



**"When the two main global economies impose tariffs, it will affect everybody, not only the economies engaged in the tariff war."**  
UN trade chief  
Rebecca Grynspan



DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 12, 2025

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 85

CHAITRA 29, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHAWWAL 13, 1446 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00



**From lost playgrounds to booming business**  
WR4



**Legal tangle hinders revival efforts on Ichamati**  
P5



**Iran vows 'good faith' in nuclear talks with US**  
P7



**'Don't see my position under threat'**  
P11

## Caught in toxic grip of a landfill

Soil, groundwater and air pollution poses serious health hazards to people around Amin Bazar landfill

HELEMUL ALAM

The villages around Amin Bazar, once known for their lush green farmlands and fresh air, now stand as stark reminders of unchecked pollution, with locals facing serious health risks from a nearby landfill.

In 2007, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) set up a landfill in Baliarpur of Savar. Since then, Baliarpur, Konda, and Beraith villages in Bongaon union have been facing relentless pollution. The community that once thrived through farming is now grappling with the devastating impacts of water, air, and soil pollution.

According to a study carried out in 2022, leachate, a toxic liquid from decomposing waste, seeps into soil and groundwater, carrying heavy metals like arsenic, nickel, chromium, and lead. These contaminants are linked to cancer and other life-threatening diseases, experts say.

Mostafizur Rahman, a professor of

- ➔ Heavy metals found in soil, groundwater within 1.5km radius of landfill
- ➔ 50,000 directly affected; many suffer from skin diseases, respiratory problems
- ➔ Long-term consumption of crops grown on polluted soil poses risk of cancer
- ➔ Untreated leachate may be spreading up to 5km radius of landfill, say experts

environmental sciences at Jahangirnagar University, who co-led the study, said, "We found toxic metals like arsenic and nickel in both surface and groundwater near the landfill. The highest concentration of metals

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Smoke billowing from the burning waste at Amin Bazar landfill. The community living in nearby neighbourhoods grapples with the devastating impacts of water, air, and soil pollution from the landfill.  
PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

## 'Mangal Shobhajatra' renamed to 'Anondo Shobhajatra'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The procession marking the Bangla New Year, organised by Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, has been renamed.

Formerly known as "Mangal Shobhajatra", the procession will now be called "Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra".

The decision was conveyed at a press conference yesterday at the fine arts faculty at DU.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan said, "The main theme of the Anondo Shobhajatra conveys two messages – the end of an authoritarian political system and the spontaneous protest of the people against a distorted system."

Prof Azharul Islam Chanchal, convener of the Nababarsa 1432 Celebration Committee, said, "We have not changed the name; rather, we have restored the original name of the celebration, 'Anondo Shobhajatra'."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## ESCALATING US-CHINA TRADE WAR

### Turmoil rings recession alarm

China slaps 125% tariffs on US goods; Xi urges EU to resist Trump 'bullying'

REUTERS, Beijing

Beijing yesterday increased its tariffs on US imports to 125 percent, hitting back against US President Donald Trump's decision to hike duties on Chinese goods to 145 percent and raising the stakes in a trade war that threatens to upend global supply chains.

Meanwhile, the turmoil unleashed by Trump's tariffs showed few signs of easing yesterday, with markets tumbling and foreign leaders puzzling how to respond to the biggest disruption to the world trade order in decades.

A brief reprieve for battered stocks seen after Trump decided to pause duties for dozens of countries for 90 days quickly dissipated, as attention returned to his escalating trade war with China

- ➔ US says 75 countries want trade talks
- ➔ Markets fall amid Trump's escalating trade war with China
- ➔ Investors flock to safety of gold, bond rout continues

that has fuelled global recession fears.

Global stocks fell, the dollar slid and a sell-off in US government bonds picked up pace yesterday, reigniting fears of fragility in the world's biggest bond market. Gold, a safe haven for investors in times of crisis, scaled a record high.

"Recession risk is much, much higher now than it was a couple weeks ago," said Adam Hettis, global head of multi-asset at Janus Henderson.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent tried to assuage sceptics by telling a cabinet meeting on Thursday that more than 75 countries wanted to start trade negotiations. Trump himself expressed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



**Model Meghna Alam's arrest sparks outcry**

**Court sends her to jail under Special Powers Act**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Model and Miss Bangladesh Foundation Chairperson Meghna Alam was detained and sent to jail for 30 days under the Special Powers Act of 1974 following a late-night court hearing on Thursday, drawing widespread criticism over the use of what many say is a draconian law.

Police said they took her in protective custody as she was spreading lies about an important individual.

A Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## ADB to increase lending by 67%

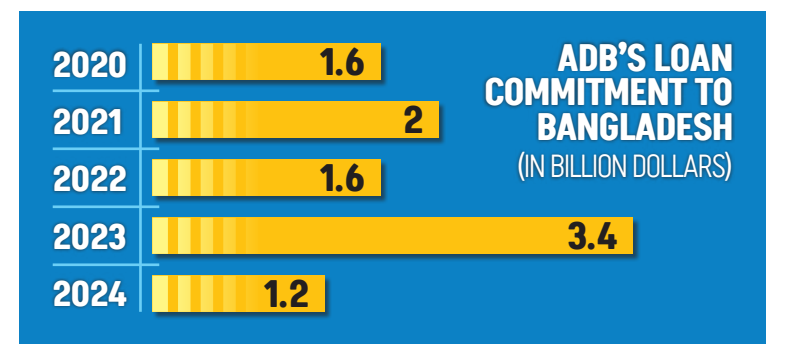
Bangladesh to get \$2b this year; ADB to lend more by repurposing funds from long-delayed projects

REJAU KARIM BYRON

The Asian Development Bank is likely to increase its loan commitment to Bangladesh by 67 percent to \$2 billion this year, up from \$1.2 billion in 2024, and offer additional financing by partially canceling funds from long delayed projects.

The partial fund cancellation is one of several measures that the ADB has been considering for Bangladesh, according to the lender's portfolio review report sent to the government in February.

The ADB's loan commitment to Bangladesh dropped to \$1.2 billion last year from \$3.4 billion the previous year. The lender informed the government this year that it would commit around \$2 billion in loans, said a finance ministry official seeking anonymity.



In its portfolio review report, the ADB said, "The year 2025 would be another challenging year considering the expectation of election and continuous shuffling of decision-makers in the government." Disbursement targets were set conservatively, considering "a possible disturbance".

Some projects and programmes faced significant delays in implementation. The situation worsened further due to additional difficulties and challenges, it pointed out.

"Taking into serious consideration the country's risk appetite and risk tolerance under the ADB exposure limits framework, more serious consideration and decisions on partial cancellation of loans with poor performance can create more headroom for new lending opportunities that can support the interim government's priorities."

Such repurposing would also help improve the portfolio management of the ADB-financed projects and programmes that would lead to more effective utilisation of public funds in Bangladesh, it noted.

The ADB usually makes loan commitments for its member countries every calendar year. Once a loan signing is approved by the ADB board, it turns into a loan commitment and becomes ready for disbursement.

At the beginning of this year, Bangladesh's loan portfolio under the ADB stood at \$11.79 billion for 52 projects.

If Bangladesh fails to implement a project after the ADB's loan commitment, the country must pay commitment charges to the lender.

According to the ADB report, a commitment charge of 0.15 percent per year is applied to all undisbursed loan balances for ordinary capital resource (OCR) loans, starting 60 days after the loan signing.

For the computation of commitment charges, undisbursed loan balances are calculated daily. Consequently, the timing of disbursements within a year affects the amount of commitment charge.

Based on the analysis of \$7.07 billion OCR loans in the present portfolio, the amount of undisbursed loan stands at \$2.39 billion, and a total of \$30.89 million was paid accumulatively in commitment charges over a decade.

Last year, Bangladesh paid ADB \$3.58 million as commitment charges.

The report said the analysis of 15 OCR loans that were closed or scheduled to be closed between January and December last year shows that \$23.54 million in commitment charges was paid cumulatively against loans of \$3.98 billion.

High commitment charges resulted from long implementation periods and low disbursements during the initial phases of the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## 'March for Gaza' rally at Suhrawardy Udyan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists demanding an end to Israeli atrocities in Palestine will gather at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka today for a rally after marching from five different points.

Several political and professional organisations, including the National Citizen Party (NCP), Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefazat-e-Islam and AB Party, will join the "March for Gaza", which had earlier been scheduled to start from Shahbagh and end at Manik Mia Avenue.

A platform called Palestine Solidarity Movement Bangladesh has created the March for Gaza event on Facebook. As of 6:00pm yesterday, 73,000 people showed interest and 6,300 said they would attend.

As per the latest decision, the rally at the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A Palestinian man weeps while holding an injured child at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Shejaia, Gaza City. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



# Preserving the past, one tour at a time

## Heritage group marks 100 tours across country

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

There's something magical about old buildings. You walk through the halls, and it feels like the walls are trying to tell you something. I have heard somewhere that every old brick holds a story. The tours of "Save the Heritages of Bangladesh" can take you close to those historic architecture, where you can experience the stories these old structures have to tell.

On April 5, the Facebook-based group dedicated to raising awareness about the rich heritages of Bangladesh reached a beautiful milestone: their 100th heritage tour, which took place at Pura Dhaka.

From morning till evening, members explored a line-up of historic gems: Lalkuthi, Ruplal House, Mongalalaya, Basanta Bari, Boro Bari, Bibi Ka Rauza, Sri Bihari Lal Jiu Mondir, Sutrapur Zamindar Palace, Jalsa Ghar, the Dhaka residence of Murapara Zamindar, Rishikesh Babur Bari, and lastly, Qazi Bari Heritage Estate, where they had their lunch. The walk started around 8:30am from Lalkuthi and wrapped up at Qazi Bari.

The Facebook group was created by Tony Angel back in 2008. While he's no longer active, the group officially



PHOTO: COURTESY

started its journey in 2011 with a renewed version of the group led by Sazzadur Rasheed, a passionate heritage explorer and an architect by profession. Rasheed shared photos and stories from his solo trips until group members and his close ones began requesting to join.

"They said, 'You're roaming solo — take us too!' That's when I thought, why not?" he recalls. The group had between 10,000 and 12,000 members back then, now it has grown to nearly 134,000!

The first official tour took place on 1 May, 2014, at Savar and Kaliakair.

Since then, they have conducted tours almost every month, with only a few unfortunate gaps. Now, more than ten years later, they've reached 100 tours, and still counting.

Along with general visitors, the event also saw participation from some prominent names, including Professor Abu Sayeed M Ahmed, former president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB); Hashem Sufi, a historian, researcher, and writer; Shakoor Majid, an architect, writer, filmmaker, and photographer; and Bayejid Mahub Khondker, a recipient of two gold medals at the ARCASIA Awards for Architecture.

The history of our heritage must be

preserved across generations. So, when asked whether the younger generation is passionate about it, Rasheed shares, "Honestly, not many youngsters show up. As a teacher, many of my students have participated in several tours. In the recent 100th event, we saw a few young participants alongside people from various disciplines, ages, and professions. I hope to see more young people joining in the future."

With their first-ever tour held on May 1, the group plans to mark that day every year. This year's tour on May 1, the 101st one, is expected to take place in Pirojpur and Jhalakathi.

Is the group and the tours really serving their purpose? "Definitely. When people visit a heritage site, they don't just look at it — they take the time to learn about the history, interact with locals, and maybe even buy some souvenirs from the local shops. With cameras so accessible, they often share their experiences or photos in the group, which sparks interest and encourages others to visit. That's how the stories stay alive, and so do the places," Rasheed explains.

"Recently, someone shared a post about a theft at a heritage house. The response was intense, and that post alone raised awareness. That's exactly what we aim to do, creating awareness," Rasheed adds.

Above all, things that are our responsibility — our history, our architecture — should never fade away. The group has come a long way, and after 100 successful tours, it is safe to say "The tours must go on!"

## Three of a family found dead in Narayanganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of two women and a child from a pile of debris in Siddhirganj of Narayanganj.

The deceased are Lamia Akhter, 22, her son Rafsan Labib, 3, and her elder sister Swapna Akhter, 35. They were residents of Mizmizi Paschimpara area, said police. Lamia's husband Md Yasin, 23, was arrested in this regard.

Locals spotted a severed hand near a pile of debris on the side of the road in the area around 1:15pm and informed police.

Later, police went to the spot and recovered several body parts buried in the pile, said Md Hasinuzzaman, additional superintendent of Narayanganj police.

Several body parts of Lamia and Swapna were found in sacks. But the child's body was not dismembered, he said.

"After primary investigation and interrogation, we suspect that Yasin was involved in the killing," he said. Lamia's another sister Munmun said Lamia used to work in a garments factory and Yasin is an auto-rickshaw driver. They got married in 2022 after being in a relationship.

Swapna lived with Lamia's family, said Munmun. "Yasin often demanded money from Lamia. Whenever Lamia refused, Yasin used to physically torture her," said Munmun.

Police suspect that the killing took place around four days ago, said the additional SP, adding however, no evidence was found in the rented house. No case was filed till filing of the report around 8:00pm last night.

## More Sudanese refugees fleeing as far as Europe

Says UN refugee agency

REUTERS, Geneva

Over a thousand Sudanese refugees have reached or attempted to reach Europe in early 2025, the United Nations' refugee agency said yesterday, citing growing desperation in part due to reduced aid in the region.

Some 12 million people have been displaced by the two-year conflict between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that has fuelled what UN officials call the world's most devastating aid crisis.

While some have recently returned home to Khartoum, millions of others in neighbouring countries like Egypt and Chad face tough choices as services for refugees are being cut, including by the United States as part of an aid review.

## Caught in toxic grip of a landfill

FROM PAGE 1  
was found in areas closest to the site, showing how pollutants are infiltrating groundwater."

He said the researchers had collected samples of leachate, surface water, groundwater, soil, and leaves of plants from areas within a 1.5km radius of the landfill.

"The detection of cadmium and nickel in surface water indicates high levels of toxicity," he told The Daily Star.

"In groundwater, the highest concentration of heavy metals was found in areas near the landfill, indicating that these toxic metals are coming from it." Soil near the landfill has also been polluted, with chromium, a harmful heavy metal, detected at 108.5 milligrams per kg, exceeding the permissible limit of 100 milligrams per kg, said Mostafizur.

"This study provides a picture of how Amin Bazar landfill has become a source of multiple types of pollution," he added.

Prof Shafi Mohammad Tareq, a researcher and teacher of environmental sciences at Jahangirnagar University, said that a properly engineered sanitary landfill must have mechanisms to prevent leachate leakage. However, the Amin Bazar site lacks that and doesn't meet the required standards.

"Though there is a leachate treatment pond at the landfill, it doesn't appear to be functioning properly. Untreated leachate may be spreading across a radius of up to five kilometers."

The nearby Turag River, already contaminated with untreated industrial waste, is further poisoned by the landfill's runoff.

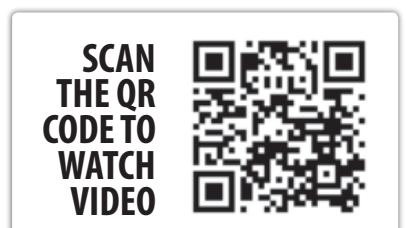
"If river water, contaminated by leachate from the landfill, is used for irrigation, it may jeopardise public

health through the food chain." People who consume crops from these fields over an extended period are at a high risk of developing cancer or long-term health issues, Tareq pointed out.

### LIVES IN PERIL

The residents of Konda, Baliarpur, and Beraith villages have been struggling to cultivate land for more than a decade. During the monsoon, rainwater carries waste into nearby fields, scattering plastics, broken glass, and medical debris across the area.

Recounting his ordeal, Mohammad Nazim Uddin, a farmer from Baliarpur,



said, "Once the water recedes, we find syringes, shards of ceramics, and scrap metal in our fields. Farmers even get hurt while working the land."

Shahidul Islam, a resident of Konda village, said, "Smoke from burning waste fills the air... My six-month-old daughter has been suffering from asthma. I'm also having respiratory problems."

Even water from many tubewells, once a source of fresh groundwater, turned foul. "We had to dig 350 feet deep to get clean water," he lamented.

Saiful Islam, former chairman of Bongaon union parishad, said that around 50,000 people are directly affected by the landfill.

"Around 40 percent of farmland

in low-lying areas has already been damaged. Farmers find it hard to cultivate land... Diarrhea, skin diseases, and respiratory problems have become prevalent among the villagers," he added.

Vegetables and crops grown on contaminated soil are making their way to markets in Mirpur-1, Hemayetpur, Karwan Bazar and other areas, posing health risks to many.

