. He has been a pioneering force in the RMG sector, with his investments spanning Chattogram, Dhaka EPZs, and, more recently, the Korean EPZ.

Born in 1947 in Seoul, Sung pursued a degree in international economics from Seoul National University. He then began his career in international trade through Seoul Trading. This experience laid the groundwork for his entrepreneurial journey and the founding of Youngone.

Youngone made history as the first investor in Bangladesh's textile and apparel export sector in May 1980. The company also played a key role in promoting female employment in the industry, contributing to Bangladesh's evolution into a global garment production hub.

Youngone's factories, located in Dhaka and Chattogram's export processing zones, produce high-quality jackets, trousers, sports shoes, and leather goods for international markets.

Currently, the company employs about 73,000 people across Bangladesh, making it one of the country's largest employers. In total, Youngone has approximately 95,000 employees globally. The company has invested \$650 million and has annual exports worth \$1 billion.

Sung served as president of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF) for the 2018-2020 term.

Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary to the chief adviser, highlighted Sung's unparalleled contribution in a Facebook post:

"Sung has done something for Bangladesh that very few foreign investors do. He not only created jobs for 72,000 Bangladeshis in KEPZ in Chattogram but also reinvested all of Youngone Corporation's earnings back into Bangladesh."

With the honorary citizenship, Kihak Sung joins an esteemed group of dignitaries, including Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mohammad Ali, Father Richard Marino, Valerie Ann Taylor, and Gordon Greenidge, wrote Azad.

ACC Public Prosecutor Ruhul Islam Khan moved the application on behalf of the anti graft body.

With the honorary citizenship, Kihak Sung joins an esteemed group of dignitaries, including Kazi Nazrul Islam, Mohammad Ali, Father Richard Marino, Valerie Ann Taylor, and Gordon Greenidge, wrote Azad.

He stood first class first in MA examinations in Economics at Dhaka University in 1977. During 1980-83, he attended the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and earned the degrees of MA in Law and Diplomacy and PhD in Economics.

The information was also shared in a statement posted by Shafiqul Alam, press secretary at the Chief Adviser's Office, on his verified Facebook profile yesterday.

Delhi wants positive ties

FROM PAGE 12

He also said, "In Bangkok, the issue of violence against minorities in Bangladesh was raised. The incidents of atrocities and violence have happened with them and they cannot be wished away or just dismissed as due to political reasons or media exaggeration."

Asked about media reports about Bangladesh's plan to have a Chinese air base in north western Bangladesh near India's "Chicken's Neck," a narrow landmass connecting mainland India with its north eastern states, Jaiswal reiterated "we keep a close watch on all developments near our border that impinge on our security and take appropriate action."

On a question about Yunus' Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam's claim a day after Modi Yunus talks in Bangkok that India "did not appear negative" to Bangladesh's request for Sheikh Hasina's extradition from India, Jaiswal said "we have conveyed our position earlier. I have nothing more to add."

SSC exams start today

FROM PAGE 12

expected to sit for the exams, which is, on average, over one lakh fewer than that of the last four years.

When asked about the low number of examinees, Prof SM Kamal Uddin Hyder, convener of the Inter Education Board Examination Control Committee, explained that usually a significant number of unsuccessful candidates of the previous year usually sit for the exams.

But this year, the number is notably lower because last year's pass rate was significantly higher. This was the main reason behind the lower number of examinees, Prof Hyder added.

To prevent malpractice, the

Asked about Yunus' comment on Teesta during his China visit, Jaiswal made it clear that the Teesta water-sharing issue was a bilateral one.

India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers, including Teesta, and there are bilateral mechanisms like the Joint River Commission and technical committees to address the issues, he said.

On a question about Yunus' Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam's claim a day after Modi Yunus talks in Bangkok that India "did not appear negative" to Bangladesh's request for Sheikh Hasina's extradition from India, Jaiswal said "we have conveyed our position earlier. I have nothing more to add."

Special directives for students include arrival at exam centres at least 30 minutes before the scheduled time. Only scientific calculators will be allowed in the exam halls, and carrying or using mobile phones is strictly prohibited for everyone except the centre secretary. All coaching centres will remain closed until the exams end.

Following the publication of results, students will have the option to apply for re-evaluation within seven days.

Khalilur new nat'l security

FROM PAGE 12

aware of the gravity of my responsibilities and will do my utmost to uphold and advance our national interest," said Khalilur.

Khalilur joined BCS (foreign affairs) in 1979 after securing the first position in the first regular civil service examination after independence held in 1977.

He served in various capacities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York.

In 1991, he joined the UN secretariat as a special adviser and served in different senior UN positions during the next 25 years. In November

2024, he was appointed as the high representative with the status and privileges of an adviser.

He stood first class first in MA

examinations in Economics at Dhaka University in 1977. During 1980-83, he attended the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and earned the degrees of MA in Law and Diplomacy and PhD in Economics.

The information was also shared in a statement posted by Shafiqul Alam, press secretary at the Chief Adviser's Office, on his verified Facebook profile yesterday.

Reforms vital to spur business growth

WB report on our investment prospects should be taken seriously

It is encouraging to read the latest World Bank Group report on investment prospects in Bangladesh. Prepared by the group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) and unveiled at the ongoing Bangladesh Investment Summit on Tuesday, the report identifies four strategic sectors—green ready-made garments (RMG), middle-class housing, paint and dyes, and digital financial services—as ripe for reform. These sectors, it argues, are mature and politically feasible enough to be restructured in ways that could create millions of jobs, draw both local and foreign investment, and spark a ripple effect of productivity in other interconnected sectors. The question is, can we do what's needed to bring about this change?

In recent days, there has been much talk about Bangladesh's investment scenario with the government taking steps to woo global investors. The four-day summit, somewhat overshadowed by concerns surrounding the new US tariff policy, which went into effect on April 9, is meant to provide a boost in this regard. For this, reforms are essential even while new deals and commitments are being made. With proper reforms, the WB report estimates, the construction sector alone could add over two million jobs annually by supporting new housing developments for middle-income families. A further 664,000 formal jobs could be generated by expanding local production of paint and dyes. Targeted interventions in digital financial services could also yield between 96,000 and 400,000 additional jobs.

However, achieving desired outcomes requires removing long-standing barriers to doing business in Bangladesh, such as erratic power supply, high prevalence of informal economy, high borrowing costs, our complex and inefficient tax regime, and other bureaucratic challenges. In its report, the WB also provides a roadmap of actionable reforms for the four sectors it singled out. These findings and recommendations, however, are not new. In the past, experts have often highlighted many barriers to trade and investment such as corruption, anti-competitive procurement practices, customs inefficiencies, etc. Sadly, successive governments have failed to seriously act on such findings and recommendations. Bureaucratic inertia, political instability, and weak institutional coordination frequently came in the way of progress. One statistic that can aptly portray its effect is that, while global foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by less than two percent in 2023, FDI inflow to Bangladesh dropped by nearly 14 percent.

Can the interning government do things differently? It must. As Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said at the summit, Bangladesh is a country of "crazy ideas" that investors can trust in going forward. But ideas alone are not enough. We need meaningful transformation. We need the government to not only listen to experts but also act decisively on their counsel. It is up to the present policymakers to bring about much-needed change in prevailing business and bureaucratic practices so that Bangladesh can fulfil its potential.

Sustain progress in maternal care

Reduced funding threatens the quality of services

We are concerned about the ongoing and potential funding cuts by our key development partners that could seriously undermine the quality of maternal care in the country. According to a UN report, reduced funding may weaken the healthcare system by making facilities less effective, reducing the number of healthcare professionals, and disrupting critical supply chains. These setbacks would inevitably compromise both the availability and quality of maternal care. At a time when Bangladesh is striving to lower its maternal mortality rate in line with the relevant SDG target, funding cuts threaten to reverse hard-won gains.

Over the past decades, Bangladesh has made significant strides in reducing maternal and child mortality despite longstanding challenges in the health sector. Much progress has been made in addressing key causes of maternal deaths such as obstetric haemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, unsafe abortions, and other indirect complications. According to the UN, while global maternal deaths fell by 40 percent between 2000 and 2023, Bangladesh achieved an impressive 79 percent reduction—from 523 to 115 deaths per 100,000 live births. This success would not have been possible without improved access to essential healthcare services and the critical support of international donors. With funding now at risk, it will be difficult not only to sustain this progress but also to move forward. Women in remote, rural, and low-income communities stand to suffer the most.

The government, therefore, must act swiftly to mitigate the impact of these funding shortfalls. Developing a self-reliant healthcare model is crucial to safeguarding our achievements in maternal care. Increasing national budget allocations for the health sector—especially for maternal, newborn, and child health projects—must be a top priority. At the same time, collaboration with NGOs is essential to keep key initiatives alive. Securing new investments from alternative sources is equally important.

We must remember that strengthening the healthcare system overall—by ensuring well-equipped facilities, a skilled workforce, and reliable access to life-saving medicines, diagnostic tools, and essential supplies—is central to improving maternal care and preventing deaths. Parallel efforts are also needed to enhance women's economic and educational opportunities, expand access to emergency obstetric care and family planning services, increase skilled birth attendance, and strengthen the network of community health workers. With proper planning and critical reforms, we can ensure that even the most vulnerable women have access to the care they need.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE

On this day in 1971, the Proclamation of Independence in Bangladesh was issued, turning the Liberation War from a secessionist movement to a lawful claim for self-declaration.

EDITORIAL

Popular mandate and the road to consensus and change



Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir is professor in the Department of Development Studies at the University of Dhaka.

RASHED AL MAHMUD TITUMIR

The country finds itself at a defining crossroads. Political parties have begun engaging with the National Consensus Commission by submitting their recommendations across six critical areas. Differences of opinion are inevitable in any meaningful dialogue about systemic change. The true test lies in navigating these divergences to arrive at a common minimum reform programme (CMRP) that can steer the country forward.

Two critical questions now loom large over this transition. First, will political parties genuinely engage in dialogue to reach consensus? The answer lies in recognising that all stakeholders stand to gain more from cooperation than confrontation. The experience of other transitional democracies shows that when political survival becomes tied to reform implementation, even rival parties can find common ground. The current crisis has created sufficient mutual vulnerability to compel dialogue, provided mediators maintain neutrality and the process remains inclusive.

Second, how can resistance from vested interests be overcome? The entrenched opposition from these groups represents perhaps the most formidable obstacle. Counter-strategies must combine institutional restructuring with popular mobilisation. Establishing independent oversight bodies with public participation can check bureaucratic obstruction, while transparent asset declarations and conflict of interest regulations can weaken the rentier system. Crucially, sequencing reforms to create early wins that demonstrate tangible public benefits will build momentum against resistant factions.

The oligarchic model of governance has left Bangladesh's political institutions weakened, its economy distorted, and its bureaucratic apparatus compromised. The only viable escape from this quagmire is through the restoration of genuine popular sovereignty, where the electorate becomes the ultimate arbiter of the nation's trajectory. No sustainable reform can take root without first securing the people's trust and explicit mandate.

The case for an elected government with an undisputed mandate extends beyond political legitimacy to economic necessity. History shows that only administrations born from credible elections can deliver the stability required for social cohesion and economic rehabilitation. Nations that fail to establish such legitimacy invariably grapple with institutional paralysis and escalating public frustration. Before returning to the polls, however, Bangladesh must first establish the groundwork through a negotiated reform framework. This requires political actors to move beyond rigid positions and embrace pragmatic solutions through good-faith compromise.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

The immediate priority for the interim government is creating conditions for free and fair parliamentary elections, supplemented by a binding commitment from all political parties to respect the electoral outcome.

Such an accord would serve as a crucial safeguard against post-election turmoil. Several key reforms demand urgent attention in the pre-election phase. The electoral process itself requires fundamental overhauling through measures like transparent voter registration, biometric verification systems, and enhanced security protocols to protect voters.

Democratic governance needs strengthening through constitutional reforms like a bicameral legislature, greater women's participation, and

devolved power to local governments. The welfare state vision must transition to reality with investments in education, healthcare, social housing, and food security. Climate resilience must be mainstreamed. To ensure accountability, mechanisms like independent audits, whistleblower protections, and robust freedom of information laws should be established. Institutional depoliticisation, particularly for the judiciary, anti-corruption bodies, and law enforcement, is crucial. Digital governance tools can enhance transparency, while cybersecurity frameworks protect data rights.

Additionally, the following public-interest issues could be considered by political parties for inclusion in the electoral manifesto for public scrutiny:

Foundation of a welfare state

The foundation of a welfare state can truly embody the spirit of our glorious Liberation War, which calls for equality, human dignity, and social justice. The 2024 mass uprising was a movement against discrimination. Building a welfare state requires more than just economic development. Universal civil,

political, economic, social, and cultural rights are fundamental conditions of a civic state.

Firstly, education must be universal. Ensuring quality education at all levels, from primary to higher education, is the call of the hour. Particularly, affirmative actions for girls and marginalised communities are warranted. Secondly, ensuring free primary healthcare and affordable specialised treatment for every citizen is a first step towards a universal health system. Thirdly, housing is a fundamental right. Affordable social housing can be arranged in both urban and rural areas through collaborations with NGOs. Fourthly, modernising agriculture and reforming the food distribution system are necessary to ensure food security, as millions are

plagued by hunger, malnutrition, and stunting. Fifthly, a life-cycle-based universal social security system, including maternity, child, youth unemployment, and elderly allowances, is a dire necessity. For uplifting millions out of poverty and achieving Sustainable Development Goals, the system must also include communities affected by climate change. These allowances will ensure the fulfilment of basic needs at every stage of a citizen's life and reduce inequality.

The economic revival

Economic revival demands a shift from over-reliance on ready-made garments towards diversified industrialisation, agricultural modernisation, and robust labour rights protection.

Industrial diversification into sectors such as agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, and technology will generate decent employment and leverage our demographic dividend. Increased investment in vocational and technical education enhances productivity and expands opportunities for both domestic employment and overseas remittances. Simplifying bureaucratic processes and reducing regulatory burdens augments competitiveness and attracts foreign investment. Providing incentives and credit facilities for small and medium enterprises is crucial for job creation and economic stability.

A peaceful, prosperous rise of the Bay of Bengal

In the global economic and geopolitical context, the Bay of Bengal region will play a significant role. Strengthening cooperation among Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia could transform the region into a vital economic hub. Trade, investment, and technology exchange must be prioritised alongside collaborative climate action initiatives. Simultaneously, Bangladesh must expand its export markets beyond traditional sectors, with China, India, the United States, Japan, Korea, the European Union, and the Middle East securing new free trade agreements while ensuring that national interests and workers' rights remain protected.

Ultimately, the Bangladeshi people—through their historic movements and political consciousness—have repeatedly demonstrated their role as the true architects of national progress. The coming electoral exercise will once again test their collective wisdom in choosing leaders capable of stewarding the economic revival, translating the welfare state vision into tangible reality, and positioning the country as a dynamic player in the Bay of Bengal region. The future hinges on their informed choice.

Are we truly against discrimination?



Naziba Basher is a journalist at The Daily Star.

NAZIBA BASHER

"Students Against Discrimination" (SAD) sounded like a dream when we first heard about it. This "anti-discrimination" platform, comprising both male and female students, emerged in response to the widespread social and institutional discrimination faced by various groups within society, particularly students.

Since the July 2024 uprising and the subsequent ousting of the Awami League government, numerous bodies, platforms, and committees have been formed—either as extensions of SAD or as entirely separate entities. All these groups make similar promises: to root out discrimination and work for the betterment of the country. However, they share one glaring flaw—discrimination within their own ranks against women, private university students, and others, which is evident in the poor representation of these groups.

Looking at the central executive committee of SAD, 12 members were from Dhaka University, three from private universities, and seven from other educational institutions. Of the 22 committee members, only four were women. When the top leadership of the movement was announced, three of the four members hailed from Dhaka University and only one from Jahangirnagar University. The leadership included just one woman. First, let us reflect on the crucial

role women played in the July 2024 uprising. From the very beginning, women were at the forefront of the protests. They organised and led demonstrations, provided essential support such as food and medical aid, and used online platforms to raise awareness about the movement.