Mohammad Ali, a vegetable seller at Nagar Kunda Bazar of Baliarpur, said he buys vegetables from areas near the landfill. Vegetables from these areas are also sold to traders in Mirpur-1, Karwan Bazar and Hemayetpur.

Contacted, DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz said that a waste-to-energy plant is being constructed in Amin Bazar, which will help tackle pollution in the area. The project is expected to be completed by next year.

"Garbage from the northern part of Dhaka city will be used to generate power, reducing landfill waste by up to 90 percent. Besides, leachate will be managed properly," he told The Daily Star.

In 2021, the DNCC and Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPPDB) signed an agreement with Beijing-based China Machinery Engineering Corporation to build the country's first waste-based power plant. It'll generate 42.5 megawatts of electricity from 3,000 tonnes of waste per day, with the BPPDB purchasing the power.

While the waste-to-energy plant promises long-term relief, environmental experts emphasise the need for immediate measures, such as leachate containment and regular monitoring of groundwater and soil quality, to safeguard the villagers.

## 'Mangal Shobhajatra' renamed

FROM PAGE 1  
He argued that during the first rally in 1989, the name "Anondo Shobhajatra" was adopted spontaneously. However, when it was later renamed Mangal Shobhajatra, that change did not occur in the same "organic manner."

He said the decision was not made under any external pressure.

"The word Mangal was used by fascist regimes in a way that left negative connotations in society. That's why we want to return to the original spirit, a time of spontaneous participation by all people, free from political aggression disguised as cultural practice," he said.

Mentionable, UNESCO recognised the Mangal Shobhajatra as a World Cultural Heritage on November 30, 2016.

Prof AAM Kaoser Hassan, member secretary of the Nababarsa 1432 Celebration Committee, said this year's procession would feature seven large motifs: a face symbolising fascism, a wooden tiger, a hilsa fish, a dove, a palanquin, a water bottle as a symbolic representation of Mugdho — the young student killed during the July uprising last year — and a watermelon slice, in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

In Palestine, the watermelon is a symbol of diligence and resistance. He also said this year, 410 artists from 26 indigenous communities will participate in the celebrations. Among them are communities such as the Mro,

Marma, Lusai, Bom, Khiyang, Chakma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Pankhwa, Rajoar, Santal, Mahali, Kol, Malpaharia, Hajong, and others.

DU Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed said law enforcement will not be positioned at the front of the procession this year, although they will be present on both sides to ensure overall security.

Saifuddin said at the time of the rally, only Palashi and Nilkhet road will be kept open for people, while the road from Banglamotor, Matshya Bhaban to the Shahabagh intersection will remain closed.

For security and crowd control, the Shahbag and TSC metro stations will also remain closed from morning until afternoon. The stations will reopen after the procession ends.

After 5:00pm, no one will be allowed to enter the campus, as entry gates will not remain open. However, exit gates will remain open after 5:00pm.

**BACKLASH OVER NAME CHANGE**  
The decision to rename the procession has stirred criticism from various quarters, with some left-leaning student organisations and public intellectuals rejecting the new name.

Prof Anu Muhammad, a former teacher at Jahangirnagar University, said that the decision lacked transparency and public consensus.

"This change did not occur spontaneously or for a well-reasoned

cause. It appears to be the result of pressure from groups that have long opposed such cultural expressions," he told The Daily Star.

"There was already a level of government control in cultural affairs, and now we are witnessing new forms of intervention — both from state institutions and certain ideological groups. This raises concerns about the space for inclusive cultural practices," Prof Muhammad said.

Zunayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganasamhati Andolon, said, "There is politics and bias surrounding the use of language, but such national festivals should be kept above controversy."

Mahir Reza Shahriar, president of Chhatra Union, said, "If the change has been made due to pressure from extremist religious groups, it risks harming a tradition that holds non-communal significance for the country."

Besides, the 26th batch of DU's Faculty of Fine Arts boycotted the Baisakh celebrations, alleging that this year's organising committee had sidelined the batch that was supposed to organise the event.

Abdullah A Zaidi, a student of the 26th batch, said, "To us, this feels like hypocrisy. Suddenly, excluding students, the teachers are now organising the Baisakh celebrations as part of academic activities. This is one of the main reasons we are boycotting this year's event."

## Model Meghna Alam's arrest sparks outcry

FROM PAGE 1  
Dhaka sent her to jail around 10:30pm, over 24 hours after she was picked up from her home in the capital's Bashundhara on Wednesday.

Amid criticism on social media, Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued a statement yesterday, refuting allegations that officers had abducted the woman.

The statement said Meghna was held in accordance with the law, but made no mention of the time of her detention.

The statement added that she was out to deteriorate the relations between countries and was involved in a conspiracy to damage the country's economy.

Meghna's father Badrul Alam told The Daily Star that his daughter was in a relationship with a foreign diplomat, with whom she got engaged several months ago.

But she recently learned that the man already had a wife, he said, adding that Meghna contacted his wife and ended the engagement.

"I have heard that the diplomat contacted the home ministry. On Thursday night, the Detective Branch told me that the home ministry instructed law enforcers to take action under the Special Powers Act."

He added it was unfortunate that the government formed through a mass uprising used a draconian law, and it was reminiscent of the way people used to be detained and imprisoned under the previous regime.

Lawyers and rights activists raised concerns over the way she was picked up from home, the late-night hearing, and the state of civil liberties.

Firoz Ahmed, member of a constitution reform commission formed by the interim government, wrote on Facebook, "The police statement regarding Meghna is depressing. I have repeatedly called for police reform, and I am doing so

again. The use of the police to serve the interests of the powerful must stop."

Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua wrote on Facebook that Meghna's detention and imprisonment involved legal violations at every step.

Amnesty International South Asia wrote on X that it was deeply concerned about the use of the Special Powers Act for the arrest.

"The draconian legislation, with vague, overbroad provisions, has historically been used to arbitrarily detain people for long periods of time, without charge, and without judicial oversight. These all constitute gross violations of due process safeguards and international human rights standards and best practices," Amnesty said.

"As per media reports, Meghna's detention was shrouded in secrecy, and was allegedly carried out without a warrant, which are considered to be an alarming violation of procedural safeguards."

"We call on the authorities to either charge Meghna with an internationally recognizable crime or release her. They must also end the use of and repeal the Special Powers Act."

Former economics teacher Prof Anu Muhammad wrote on Facebook that the individual who detained her from her apartment should be punished for criminal conduct.

Muhammad Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner of the DMP's media and public relations division, said, "Meghna retains her right to seek legal assistance."

Additional Commissioner Rezaul Karim Mallik said law enforcers also detained a man named Sameer "in this connection."

On Wednesday around 5:00pm, Meghna went live on her verified Facebook page, saying that individuals identifying themselves as law enforcers from the Bhatara Police Station were trying to break into her flat without a warrant.

A visibly distressed Meghna is heard in the video requesting the men "carrying firearms" to leave and telling them that she would go to the police station.

The 12-minute footage shows the individuals breaking into her flat and forcibly taking her phone. The video and some of her previous posts were removed from her profile soon afterwards.

However, the footage was downloaded by social media users who posted it again.

An officer from Bhatara Police Station, requesting anonymity, said officers took her to the Detective Branch (DB) office on Minto Road after detaining her.

Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi told The Daily Star that Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sefatullah sent her to jail for 30 days, following a directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Later, Meghna, also winner of Miss Earth Bangladesh 2020, was taken to Kashimpur jail in Gazipur.

The section 3(1) of the Special Powers Act, 1974, allows authorities to detain individuals to prevent them from committing a prejudicial act.

Under Section 3(2), a district magistrate or additional district magistrate can issue a detention order to prevent actions that threaten national security, public safety, or public order; incite hatred between communities or groups; interfere with law enforcement; disrupt essential supplies or services; spread fear or alarm; or harm the country's economic or financial interests.

Lawyer Jyotirmoy said, "By detaining her under the draconian Special Powers Act of 1974, a dangerous new precedent has been set. Under what law was a magistrate made to sit in court at night? The Code of Criminal Procedure clearly outlines when, where, and how a magistrate can hold court."

## Turmoil rings recession alarm

FROM PAGE 1  
hope of a deal with China, the world's No.2 economy.

But the uncertainty in the meantime extended some of the most volatile trading since the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Asian indices mostly followed Wall Street lower yesterday. In Europe, China's latest tariff hike sent stocks lower, leaving the STOXX 600 down more than 1 percent on the day and set for another drop this week, one of its most volatile on record.

The EU's trade chief will hold new talks with US counterparts in Washington on Monday, a spokesperson said.

Bessent shrugged off the renewed market turmoil on Thursday and said striking deals with other countries would bring certainty.

The US and Vietnam have agreed to begin formal trade talks, the White House said. The Southeast Asian manufacturing hub is prepared to

crack down on Chinese goods being shipped to the United States via its territory in the hope of avoiding tariffs, Reuters exclusively reported.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, meanwhile, has set up a trade task force that hopes to visit Washington next week.

As Trump suddenly paused his 'reciprocal' tariffs on other countries hours after they came into effect earlier this week, he ratcheted up duties on Chinese imports as punishment for Beijing's initial move to retaliate.

He has now imposed new tariffs on Chinese goods of 145 percent since taking office, a White House official said.

China hit back with new tariffs yesterday. "The US imposition of abnormally high tariffs on China seriously violates international and economic trade rules, basic economic laws and common sense and is completely unilateral bullying and coercion," China's finance ministry

said in a statement.

Trump told reporters at the White House on Thursday that he thought the United States could make a deal with China and said he respected Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"In a true sense he's been a friend of mine for a long period of time, and I think that we'll end up working out something that's very good for both countries," he said.

Xi, in his first public remarks on Trump's tariffs, told Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez during a meeting in Beijing yesterday that China and the European Union should "jointly oppose unilateral acts of bullying." China's state news agency Xinhua reported.

"There are no winners in a trade war," the Chinese leader told his guest, adding that by acting together, the world's second-largest economy and the 27-strong European trade bloc could help uphold "the global rules-based order."

## 'Interim govt has no right to stay for 5 years'

Says BNP Standing Committee Member Selima Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has no right to remain in power for five years, said BNP Standing Committee Member Selima Rahman yesterday.

"We want fair elections. The home affairs adviser has said the country wants this government to stay for five years. But we know what the people really want," Selima said at a special council session of the Central Executive Committee of the Bangladesh Diploma Medical Association in the capital.

"This is an interim government, and it is not meant to take on long-term responsibilities," she added.

Her remarks came in response to a statement made by Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury in Sunamganj on Thursday, where he claimed that people are urging the government to stay for five more years.

Selima said BNP remains

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Jayanta Kar, a fisherman, carries net over his shoulder as he walks through the twilight glow while the sun sets. After a hard day's work, he returns to his family, who rely on his fishing for their sustenance. However, due to various reasons, local fish are not as plentiful as they once were, leaving people like Jayanta and his family struggling. The photo was taken in the Fenchuganj upazila of Sylhet recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Accountability key to resolving Rohingya crisis

Says foreign adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain, now visiting Turkey, yesterday emphasised that accountability for the crimes against humanity perpetrated against the Rohingya community is a crucial factor in ensuring justice and the ultimate resolution of the crisis.

He also reassured that Bangladesh will continue to lend its unwavering support for the just cause of establishing an independent Palestinian state in accordance with multiple UN resolutions.

On the sidelines of the "Antalya Diplomacy Forum 2025," Hossain had a meeting with Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Karim AA Khan KC and discussed the issue.

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Md Mahfuj Alam, Bangladesh Ambassador to Türkiye, and other senior officials from both sides attended the meeting.

The meeting discussed all aspects of engagements between Bangladesh and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## RAMNA BATAMUL BOMBING

# 24 years on, justice still eludes victims

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Twenty-four long years have passed since the bomb blasts at Ramna Batamul during Pahela Baishakh celebrations, yet justice remains out of reach for the victims.

Prolonged legal delays have kept the case pending, with no final verdict delivered.

The 2001 blasts, which shook the nation, left 10 people dead and several others injured.

Now the case remains stuck in legal limbo, despite a trial court sentencing several accused in 2014.

**Legal complications delayed the hearing and disposal of the convicts' appeals and the death reference, as several HC benches declined to hear the case for various reasons, and the state repeatedly sought adjournments.**

The High Court has yet to deliver a verdict on the appeals and death reference — required to confirm death sentences — even though hearings concluded on February 18 this year.

Earlier, legal complications delayed the hearing and disposal of the convicts' appeals and the death reference, as several High Court benches declined to hear the case for various reasons, and the state repeatedly sought adjournments.

On February 18, the HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Nasreen Akter wrapped up

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

# 451 cases filed in 2024, highest in 5 years

ACC ramps up activities after July uprising

DIPAN NANDY

Following the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5, the Anti-Corruption Commission has significantly increased its activities, as the number of cases filed, charge sheets approved, and complaints investigated in 2024 surpassed those of the past five years, according to the commission's draft annual report.

ACC Chairman Mohammad Abdul Momen said the commission is working impartially and not favouring any political party.

Following the mass student and public uprising on August 5, the ACC began investigations against former PM Sheikh Hasina — who led the Awami League for over 15 years — her family members, former ministers, and lawmakers. More than 200 party leaders and activists were also sued.

ACC activities were briefly halted after the resignation of the previous commission led by Moinuddin Abdullah on October 29. The commission resumed its work after Dr Abdul Momen took over on December 12.

According to the draft annual report, the ACC received 15,842 complaints in 2024. Of these, 1,894 were accepted for investigation, and 1,012 were forwarded to other

departments.

In comparison, complaints accepted for investigation were 845 in 2023, 901 in 2022, 533 in 2021, and 822 in 2020. The ACC filed 451 cases in 2024, mostly against



### AT A GLANCE

Probe launched against former PM, ministers, AL leaders

15,842 complaints received in 2024; 1,894 accepted

403 charge sheets approved, marking a record high

Tk 170.55cr in assets confiscated by court orders

Tk 190.90cr in assets frozen in other cases

ministers, state ministers, and MPs affiliated with AL. The number of cases filed in previous years was 404 in 2023, 406 in 2022, 347 in 2021, and 348 in 2020.

Charge sheet approvals reached a five-year high in 2024, with 403 approved by the ACC. The report credits this rise to better training for investigators and improved monitoring by supervising officers. In comparison, the numbers of approved charge sheets were — 363 in 2023, 224 in 2022, 260 in 2021, and 228 in 2020.

The ACC also made progress in asset recovery. In 2024, assets worth Tk 170.55 crore were confiscated in 69 cases through court orders, and another Tk 190.90 crore was frozen in 38 other cases.

However, fines collected totalled Tk 1,147.33 crore in 2024, which is lower than the previous two years. The amount was Tk 1,683.67 crore in 2023 and Tk 2,632.41 crore in 2022, while Tk 75.18 crore was collected in 2021 and Tk 72.48 crore in 2020.

Despite the post-August 5 momentum, many cases against BNP's acting chairman Tarique Rahman and other party leaders ended in acquittals.

The ACC Chairman clarified that since the commission resumed operations only on December 12, none of these acquittals were made by the ACC. Those were court decisions, which are outside the commission's jurisdiction.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## 'Time to move away from fossil fuel'

Youths demand revision of energy plan, fair climate finance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Young climate activists have called for urgent revisions to Bangladesh's Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP), warning that the country's continued dependence on fossil fuels undermines both national and global climate goals.

As part of the Global Climate Strike, more than 200 youths under the banner of YouthNet Global staged a peaceful demonstration in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka yesterday, demanding



a just transition to renewable energy and greater access to international climate finance.

Similar protests took place in 50 districts across the country, with students from schools, colleges, and universities taking part.

Holding placards that read "Time to move away from fossil fuels" and "We demand renewable energy, don't sell our future," the demonstrators said the current IEPMP risks increasing Bangladesh's reliance on costly and polluting fossil fuel imports.

Speakers warned that continued fossil fuel

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



A heap of waste burns openly on a street in Lalmatia, disregarding its impact on both passersby and the environment. Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan had earlier warned that without effective waste management, protecting Dhaka's residents from air pollution would be difficult. This scene is a perfect demonstration of the poor state of waste management in the capital, where trash is regularly set on fire without concern for the consequences. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Dengue risk looms with onset of monsoon

HELEMUL ALAM

With rainfall starting in various parts of the country, the risk of an outbreak of Aedes mosquitoes — carriers of dengue and chikungunya — is rising significantly.

Experts warn that without prompt and effective measures to control mosquito breeding, the situation could worsen during the upcoming monsoon.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least 14 dengue-related deaths have been reported this year, with 2,052 people hospitalised as of yesterday.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast rain and thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds in one or two places across Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions in the next 24 hours from 9:00am today.

Elsewhere, the weather is expected to remain mostly dry with some cloud cover.

Professor Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said the steady influx of nearly 50 dengue patients daily is concerning.

"This indicates a growing risk.

Authorities must act quickly to eliminate potential breeding sites and control the Aedes population," he said.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman noted that even light rainfall can cause a spike in dengue cases.

"The first generation of mosquitoes that matures after rain significantly increases the overall population. If BTI or other eco-friendly larvicides are applied now, a major outbreak can be prevented," he said.

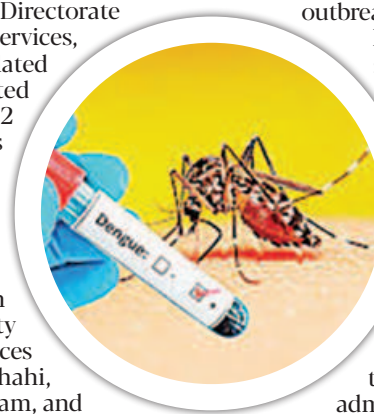
BTI is a naturally occurring soil bacterium used as a microbial insecticide to control mosquito larvae and other insects.

He added that while city corporation efforts were poorly coordinated last year, there has been some improvement this year — though still limited.

Rahman stressed the need for local administrations to remain alert and called for dedicated mosquito control units across the country.

"Early detection of Aedes clusters is crucial. Once the rains begin, immediate drives to destroy breeding grounds and larvae are essential. Taking preventive action now is the key to avoiding a major outbreak," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



'Oligoli Halkhata' to usher in Pahela Baishakh



CITY DESK

The Bangla New Year 1432 will be celebrated in the Dhaka North City Corporation area through a vibrant event titled 'Oligoli Halkhata,' organised by 'Oligoli Borshoboron Bondhugan' and initiated by the Gulshan Society.

The announcement came during a press conference held yesterday at Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in the capital's Gulshan.

The event is being organised to bring together residents and communities through cultural festivities marking Pahela Baishakh.

Barrister Omar Sadat, president of the Gulshan Society; Syed Ahsan Habib, general secretary of the society; its members Srabonti Dutta and Navim Murshid; and Muhammad Tarikul Islam were present during the press conference, among others.

24 years on, justice still eludes

FROM PAGE 3

the hearings and kept the verdict as curia advisari vult - meaning it could be delivered any day.

According to court sources, the case appeared on cause lists 440 times, but hearings were often deferred due to requests from state lawyers.

Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer, told The Daily Star on April 9 that the verdict might be delivered within this month, once the court reopens on April 20 after its annual vacation.

"The evidence presented by the prosecution was not sufficient to justify sentencing," he claimed.

On April 14, 2001, two bombs went off during Pahela Baishakh 1408 celebrations organised by Chhayanaut at Ramna Batamul in the capital.

On June 23, 2014, a

Dhaka court sentenced eight individuals to death: Mufti Abdul Hannan, Moulana Abkar Hossain alias Helaluddin, Moulana Mohammad Tajuddin, Hafez Jahangir Alam Badar, Moulana Abu Bakar alias Selim Hawlader, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Mufti Abdul Hye, and Arif Hasan Suman.

Another six - Moulana Abu Taher, Moulana Sabbir alias Abdul Hannan, Moulana Yahiya, Moulana Shawkat Osman, Moulana Abdur Rouf, and Shahadat Ullah - were sentenced to life imprisonment.

All convicts were reportedly members of the banned Islamist group Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI).

Mufti Abdul Hannan, one of the country's most notorious militants, who was behind several HuJI-led attacks, was executed

on April 13, 2017, for a separate grenade attack targeting the then British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in Sylhet. Some other accused in that case remain absconding.

During the HC hearings on the death reference and appeals, defence lawyers sought acquittal for the convicts, arguing that although 61 prosecution witnesses testified, none were eyewitnesses or even gave hearsay evidence.

Defence lawyer Shishir Manir also claimed that no circumstantial evidence was found during the nearly eight-year investigation and confessional statements from three accused were obtained under torture and contradicted one another.

On the other hand, Deputy Attorney General Sultana Akter Rubi urged the court to uphold the trial court's verdict.

451 cases filed in 2024

FROM PAGE 3

Regarding concerns about accused individuals fleeing the country, Abdul Momen acknowledged the ACC's limitations.

Asked whether the ACC would conduct raids, he said, "The commission

is not a law enforcement agency and must rely on support from other institutions. It is known who remains in the country and who has left. Repatriating those abroad requires a complex international process."

"For those still in Bangladesh, I ask the public to judge whether the commission has been lenient or strict," he added.

He assured that the ACC is doing everything within its capacity to bring accused individuals to justice.

Interim govt has no right to stay

FROM PAGE 3

committed to restoring the people's right to vote. "That is why BNP has never craved power. Despite oppression and persecution, not a single activist has fled. The people still have confidence in us," she said.

She also stressed that BNP does not fear elections. "Even in opposition, we have never been afraid. Our goal is to restore people's fundamental rights, and the first step is to hold an election."

Meanwhile, Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Huq also raised concerns over the home adviser's comment, questioning the intention

behind it.

Speaking at a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club, he said, "Is this statement a reflection of the government's stance? What is your agenda? What is the real objective?"

He urged the interim government to clarify its position and warned that such statements could undermine political trust and stability.

"If the adviser is urging the true intention of the government, Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus should come forward and state their official position," Saiful said.

"What you are doing in the name of the people will create confusion

between the government and political parties and increase distrust. As a result, whatever progress we could have made may be at risk of being undone," he said.

He also called upon the chief adviser to warn the members of the advisory council of the interim government to refrain from making unguarded comments.

"If they defy the warning, dismiss them. If necessary, appoint new responsible individuals," he said.

On behalf of his party, Saiful also demanded that the government arrange the next parliamentary election by December this year.

Dengue risk

FROM PAGE 3

Meanwhile, residents in some areas are already raising concerns. Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Jurain, blamed the city corporation for inaction.

"Several breeding sites, around houses and in the drains, are already active. Soon, these will turn into adult mosquitoes," he said.

He also said elevated roads in parts of Jurain have caused year-round water stagnation in houses and yards, creating ideal conditions for Aedes breeding.

"If the city corporation doesn't act now, Jurain could be one of the worst-affected areas this year," he added.

Contacted, Md Emdadul Hoque, deputy chief health officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, said preparations for the dengue season are underway.

"Along with our regular operations, mosquito control workers are continuing anti-mosquito drives," he said.

An official from Dhaka South City Corporation echoed him.

Time to move

FROM PAGE 3

dependency is contributing to the climate crisis and threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions, particularly in coastal areas.

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), criticised the IEPMP for continuing the previous government's flawed energy planning.

Sohanur Rahman, executive coordinator of YouthNet Global, said youth voices must be meaningfully included in national energy planning processes, including the National Determined Contribution (NDC).

Prof Kamruzzaman Majumder, chairman of the Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS), also highlighted environmental gaps in the plan and called on policymakers to integrate climate considerations.

Potters in Patuakhali

FROM PAGE 5

and household goods," he said. "Clay dinner sets are particularly popular, with a 16-36 piece set priced between Tk 2,000 and Tk 4,500."

"Our products are collected by brands such as Aarong and are sold across the country," Barun added. "Many items are even exported abroad, like to the US, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai, by both foreign buyers and Bangladeshi expatriates," Barun also said.

Another artisan, Kamal Pal, said government support - especially easy access to bank loans and technical assistance - could help the industry grow further.

Highlighting logistical challenges, Govinda Pal, a trader, said, "Since

Patuakhali produces a large volume of watermelon during this season, it's harder to find trucks for transporting our products. Freight costs have also increased."

"Now the transport cost reaches up to Tk 20,000, which was previously Tk 10,000-15,000," he added.

Contacted, Md Al Amin, sub-assistant general manager of Patuakhali BSCIC, said, "We provide training and low-interest loans to pottery artisans in Baufal. During the pandemic, we provided nearly Tk 50 lakh in bank loans."

"We also help with design innovation and are working to get their products recognised with GI (Geographical Indication) status," he added.

Farmers pay Tk 1,000

FROM PAGE 5

Abdus Samad, gatekeeper of the Teesta Irrigation Project and president of the farmers' association in Dimla village, said farmers pay for irrigation water through the association.

He said the association employs workers to clean and monitor the canals in the irrigation area, which is why farmers are charged extra.

"After paying the government rate, the extra money is spent on the welfare of the association members," he claimed.

The Teesta Barrage, located over the Teesta River in the Doani area of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat, is the largest irrigation project in the country. The barrage was built in 1990, and the irrigation project was launched in 1992.

There are 78 farmers' associations in the project area, each with a gatekeeper to assist farmers in supplying water to their land.

Amolesh Chandra Roy, sub-extension officer of BWDB in Rangpur, said it is not feasible for the BWDB to monitor such a

large area without forming farmers' associations.

He said the association leaders must pay the irrigation fee on time. "I have not heard of any extra charges, and no farmer has complained in this regard," he added.

Amitav Chowdhury, BWDB executive engineer in Daloa, said he was not aware of any information regarding farmers being charged extra money.

He said he would investigate the matter and take necessary action.

Body of missing

FROM PAGE 5

allegedly beaten until he lost consciousness and later died from his injuries. The group then buried the body in the tea garden hillocks to hide the crime, the OC said.

Md Salimul Haque, assistant superintendent of police (Madhabpur Circle), confirmed that the body had been sent to Habiganj Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

Police said efforts are underway to identify and arrest the other individuals involved.

Accountability key

FROM PAGE 3

the ICC. The ICC prosecutor lauded Bangladesh's unwavering stance for the cause of the international justice system, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The foreign adviser expressed Bangladesh's continued support for the Rome Statute and the ICC.

He said Bangladesh's interest in exploring tangible cooperation with the ICC in training experts, academics, and jurists.

He appreciated the

ICC for its stance vis-a-vis on the situation in the Rohingya crisis and Gaza. Both sides agreed to further enhance the level of existing engagements in the coming days.

PRAYER TIMING APRIL 12. Table with prayer times for Azan, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, Esha, JAMAAT, and SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION.

Urgent Sale 7.5 Katha plot with a 7-ft boundary wall in 'M' Block Bashundhara R/A. Ideal for residence, foreign embassy, or international NGO. Plot No: 2458, Road No-25. Contact: 01329666162, +447713248158

Land Sale 50% Off! Gazipur 3 Bigha Only 60 Lac/Bigha Papers OK, Urgent Call/WhatsApp 01680 550100

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয় শাখা ডি-১১ (প্রশাসন) www.mod.gov.bd নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি. ২৬ চৈত্র ১৪৩১ ০৯ এপ্রিল ২০২৫. Includes job details table and application instructions.

## PER ACRE WATER PRICE FOR IRRIGATION

## Farmers pay Tk 1,000 despite Tk 480 govt rate

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

While the government has fixed the rate for irrigation water supply from the Teesta Irrigation Project at Tk 480 per acre throughout the year, farmers are reportedly paying Tk 1,000.

This discrepancy has led to frustration among farmers in the project area.

However, authorities from the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) claimed that no additional money is being taken from farmers.

The payments for irrigation water are made through local farmers' associations, they added.

BWDB officials said approximately 1,00,000 farmers have cultivated Boro rice on 1,23,500 acres of land under the project across six districts: Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Joypurhat, and Bogura.

Irrigation water is supplied through a 750 kilometre canal network from the project.

The government earns Tk 5,92,80,000 for supplying irrigation water to 1,23,500

acres at the rate of Tk 480 per acre.

Farmers, however, alleged that local associations have collected Tk 12,35,00,000 from them for irrigation water supply to 1,23,000 acres at the rate of Tk 1,000 per acre.

While the association leaders paid the government fee of Tk 5,92,80,000, the additional Tk 6,42,29,000 remains unaccounted for, the farmers alleged.

Rashidul Islam, a 65-year-old farmer from Nilphamari's Dimla upazila, said he has been growing crops using irrigation water from the project for the past 30 years.

"I had to pay Tk 1,000 to receive irrigation water for one acre of land, despite the government rate being Tk 480.

I don't know where the extra Tk 520 went. I paid the amount through the local association. However, they did not give me any receipt for it," he said.

Abdur Rahim, a 70-year-old farmer from the same area, alleged that the extra money is shared between the association leaders and BWDB officials.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



A mango farmer sprays pesticides on mango trees in an orchard of Rajshahi. This year, orchards throughout the district saw an abundance of mango blossoms. Farmers are trying their best to ensure a good yield. The photo was taken from the Mormoria village in Paba upazila recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Body of missing man found in forest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police have recovered the body of a man who was missing for seven days from a remote forest area in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj early yesterday.

The deceased, Liton Mia, 38, from Goachnagar village in Madhabpur upazila, was missing since April 3.

His body was found buried under a mound in the Kapaichhara tea garden area.

According to his family, he left home to collect firewood from the Satchari forest but did not return. His family began searching for him and filed a missing person's report with Chunarughat Police Station on Thursday, seven days after the incident.

Following the complaint, police launched an investigation and arrested one suspect, Pramod Rickmon, 32, from the Kapaichhara tea garden area.

"Based on Pramod's confession, we recovered the body from under a sand mound in the tea garden area," said Nur Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Chunarughat Police Station.

During preliminary interrogation, Pramod confessed that Liton was beaten to death by a group of five individuals who suspected him of cattle theft.

Liton was accused of stealing ten cows and was

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

## SAVING ICHAMATI RIVER

## Legal tangle hinders revival efforts

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The progress of a Tk 1,554.90 crore mega project aimed at reviving the Ichamati river in Pabna has hit a snag due to numerous legal battles over disputed land, casting uncertainty over its timely completion.

The three-year project — launched in June last year — targets 110 kilometres of dredging work, including 33.77km of the river itself, 44.07km along canals connecting it, 20km of the Sutikhali river, and 12.37km of the Bharara canal.

According to Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), the initiative is being implemented by the Bangladesh Army's Engineering Division.

The plan also includes extensive construction — 10km of retaining walls, 10km of drainage lines, 23 bridges, 56 quays, and a 10km walkway. A total of 42,310 trees will be planted along the walkway in Pabna municipality.

"Once completed, Ichamati will regain its former flow, river communication will be restored, and its banks will become tourist attractions," said project director Sudhangsha Kumar Sarkar, also superintendent engineer of BWDB in Pabna.

He added that the river would reconnect with the Padma and Jamuna rivers, and a pumping station will ensure water flow during the dry season.

Currently, 162 excavators are involved in dredging, with 26km of

the river and 5km of canals already completed up to the Fakirpur bridge, said warrant officer Md Saiful Islam of the Bangladesh Army, who is posted in the project area.

However, dredging a 5km stretch through Pabna municipality has become challenging due to land disputes.

Over the years, riverbanks have been encroached upon through forged documents. BWDB identified

with the work by bypassing the disputed land, as we cannot act beyond court orders."

Environmental activists blame poor planning. Md Abdul Hamid Khan, secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon in Pabna, said, "The authorities didn't demarcate the river before starting the project. According to High Court orders, CS (Cadastral Survey) records must be used for river demarcation. But

encroachers made fake documents with help from local officials."

He called the situation a result of official negligence.

Md Masudur Rahman Mintu, an alleged land grabber, claimed many residents have lived on the banks for decades and possess valid documents.

"We've been paying taxes and hold three to four official records. We don't oppose the project — but if our land is needed, it should be acquired lawfully," he said.

Pabna Deputy Commissioner Md Mofizul Islam said the administration is pursuing legal resolutions and will act upon the court's decisions.



1,053 illegal structures on the Ichamati's banks — most of which were demolished before the project began. But many encroachers have since filed 87 court cases, stalling further work.

"We're engaging in legal battles, but these processes take time," said Md Mosharaf Hossain, assistant director of BWDB in Pabna.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw several signboards along the riverbank declaring legal proceedings over land claims.

Regarding the stalled dredging, Saiful Islam said, "We will continue



## Robbery on moving bus in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

An incident of robbery took place on a moving passenger bus in Savar's Bank Town area yesterday.

The robbery occurred around 12:00pm on a Dhaka bound "Savar Paribahan" bus as it reached the bridge adjacent to the Bank Town area on the Dhaka-Aricha highway.

Local journalist Tayefur Rahman, who was on board with his wife and daughter, told The Daily Star, "We boarded the bus from Bank Town around noon, heading to Shyamoli. As the bus got on the bridge, three to four young men — already on board — held female passengers at knifepoint and snatched their gold ornaments."

He said there were around 20 to 25 passengers on the bus, but the snatchers only targeted women. "They didn't take any mobile phones or other devices. At least three women had their chains snatched. After the robbery, they got off the bus on the bridge."

Later, when the bus reached Gabtoli, passengers detained the driver at a local counter, he said.

Savar Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Jewel Mia said police are investigating the incident. "We are regularly patrolling the area."