Their presence was particularly visible among university and high school students, who mobilised in large numbers to demand political change. Iconic images from the protests show women confronting police and political forces, armed with sticks and stones—a testament to their bravery and determination. Despite such exceptional displays of courage and resilience during the movement, most women have been sidelined in the post-uprising political landscape.

This marginalisation underscores an ongoing issue: women's contributions are often recognised during times of political struggle but overlooked when it comes to governance and decision-making. This remains a fundamental challenge to achieving gender equality in Bangladesh. In recent months, violence against women has not only persisted but escalated at an alarming rate.

While women were undeniably central to the uprising, their struggle for equal recognition and political empowerment continues. This is a stark reminder that participation in

revolutionary movements does not always translate into lasting societal change.

Alongside these brave women, private university students also emerged as pivotal participants in the movement. Their significant role can be traced back to July 18, 2024, when they intensified the movement by taking to the streets and directly confronting government forces.

Although public university students initially led the protests, the involvement of private university students marked a turning point. When some student leaders were arrested or forced into hiding for their safety—when the movement, under pressure from law enforcers and the then government, appeared to be losing momentum—it was private university students who kept it alive and thriving.

Despite having less direct stake in government jobs compared to their public university counterparts, they rallied for political change, thus broadening the movement's support base.

Can we forget the day BRAC University students poured onto the streets to face law enforcers armed with lethal weapons, to protest the deaths of their fellow students—regardless of which university they were from? Can we forget how students of East West, North South, IUB, and others joined them?

Their involvement was key to expanding the protests' appeal, attracting a wider demographic, including urban youth and professionals. These students organised and participated in significant actions, including the Dhaka Blockade, helping to sustain momentum and escalate the protests.

Given this vital role, it is puzzling that a group of private university

students felt compelled to protest the launch of the new independent body, Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad. Their protest aimed to highlight their exclusion. Does the word *chhatra* (student) lose its meaning when applied to them?

It is difficult yet crucial to be genuinely "anti-discrimination." Discrimination is pervasive, and often we are unaware that we are perpetuating it. However, when we ourselves are discriminated against, we are quick to label ourselves as "anti-discrimination" advocates.

If you judge or shame someone based on their race, appearance, religion, caste, class, or language, you are reinforcing discrimination—not fighting it. Can we truly claim to have moved beyond these biases, or is the real work still to be done?

For decades, society has failed to confront these issues with the seriousness they deserve. It is time to stop hiding behind labels and start looking inward. We must recognise our own shortcomings and take responsibility for the changes that need to happen within ourselves before we can hope to bring about transformation in the broader society.

The road ahead is one of deep reflection and significant social reform. True "anti-discrimination" efforts require more than simply calling out injustice—they demand a genuine commitment to addressing the prejudices we each carry. We must not only acknowledge the exclusion of certain groups from political spaces but also challenge the deeply ingrained biases in our everyday interactions.

It is time to set aside our hypocrisy and take meaningful steps towards a more inclusive and just society, where the voices of all are heard, respected, and valued in shaping the future of the country.

A 'new constitution' and my discontents



Symhe Wadud
teaches law at the University of Dhaka
and is in charge of Law & Our Rights at
The Daily Star.

PSYME WADUD

Since the fall of the Awami League government, we have been debating prospects of transitioning into a new republic with a new constitution. With the inception of the Jatiyo Nagorik Party (JNP), the debates and discussions are now taking a definite shape. We now have several concrete arguments with time—and alongside, the discontents too.

One argument is that the 1972 constitution-making episode was elitist and dominated by one party. It is quite a fair criticism that resonates with many feminist, Marxist scholars about virtually any constitution of the world. However, it is not clear whether any constitution-making episode can stand blameless on this count.

Studies on constitutionalism have always been saturated with discussions on how dominant political parties' ideologies influence constitution building—be it a one-party, authoritarian, or a liberal-democratic state. In appraising the one-party dominance over the 1972 constitution-making episode, we must consider the historical contingencies too, characterised by the Liberation War, its antecedents and political aftermath, the need for post-war reconstruction and solidification of a constitutional identity. Some say that the constituent assembly members were elected under the Legal Framework Order (LFO) 1970 of the erstwhile Pakistan, and hence, the constitution they drafted needs to be replaced with a new one. However, it must be noted that following the constitutional subversion facilitated by Ayub Khan, the LFO came as a remarkable political win, posing one concrete opportunity for democratic transition. Therefore, the significance

of the moment within which the LFO came into being cannot be overstated.

Pertinently, the Proclamation of Independence (which we all agree to be our first constitution) as adopted on April 10, 1971 (with retrospective effect from the March 26, 1971), the representatives elected in the 1970 elections constituted themselves into a "Constituent Assembly" for drafting a constitution for an independent Bangladesh.

Following the war, the Provisional Constitution of Bangladesh Order of 1972 further defined the same elected representatives as the "Constituent Assembly" who, in fact, later drafted and adopted the existing constitution of Bangladesh. While the JNP vows to protect the ideals of *shammo, manobik*

morjada, and shamajik shubichar (that were categorically enshrined in the Proclamation of Independence), the process of adopting a new constitution as laid down in the same document cannot be ignored. If we adopt historiographical lenses, then the immense political significance of 1970 elections and its aftermath can also not be downplayed as that

seemingly stems from their political vision for a "second republic", won't claims about their dominance, at least in terms of steering the process, be legitimate too?

To simplify matters, some propose having a parliament act as a constituent assembly (put in place through simultaneous elections). Such an arrangement

be tenable because of the systemic inequalities that exist and because women as a group do not have the political capital as such. Indeed, for those who are left out of the process, a constitution making episode will always look "exclusionary," "elitist," and dominated by "others," and because constitutions are only imperfect ideological settlements that only a sustainable culture of democracy can carry forward.

Another key argument is that the existing constitution is "fascistic." Authoritarianism or fascism is an indefensible political vision, a conscious governance choice, and an inanimate constitution cannot be blamed for that unless it explicitly provides for one-party rule or authoritarianism. In many authoritarian or paternalist countries, apparently good reading constitutions are kept simply as tools of window dressing. The democratic subversion in the post-independence Bangladesh was facilitated by a series of constitutional amendments, which irreparably whittled down constitutional checks and balances (e.g. fourth constitutional amendment), subverted the constitutional mandate of democratic rule (e.g. fifth and seventh constitutional amendments), and monopolised a static constitutional narrative and thereby contributed to democratic backsliding (e.g. fifteenth constitutional amendment). But these were not amendments—not the constitution itself. The Awami League government, time and again, co-opted constitution-based rhetorics while remaining authoritarian, but that is a classic example of abusing the constitution, not of "using" one. Instances of abusing the constitution were prominent during other military and non-military regimes too. Indeed, blaming the constitution for explaining the political follies and calling for its replacement without addressing its political understructure is quite enervated and does not align with the vigour and acumen that our youth shows otherwise.

While arguing for a new republic, the JNP often refers to France, which I do not think offers a useful,

appropriate example for our context. A cardinal yet uncomplicated rule of adopting constitutional experiences is that we cannot transplant an idea without accounting for the overarching politico-cultural contexts. Indeed, transplanting an 1852 idea into a 2025 postcolonial independent country sounds perversely counterintuitive as there are literally no parallels that we can draw to begin a sensible comparison (other than the fact that France opted for a second republic).

Pertinently, contemporary instances only show how new constitution making episodes can potentially bring in disunity, violence, and instabilities. We do have the inspiring instance of South Africa, which chose to undo its constitutional order rooted in apartheid, racialised political and governance structure, and explicit electoral discrimination against the non-Whites. What do we seek to undo? Persistent culture of rights violations, authoritarian governance, and democratic deficit? But the existing constitution permits/ endorses none of these. Certainly, state powers could be better organised and less concentrated in the existing constitution, but that does not make the entire constitution expendable and does not necessitate making an entirely new one. Finally, any new constitution will not be entirely "new" as such unless we opt for something other than a liberal democratic constitutional order. In fact, some scholars suggest that the very idea of replacing an old constitution with a new one is a "myth" and is only possible in theory. In practice, there will always be constitutional/legal continuity. A so-called new constitution will perhaps only arrange things in a different order, expand on or restrict certain rights, and may dilute some commitments. What troubles me is the idea of going over the entire process all over again, of deepening and entrenching divisions, producing new binaries, reinforcing the existing ones, and so on. And the people who lie in the fringes and the margins will not be able to withstand that.



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

The colonial legacy in our digital infrastructure

How Bangladesh and the Global South remain trapped in digital dependence



Zarif Faiz
is a journalist at The Daily Star
and a researcher at
Tech Global Institute.

ZARIF FAIZ

The history of colonialism is often understood as a physical phenomenon: the subjugation of nations, the extraction of resources, and the imposition of foreign systems of governance. However, in the 21st century, colonialism has evolved into something more subtle yet equally pervasive—digital colonialism. This form of control is exerted not through military force but through the dominance of digital infrastructure, platform economies, and the manipulation of data flows. In this new era, countries in the Global South, including Bangladesh, find themselves in a state of structural dependence on the technological and regulatory frameworks imposed by the Global North. The consequences of this dependency affect economic development and even fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and privacy.

At the heart of this modern form of colonialism is the concentration of digital power. Big Tech corporations, predominantly based in the United States and China, dictate the architecture of the digital world. Platforms such as Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft do not just dominate markets; they also control the information ecosystem itself. Data, the new economic resource, is extracted from users in the Global South, processed in data centres located abroad, and monetised without significant benefit to the originating country. This is eerily similar to the economic model of historical colonialism, where raw materials were taken from the colonies, refined in imperial centres, and sold back to the colonies at a profit.

The digital divide and the Global South's digital rights dilemma
The term digital divide is commonly used to describe disparities in internet access between different regions of the world. However, the divide is no longer simply about connectivity; it is about control, governance, and agency over digital resources. Bangladesh has made impressive strides in digital expansion, with internet penetration now exceeding 50 percent of the population (Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, 2023). However, this connectivity does not necessarily translate into empowerment. Instead, much of the country's digital economy operates under the influence of foreign platforms,

which dictate the rules of engagement.

Unlike the European Union, which has imposed strong data protection regulations through the General Data Protection Regulation, Bangladesh lacks a comprehensive legal framework to protect user data from exploitation. In the absence of such protections, the personal data of millions of Bangladeshis is harvested and monetised by global tech firms with little oversight or accountability. Moreover, without a robust policy framework, local users are vulnerable to unauthorised government surveillance, misuse of personal data by both state agencies and private corporations, and a complete lack of legal recourse in cases of data breaches or privacy violations.

The case of Facebook's Free Basics initiative illustrates how such dependencies can be exploited. Initially promoted as a way to bring free internet to underserved populations, Free Basics was ultimately banned in India for violating net neutrality laws. Nevertheless, the programme continues to operate in Bangladesh and over 60 other countries, giving Facebook disproportionate control over the digital experiences of millions of users (Kwet, 2019).

There is also a troubling lack of regulatory power over content moderation. Digital platforms enforce content policies developed in the United States or Europe, which often fail to account for the political and cultural nuances of the Global South. Reports have shown that moderation efforts on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are highly inconsistent, with harmful and inflammatory content often left unchecked in non-Western contexts (Digital Rights Foundation, 2022).

Meanwhile, governments in the Global South, including Bangladesh, have leveraged these platforms to suppress dissent, request user data, and exert control over digital narratives, creating a paradox where local authorities may lack power over Big Tech but still exploit digital platforms to advance state surveillance.

The Global South's digital sovereignty dilemma

Digital sovereignty—the ability of a nation to control its own digital destiny—is increasingly at risk in the Global South. Unlike Europe, which has exercised regulatory power through the Brussels Effect, and China, which

has pursued state-driven digital expansion through the Beijing Effect, most developing countries remain passive recipients of external digital governance models. The EU's regulatory influence has been particularly significant, shaping global discussions on data privacy, competition law, and artificial intelligence. The Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act have introduced strict rules on platform accountability,

indigenous digital alternatives. Policies such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and the regulation of digital lending platforms demonstrate India's intent to assert control over its own digital space. By contrast, Bangladesh lacks a clear strategic direction in digital governance. Existing laws, such as the now-repealed Digital Security Act and the draft Cyber Protection Ordinance, focus more on controlling online speech than

inadequate response to misinformation and hate speech in Myanmar—which contributed to real-world violence—is a stark reminder of the dangers of weak digital governance.

Furthermore, automated decision-making systems, powered by AI-driven algorithms, have become integral to digital platforms but remain largely unregulated in Bangladesh. These systems dictate everything from job recruitment and credit scoring to content recommendations, often reinforcing existing biases. Without robust legal mechanisms to challenge discriminatory algorithmic outcomes, users in Bangladesh and other Global South nations remain at the mercy of opaque, profit-driven tech policies.

Reclaiming digital futures: The path forward

The battle against digital colonialism is not just about resisting foreign dominance; it is about building self-sustaining digital ecosystems that prioritise local needs. To achieve this, Bangladesh and other Global South nations must adopt a multi-pronged approach that includes regulatory reforms, technological investments, and regional cooperation.

Developing local digital infrastructure is essential. Investments in domestic data centres, cloud services, and locally owned digital platforms can reduce reliance on foreign tech giants. At the same time, stronger data protection laws are needed to prevent the unchecked extraction of personal information. Bangladesh must move beyond restrictive internet laws and instead focus on comprehensive privacy legislation that aligns with both international human rights standards and the country's own digital development goals.

The country must also modernise its competition laws to reflect the realities of digital markets. Establishing clear regulatory frameworks on data governance, enforcing accountability for algorithmic biases, and fostering transparency in AI-driven decision-making can ensure fairer digital participation.

Finally, digital literacy must be prioritised. Citizens must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to understand how their data is used, how algorithms shape their online experiences, and how they can exercise greater control over their digital rights.

Digital colonialism is the defining technological struggle of our time. Bangladesh must move beyond passive participation in the digital economy and assert its own models of governance, economic participation, and technological innovation. This is not merely a question of infrastructure but of sovereignty, democracy, and the fundamental right to shape one's own digital future. The time for action is now.



Digital colonialism is exerted through the dominance of digital infrastructure, platform economies, and the manipulation of data flows.

FILE PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

aiming to curb monopolistic practices and enhance consumer protection (Larsen, 2022). However, these laws are designed primarily with European users in mind, with limited applicability to nations that lack the institutional capacity to enforce similar measures.

China, on the other hand, has pursued a more direct approach to digital sovereignty, promoting its own technological ecosystem through the Digital Silk Road initiative. By exporting surveillance technologies, telecommunications infrastructure, and AI-driven governance tools, China has created an alternative model of digital governance that appeals to many developing nations seeking to escape Western regulatory dominance. Huawei, for instance, has built significant portions of Bangladesh's digital infrastructure, including 4G and 5G networks (Digital China Initiative, 2023). While these partnerships offer technological benefits, they also raise concerns about state surveillance and overreliance on Chinese technology.

India has emerged as a third major player, seeking to balance digital sovereignty with economic openness. The so-called Delhi Effect has been defined by India's efforts to regulate foreign tech companies while promoting

on ensuring data sovereignty or platform accountability.

Antitrust laws and the struggle for digital accountability

Another critical aspect of digital colonialism is the absence of strong antitrust laws to counterbalance the power of tech firms over users. While the EU and the US have recently intensified their scrutiny of digital monopolies, much of the Global South remains vulnerable to unchecked data extraction, algorithmic biases, and lax enforcement of digital accountability. The Bangladesh Competition Act, 2012 was designed to prevent anti-competitive practices but has proven inadequate in addressing the unique challenges posed by digital markets.