Mentionable, multiple incidents of muggings on moving buses have been reported in the same area over the past month.

## Potters in Patuakhali gear up for Baishakh

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

With Pahela Baishakh just around the corner, the air in several villages of Bauful upazila in Patuakhali is thick with the scent of wet clay and fresh paint.

Pottery artisans are working tirelessly in courtyards and makeshift workshops, shaping, painting, and drying clay goods — each piece crafted in anticipation of booming sales during the Bangla New Year festivities.

Around a thousand families across four villages — Kankdia, Boga, Madanpur, and Bilbilas — are engaged in this traditional craft.

Though their products are sold throughout



the year, demand peaks ahead of the Baishakhi celebrations and fair, with traders and artisans expecting sales to exceed Tk 1 crore this season.

These villages, located about 30 kilometres northeast of Patuakhali town, have long been home to the Pal community, renowned for their pottery skills.

Under the supervision of master craftsmen, the artisans produce a wide variety of household and decorative items using a special type of locally sourced sticky clay.

The production process is a team effort — some artisans shape the clay, others paint the items, some dry them in the sun, and others take care of packaging.

Over the past five decades, the Pal community has adapted to changing consumer tastes, said Barun Pal, one of the most experienced artisans in the region.

"In the beginning, we used to make only clay pots and toys. Now, we create a wide variety of items like dinner sets, cups, and other decorative

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Artisans are busy weaving Shital Pati, a traditional mat, in Kathalia village of Barishal's Bakerganj upazila. These mats are crafted by interlacing strips of a green cane known as "Murta." Depending on size and quality, each mat sells at wholesale prices between Tk 1,500 and Tk 3,500. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

"From the moment I chose bti until now, their team has been meticulous in ensuring all of my needs are fulfilled. I highly recommend bti for the incredible customer service!"

OUR CUSTOMERS SPEAK FOR US

Mrs. Nargis Alam  
Homeowner  
Liberty  
Khilgaon

SCAN HERE

btid.com

...SINCE 1984

# IMO approves first global carbon pricing system

AFP, London

Member states of the Intentional Maritime Organization (IMO) voted in favour of a global pricing system to help curb maritime emissions, the UN shipping body announced yesterday.

From 2028, all ships will be required to use a less carbon-intensive fuel mix, or face financial penalties – but the system is deemed by Pacific Island states as insufficiently ambitious. The initial agreement comes after a week of negotiations in London to decide which mechanism to adopt to reach carbon neutrality in shipping by 2050.

Those who do not meet the guidelines will have to pay annually for every tonne of greenhouse gas emissions that exceeds the targets set.

The IMO said the funds raised will be used to “reward” zero or near zero greenhouse gas emissions technologies and to financially support developing countries to transition to lower emissions shipping. A majority of members, 63 states, voted for carbon pricing system, including European Union, Brazil, China, India and Japan.



**Afghan refugees, carrying their belongings, wait at a holding centre near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Chaman, Pakistan yesterday, preparing to return to Afghanistan.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Panama deal allows US to deploy troops to canal

AFP, Panama City

US troops will be able to deploy to a string of bases along the Panama Canal under a joint deal seen by AFP Thursday, a major concession to President Donald Trump as he seeks to reestablish influence over the vital waterway.

The agreement, signed by top security officials from both countries, allows US military personnel to deploy to Panama-controlled facilities for training, exercises and “other activities.”

The deal stops short of allowing the US to build its own permanent bases on the isthmus, a move that would be deeply unpopular with Panamanians and legally fraught.

But it gives the US broad sway to deploy an unspecified number of personnel to bases, some of which Washington built when it occupied the canal zone decades ago.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that China has too much influence over the canal.

# Chhayanaut all set for celebrations

FROM PAGE 12  
culture, and national identity,” said Dr Sarwar Ali, executive president of Chhayanaut.

The theme of Chhayanaut's Pahela Baishakh celebration this year is “Amar Mukti Aloy Year” (my freedom lies in light). Through this theme, Chhayanaut aims to convey a message of hope, resilience, and renewal.

Final rehearsals are currently underway at Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhaban in Dhanmondi. Preparations began on January 17, and nearly 150 performers – including vocalists and instrumentalists – are set to participate in this year's

production. The structure of the event will remain faithful to tradition. It will begin at 6:15am with an early morning raga performance and conclude with an address from Chhayanaut's president and the singing of the national anthem.

Despite the shifting political and social landscape, Chhayanaut remains steadfast in its commitment to cultural resilience. “The spirit of the programme – awakening the Bangalee consciousness through music at the dawn of the new year – remains unchanged,” said Sarwar. “It is through this atmosphere that our cultural identity is reaffirmed.”

According to senior coordinator Rashid Al Helal, the final rehearsal will be held on Saturday at Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhaban, followed by a full dress rehearsal at Ramna Park at 3:00pm on Sunday. This year's lineup includes 12 solo songs, nine group performances, and three poetry recitations. The programme will end by 8:30am.

General Secretary Laisa Ahmed Lisa said, “This year's programme is a call to become travellers on the path of light and liberation—to sing of new beginnings, of love for nature and humanity, and of self-awakening. It is a collective call for the Bangalee spirit to rise with

a mantra of love for the people, the country, and the world.”

Vice-President Khairul Anam Shakil added, “We are passing through a critical juncture. But no matter how deep the darkness or how great the obstacles, we will continue to move forward—toward light, toward liberation. That is the spirit of this year's celebration.”

He also said there were no challenges or restrictions in organising the event so far. The programme will be broadcast live on Chhayanaut's official Facebook and YouTube channels, as well as on BTB and BTB World.

# Govt mulling out-of-court settlements

FROM PAGE 12  
He stressed the need for gathering accurate data before launching any recovery efforts. “Whether the money is brought back through legal procedures or out-of-court settlements, we must first gather detailed information on the amount and destination of the laundered assets. The more specific the data, the better our negotiating position.”

The central bank has engaged several private firms to assist in identifying

and tracing these assets abroad, he said. After compiling the information, the government will initiate discussions with the respective government agencies.

“We must also abide by their legal frameworks. Communication has already begun, and so far, their response has been encouraging,” Mansur added. In response to a question, the governor said Chattogram-based conglomerate S Alam Group laundered between

Tk 1.25 lakh crore and Tk 1.5 lakh crore during the Awami League regime. The total amount could range from Tk 2.5 to 3 lakh crore, including the money laundered by other groups like Beximco.

Mansur also said that a significant portion of the country's approximately Tk 5 lakh crore in non-performing loans (NPLs) had been laundered. “The rest also remains unrecovered. Initiatives have been taken to recover such loans through money

loan courts,” he added. When asked about central bank officials' role in money laundering, the governor said actions were taken only on specific allegations. “We cannot take steps based on mere assumptions. If the Anti-Corruption Commission or any state agency submits evidence-backed complaints, we act accordingly,” he said.

“I do not believe anyone should be dismissed solely on the basis of allegations or suspicion,” he added.

# ADB to boost lending by 67% to \$2b

FROM PAGE 1  
implementation process, it mentioned.

During a three day discussion in February, officials of the finance ministry, the planning ministry and other ministries concerned discussed and reviewed the ADB loan portfolio report and Bangladesh's loan performance, said a finance ministry official.

### PROJECTS FACING LONG DELAYS

In its report, the ADB cited three projects as examples to demonstrate how long delays and cost escalations affect implementation.

One of the projects, “The Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project,”

was approved on April 17, 2012, with an estimated cost of \$255 million, and a completion deadline of December 31, 2017. The ADB's contribution was \$160 million.

However, the deadline was later extended to December 31, 2022, and additional financing was approved to address the cost overrun. The total cost saw a 94-percent increase to \$494.39 million from \$255 million.

Consequently, the ADB raised the loan amount for the project by 63 percent to \$260 million from \$160 million.

Multiple factors contributed to deadline extension and cost overrun,

such as underestimated cost for civil works at appraisal, changes in the scope and design during implementation, delays in land acquisition and relocation of utilities, slow mobilisation and inadequate input of contractors, and also impacts of Covid-19.

Land acquisition and resettlement, scheduled for completion in the fourth quarter of 2013, were delayed by over three years. Similarly, civil work contracts were awarded more than three years behind schedule.

The second example was “The Power System Efficiency Improvement Project” taken up in

August 2011, with a completion date of December 30, 2017.

Though the approved loan amount was \$300 million, the authorities revised it four times, raising the total cost by 3 percent. The deadline was extended by eight years with the latest completion date set for December 31 this year.

The third example was “Dhaka Environmentally Sustainable Water Supply Project,” approved in 2013 with a completion date of June 30, 2020. But the project has yet to be completed, with the ADB raising its loan amount to \$328.80 million from \$250 million.

# NCP to seek 2-month extension

FROM PAGE 12  
The party plans to follow the central committee model while forming district and upazila committees, incorporating members from Students Against Discrimination, Jatya Nagorik Committee, and

professionals from various fields. The anti-discrimination student body spearheaded the July uprising leading to the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year.

NCP is also developing several specialised wings. Its

youth wing is set to launch in April, while a coordinating committee for its labour wing was declared on March 23. Efforts are also underway to establish separate wings for women and professionals, and a forum for people with disabilities.

The second example was “The Power System Efficiency Improvement Project” taken up in

### New logo

FROM PAGE 12  
shapla (water lily) above the sail and the word “Police” written in Bengali beneath the boat.

Calls for changing the police uniform and logo resurfaced after the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5 last year amid a mass uprising.

On August 11, a decision was made to revise police's uniform and logo during a meeting with then home adviser M Sakhawat Hossain.

The next day, the PHQ formed a 10-member committee led by Additional DIG (Logistics) Mohammad Ataul Kibria to oversee the proposed changes.

# ‘March for Gaza’ rally

FROM PAGE 1  
Suhrwardy Udyan will start at 3:00pm, according to a report published by the Prothom Alo.

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Maruf, media coordinator of the Movement, said the march from five points would start at 2:00pm. The points are Banglamotor, Kakrail, Zero Point,

Bakshibazar and Nilkhet intersection.

The changes were brought to the programme considering the movement of guests coming to the investment summit in Dhaka and admission tests. Muhammad Abdul Malek, the khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, will preside over

the rally.

Fazlul Karim said a declaration expressing solidarity with the Palestinians will be read out in Bangla, English and Arabic at the rally. The participants will take an oath to boycott products linked to Israeli interests. The programme will end with a prayer session.

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, টাঙ্গাইল  
স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা  
**tangail.gov.bd**

তারিখ: ২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৪৩১  
০৯ এপ্রিল ২০২৫

**দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরে টাঙ্গাইল জেলার ১২টি উপজেলার ১২০টি ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের কর্মসূচি ১,০৯২ (এক হাজার বিয়ানব্বই) জন গ্রামপুলিশের (দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদার) তফসিল খ' বর্ণিত পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি (এ অফিসে সংশ্লিষ্ট নমুনার অনুরূপ) এবং ১৫২টি (একশত বায়ান্বাশ) টি উন্নতমানের বাই-সাইকেল সরবরাহের নিমিত্ত উপযুক্ত ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান/ব্যবসায়ী/সরবরাহকারী/টিকাদারের নিকট PPR 2008 (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনকৃত) এর নিয়মনুসারে নির্ধারিত শর্তনামায়া সীলমোহরকৃত বামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

ক্রঃ নং	বিবরণ	তফসিল-ক	নির্ধারিত তথ্য
০১.	মহস্ত্রাদার/বিভাগ	:	স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ, স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মহস্ত্রাদার, ঢাকা
০২.	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী	:	জেলা প্রশাসক, টাঙ্গাইল
০৩.	কার্যের বিবরণ	:	২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরে টাঙ্গাইল জেলাবাসী গ্রামপুলিশদের (দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদার) পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি এবং বাই-সাইকেল সরবরাহ
০৪.	সন্ত্রাস পদ্ধতি	:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
০৫.	বাজেট এর সোল্ড ফস	:	২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবছরে অনুদান বাজেটের মঞ্জুরি নং-৩৪, হিসাবের খাত নং- ১৩৭০১০১/১২০০১০৩০৮/৩৩০১১০৩ গ্রামপুলিশদের পণ্য ও সেবা বাবদ সহায়তা খাত
০৬.	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	:	১২/০৪/২০২৫ খ্রি.
০৭.	১ম পর্যায়ে দরপত্র/সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শুরু ও শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৩/০৪/২০২৫ হতে ১২/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত
০৮.	১ম পর্যায়ে দরপত্র/সিডিউল গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৩/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. দুপুর ১.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
০৯.	১ম পর্যায়ে দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	১৩/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. বিকাল ৪-৪৫ টা। উপপরিচালক, স্থানীয় সরকার, টাঙ্গাইল এর অফিস কক্ষ (কক্ষ নং- ২০১)
১০.	২য় পর্যায়ে দরপত্র/সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	১৪/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. হতে ২১/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত
১১.	২য় পর্যায়ে দরপত্র/সিডিউল গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২২/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. দুপুর ১.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত
১২.	২য় পর্যায়ে দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	২২/০৫/২০২৫ খ্রি. বিকাল ৪-৪৫ টা। উপপরিচালক, স্থানীয় সরকার, টাঙ্গাইল এর অফিস কক্ষ (কক্ষ নং- ২০১)
১৩.	দরপত্র/সিডিউলের মূল্য	:	৩,০০০/- (তিন হাজার) টাকা বা যেকোন তথ্যে
১৪.	দরপত্র/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	:	(ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়, ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকার অর্থাহিত পরিচালক, স্থানীয় সরকার, ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকা-এর দপ্তর (খ) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, টাঙ্গাইল (স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা, কক্ষ নং-১০৫)
১৫.	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান সমূহ	:	(ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়, ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকার অর্থাহিত পরিচালক, স্থানীয় সরকার, ঢাকা বিভাগ, ঢাকা-এর দপ্তর (খ) জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, টাঙ্গাইল এর উপপরিচালক, স্থানীয় সরকার এর অফিস কক্ষ নং-২০১)

**তফসিল খ'**

ক্রমিক নং	পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি বিবরণ	সংখ্যা	জামানতের পরিমাণ	কার্য সম্পাদনের মেয়াদকাল
১	২	৩	৪	৫
০১	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের ব্যক্তিগত শারীরিক মাপ অনুযায়ী স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত টিসি কাপড়ের নমুনা মোতাবেক ফুল শার্ট (ফার্মাসহ ২ পকেট বিশিষ্ট, উভয় কঁচের উপর ১ টি করে ৬"X২" পরিমাপের ফিতাসহ)	২০৫৮ পিছ		দরপত্রে উদ্ধৃত দরত্রে ৩%
০২	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের ব্যক্তিগত শারীরিক মাপ অনুযায়ী স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত টিসি কাপড়ের নমুনা মোতাবেক ফুল শার্ট (ফার্মাসহ ২ পকেট বিশিষ্ট, উভয় কঁচের উপর ১ টি করে ৬"X২" পরিমাপের ফিতাসহ)	১০২৯ পিছ		সর্বোচ্চ ৪৫ (পঁচাত্তির) দিন
০৩	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের ব্যক্তিগত শারীরিক মাপ অনুযায়ী স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত টিসি কাপড়ের নমুনা মোতাবেক হাফ শার্ট (ফার্মাসহ ২ পকেট বিশিষ্ট, উভয় কঁচের উপর ১ টি করে ৬"X২" পরিমাপের ফিতাসহ)	১০২৯ পিছ		
০৪	মহিলা মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য নারী পুলিশের ন্যায় উন্নতমানের ২টি করে শাড়ি	শাড়ি-১২৬ টি		
০৫	মহিলা মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য নারী পুলিশের ন্যায় উন্নতমানের ২টি করে পেটিকোট	পেটিকোট-১২৬ টি		
০৬	মহিলা মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য নারী পুলিশের ন্যায় উন্নতমানের ২টি করে স্ট্রাইট	স্ট্রাইট-১২৬ টি		
০৭	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের (পুরুষ ও মহিলা) উন্নতমানের শাল রং এর সোন্ডার ব্যাগ	স্টারসহ ব্যাগ-১০৫ জোড়া ব্যাগ-১৮৭ জোড়া (পারপেল কালার) Four Pointed Cross)		
০৮.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য (পুরুষ ও মহিলা) উন্নতমানের সোন্ডার ব্যাগে কোনো কাপড়ের রিবন ২টি	স্টারসহ ব্যাগ-১০৫ জোড়া ব্যাগ-১৮৭ জোড়া (স্টারসহ) (Four Pointed Cross এর মধ্যে সোয়েব, আকাশি রং এর রিবন এবং গ্রাম পুলিশ লেখাটি সাদা রং এর হবে)		
০৯.	উন্নতমানের বেণ্ট	১০৯২ টি		
১০.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের উন্নতমানের চামড়ার জুতা (পুরুষ)	পুরুষ-১০২৯ জোড়া		
১১.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের উন্নতমানের চামড়ার জুতা (মহিলা)	মহিলা-৬৩ জোড়া		
১২.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের উন্নতমানের কাপড়ের জুতা (পুরুষ)	পুরুষ-১০২৯ জোড়া		
১৩.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের উন্নতমানের কাপড়ের জুতা (মহিলা)	মহিলা-৬৩ জোড়া		
১৪.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য উন্নতমানের মোজা (পুরুষ)	১০২৯ জোড়া		
১৫.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য উন্নতমানের মোজা (মহিলা)	৬৩ জোড়া		
১৬.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য উন্নতমানের জ্যাকেট (পুরুষ)	১০২৯ টি		
১৭.	দফদার ও মহস্ত্রাদারদের জন্য উন্নতমানের জ্যাকেট (মহিলা)	৬৩ টি		
১৮.	টাঙ্গাইল (৪.৫০ ফোন্ট)	১০৯২ টি		
১৯.	গ্রামপুলিশদের (পুরুষ ও মহিলা) জন্য বাই-সাইকেল Supplying best quality (RFL, duronto or equivalent) original quality bicycle with size (28"x1.5", Rim = steel, type, body-steel, built in kick stand with carrier, bell, lock-zongly (china) and Fork guard, Colour-black etc. all complete as per direction of the EIC for men and women	পুরুষ-১৪৫ টি মহিলা-০৭ টি		

**দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা:**

- (ক) দরপত্র দাতাকে গ্রামপুলিশ সদস্যদের পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি এবং বাই-সাইকেল সরবরাহের ক্ষেত্রে পিপিআর সিডি-৩ এর আইটিটি ১৪.১(এ) ও ১৪.১ (বি) এর আলোকে যে কোন সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের ১,২৬,০০,০০০/- (এক কোটি ছয়শিশ লক্ষ) বা তদুর্ধ্ব টাকার গ্রামপুলিশদের পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহকারী হিসাবে অথবা সমাজসেবার মালানা সরবরাহ করেছেন মর্মে গত ০৫ (পাঁচ) বছরের মধ্যে যুক্তসহ ০২ (দুই) টি একক কার্যাদেশ ও ০৩ (তিন) টি অভিজ্ঞতার সনদ দাখিল করতে হবে।
- (খ) দরপত্র দাতার সন্মতি পেয়ে দরপত্র/সিডিউল গ্রহণের স্বীকার্য দাখিল করতে হবে।
- (গ) গ্রামপুলিশদের পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি এবং বাই-সাইকেল সরবরাহের জন্য দরপত্র দাতাকে হালনাদার আরও পরিচোপের সনদ পর, দরপত্র দাখিলের ২১ (একশত) দিন পূর্বে ইস্যুকৃত পিপিআর সিডি-৩ এর আইটিটি ১৫.১(এ) এর আলোকে কমপক্ষে ১,৪৪,০০,০০০/- (এক কোটি চারশিশ লক্ষ) টাকার ব্যাকে তারল্যা/ছিত সেক্রেজ প্রত্যয়নপত্র ও ০৬ (ছয়) মাসের সেন্সেলেস হিসাব বিবরণী, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, টিআইএন, ডায়াল রেজিট্রেশন ও জাতীয় পরিচয় পত্রের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
- (ঘ) পিপিআর-২০০৮ মোতাবেক দরপত্র দাতার অন্যান্য সকল যোগ্যতা থাকতে হবে।
- ২) যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিলের বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।
- ৩) এই দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত, দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য ও শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত থাকবে এবং তা এ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির অংশ বলে গণ্য হবে।
- ৪) ১ম পর্যায়ে যোগ্য ও কাকিত দরদাতা পাওয়া না গেলে ২য় পর্যায়ে দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে। ১ম পর্যায়ে যোগ্য ও কাকিত দরদাতা পাওয়া গেলে ২য় পর্যায়ে প্রবেশ করা হবে না।
- ৫) পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি এবং বাই-সাইকেল এর সংখ্যা বাড়ানোর অথবা কমানোর বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।
- ৬) দরপত্রের সাথে সকল প্রকার পেশা/সরঞ্জামাদি এবং বাই-সাইকেল (পুরুষ) ০১ (এক) পিছ/জোড়া করে নমুনা কণ্ঠ মাংসে জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, টাঙ্গাইলের স্থানীয় সরকার শাখায় জমা দিতে হবে।
- ৭) দরপত্রের স্পষ্টভাবে উদ্ধৃত দর থেকে ও কথায় লিপিত হবে। দরপত্রে কোন কাটাকাটি ও ঘামামাটা করা যাবে না।
- ৮) কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীতই টেন্ডার কমিটি যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
- ৯) দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখের পরবর্তীতে জেলা প্রশাসক, টাঙ্গাইল এর ওয়েব সাইট www.dctangail.gov.bd এ পাওয়া যাবে।

তারিখ: ২৬/০২/২৫  
শ্রীমতী সীমা সুলতানা  
জেলা প্রশাসক  
টাঙ্গাইল  
ফোন: ০২৯৯৭৭৯৪০২  
dctangail@mopa.gov.bd

## UN denounces army attacks in Myanmar

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations rights office yesterday decried attacks by Myanmar's military despite a ceasefire declared following last month's devastating earthquake, which killed more than 3,600 people.

"At a moment when the sole focus should be on ensuring humanitarian aid gets to disaster zones, the military is instead launching attacks," spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement.

UN rights chief Volker Turk, she said, "calls on the military to remove any and all obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to cease military operations".

A multi-sided conflict has engulfed Myanmar since 2021, when Min Aung Hlaing's military wrested power from the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Following reports of sporadic clashes even after the March 28 quake that so far is known to have killed at least 3,645 people, the junta joined its opponents last week in calling a temporary halt to hostilities for relief to be delivered.

But Shamdasani highlighted that since the earthquake, "military forces have reportedly carried out over 120 attacks".



Burning emergency vehicles are seen at the site of a hospital hit by an overnight Russian air strike in the town of Kupiansk in Kharkiv region, Ukraine yesterday. US envoy Steve Witkoff was in Russia yesterday, the Kremlin said, his third visit to the country as Washington pushes for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Iran vows 'good faith' in nuke talks with US

Trump threatens bombing if talks fail, raising stakes

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran said yesterday it was giving high-level nuclear talks with the United States today "a genuine chance", after President Donald Trump threatened bombing if discussions failed.

Trump made a surprise announcement on Monday that Washington and Tehran would begin talks in Oman, a Gulf state that has mediated between the West and the Islamic Republic before.

The January return to the White House of Trump, who in his first term withdrew the US from a 2015 big-power accord with Tehran, has again brought a tougher approach to a Middle Eastern power whose nuclear programme Washington's ally Israel regards as an existential threat.

At the same time, Iran and allied opponents have been weakened by the military offensives Israel has launched across the region, including air strikes in Iran, after being attacked from Gaza by Palestinian militant group Hamas in October 2023.

The Iranian foreign ministry said yesterday that the US should value the Islamic Republic's decision to engage in talks despite what it called Washington's "prevailing confrontational hoopla".

"We intend to assess the other side's intent and resolve this Saturday [today]," spokesperson Esmail Baghaei posted on X. "In earnest and with candid vigilance, we are giving diplomacy a genuine chance."

US air attacks on Yemen's Houthis, who are aligned with Iran and have hit international shipping lanes in the Red Sea in support of Hamas, have stirred speculation that Washington might be preparing to attack Iran.

Meanwhile, Israel has resumed its devastating military campaign against Hamas, which has also received support from Iran, after several weeks of truce, and its ceasefire with the Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah militia remains brittle.

Iran had rejected direct negotiations with Washington before Trump announced on March 30: "If they don't make a deal, there will

be bombing, and it will be bombing the likes of which they have never seen before."

"Important and practical" Iranian proposals have been prepared in pursuit of "a real and fair" agreement, Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in a post on X.

"If Washington comes to the talks with sincere intentions and genuine will to reach an agreement, the path to a deal will be clear and smooth," Shamkhani added.



Since Trump pulled the US out of the 2015 deal that curbed Iran's uranium enrichment activity, deeming the accord deeply flawed, Tehran has accumulated a stockpile of uranium refined to levels close to what would be suitable for nuclear bomb fuel.

Iran had agreed in the deal, reached during US President Barack Obama's administration, to strictly limit its enrichment activity in return for a lifting of global economic sanctions.

Tehran says its programme is purely for peaceful energy purposes, but the West says it goes far beyond any civilian requirements, and suspects Tehran of developing nuclear weapon capability.

Confusion swirled after Trump announced that the talks between the longtime geopolitical adversaries would be direct, while Iran has insisted they would be indirect, with Oman acting as mediators.

## UN trade chief warns against tariff pain for countries

AFP, United Nations

The top UN trade official on Thursday urged the United States to spare the poorest countries "the pain of tariffs," as the world braces for a possible global trade war unleashed by President Donald Trump.

"When the two main global economies impose tariffs, it will affect everybody, not only the economies engaged in the tariff war," Rebeca Grynspan, head of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said in an interview with UN News.

"We are already in a 'new normal' of low growth and high debt, and we are worried that the global economy will slow down," she added.

Echoing comments by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, she expressed particular concern about the fate of smaller, vulnerable nations.

"Our emphasis has been to put attention on what can happen to countries that are more vulnerable, such as the Least Developed Countries and small island developing States," Grynspan said.

"What is happening to those countries is what really worries us," she said.

## Trump admin cuts thousands off from Social Security

AFP, Washington

The Trump administration has added over 6,000 immigrants to a database of dead Social Security recipients, effectively cutting off benefits and their ability to work, US media reported Thursday.

Adding the immigrants to the so-called "death file" is "aimed at putting pressure on the undocumented immigrants to leave the country," the Washington Post said, citing a White House official.

The policy aligns with other high-profile anti-immigration measures taken by Donald Trump's White House since his second term began, including sending more than 200 suspected gang members to a notorious prison in El Salvador.

Social Security Numbers (SSNs) are a key identifier for people in the United States, used to report earnings, establish eligibility for welfare benefits and other purposes.

Hundreds of thousands of people who are in the country illegally nevertheless have a US Social Security Number.

Many arrived during the Biden administration, which allowed certain people to enter temporarily as a way of reducing illegal border crossings.

## 2008 MUMBAI-ATTACKS India questions accused after extradition from US

AFP, New Delhi

Indian investigative agencies yesterday questioned a man they extradited from the United States and charged with being a "mastermind" of the deadly 2008 Mumbai siege.

India accuses Tahawwur Hussain Rana, 66, of being a member of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organisation.

Rana, a Pakistan born Canadian, has denied all charges -- including waging war against India, conspiring to commit murder and acts of terrorism. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

New Delhi blamed the LeT group for the 2008 Mumbai attacks when 10 gunmen carried out a multi-day siege of the country's financial capital.

## 4 publicly executed in one day in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Four men were publicly executed in Afghanistan yesterday, the Supreme Court said, the highest number of executions to be carried out in one day since the Taliban's return to power.

The executions at sports stadiums in three separate provinces brought to 10 the number of men publicly put to death since 2021, according to an AFP tally. Public executions were common during the Taliban's first rule from 1996 to 2001, with most carried out publicly in sports stadiums.

Two men were shot around six or seven times by a male relative of the victims in front of spectators in Qala-i-Naw, the centre of Badghis province, witnesses told an AFP journalist in the city.

"They were made to sit and turn their backs to us. Relatives from the victims' families stood behind and shot them with a gun," Mohammad Iqbal Rahimyar, a 48-year-old spectator, told AFP.



## Over 100 killed after heavy rain hits India, Nepal

REUTERS, New Delhi

More than 100 people have died since Wednesday after unseasonably heavy rain lashed parts of India and Nepal, officials said yesterday, as the weather department predicted more rain for the region.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) warned of multiple weather hazards on Wednesday, with heatwave conditions in the west and thunderstorms in the eastern and central region although the torrential rain associated with the monsoon usually starts in June.

At least 82 people have died in rain-related incidents in Bihar over the last two days, the eastern state's disaster management department said.

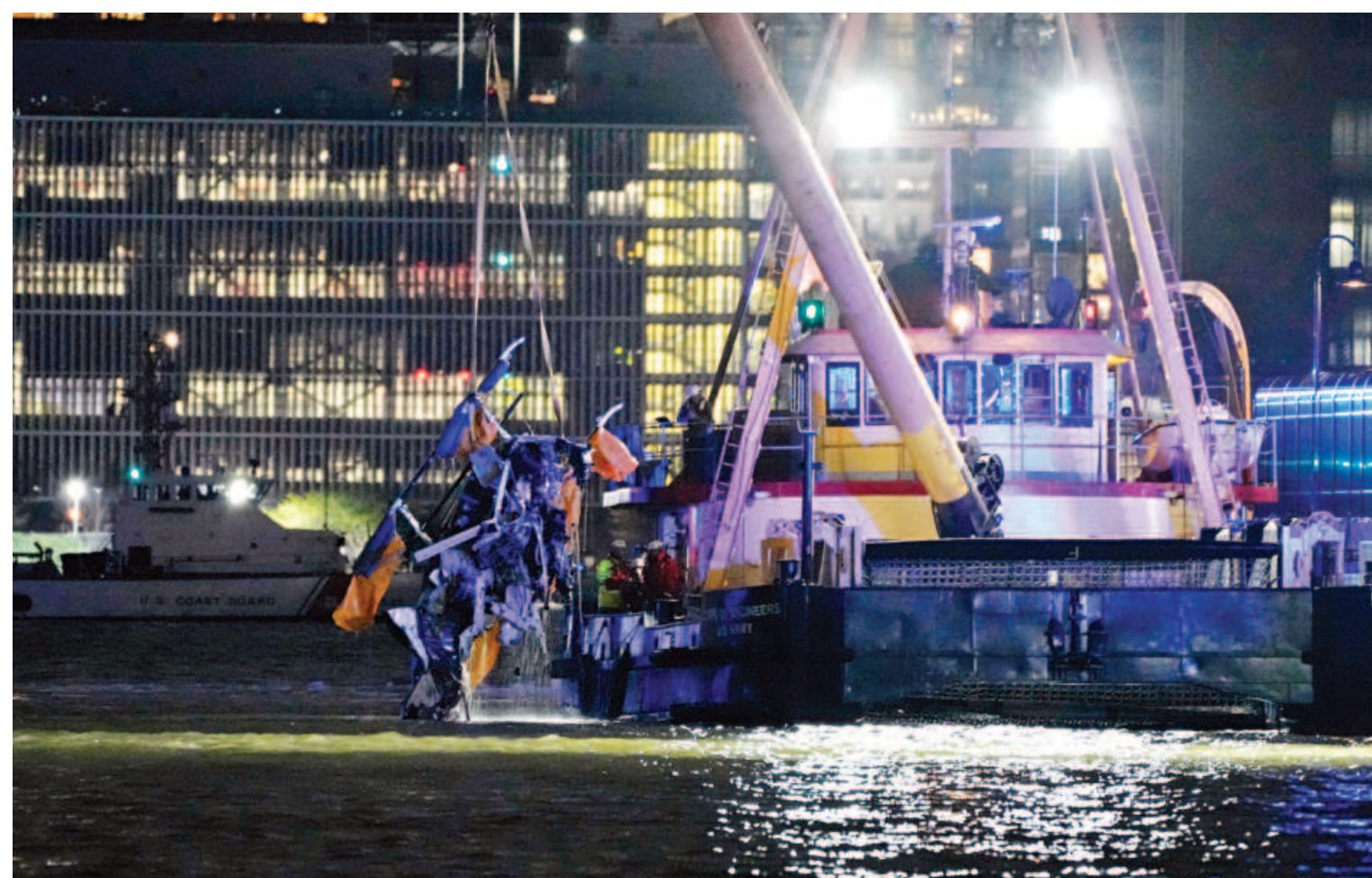
In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, authorities said 18 people had died due to lightning and storm-related incidents.

In neighbouring Nepal, lightning strikes and heavy rain killed at least eight people, National Disaster Authority officials said.

India's weather office expects more rain with thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds over central and eastern India until Monday.

Intense heatwaves in the summer months of the recent past have killed several people.

State-run IMD said last week that India was expected to experience a much hotter April, with above normal temperatures across most of the country.