This outdated framework has allowed tech companies to operate with little to no accountability, often abusing monopolistic powers and practices. The absence of stringent regulations means that companies can harvest vast amounts of personal data without user consent, exploit algorithmic biases that disproportionately affect marginalised groups, and avoid legal consequences for failing to moderate harmful content. The case of Facebook's

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

STITCHING FRAGMENTS

of a city lost in time

Review of 'Disrupted City: Walking the Pathways of Memory and History in Lahore' (The New Press, 2024) by Manan Ahmed Asif

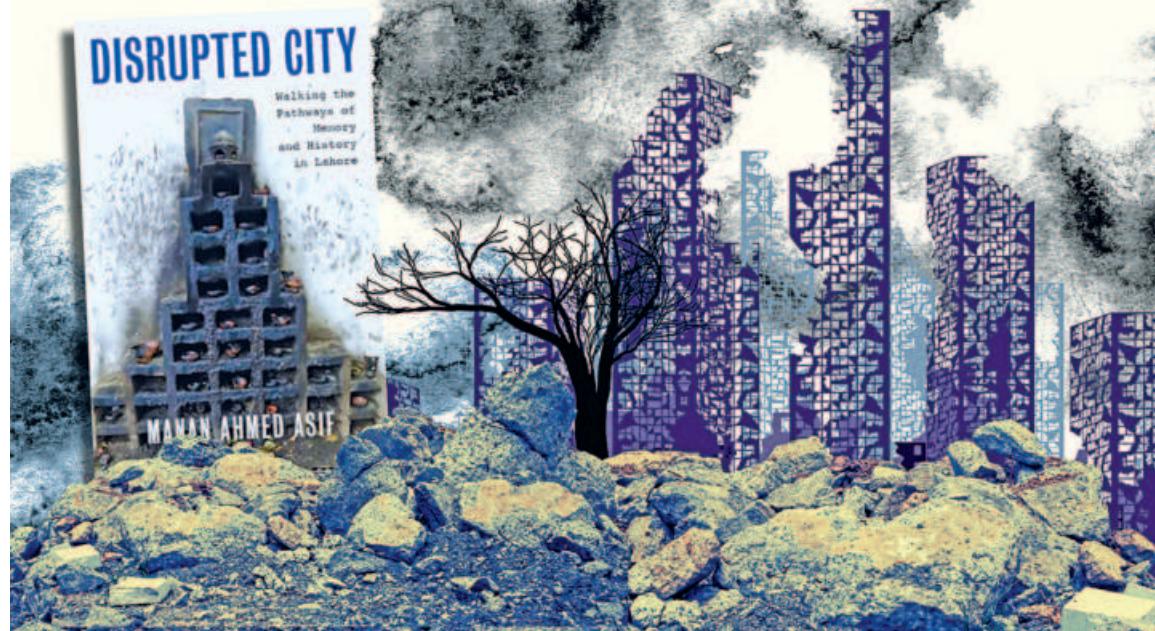


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

ISRAR HASAN

In the contested notion of creating a 'nation,' few ideas provoke as much ire among the everyday citizens of a bordered entity as the concept of a space—one that carries with it the weight of instilling an identity. That space is often a city. Throughout the last century till now, we have cities getting partitioned and segregated on volatile lines of gender, religion, and ethnicity on the route to creating a "nation-state". Lahore is such a city. It stands at the heart of Pakistan's various internal and external wars of mythmaking, identity-formation offering a windowscape into

the paradoxes of modern day identity politics in the subcontinent. In *Disrupted City*, Manan Ahmed Asif pens a magisterial account of Pakistan's cultural capital on accounts of his various walks around the city trying to decipher Lahore's various vantage points using a wide assemblage of texts, pamphlets, interviews, observations, novels, memoirs, courtroom transcripts, and archives. The book is essentially about the "ideas of Lahore" which involves its history, and vexed lingering questions of nationalism and memory. Asif, a professor at Columbia University, uses the act of walking through the city to engage with a

place he has long considered home—a home that has been at the center of key moments in the modern history of the subcontinent and Pakistan: the 1940 Lahore Resolution that solidified the Pakistan movement, the caesarian partition of the city's inhabitants of 1947 that oversaw massive migration, and the 1953 Anti-Ahmadi Riots, which tested the relationship between state and religion.

Manan sees his city as a city partitioned from itself. A city that has embedded itself into the structure of Pakistan yet seems to be distant from it. Lahore, a city of thousand years, has maintained its name through multiple rulers, natural disasters, and plagues from ancient times till today. As a major city in a country founded in the name of Islam, Lahore retained its name. Named after Lava, the son of Rama, the city whose demographics are far more homogenised than ever before, retains

this city". In his various escapades into the city, the author is a veritable tour guide who verifies his information deftly with a corpus of texts and quotes rooted in the gradual making of the city's numerous fluid pasts and now morbidly rigid present. Shrines and mausoleums that dot the city's smog-filled landscape have for most of their history been places open to the general public, including women who have been welcome and active participants in the gathering. Today, these shrines, once boasting a syncretic version of synthesis of South Asia's religious faiths, are increasingly policed using social curfews and gendered surveillance lessening their daily interaction.

Manan quotes travellers and poets from Lahore's ancient, medieval pasts, and not so distant past as fellow companions in tackling the contours of memory and placemaking the city has taken up in of itself. The fascinating of

become the capital of the Sikh empire under the reign of the controversial and charismatic Ranjit Singh. While certain vestiges of Nanak remain, largely in the form of remnants of Lahore's Sikh rule, his name has largely disappeared from the country's hagiography of illustrious reformers and truth-seekers. This gradual narrowing of identity bleeds onto the onset of modern day Lahore which saw the start of Zia ul Haq's largely Sunni driven Islamisation program in the 1980s that oversaw massive public floggings and beatings. A legacy which lives on today in the form of numerous draconian laws such as blasphemy laws and anti-Ahmadi ordinances that have long tested the murky waters of what it means to be Muslim, non-Muslim, Punjabi, Sunni, Shia, and even Pakistani in the holistic sense.

Taking forward to the current days is what startles the reader with more deep seated questions of the city's sustained existence. In addition to the fragile structure of the Pakistani state, contemporary Lahore is beset by numerous challenges such as floods and a lack of clean air that might make the city of poets uninhabitable by 2050. For a city that has grown, shifted, retreated, remade itself in the various contours of power, a question lingers on its survival. Combining walking as a form of deep learning and engagement with the city's conflicted landscape of placemaking, lived history, and the overall state of nation building, Manan is a formidable biographer of a city mired in a quagmire of its own.

Israr Hasan is currently working as researcher in a public health institute.

Manan sees his city as a city partitioned from itself. A city that has embedded itself into the structure of Pakistan yet seems to be distant from it. Lahore, a city of thousand years, has maintained its name through multiple rulers, natural disasters, and plagues from ancient times till today.

its name while its "non-Muslim" past continues to be erased. This includes Sikh and Hindu temples alongside its Devanagari and Gurmukhi scripts that once saturated its numerous streets and neighborhoods. Largely cleansed of its conspicuous Sikh and Hindu residents in 1947, its physical erasure is the "lasting epistemic violence on

this that of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith whose presence is embedded into modern day Punjab encompassing India and Pakistan. Describing Lahore as "a pool of ambrosial nectar, the home of praise", Nanal's poetic verses capture the destruction of Lahore at the hands of the first Mughal emperor, Babur. Fast forward into the future, Lahore had

ESSAY

'SUNRISE ON THE REAPING':

Fan service and repetitive themes weigh down 'Hunger Games' prequel

SHABABA IQBAL

Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* series has captivated pop culture with its bold take on tyranny, sacrifice, and resistance, spanning Katniss Everdeen's blazing defiance in *The Hunger Games* (2008) to her final stand in *Mockingjay* (2010) against Coriolanus Snow's cold cruelty. The buzzed about prequel *Sunrise on the Reaping* (Scholastic Press, 2025) thrusts us into the real story of Haymitch Abernathy's harrowing run in the 50th Hunger Games—the Second Quarter Quell—and how the tragedy twists him into the drunken recluse readers first met in 2008.

To recap: In Panem, a post-apocalyptic society split into 12 struggling districts under the Capitol's oppressive rule, the Hunger Games is a brutal annual contest. Each District must send a boy and a girl, known as tributes, aged 12 to 18, to fight to the death in an arena—a battleground designed by the Capitol with traps—on live television. For the Capitol, this ritual reinforces its control, rooted in the aftermath of a failed uprising, while contrasting its opulence with the suffering of the Districts. Haymitch, the victor of the 50th Hunger Games, mentors Katniss, the District 12 tribute, for the 74th and 75th Hunger Games, guiding her as she ignites a rebellion against the Capitol's cruelty.

Reaping is the fifth novel in the series and the second prequel after *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* (2020), which focused on the youth and radicalisation of Snow, the future president of Panem.