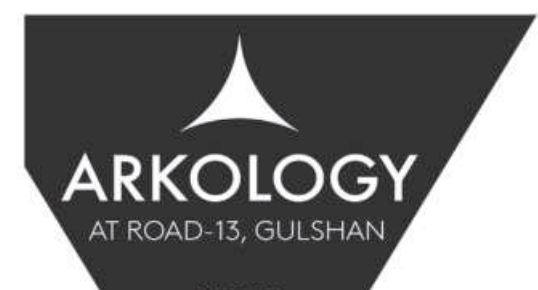
The wreckage of a helicopter is removed from the water after crashing into the Hudson River, in the Newport neighbourhood of Jersey City, New Jersey, US on Thursday evening. Six people including three children were killed after the tourist helicopter plummeted upside down into the river, authorities said.

PHOTO: AFP

Peace in Ukraine appears to be out of reach in the immediate future.  
Says German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius

### SENSE OF TRANQUILITY

BESIDE GULSHAN LAKE.













**ARKOLOGY**  
AT ROAD-13, GULSHAN

4 BED APARTMENTS

16769

CELL/WHATSAPP: 01711431450, 0187772246, 01711431448  
www.credencehousingltd.com

MAIN AMENITIES

-  SWIMMING POOL
-  YOGA
-  COMMUNITY SPACE
-  CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
-  GREEN LAWN
-  RECEPTION LOUNGE
-  PRAYER SPACE
-  BIKE ZONE
-  FURNISHED GM
-  24/7 SECURITY

**CREDESCENCE**  
for the inspired lifestyles

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## Build on investment summit gains

Both broad and targeted interventions necessary

We're heartened by the successful conclusion of Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025 that reportedly drew in some 450 foreign investors and representatives from 40 countries. During the four-day event, two investment deals were signed, while many pledged future investments. The government has rightly expressed its intent to capitalise on the momentum. As per the organisers, a "pipeline" of potential investments will be created based on the companies and individuals who have shown interest, and a roadmap with a timeframe of 18-24 months will be drawn up to ensure the summit's promises translate into real, long-term gains. It goes without saying that the success of this much-hyped event will be determined by how well the authorities can follow through. The challenge is not just to concretise the investment commitments, but also to uphold the post-July economic reform agenda to create an enabling environment for sustainable growth.

In this connection, we want to reiterate the importance of addressing long-standing barriers to doing business that have been repeatedly flagged by experts. While there are sector-specific concerns and vulnerabilities—such as those affecting the RMG industry, which just recently received a reprieve from a tariff scare triggered by the US—barriers cutting across all sectors must be addressed with priority. Participants at the summit, for instance, raised concerns about policy inconsistency, political instability, corruption, bureaucratic red tape, lack of coordination, crises of gas and electricity, and complex approval procedures. Some of these were also reflected in a recently unveiled World Bank report that highlighted Bangladesh's top five business obstacles, including its inefficient tax structure and informal economy. Many of these problems require political commitment, so political parties, too, must step up in creating the kind of environment investors need.

The fact is, Bangladesh has significant investment potential that cannot be realised without addressing these underlying challenges. While the interim government's efforts in this regard have borne some fruit, much more needs to be done. At the same time, we must acknowledge the promise shown of late by some sectors. For instance, in its report, the World Bank identified four sectors—green RMG, housing for middle-class families, 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 investments, and spark a ripple effect of productivity in interconnected sectors. Among them, the RMG industry deserves particular mention. As the founder of Korean EPZ said at the summit, if overhauled and properly supported, it could become the top global apparel exporter even as we try to diversify our export basket.

To capitalise on all such promises, we need sustained efforts from the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) as well as targeted interventions and broad reforms from higher authorities. The recent summit was an attempt to dispel the negative perceptions many foreign investors still hold about our investment climate because of past experiences. We can project a new, reformed image through our actions going forward.

## Political violence has to stop

Parties, govt have a greater role to play in addressing it

We are concerned about the ongoing trend of political violence that has gripped the country in recent months. According to a report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), at least 23 people lost their lives and 733 others were injured in over 97 incidents of political violence in March. Meanwhile, there were at least 40 cases of mob beatings resulting in 12 deaths and 44 injuries—some of which were also reported to have been driven by political motives and personal grudges. As for the parties involved in political violence, we are told that the majority of attacks were confrontations between rival factions of BNP activists. Of the 23 people killed in such violence last month, 18 were reportedly affiliated with BNP.

What has led to this surge in political violence? Why can't political parties control their errant members and establish discipline? The manner in which some of the attacks were carried out shows how out of control many political activists and leaders have become. On March 12, a BNP activist was killed during a clash at an iftar programme. Earlier, a BNP leader was beaten to death by his rivals right in front of his wife. It is clear that criminal elements embedded within some of the parties are feeling emboldened by the normalisation of such violence over time and the lack of legal or political consequences. This is unacceptable.

The BNP, in particular, must take responsibility for the surge in intra-party violence. Although it has expelled quite a number of party members for their involvement in violent incidents, these actions have proven insufficient as a deterrent. The BNP, therefore, must take stronger measures and send a clear message to all its members and supporters that any involvement in political violence will have immediate and dire consequences. Equally importantly, law enforcement agencies must act decisively to curb violence and refrain from favouring any party or individual while doing so.

All stakeholders of post-uprising Bangladesh should come together to help restore the rule of law. This means the police should act with greater resolve, political parties should take responsibility for the crimes of their members, and community and religious leaders should actively discourage mob violence. A new Bangladesh demands a new political expression that doesn't involve impulsive violence.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Launch of first space shuttle

On this day in 1981, NASA launched the first space shuttle, Columbia, which was designed to orbit Earth, transport people and cargo to and from orbiting spacecraft, and glide to a runway landing on its return to Earth.

# The price of the vote must be reform



Dr Kazi ASM Nurul Huda is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Dhaka and adjunct faculty at North South University (NSU). He can be reached at huda@du.ac.bd.

KAZI ASM NURUL HUDA

The political conversation in Bangladesh today is sharply divided between two dominant camps—those demanding immediate elections and those insisting that structural reform must come first. On one side, BNP leaders are calling for swift elections, warning against a return to authoritarian practices disguised in the language of "development," "reform," and "investment." On the other side, some argue that without deep institutional change, any election would merely replicate a broken system. They view the current government, born of a mass uprising, as having a unique mandate to pursue transformative reform before handing over power through a vote.

These two narratives, each grounded in real concerns, appear locked in conflict. But this binary framing—election first or reform first—misses the deeper challenge: how can we ensure that democratic transitions lead not just to a change in leadership, but to a transformation of the system itself?

As someone who believes in the urgency of restoring democratic consent, yet also sees the necessity of foundational reform, I propose a middle path. Elections should happen without delay, provided they take place within a framework that obliges the next government to implement a clear and enforceable reform agenda. These reforms must not be left to political convenience. They must be time-bound, mandatory, and tied to the government's continued legitimacy.

Bangladesh has seen too many instances of democratic decline cloaked in claims of national interest. The argument that elections can be delayed for the sake of stability, economic growth, or technical preparation is not new, and it is perilous. When unelected authority lingers under the pretence of reform, the principle of consent is gradually undermined. Democratic institutions grow brittle, public trust wanes, and technocratic efficiency replaces participatory governance. That is neither sustainable nor just.

At the same time, holding elections under an unreformed system risks

repeating the very dysfunctions that provoked the current crisis. Flawed electoral institutions, unchecked executive power, and the absence of meaningful decentralisation have all contributed to a political culture in which elections settle little and reform remains elusive. We cannot afford to repeat that pattern.

To understand the stakes, we must revisit the unfulfilled promises of Bangladesh's last major democratic transition: the post-1990 period. The mass uprising that ousted HM

effective: hold elections soon, but within a structure that binds the next government to a reform mandate. This can be achieved in one of two ways.

First, a pre-election constitutional amendment could be enacted, specifying a timeline—perhaps six to 12 months—within which essential reforms must be completed. These may include restructuring the Election Commission, strengthening judicial independence, placing checks on executive power, and ensuring protections for civil liberties and political opposition. Failure to comply would place the government in breach of constitutional responsibility, triggering consequences such as judicial intervention or the possibility of early elections.

Secondly, if constitutional amendment is not feasible before the vote, a broad-based political accord could be negotiated and publicly formalised. This agreement, endorsed by major parties and civil society,

is not merely a function of electoral success; it can and should be tied to the fulfilment of constitutional obligations.

In Bangladesh, this model offers a path forward that neither dismisses the demand for elections nor ignores the urgency of reform. It meets the opposition's call for democratic legitimacy while addressing the concerns of those who fear another empty transition.

This approach also calls for a deeper cultural transformation. It asks citizens to see themselves not just as voters who participate periodically, but as guardians of a constitutional project that must be renewed and defended. It challenges political leaders to abandon the winner-takes-all mentality that has hollowed out our institutions. A government elected under this framework would be bound not only by its promises, but by structural commitments embedded in law or public accord. There would be no excuse for delay and no room for betrayal.

Some may dismiss this proposal as overly ambitious or politically unrealistic. But in truth, the real illusion is the belief that elections alone—without binding reform—can resolve our current crisis. Equally naive is the notion that unelected authority, however well-intentioned, can govern indefinitely without undermining the very foundations of democratic legitimacy.

Realism today demands more than resignation to broken cycles. It requires imagination anchored in accountability. And more than that, it demands a politics in which outcomes are tied to commitments, and power is matched by responsibility. If we are to be realists in the best sense, then we must refuse both cynicism and complacency.

The real danger now is not that we will choose the wrong side in the "election versus reform" debate. It is that we will accept the debate on its current, limiting terms. This false binary must be rejected. We need both: elections that restore the people's voice, and reforms that prevent its silencing in the future.

What is needed most urgently is a credible mechanism—constitutional, political, or both—that ensures the next government, whoever forms it, cannot simply walk away from its obligations once in office. The days of promising reform only to abandon it after securing power must come to an end.



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Ershad marked a decisive rejection of authoritarianism and a call for genuine democracy. But while elections followed, deeper reforms were quietly shelved. Electoral processes remained vulnerable, political power remained overly centralised, and democratic norms steadily eroded. The spirit of that movement—captured in slogans like "let democracy be free"—was honoured in form but not in substance.

That historical memory informs the scepticism many feel today. There is a well-founded fear that even if elections are held and power changes hands, reforms will once again be delayed, diluted, or dismissed. The burden is now on us to ensure that does not happen.

So how do we break this cycle? My proposal is simple but, I believe,

would bind the next government to a detailed reform roadmap monitored by an independent oversight body. While not legally binding in the same way as a constitutional provision, such an accord could be legitimised through public scrutiny and, if necessary, international recognition.

Either model would shift reform from being a matter of political discretion to a condition of democratic governance. It would also introduce a principle that is increasingly recognised in global democratic transitions: conditional legitimacy. In many contexts—post-apartheid South Africa, post-uprising Tunisia, and post-monarchy Nepal—transitional governments were required to enact reforms as a condition of their authority. These examples demonstrate that legitimacy

## By proxy or post?

The long wait for Bangladesh's expatriate voting rights



Antonio Spinelli is senior adviser, Asia and the Pacific, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

ANTONIO SPINELLI

Following decades of authoritarian rule, Bangladesh has embarked on an ambitious and necessary process of constitutional and electoral reform. Among the priorities for the upcoming 13th parliamentary elections is the long-overdue enfranchisement of approximately 10 million Bangladeshi expatriates, primarily labour migrants, systematically excluded from participating in national elections.

While the country's electoral framework normatively recognises the voting rights of its overseas citizens through an out-of-country voting (OCV) mechanism based on postal ballots, the system has never been effectively implemented. Despite its de jure existence, Bangladesh's OCV framework remains de facto inoperative due to a range of persistent challenges. These include procedural and administrative complexities, a lack of timely voter information and outreach, logistical constraints in ballot distribution and return, political controversy over dual citizenship, and broader concerns over democratic deficits and legitimacy of past elections. These obstacles have collectively silenced politically a large segment of the country's eligible electorate.

With national elections anticipated by the end of the year, public and political attention has increasingly turned towards identifying feasible OCV mechanisms. The Election Commission has reviewed several

options—postal ballots, online voting, and proxy voting—and has provisionally favoured proxy voting as the most operationally viable method within the limited timeframe. This method allows a registered voter to authorise another person—typically residing in the same constituency—to cast a ballot on their behalf. Commonly used in countries such as the UK, France, Belgium, Canada, and India, proxy voting is often employed when voters are unable to attend their polling station due to travel, illness, or overseas residence. Its appeal lies in its relative simplicity, offering a workaround in contexts where digital infrastructure or reliable postal systems are lacking. The use of proxy voting, however, in some of these jurisdictions is very limited.

Proxy voting presents obvious benefits. It facilitates participation for overseas voters, those unable to physically access polling stations, accommodates persons with disabilities or mobility challenges, and provides a flexible option for last-minute changes in personal circumstances. It is especially useful in low-infrastructure settings where postal or electronic voting may be unreliable or unfeasible.

Nonetheless, its adoption comes with significant risks and limitations. Key among them is the potential compromise of electoral integrity. Unlike supervised or assisted voting at polling stations, there are limited

means of verifying whether the proxy acted according to the voter's actual preference. This opens the door to abuse—such as vote buying, undue influence, coercion, or manipulation—particularly in systems where a proxy may cast votes on behalf of multiple individuals.

The secrecy of the ballot is another concern. It is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure that the proxy vote reflects the true intent of the voter. The risk of delegitimising the principle of "one person, one vote" is also heightened when proxies fail to vote in accordance with the original voter's will. The proxy voting system in Vanuatu, for example, has been facing these challenges.

Moreover, while perhaps logistically simpler than other OCV methods, proxy voting requires rigorous procedural oversight, including secure voter-proxy registration, robust authentication mechanisms, and monitoring to prevent fraud or multiple voting. In highly politically polarised contexts such as Bangladesh—where past elections have been plagued by irregularities, violence, and widespread mistrust—unless proxy voting is rigorously regulated, it may be perceived as particularly vulnerable to manipulation and thus incapable of generating public or stakeholder confidence.

Striking the right balance between accessibility and integrity remains a critical challenge as efforts to make proxy voting broadly accessible may unintentionally weaken safeguards, while overly stringent regulations could make the process inaccessible and thus ineffective.

Lastly, international best practice suggests that introducing new, untested voting methods to enfranchise large numbers of voters shortly before a major transitional election is rarely advisable. Often, late-stage reforms face serious logistical,

legal, and political constraints, which can undermine their credibility and effectiveness.

It would be prudent for the EC to prepare alternative OCV mechanisms as contingency options should proxy voting prove unfeasible. Postal voting—though less ambitious in its reach of overseas voters—appears to present a more pragmatic alternative. As it is already legislated—other than extending several timelines of the election to allow the delivery and collection of postal ballots—its implementation would not require major legal reform, but rather a more effective operational strategy.

To make postal voting viable for the next general election, the EC would need to act with urgency. Key steps could include establishing a secure overseas voter registration process, taking stock of which countries have viable postal service, conducting extensive outreach through diplomatic missions and diaspora networks, and addressing operational constraints such as ballot printing, dispatch, and return timelines. Robust verification mechanisms and stakeholder consultations will be essential to uphold electoral integrity and build trust in the process.

While proxy voting offers a short-term solution for the inclusion of overseas voters, its introduction does not come without considerable risks. A dual-track approach—prioritising proxy voting with a parallel plan for postal voting as contingency—would provide Bangladesh with a more balanced, credible path towards electoral inclusion and reform. Following the next elections, the adoption of a stronger, more permanent, viable, accessible, and sustainable OCV system can then be more comprehensively explored as part of a long-term electoral reform agenda.

# Homecoming with a purpose



**BLOWIN' IN THE WIND**

**Dr Shamsad Mortuza**  
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

**SHAMSAD MORTUZA**

You can't see air. But if you breathe into a balloon, your air takes shape. The inflated balloon is no longer the shape it used to be. You look at it with pride, as if you have poured your spirit into it. It can either join other balloons to be part of a party or be a stand-alone object with trepid bounces.

The July uprising caused different invisible shapes to emerge that visibly changed the political landscape of the country forever. The spirit of the uprising emanated from the hearts of Bangladeshis, both domestically and internationally. At a time when freedom of expression was muffled at home, the call for change by our compatriots abroad kept the hope alive. Some of them even signed up for a reverse brain drain scheme, pledging their commitment to national recovery.

The country is still in the process of redefining itself. The spirited balloons are far

and investment banker Dr Ashik Chowdhury (Bangladesh Investment Development Authority), among others, to invigorate the administrative system. These returnees bring home more than their resumes. They bring a touch of international standards that were not always accepted at the national level. Their inclusion is as talismanic as footballer Hamza Choudhury, who, in his first appearance in national colours, gave the opponent a lot to think about in Bangladesh's new outfit.