The Second Quarter Quell, a unique edition of the Games, is the bloodiest in the series' lore. With twice the number of tributes selected, the competition is even



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

more intense. The differences between these special editions and standard Games, as well as their impact on the tributes and Districts, were addressed in *Catching Fire* (2009), which depicted the 75th Hunger Games, aka the Third Quarter Quell. In this event, tributes were drawn from the existing pool of victors to show to the Districts that even the strongest among them are vulnerable. Meanwhile, *Songbirds and Snakes* was a stunning prequel that provided a unique perspective on Snow and deeply explored power and human nature, with subtle and natural connections to the original books. It depicted the 10th Hunger Games, highlighting their crude, formative state before they became the polished spectacle of Katniss' era, and how Snow's ambition and ideas transformed them into tools of propaganda and control, enriching the series by revealing the origins of Panem's brutality. So, does *Reaping* fill a narrative gap and stand tall by unveiling Haymitch's raw, rebellious soul?

While the book has its moments and Collins' skill in blending political commentary with page-turning storytelling is undeniable, it stands out to me as the weakest entry in the series. This is largely due to its heavy reliance on fan service and repetition of themes from earlier novels.

The book opens on Haymitch's 16th birthday, which unfortunately coincides with Reaping Day, when tributes from each District are selected to compete in the Hunger Games. Haymitch has simple wishes, like any teenage boy: to dodge responsibilities, spend time with his girlfriend, and enjoy a birthday dinner with his mother and younger brother. An early plot twist thrusts him into the Second Quarter Quell.

What follows is familiar to

fans of the series: The tributes' journey to Panem, the revelation of the decadence and cruelty at the heart of the Capitol and many of its residents, a dramatic parade, a training montage of sorts, and a flamboyant interview with Caesar Flickerman. If you've read the preceding four books—and it's advisable to do so before starting this one—returning to this world will be quite easy.

Haymitch's life mirrors Katniss'—both were born in an impoverished neighbourhood of District 12, both have a widowed mother and a younger sibling, and both suffered the loss of a father in a tragic coal-mining accident. They also end up in the Games due to circumstances beyond their control and form bonds with younger allies like Louella and Rue. Their losses strengthen their unyielding spirits. This close mirroring reeks of fan service, as it banks on fans' attachment to Katniss' journey. At times, the narrative also feels

overly direct. As we learn in *Reaping*, the reality of Haymitch's trip to the arena differs significantly from the Capitol's packaging of it. When Haymitch wins, he does so not as a ruthless survivor but as a rebel seeking to break the arena itself. I found the execution of the rebel-focused plot lacking because Haymitch is too similar to Katniss.

Haymitch puts Snow in the same situation he falls into with Katniss. And just like with Katniss, Snow decides to keep Haymitch alive and use him as a pawn.

The Capitol cuts the final footage of the Second Quarter Quell to exclude the acts of defiance and unity among the tributes. Channelling George Orwell's *1984*, Collins portrays a regime twisting facts to cling to control. Her work is as timely as ever, arriving at a moment when US history is being actively scrubbed, like how references to transgender people were erased from the Stonewall

National Monument website. In Bangladesh, during the uprising that ultimately led to its fall, Sheikh Hasina's regime crafted a narrative of conspiracy to mask student grievances and protect its authority, deflecting questions about deaths and government failures while ensuring the powerful dictate what is "true".

Yet, despite tapping into the truth-twisting fears gripping us today, *Reaping* does not have much to convey and what it does convey is drowned out by repetition. We have seen the Capitol's propaganda machine in action in earlier books, from its beginnings during the 10th Hunger Games to its refinement by the 74th Hunger Games and the Second Rebellion. We've also seen how District 13 uses Katniss in their propaganda to counter the Capitol's influence. Censoring the Games to cover up the Capitol's mistakes and omitting acts of defiance are nothing new to the series. Although the Capitol's censorship

during the Second Quarter Quell is more extreme than what we have seen before, the exploration of propaganda was already effectively addressed through Katniss. This concern stayed with me throughout *Reaping*. The book often feels like a 'greatest hits' compilation of what Collins has written before; it is packed with easter eggs and rolls out a younger version of a known character every few chapters—this nostalgic clutter detracts from the story's stronger points. While it's nice to see characters like Beetee and Effie again, their roles don't necessitate their return. Many consider *Catching Fire* and the Third Quarter Quell the pinnacle of the *Hunger Games* franchise, and it seems Collins aimed to replicate that impact with the Second Quarter Quell, leaning too often on past glories.

It is stated at the end of *Reaping* that Haymitch wasn't the right person at the right time to bring down the Capitol and the Hunger Games; instead, someone luckier or smarter needs to come along to finish the job he started. Viewed through this lens, the repetitive themes and overdone connections between characters begin to seem more acceptable. Yet, the execution of these ideas simply wasn't developed enough to make *Reaping* as strong a story as the earlier entries in the series. It is set to follow in the footsteps of the other books, with a film adaptation scheduled for release in November 2026. I feel it primarily exists to facilitate that adaptation.

Shababa Iqbal is a journalism graduate of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). She likes Jane Austen's novels and Disney movies. Email: shababa@icloud.com.



DECLAN RICE the Real slayer

KHALID HOSSAIN

In the old Russian fairy tale of Dobrynya Nikitich, the valiant knight faces a fearsome fire-spitting three-headed dragon -- a beast of such terror that slaying it demands more than mere strength.

Yesterday at the Emirates Stadium, Arsenal lived a fairy tale of their own in the quarter-final first-leg fixture of the Champions League. The dragon was Real Madrid -- 15-time winners, masters of the Houdini-esque escape.

A team do not simply beat Real Madrid in this competition. They have to vanquish Los Blancos. And vanquish them Arsenal did.

On what turned out to be a magical night in London, the Gunners brought more than belief -- they brought brilliance. Like the hero Dobrynya, they needed something otherworldly to prevail.

Enter Declan Rice.

The England midfielder, who had never before scored from a free-kick in his career spanning 338 games, summoned two of the finest strikes of his career. Two pieces of theatre. Two thunderbolts

We were nowhere near [our level], and Arsenal were really good. We were lucky to get away with three. There is a second leg, that's the thing we're holding onto. We're going to need something unbelievably special, something crazy.

Jude Bellingham,
Real Madrid midfielder

This was Real Madrid's joint-heaviest defeat in the first leg of a Champions League knockout stage tie, along with a 4-1 loss at Borussia Dortmund in the semifinals in 2012-13.

Real Madrid are yet to win or score against Arsenal in the Champions League. Arsenal won their only previous tie with Real Madrid, back in 2006 -- a goalless draw at Highbury following a 1-0 win in Spain in the last 16 of the competition.

that cracked the illusion of Madrid's invincibility and lit up north London in red.

The first came in the 58th minute, from 25 yards. Calm as you like, Rice curled it around the wall and past a sprawling Thibaut Courtois -- a goalkeeper who is arguably the best in the business.

Twelve minutes later, Rice struck again. This time from 20 yards, and this time with venom. The ball soared into the top corner, unstoppable and untouchable, as Courtois grasped at air. At that moment, the Emirates believed.

And so did Rice, becoming only the fifth player to have scored two direct free-kicks in a single Champions League match -- following Neymar, Ziyech, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Rivaldo.

By then, Real Madrid were shadows of themselves. Kylian Mbappe was muted, Vinicius Junior faded, and Jude Bellingham barely visible. Arsenal tightened the noose, and in the 75th minute, Mikel Merino drove in a third to complete the dream.

Three goals in 17 minutes. The Emirates roared. The dragon was down.

Arsenal recorded 11 shots on target -- the joint-most ever against Real in a Champions League knockout game (since 2003-04), matching Liverpool's tally from 2009. But the numbers only tell part of the story.

This was not just dominance. It was defiance. Real Madrid were not just outplayed -- they were dismantled.

The second leg awaits in Madrid on April 16, and history warns against underestimating dragons that breathe fire until the final whistle. But Arsenal have never stood taller in Europe under coach Mikel Arteta. Not since 2009 have they come this close to the semi-finals. Now, they are one fearless night away.

For now, this was a tale to tell for years -- of Rice, of red shirts swarming, and of a dragon slain.

SPORTS REPORTER

Another chaotic day unfolded in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) as long-standing issues resurfaced. Partex Sporting players boycotted their training session and threatened

to skip upcoming matches due to unpaid salaries, while match-fixing allegations surfaced in a game between Gulshan Cricket Club and Shinepukur Cricket Club.

It is evident that the domestic leagues are suffering similar woes of recent years.

Following the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), where such instances had brought the tournament into disrepute, the Premier League brought back payment disputes in domestic cricket.

Cricketers alleged that, apart from a few players, the majority of the players received only 10 to 20 percent of their payments.

Seventeen players initially wanted to submit

a letter to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO, but with him unavailable, they later submitted the letter to cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen and told the media about boycotting the game against Gazi Group on Thursday.

"We've been trying for a long time to get our payments. We've tried to cooperate with the club and the coach in many ways, but they're not responding... The wages offered to us this season are already

Partex manager Sazzad Hossain claimed the majority of payments had already been made.

"Fifty percent of payments were made during players' transfer and before Eid. The maximum of the players were given 10 percent, and some of them even received 55 percent. Before Eid, two players had left their bank account numbers since we were supposed to pay 10 percent more, but due to the rush, we couldn't do it. After

Partex has the documents, then the players would get suspended. But Partex would need proper documents. We asked Partex and they sent in some documents and also said that 60 percent payment has been made, and after the league ends, they will have one and a half months to make the full payments."

Meanwhile, in the match between Gulshan and Shinepukur, suggestions of match-fixing followed after videos of the manner of Shinepukur batter Minhajul Abedin's dismissal made the rounds on social media.

The batter went down the crease to Gulshan's Naeem Islam, and having missed the delivery, got the chance to place his bat as the wicket-keeper failed to take off the bails. The batter appeared to be in slow motion, inches away from the crease, but somehow not placing his bat in, as the wicket-keeper finally dislodged the bail. Even former Bangladesh players such as Shamsur Rahman talked about "shame" in social media posts.

On-field umpires, however, did not mention anything in their reports to the match referee. Asked, CCDM officials said that the matter had come to their attention. "We have asked the umpiring department, but from video footage, there was clearly something evident. If there is an allegation, ACU will deal with it."

Despite there being no reports, social media reactions and video suggest that it was another day of the DPL being thrown into controversy.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/SCREENGRAB



very low, and we're not even receiving that," Muktar Ali said.

Some players were seen practicing during the boycott, and opener Joyraj Sheikh alleged that

Partex are now registering new players to build the team.

they returned, I sent them the payments through the coach, but they said that they didn't receive payments before Eid, so now they want full payment," he said, adding that since Muktar Ali was playing Legends League, he was excluded from the team after featuring in one game.

Sabbir Ahmed, coordinator of CCDM, informed members of the media, "If

ICC WOMEN'S WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

'Cautious' Bangladesh eye winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Before leaving for Pakistan to take part in the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier, Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana Joty was asked whether she felt that the hosts and West Indies would be their main challenges in the qualifiers with only two out of the six teams slated to qualify for the main event later this year in India.

Joty's answer was a straightforward one.

"I think except for Pakistan; the condition will be difficult for all the other teams. The weather will also be a factor. If you see the stats, West Indies and Pakistan will be ahead of the other teams. But Ireland are a good side too. Traditionally, Pakistan has batting friendly surfaces. If you win every match, only then can you qualify," Joty told The Daily Star during an interview.

It didn't take long for Bangladesh skipper's words to come true as on the opening day of the qualifying event yesterday favourites West



Indies suffered a shock 11-run defeat to Scotland despite a brilliant all-round display by Hayley Matthews, who struck an unbeaten 114 off 113 balls after scalping 4-56.

Pakistan were also rocked by Ireland in the day's other match but the hosts held their nerves and took the last six Irish wickets for just 26 runs to clinch a 38-run win at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

As Bangladesh are all set to take on Thailand in their tournament

opener at the Lahore City Cricket Association Ground today, where the West Indies vs Scotland match took place, the Tigresses will surely try not to get complacent as a defeat at any stage of the tournament can be very costly.

The Tigresses won both their warm-up matches against Scotland and Pakistan 'A' but the most satisfying part was the batters having an impressive outing in both games.

In the opening warm-up match against Scotland, Bangladesh chased down a target of 252 runs in 41.3 overs while on Tuesday against Pakistan 'A', they made 276 runs while batting first in the second warm-up game. The women's team had a rest day yesterday.

The match against Thailand will be Bangladesh's first in this format even though the Tigresses enjoy a 7-0 advantage against the Thais in WT20Is.

The match is scheduled to start at 10:30 am (Bangladesh time).

that cracked the illusion of Madrid's invincibility and lit up north London in red.

The first came in the 58th minute, from 25 yards. Calm as you like, Rice curled it around the wall and past a sprawling Thibaut Courtois -- a goalkeeper who is arguably the best in the business.

Twelve minutes later, Rice struck again. This time from 20 yards, and this time with venom. The ball soared into the top corner, unstoppable and untouchable, as Courtois grasped at air. At that moment, the Emirates believed.

And so did Rice, becoming only the fifth player to have scored two direct free-kicks in a single Champions League match -- following Neymar, Ziyech, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Rivaldo.

By then, Real Madrid were shadows of themselves. Kylian Mbappe was muted, Vinicius Junior faded, and Jude Bellingham barely visible. Arsenal tightened the noose, and in the 75th minute, Mikel Merino drove in a third to complete the dream.

Three goals in 17 minutes. The Emirates roared. The dragon was down.

Arsenal recorded 11 shots on target -- the joint-most ever against Real in a Champions League knockout game (since 2003-04), matching Liverpool's tally from 2009. But the numbers only tell part of the story.

This was not just dominance. It was defiance. Real Madrid were not just outplayed -- they were dismantled.

The second leg awaits in Madrid on April 16, and history warns against underestimating dragons that breathe fire until the final whistle. But Arsenal have never stood taller in Europe under coach Mikel Arteta. Not since 2009 have they come this close to the semi-finals. Now, they are one fearless night away.

For now, this was a tale to tell for years -- of Rice, of red shirts swarming, and of a dragon slain.

What to WATCH

TSPORTS

DPL
Legends of Rupganj vs
Brothers Union
Live from 9:00 am
IPL

Bengaluru vs Delhi
Live from 8:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 2
Europa League
Quarterfinal
Lyon vs Man Utd

Live from 1:00 am
(Friday)
SONY SPORTS 1
Tottenham vs Frankfurt
Live from 1:00 am
(Friday)

Inter Milan's Davide Frattesi celebrates scoring an 88th-minute winner to snatch a 2-1 victory over shocked hosts Bayern Munich in their Champions League quarterfinal first leg on Tuesday. Frattesi tapped in from close range to stun the Bavarians, who had levelled three minutes earlier through substitute Thomas Mueller after Inter captain Lautaro Martinez had put the visitors in the driving seat after 38 minutes, drilling the ball into the net with a trivela.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Hamza's home debut at NS closer to reality

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh star Hamza Choudhury's home debut at the National Stadium [NS] is becoming a reality as officials from Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) visited the venue today to assess the ongoing renovation progress.

The Sheffield United midfielder made his international debut in the AFC Cup Qualifying match against India on March 25 in Shillong. Now, the board is aiming to host Bangladesh's upcoming match against Singapore on June 10 at the National Stadium -- formerly known as Bangabandhu National Stadium -- which has been undergoing extensive renovations since 2021.

Initially, BFF had planned to hold the match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena due to the extended renovation schedule at NS. However, the renovation work, worth 158 crore, is nearly complete, with only a few minor tasks remaining.

"We came here after honourable [Youth and Sports] adviser [Asif Mahmud] assured us that Hamza will make his home debut at the National Stadium," said BFF vice-president Fahad Karim, speaking to reporters after inspecting the venue along with executive members Iqbal Hossain, Golam Gaus, Kamrul Islam Hiton, Zakir Hossain Chowdhury, and officials of the NSC engineering

department.

"You know the youth and sports ministry and National Sports Council (NSC) have been working to fix all things, so we are getting confidence with the activities of them. In this perspective, what we have initially seen today is that the venue has been in good condition, though there are some works left."

"We want to host the June 10 match here. BFF will do everything to make it happen," further informed Karim, adding that they would form a three-member committee to look after the NS.