I watched BIDA Executive Chairman Ashik Chowdhury's presentation at the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025, which has gained considerable attention. Even an adviser on my friend list was amazed by the presentation, saying no civil servant could pitch Bangladesh so smoothly. Maybe he is right. Then again, I see many of our students present in classrooms or at international

for us to create our cohort of academics, entrepreneurs, and policymakers who can join hands with our expatriates to participate in the global knowledge economy.

When a transformed Ashik Chowdhury makes his return from Singapore, many of us share the pride of knowing him at Dhaka University's IBA, Sylhet Cadet College, or the local organisations he worked for. But in most cases, the real change in our expatriate

networks to secure funding, mobility, and visibility. With less than 2 percent of GDP assigned to education, against the UNESCO-prescribed 6 percent, higher education is a resource-constrained sector. With the help of our overseas friends, we can prepare ourselves to make our mark on the international stage.

Having said that, as a nation that prides itself on being "porosrikator" (getting ill by

many returnees feel emotional burnout and cynicism, resulting in their quiet withdrawal and return to their adopted homes.

So the challenge for us is to retain quality in a system with resistance. The returnees may have an idealistic view of achieving excellence. But they must work in a system where most may lack training, resources, or the will to change. Their desire to introduce high standards might end up alienating them from their colleagues. Any top-down approach should be avoided. If the imported leaders behave in a know-it-all manner, they are likely to alienate their colleagues. Instead, they need to work horizontally, not hierarchically. We need to collaborate with our visiting mentors to initiate micro-reforms in course design, assessment, or research, for instance. Through mentorship, shared aspirations can be practised, aimed at merging local and global voices.

We must acknowledge the returnees' sacrifice and emotional labour, knowing we can't repay them in cash. To build a bridge between locals and returnees, networks of solidarity are essential. The terms of reference for engaging the returnees need to be more than a phone call from the top. We need to guarantee their academic freedom and meaningful roles as well as their public recognition.

The returnees will be our role models not because they are foreign-trained but because they care enough to come back and stay. They can rewrite the myth of exodus and ignite belief in possibility among the young generation. Their very presence will reaffirm that you don't have to leave to succeed. You can return and make a difference.

While the return of Bangladesh's global citizens to the country is a welcome trend, we need to be strategic in making their integration meaningful. Not doing so will kill their passion and ruin the system they came back to fix. We need to make room for them not just institutionally but imaginatively. Universities can be redesigned to accommodate their ideas and translate them into the creation of a new Bangladesh that is confident, curious, and connected to the world.

The big question isn't whether the returnees will stay. It's whether we will give them the required space worth staying for.



**Executive Chairman of BIDA Ashik Chowdhury briefing journalists over Bangladesh Investment Summit-2025 at hotel InterContinental in Dhaka on April 8, 2025. PHOTO: PID**

scholars occurs in an overseas system that is not didactic like ours but dialogic—that is not siloed like us but collaborative. To keep producing more local idols, we need to redesign our institutions and system. To begin with, we need to introduce TNE (Transnational Education) models to our local system. We can work with foreign partner institutions to create hybrid curricula aligned with global standards. For instance, a Ford Foundation Financial Assistance Program led to the founding of IBA in 1966 in collaboration with Indiana University, Bloomington, US. The graduates of IBA are now making their marks in almost every imaginable sector, both at home and abroad.

To increase international collaboration, we need to mentor faculty and students in grant writing, peer-reviewed publishing, and research ethics. Those who previously pledged to return but have not yet made

seeing good in others), we also need to be wary of the possible backlash. The underpaid and overburdened local academic system often lacks the heart to welcome "foreigners." It responds by erecting walls against what seems foreign or threatening.

Our public universities, for instance, implement a gatekeeping system for hiring and promotion. They prefer recruiting their own (and foreign nationals are not allowed to apply). There is scepticism towards new teaching methods. Ideological opposition often masks professional insecurity. The bureaucracy excels at manipulating red tape to create administrative obstacles for foreign ideas or individuals.

Many returnees return with a lot of passion. But during their early stages of reintegration, they feel that their passion is met with passivity, innovation with indifference, and idealism with bureaucracy. As a consequence,

**The returnees will be our role models not because they are foreign-trained but because they care enough to come back and stay. They can rewrite the myth of exodus and ignite belief in possibility among the young generation. Their very presence will reaffirm that you don't have to leave to succeed. You can return and make a difference.**

from homogeneous. That's how it should be in a democracy. Unfortunately, the lack of democracy for such a long time has made us forget many of its basic tenets. It's easy to be dispirited by the change, or the lack of it.

One beacon of hope is available in the tiny streak of reverse brain drain that we are witnessing today. Dr Yunus's transitional government has been successful in crafting this inflow. The chief adviser has brought in policy experts such as Ali Riaz and Prof Mostak Hossain, economist Lutfy Siddiqi,

debate meets, making equally impressive presentations. The problem is speakers with native accents or international exposure do not normally hold the posts reserved for civil servants recruited through typical exams that rely on rote learning. So, I would have been much more impressed if our homegrown products were making the much-hyped pitch. To achieve that, we need to reform our classrooms and our educational institutes. Short-term visits by our expatriates can never yield a sustainable outcome. It's time

# How AI can help build a fairer Bangladesh



**M Shamsul Alam**  
is energy adviser at the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), and professor of electrical and electronic engineering at Daffodil University.

**M SHAMSUL ALAM**

Bangladesh has faced systemic corruption with various public and private sectors, resulting in inefficiencies, economic disparities, and hardships for the common people. Under the former regime, corruption was rampant, leading to biased policymaking that benefited vested quarters at the cost of national wealth and public welfare. To ensure a sustainable future, it is imperative to reform state policies and eliminate corruption. This can be done through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and automated data-driven systems to monitor societal transitions. This initiative aims to empower the youth and universities in Bangladesh with AI-driven tools to actively participate in societal transition. By leveraging AI for unbiased decision-making and transparent monitoring, it seeks to eliminate corruption, enhance policy efficiency, and ensure equitable national development and public welfare.

The negative impact of corruption has permeated all key areas, including: (1) Energy security: predatory costs and economic inefficiencies and energy-related challenges have led to a severe energy crisis and financial burdens on the people putting their energy rights in danger. (2) Food security: poor policies and productivity, an oligopolistic market, especially in import, mismanagement of subsidies, and exploitation by middlemen have resulted in food shortage, adulteration, and price hikes. As a result, consumers' right to food is unprotected. (3) Health security: oligopolistic



FILE ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

market, inaction by regulatory bodies, unethical business practices in the private sector and corruption in the healthcare and medicine sector have led to inadequate medical facilities, mismanagement of resources, and lack of affordable treatment options. Therefore, health rights are at stake. (4) Education security: poor quality, corruption in recruitment and physical infrastructural development, and mismanagement of resources plague the sector. Former government officials, such as vice-chancellors of public universities and

have created systemic instability and public dissatisfaction.

To counteract these, a fundamental shift in governance is needed—one that replaces human bias and vested interests with data-driven, AI-powered decision-making systems. AI has the potential to revolutionise governance by ensuring that policies are designed based on real-time, unbiased, and verifiable data.

Power network AI can be deployed to collect real-time data from power generation, transmission, and distribution systems. By

eliminating human intervention in energy allocation and pricing decisions, the system can ensure equitable distribution of electricity based on real demand and supply, power supply free from predatory costs, system loss reduction, power generation at the least cost, detection of fraudulent activities such as unauthorised power consumption, system loss and billing manipulation, and optimised renewable energy integration, reducing dependency on fossil fuels and enhancing power supply and economic sustainability.

Data-driven AI systems can be implemented to regulate the agricultural sector and ensure fair price monitoring to prevent market manipulation, automated tracking of crop yields, predicting potential shortages and suggesting policy adjustments in real-time, transparent subsidy distribution, ensuring that benefits reach the farmers rather than corrupt intermediaries, and control of market price to prevent manipulation.

The healthcare system can be improved through AI-driven solutions such as automated tracking of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals preventing corruption in procurement and distribution, predictive analytics for disease outbreaks allowing better allocation of resources, and AI-assisted telemedicine improving healthcare access in rural and underserved areas.

The education sector requires urgent

and enforcing accountability. AI-based personalised learning systems can enhance the quality of education and make it accessible to all students. It can also detect fraudulent degrees and academic misconduct, ensuring credibility in educational institutions.

Governance and policy reforms must be guided by AI-driven analysis that eliminates human biases. Key benefits include unbiased policy recommendations based on economic, social, and environmental data rather than political influences, automated fraud detection systems in financial transactions, procurement, and contract management and real-time data integration from multiple sources, ensuring transparency and accountability in government decision-making.

For AI-driven systems to function effectively, it is essential to establish: (1) Automated data collection mechanisms, reducing human interference and chances of manipulation; (2) Data sanitisation protocols, ensuring that collected data is accurate, relevant, and free from bias; and (3) Blockchain and cryptographic security frameworks, preventing unauthorised alterations or misuse of data.

The integration of AI-driven systems in governance is not just a technological upgrade—it is a revolutionary step towards fairness, efficiency, and accountability. By

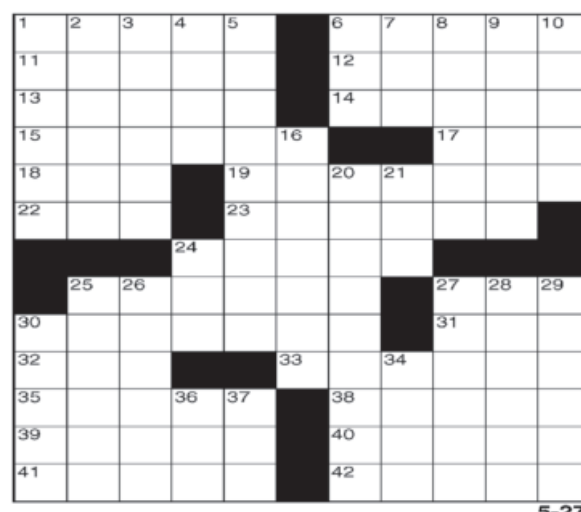
**A fundamental shift in governance is needed—one that replaces human bias and vested interests with data-driven, AI-powered decision-making systems. AI has the potential to revolutionise governance by ensuring that policies are designed based on real-time, unbiased, and verifiable data.**

intervention to eliminate corruption and improve quality. AI-driven solutions can help by automating faculty and staff recruitment, monitoring educational standards, identifying underperforming institutions

replacing corrupt human interventions with data-driven AI decisions, Bangladesh can overcome the inefficiencies of the past and build a future where public welfare is prioritised over vested interests.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                          |                      |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| ACROSS                   | 24 Two cubed         | DOWN                     | group               |
| 1 Western state capital  | 25 Malay island      | 1 Clash                  | 20 Urging on        |
| 6 Minimal amount         | 27 Easy victim       | 2 Kind of musical wonder | 21 Diet no-no       |
| 11 Building wing         | 30 Ballpark figure   | 3 Wanting                | 24 Geologic period  |
| 12 Fighting              | 31 Greek vowel       | 4 Appear                 | 25 Infertile        |
| 13 Belief                | 32 Skill             | 5 Blackmailing           | 26 Prompt           |
| 14 Zigzag                | 33 Kitchen fixtures  | 6 Bar study              | 27 Stringent        |
| 15 Underworld group      | 35 Kind of ballerina | 7 Seine season           | 28 Not nervous      |
| 17 Piano part            | 38 Notions           | 8 Come to                | 29 Went by          |
| 18 Tell tales            | 39 Cleaner scent     | 9 Frugal fellows         | 30 Syrup choice     |
| 19 Close-fitting jackets | 40 Like Loki         | 10 Deuce beaters         | 34 Freshener target |
| 22 Airport sched. abbr.  | 41 Foe               | 16 Stayin' Alive         | 36 May honoree      |
| 23 Lone Star Staters     | 42 Miser's problem   |                          | 37 One or more      |



## LAST SATURDAY'S ANSWERS





## Barca look to stretch LaLiga lead

LaLiga leaders Barcelona have the opportunity to extend their advantage atop the standings when they visit Leganes on Saturday. Barca, with 67 points from 30 games, are four points clear of second-placed Real Madrid, while Leganes are 18th with 28 points, two points below the safety zone.

## 'Would feel great if I score a ton at home'

Over a short span in Test cricket, Mahmudul Hasan Joy has been able to find his spark from time to time. With Zimbabwe coming in for a series, Joy and the other young guns in the side approach this series to build momentum in their careers. The 24-year-old opener discussed his career, approach and the Zimbabwe series during an interview last week with **The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi**. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** What's your feeling regarding Test cricket and how are you going to approach the Zimbabwe series? **Mahmudul Hasan Joy (MHJ):** The number of Tests I have played in, we got some good results in those but in some we didn't do well. So with the Zimbabwe series ahead, although they are comparatively not as competitive as the other Test sides, we have to dominate.

**DS:** Will this also be a series where the team will look for some solidity? **MHJ:** The last time we played the West Indies series, it was a pretty similar team. Mushfiqur (Rahim) bhai wasn't there due to personal reasons and (Najmul Hossain) Shanto bhai wasn't there due to injury. The last two years, this has been

the team. The team is organised and if we can do well here, it would help us get some confidence before the other big series. It could be the start of turning things around.

**DS:** Do you feel this is a series where you too have an opportunity to stake your claim?

**MHJ:** This would be a good opportunity for the openers to perform and solidify our positions. It would not mean that I would feel pressure but it would be about enjoying our cricket.

**DS:** You are Bangladesh's only batter to score a Test ton in South Africa but you haven't managed a ton at home yet. Are you looking forward to getting one here? **MHJ:** I think it would feel great if I score a ton at home because when I scored that ton outside the country, it was the greatest moment for me.

**DS:** It's evident from your batting that you try to play a lot of deliveries. Could you discuss what process you follow when building an innings?

**MHJ:** The new ball moves both ways, so if I survive that, it becomes easier. So I focus heavily on surviving the new ball. The focus is to play out the first 15-20 overs and then go for something bigger.

**DS:** Top-order collapses have bugged Bangladesh for a while. Do you think it would be the openers' contributions that could thwart such instances?

**MHJ:** Yes, the openers and the top-order will have to take that responsibility. When you play bigger sides, it's a must since they don't give you many chances. So when the top-order collapses, all the pressure falls on the middle-order. If the openers provide a good start, the middle-order can play well and contribute to a big score. Given our bowling attack, we can be in a good position if the top-order bats well.

**DS:** Is this a template you feel Bangladesh has tried to execute from Mount Maunganui?

**MHJ:** Yes, that's true. There we got a good start from the top-order and then the middle-order controlled things and we won the match.

**DS:** How would you term the transition from playing DPL to Test cricket?

**MHJ:** No, it would not be a big issue. We are moving seven days before the game, so we can take our preparations.



## Bayern, Dortmund look for respite in Bundesliga

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's home 'Klassiker' clash with Borussia Dortmund takes place on Saturday against the backdrop of potential Champions League elimination for both sides.

The clash, which has emerged as the Bundesliga's showpiece rivalry over the past 15 years since Dortmund won back-to-back titles under Jurgen Klopp, falls in between the two legs of both clubs' Champions League two-legged quarterfinals.

On Tuesday, an injury-decimated Bayern lost 2-1 at home against Inter Milan in the first leg.

In the second leg, Vincent Kompany's side will need to win by two goals to avoid extra time, or by one and hope to triumph on penalties.

The situation for Dortmund, who were Champions League finalists last season, is far more dire.

Niko Kovac's men were thumped 4-0 in Barcelona and will need to pull off one of the biggest turnarounds in the competition's history to reach the semifinals.

Complicating matters for both Bayern and Dortmund is that there is still plenty at stake in the league.

With six games remaining, Bayern could be just three points clear of second-placed Bayer Leverkusen at kick-off, should Xabi Alonso's side beat Union Berlin earlier on Saturday.

Bayern cannot afford a slip against Dortmund as Leverkusen have won 14 of their past 18 games and have lost just once.

Wanting to keep their slim hopes of Champions League qualification alive, Dortmund, who sit eighth, five points off the top four, will go to Munich to fight for every point.

Fresh from the humbling in Barcelona, Kovac warned his side could expect more of the same on Saturday, saying: "Bayern are on the same level as Barcelona. We need to do better defensively."



Bangladesh cricketer Mehedi Hasan Miraz was presented the Sportsperson of the Year and the Cricketer of the Year awards at the Kool-BSPA Sports Award 2024 held at a city hotel in Dhaka on Friday. Pace sensation Nahid Rana was named Emerging Sportsperson of the Year, while women's footballer Ritu Porna Chakma received the Popular Choice award through fans' online voting.

## WOMEN'S WC QUALIFIERS

### Pakistan, WI notch victories

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan rose to the top of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 Qualifiers with a six-wicket win against Scotland yesterday -- their second win on the trot.