Following the inspection, BFF requested NSC to construct separate rooms next to the international dressing rooms for the match commissioner and referees, as required for international matches. Additionally, they

asked NSC to finalise the lighting specifications for the newly installed LED floodlights, ensure the giant screen is operational, and test the electronic perimeter board, which has yet to be tested.

NS has undergone significant transformations, including the installation of a PVDF membrane shed in the East and West galleries, colourful chairs in all seating areas, a newly laid green pitch, a complete press and VIP box, and the addition of a red athletic track surrounding the pitch.

THE BEST QUALITY
EVERY TIME GUARANTEED
BSRM



HIGHEST
SELLING
CEMENT

for more than
20
YEARS



Kihak Sung given honorary citizenship

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kihak Sung, chairman of Youngone Corporation and a pioneer in Bangladesh's readymade garments (RMG) and textile sectors, was awarded honorary citizenship of Bangladesh yesterday for his outstanding contributions to the industry and the country's economy.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus presented the citizenship document to Sung at the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025 at the InterContinental Hotel.

Sung, who first arrived in Bangladesh in the mid-1990s, was one of five individuals and organisations recognised for their significant contributions to Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Battery-run rickshaws are running on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway though a sign says such three-wheelers cannot operate on that road. Traffic police personnel are seen on duty there. The photo was taken at Matuail around 4:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Delhi wants positive ties with Dhaka

Says Randhir Jaiswal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

New Delhi wants a positive and constructive relationship with Dhaka, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesman Randhir Jaiswal told reporters in New Delhi yesterday.

The message was conveyed to Bangladesh during the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in Bangkok last week, he added.

"We had a meeting between the two sides in Bangkok. We issued a press release after that listing our approach to Bangladesh. We want to have a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh," he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

SSC exams start today with revised schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations for 2025 begin today under all the education boards across the country.

The tests will continue until May 13, according to the revised schedule released by the Board of Intermediate and Higher Secondary Education, Dhaka.

Under the general education boards, the exams will start with the Bangla first paper and end with the Bangla second paper.

All theoretical tests will be held from 10:00am to 1:00pm on the scheduled dates, while practical exams are slated for May 15 to 22.

This year's SSC exams will cover the whole syllabus, with full marks and full duration for all subjects.

This year, around 19.28 lakh students are

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

College girl killed after 'rape'

Four children raped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a college girl, who is believed to have been killed after being raped, in Chattogram and two persons were sued over raping teenage girls in Noakhali and Netrakona.

The 20-year-old deceased is a resident of Chandanaish upazila and student of Patiya Government College in Chattogram, said police.

She came to her grandmother's home to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr a few days ago, said Nayan Chandra Acharya, sub-inspector of Chandanaish Police Station.

The victim's family members believe that one of their relatives, who was also staying in the house, raped the girl around 2:00am when she went to washroom, the SI said.

The suspect also stabbed the victim's grandparents, he said.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Khalilur new nat'l security adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Khalilur Rahman, chief adviser's high representative for the Rohingya issue and priority affairs, has been appointed as the national security adviser.

The Cabinet Division has issued a gazette notification in this regard yesterday.

Khalilur will retain his functions as the



high representative for the Rohingya issue. Additionally, he will assist the chief adviser in the discharge of his responsibilities relating to the Ministry of Defence, the statement said.

"I am very grateful to chief adviser for his continued trust and confidence. I am fully

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

23 killed in political violence in March

12 others were killed in mob beatings, says rights group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 23 people were killed and 733 more injured in over 97 incidents of political violence across the country last month, says a report of Human Rights Support Society (HRSS).

In a media release, HRSS yesterday said that at least 40 incidents of "mob beating" took place across the country in March, killing 12 people and injuring 44 others.

In a grim picture of violence against women, at least 284 women and girls were subject to various forms of torture. Of them, 133 were rape victims and 83 were aged below 18.

Meanwhile, seven workers were killed and 120 more wounded in 21 incidents, said the report.

The rights body said violent political infighting occurred over establishing supremacy and extortion. The majority of them were between two groups of BNP activists.

Although the number of incidents of political violence dropped slightly last month from 104 in February, the number of deaths more than doubled from nine.

Of the deaths in political violence last month, 17 occurred in 64 clashes between rival factions of the BNP. These incidents left 502 others injured.

Besides, two were killed and 52 more hurt in 11 clashes between BNP and Awami League activists; one was killed and 81 others were injured in 10 clashes between BNP and Jamaat activists; and two were killed and 31 more wounded in three clashes between BNP and newly formed National Citizen Party

(NCP) men.

Also, one was killed and 40 more were injured in two AL intra-party clashes.

Of the 23 deceased, 18 belonged to BNP, three to AL, and two to the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) based in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area.

BNP activists were involved in 88 of the clashes.

Rights situation in March

- ⇒ Extortion, vengeance, establishing supremacy sparked political violence
- ⇒ BNP involved in 88 political clashes including 64 intra-party clashes
- ⇒ NCP involved in five clashes including two intra-party clashes
- ⇒ 151 women and girls tortured
- ⇒ 133 women and girls raped
- ⇒ 40 mob beatings left 12 dead and 44 injured

The HRSS report said that the number of clashes between BNP and AL men decreased last month from February, but the number increased between the activists of AL, Jamaat, and NCP.

NCP men were involved in two intra-party clashes, injuring 10.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



With Pahela Baishakh approaching, people are buying colourful handicrafts like dala, kula, pakha (fan), and earthen pots from makeshift shops at Doyel Chattar in the capital as part of their preparations for celebrating the first day of the Bangla new year.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Power producer to sell directly to consumer

MoU signed between H&M and Pran for floating solar plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is getting into the merchant power generation model for the first time with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between an electricity buyer and seller for a solar power plant. It is a model which allows a power producer to sell directly to the consumers.

Swedish multinational fashion retailer Hennes & Mauritz AB (H&M), Bangladesh's Pran RFL Group and International Finance Corporation (IFC) signed the MoU Yesterday to build a floating solar power plant in Moulvibazar.

Speakers termed the development as a step towards fostering private sector collaboration for renewable energy in Bangladesh.

The MoU was signed on the third day of the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025 at the InterContinental, Dhaka, during a discussion titled "Unlocking the Potential of Bangladesh for Investors in Renewable Energy".

Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, power, energy and mineral resources adviser, said the government has opened the power sector business for all.

"You can now set up power plants on your own, avoiding red tape, and without seeing my face, and do

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Polls in Dec or June next year

Reiterates Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus reiterated yesterday that the next parliamentary elections could be held either this December or June next year, depending on the extent of reforms the interim government will be implementing.

"If political parties agree on a shorter reform process, elections could take place in December. But if a more extensive reform path is chosen, the election can be held by June," he said during a meeting with Baroness Rosie Winterton, the UK trade envoy to Bangladesh, held at the State Guest House Jamuna.

During the meeting, both sides reiterated their commitments to deepening bilateral ties, with Baroness Winterton acknowledging the "long and trusted history" between the two nations.

"We have a long history together, and we are pleased to see the direction of reforms being undertaken," she said.

Prof Yunus said that Bangladesh is experiencing a transformative period in its history. "It's a very critical time for us. We are focused on rebuilding institutions and reshaping priorities," he expressed.

The two sides also discussed broader areas of strategic cooperation, including education, the textile industry, defence, and aviation.

Baroness Winterton expressed the UK government's support for the current reform agenda.

She also held a meeting with Ali Riaz, the head of the constitutional reform initiative.

Yunus is spearheading a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at rebuilding key institutions and reshaping national priorities in Bangladesh. Six key reform commissions have submitted their reports to the government.

Confiscate S Alam's 7,919 kathas of land

Court orders ACC

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to confiscate 7,919.52 kathas of land of S Alam Group Chairman Mohammad Saiful Alam, his family members and their beneficiaries in connection with corruption allegations against them.

The properties are in Chattogram and they have a market value of around Tk 325.19 crore.

Judge Md. Zakir Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Tahasina Munabil Haque, who is leading an inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard.

"S Alam and others were attempting to transfer the properties elsewhere," said the ACC official.

On February 23, the same court ordered the ACC to freeze 227 bank accounts with a combined balance of Tk 813.56 crore of S Alam and his family over allegations of ill-gotten wealth and money laundering.

On February 12, the same court ordered the ACC to freeze 437.85 crore shares of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3