Chasing 187, the hosts closed the game with six wickets in hand in Lahore, and now have four points from two outings.

Pakistan elected to field after rain reduced the contest to 32 overs a side. Skipper Katherine Bryce constructed a gritty knock of 91 runs off 96 deliveries while Alisa Lister scored 31 as Scotland managed 186 for nine.

Pakistan skipper Fatima Sana led the charge with the ball, nabbing four wickets in the Scotland innings.

In the other match of the day, West Indies registered a thrilling six-run win against Ireland to get into the points tally after having lost their first match against Scotland.

Batting first at the Gaddafi Stadium, Stefanie Taylor and Chinelle Henry (46 each), as well as Zaida James (36), had helped avert an early collapse after Ireland removed in-form skipper Hayley Matthews and Qiana Joseph in the Powerplay.

West Indies eventually posted 181 for six in 33 overs before Matthews' four wickets stifled Ireland's chase.

## DPL first phase ends today with Abahani-Mohammedan clash

SPORTS REPORTER

Perennial rivals Abahani Limited and Mohammedan Sporting Club will face off in Mirpur while Agrani Bank Cricket Club and Prime Bank Cricket Club will vie for the final spot in the Super League as the 11th and final round of the first phase of the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) commences today.

The lustre of the Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry right now is not what it used to be during the heydays of DPL, but the game still carries significance due to top names taking part.

The last time tempers flared in an Abahani-Mohammedan clash was in 2021, and it was instigated by Mohammedan captain Shakib Al Hasan, who kicked down the stumps in a fit of rage over a leg-before appeal being turned down by the umpire.

"It was not the best of incidents, it's better if these kinds of things don't happen," Najmul Hossain Shanto, Abahani and Bangladesh captain, told reporters in Mirpur with a smile when asked about the incident yesterday.

Shanto acknowledged that fanfare surrounding the rivalry has decreased quite a bit but claimed the players still feel excited for the match.

"The excitement is similar to every other year and at the end of the day it's another match. People always have extra



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

expectations surrounding an Abahani-Mohammedan match and hopefully tomorrow's [today's] match will be exciting," he said.

"It's true that it [Abahani-Mohammedan rivalry] is not as exciting as before. People don't come to watch Abahani-Mohammedan matches like before. When I started out in 2015-2016, I would see some people in the gallery. Why it [excitement] has decreased, I don't have the answer," he added.

Both sides have already secured a place in the Super League, with Abahani topping the table with 18 points and Mohammedan in second place, trailing them by two points.

The star-studded Mohammedan will be without Tamim Iqbal and Taskin Ahmed but will hope that the likes of Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Towhid Hridoy can fire them to a victory. Meanwhile, Shanto, Mosaddek Hossain and Nahid Rana will carry the hopes of Abahani.

Meanwhile, the sixth and final spot in the Super League will be decided today. The current sixth-place holder Agrani Bank Cricket Club will face fourth-placed Legends of Rugganj in Mirpur while seventh-placed Prime Bank Cricket Club will take on fifth-placed Gulshan Cricket Club at BKSP.

Agrani are currently on 12 points, two more than Prime Bank. If Agrani lose and Prime Bank win today, then both teams will be on equal 12 points and Prime Bank would edge Agrani on head-to-head and take final slot in the Super League.

## MSC, Kings square off in high-stakes tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan SC will look to strengthen their lead in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) when they face five-time champions Bashundhara Kings at the Bashundhara Kings Arena today.

With nine wins in ten matches, league leaders Mohammedan have boosted their chances of clinching their first-ever professional league title. However, they now face a tough challenge against the Kings in their first match following a lengthy seven-week break.

Though Mohammedan had less training during the break compared to the Kings, the Black and White outfit remain confident of picking up where they left off.

Both teams bolstered their squads by signing new foreign players, and today's fixture is expected to be a thrilling encounter. The outcome could play a decisive role in the title race, with Mohammedan currently leading the Kings by seven points in the 10-team table.

"Every match is very important for us. Of course, Kings are a big hurdle, and we'll need to give extra effort on their home ground, especially after the long break,"

said Mohammedan head coach Alfaz Ahmed. He added that the Mohammedan are aiming for victory, having previously defeated the Kings 1-0 in their first league meeting.

The Kings, on the other hand, have struggled with inconsistency, mainly due to underperformance from their forwards. During the break, they strengthened their attacking line by signing new foreign forwards. Although these additions did not yield results in the Federation Cup -- where they lost to Abahani in a penalty shootout -- the reigning champions are determined to bounce back in the league as they pursue a record sixth straight title.

Meanwhile, fellow title contenders Abahani, who are four points behind Mohammedan, will also be in action today against Dhaka Wanderers Club.

In yesterday's fixtures, Rahmatganj defeated Chittagong Abahani 2-0 in Mymensingh, with Tamvir Hossain and Samuel Boateng scoring in the 28th and 45th minutes, respectively. In Gazipur, Bangladesh Police FC thrashed Farashganj Young Men's Club 3-0, with MS Bablu netting a brace and Dipok Roy adding one.



Mohamed Salah ended months of speculation over his future by signing a new two-year contract with Premier League leaders Liverpool yesterday. His previous deal, understood to be worth more than £350,000-a-week, was scheduled to run out in the summer and there had been doubts he would stay with the Reds, who rejected a £150m offer from Saudi Pro League side Al-Ittihad for the 32-year-old in 2023. The Egyptian, who has scored 243 goals and 109 assists in 394 appearances for the Reds since joining from Roma in 2017, will now have the chance to add to his stellar numbers. He has netted 32 goals and 22 assists in all competitions this season; 27 goals and 17 assists have come in the Premier League as Liverpool close in on a record-equalling 20th top-flight title.

PHOTO: LIVERPOOL

## What to WATCH

**T SPORTS**  
IPL  
Lucknow vs Gujarat  
Live from 4:00 pm  
Hyderabad vs Punjab  
Live from 8:00 pm  
**NAGORIK TV**

**PSL**  
Peshawar vs Quetta  
Live from 4:30 pm  
Karachi vs Multan  
Live from 9:00 pm  
**SELECT HD1**  
Premier League

Man City vs Crystal Palace  
Live from 5:30 pm  
Forest vs Everton  
Live from 8:00 pm  
Arsenal vs Brentford  
Live from 10:30 pm

## Don't see my position under threat: Jamal

Jamal Bhuiyan, the most-capped player in Bangladesh's history, is slowly becoming a peripheral figure in the team despite being the captain. He has not made it to the playing XI only three times in his 82-match international career, the latest of which came in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers against India. With Sheffield United's Hamza Choudhury joining the Bangladesh midfield, questions are rising whether the 35-year-old captain's time with the Red and Greens is coming to an end. To know his views on this issue and his overall plans in football, *The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman and Atique Anam* caught up with the Denmark-born midfielder. Following are the excerpts of the interview.

**The Daily Star (DS):** You were the first foreign-based footballer to represent Bangladesh 12 years ago. Now players like Hamza Choudhury are following your footsteps. How proud do you feel when you realise this?

**Jamal Bhuiyan (JB):** Of course, I feel proud that Hamza also came here to represent Bangladesh following my footsteps. Even when Tariq [Kazi] made debut for Bangladesh, I told him that I felt proud for him. Besides, I kept communicating with Tariq because he had a bit of problem in his first season

who doesn't talk much and he is a very quiet person. After coming back to Bangladesh from India, Hamza and his family visited my home in Dhaka and next day he left for England and I went to Denmark.

**DS:** Do you feel, in any way, that your position has come under threat due to Hamza's presence?

**JB:** If you look back, under Javier Cabrera I have never played in the position where Hamza played against India. Instead I played as a right midfielder, or a left midfielder or in

India team that I had seen in the last seven or eight years and we should have won the match.

**DS:** Did the coach or any member of the coaching staff communicate to you before the game that you wouldn't start the match?

**JB:** No. No one communicated with me before the match. After the match, the coach only told me that I was not fielded for the good of the team. That one sentence was all from the coach.

**DS:** You haven't played 90 minutes of football for Bangladesh for some time. Have you had any understanding with the coach regarding how much you want to play?

**JB:** The coach decides what he wants to do, but of course I want to play as much as possible, that is no secret.

**DS:** You missed the first half of the domestic season due to some misunderstanding with Abahani. How did you keep yourself motivated during this time? What was your routine and how did you keep yourself fit?

**JB:** I kept playing in Denmark with a club. To be honest, I leave all other thoughts out of my mind when I play football. So, it was easy for me to concentrate on football. I had regular gym sessions in the morning and practised with football in the afternoon sessions.

**DS:** What are your expectations from the rest of the games in the qualifying campaign in the Asian Cup Qualifiers?

**JB:** Our next two vital matches will be played at home. If we can secure full points, it will be good for us. I hope we can qualify and that is also the aim, the teams in the group are very similar when we talk about



in Bangladesh. Now, Hamza playing for Bangladesh is a positive thing because Hamza is two/three levels above us and I think it is also inspiration for me.

**DS:** How much impact, do you think, has the arrival of Hamza had on the confidence and environment of the team's dressing room?

**JB:** Dressing room has been the same, there is no change because a person can't change another person but the confidence level, what I have seen, has raised to 90 percent from 50 percent.

**DS:** How has been your experience with Hamza so far?

**JB:** Hamza is a very humble person

No. 10 position. However, I have played many times previously in the position Hamza and Mohammad Ridoy are playing now. So, I don't think my position is under threat.

**DS:** You went to Shillong as the captain and faced the media before the game. But it came as a shock to many when they didn't see you in the starting XI or as a substitute. How did you take it?

**JB:** Of course, I was much disappointed because I wanted to play the game as a footballer. I think it is the same feeling for every footballer who doesn't get the opportunity to play a game. So my condition was the same and I was disappointed. I thought it was the worst



## Leo Beenhakker dies aged 82

REUTERS

Former Real Madrid and Netherlands coach Leo Beenhakker has died at the age of 82, the LaLiga club said on Thursday.

The Dutchman coached clubs such as Feyenoord and Ajax Amsterdam as well as the Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago and Poland national teams.



He led Ajax to the Eredivisie title in the 1979-80 and 1989-90 seasons before winning the Dutch top-flight again with Feyenoord in 1998-99.

However, Beenhakker's most successful stint came at Madrid, where he won three LaLiga titles, one Copa del Rey and two Supercopa de Espana trophies.

"Real Madrid, its president and board of directors, are deeply saddened by the death of Leo Beenhakker, the legendary Real Madrid coach who led the Whites between 1986 and 1989, and in 1992," the Spanish side said in a statement.

"Real Madrid would like to express their condolences and affection to his family, clubs, and loved ones.

"Leo Beenhakker has passed away at the age of 82. Real Madrid extends its condolences to all Madridistas. May he rest in peace."

## Tonali, Fagioli suspects in new gambling probe

AFP, Rome

Sandro Tonali and Nicolò Fagioli are again in investigators' crosshairs in a new probe into betting on illegal gambling platforms, Italian news agencies reported on Friday.

ANSA and AGI report that Newcastle United midfielder Tonali and fellow Italy international Fagioli, who plays for Fiorentina, are among a dozen current or former Serie A players suspected of illicit betting activity.

Roma midfielder Leandro Paredes and Angel Di Maria, who played the 2022/23 season with Fagioli at Juventus, are two of the other footballers named by news agencies as suspects in an investigation by prosecutors in Milan.

Current Juve players Weston McKennie and Mattia Perin and Italy internationals Raoul Bellanova and Samuele Ricci are also among those being investigated for poker games and betting on sporting events -- but not on football matches -- on banned gambling platforms.

In a statement released Friday morning, the Milan prosecutor's office announced that it had placed under house arrest "for illegal gambling activities and money laundering" five people who organised and managed the clandestine platforms from a jewelry store in the city.

## SHAMIT SHOME says 'yes' to Bangladesh



SPORTS REPORTER

Canada-based midfielder Shamit Shome has initiated the procedure to play for Bangladesh, Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) vice-president Fahad Karim confirmed on Friday, marking a significant development in BFF's ongoing efforts to attract diaspora talent after roping in Sheffield United midfielder Hamza Choudhury recently.

The 27-year-old, currently a regular for Cavalry FC in the Canadian Premier League, was previously capped twice in friendlies for the Canada senior team in 2020.

Born in Alberta to Bangladeshi parents from Sylhet, Shome has represented Canada at U-20 and U-21 levels and carved out a steady club career after starting professionally with FC Edmonton in 2016.

Despite initial hesitation, Shome has now expressed a clear desire to represent Bangladesh, inspired in part by the recent switch of Hamza -- who had, likewise, played for England's youth team.

"After news came out in local media in the morning, I had texted him to enquire about his desire. He replied to me, saying he is willing to play for Bangladesh," Karim told reporters yesterday afternoon. "We are supposed to have a meeting with over zoom where we will discuss everything."

The development comes two weeks after Shomit had asked for two weeks to decide on the issue on insistence from the BFF.

"He has a Canadian passport, so we are trying to form his Bangladeshi passport. His parents have not renewed their Bangladeshi passport since 1993, so everyone's passport has to be worked on," said Shomit's agent Amit Hassan, adding that the birth certificates of the player and his parents need to be made prior to the passport as well.

"The documents will be forwarded to FIFA afterwards. Hopefully the birth certificate will be finalised by Sunday at the earliest next week.

"Then he will visit the Canadian embassy and if everything works out well, he'll be joining the [Bangladesh] team in June," he informed further.

"If completed in time -- although it appears to be unlikely, given the procedure -- Shome could feature in Bangladesh's AFC Asian Cup qualifying campaign in their key fixture against Singapore in June 10 at National Stadium in Dhaka, providing a significant boost to the midfield ranks," Amit added.



## Amorim backs Onana after Lyon nightmare

AFP, Lyon

Ruben Amorim defended Andre Onana and said mistakes "can happen" after the Manchester United goalkeeper committed a pair of errors in Thursday's 2-2 draw at Lyon in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final.

Onana landed himself in a war of words before the match with Lyon midfielder Nemanja Matic, which prompted the former United player to call the goalkeeper "one of the worst" in the history of the club.

Booted by Lyon supporters each time he touched the ball, Onana made a weak effort to save Thiago Almada's free-kick which gave the hosts the lead.

After goals from Leny Yoro and Joshua Zirkzee turned the game in United's favour, another error from Onana allowed Rayan Cherki to equalise with the last touch of the match.

"It can happen. If you play football, and we play a lot of games, you can make mistakes," said United manager Amorim. "There is nothing I can say to Andre in this moment that will help."

"We have one more game to change everything and that should be our focus," he added.

United remain unbeaten in Europe this season but Amorim admitted the late goal had left his players deflated.

"I felt the dressing room was really quiet and that is a good thing. We draw away in Europe, that is always hard. The team is suffering and we need to change that," he said.

With success in the Europa League their only route into the Champions League next term -- and the financial windfall that comes with it -- United know their season is on the line next week in the second leg.

"I think it's 50-50," said Amorim. "It's a really difficult match but when we play at home with our fans, we play with one more player."

The 19-year-old Yoro, who played for Lyon boss Paulo Fonseca while at Lille, is confident United can get the job done after scoring his first goal for the club.

"We know that matches like these, away from home, if we win it puts us in a really good position for the return at home," he said.

"Unfortunately we conceded that goal at the end so come away with a draw and will do everything to win the second leg."

But Cherki said there was more to come from Lyon as he put United on notice.

"We deserved a lot better. We were better and from the start we felt the fear in them," he said.

"Now we're just waiting for one thing, to go over there to win. When they set up against us with two defensive midfielders, that means they're afraid of us."

**THE BEST QUALITY EVERY TIME GUARANTEED BSRM**

THE NATION'S LARGEST ROD MANUFACTURER

BSRM building a safer nation

Terminal 3, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

Proud Construction Partner

SHAH CEMENT

## PAHELA BAISHAKH Chhayanaut all set for celebrations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chhayanaut is all set to celebrate Bangla New Year, Pahela Baishakh, with its iconic cultural programme at Ramna Batamul in Dhaka.

The revered cultural institution, which has been hosting the event since 1967, will once again greet the rising sun with timeless classical ragas beneath the banyan tree – an enduring symbol of the spirit and resilience of Bangalee cultural identity.

The 58th edition of the traditional Baishakh celebration, however, carries a profound sense of loss.

It will be the first time that the event takes place without Sanjida Khatun, Chhayanaut's co-founder and president, who passed away on March 25. A towering figure in Bangladesh's cultural landscape and a pioneering musicologist, her absence will be deeply felt.

"This year's programme will be dedicated to her memory, honouring her lifelong commitment to music,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



**POLISHING OFF THE PATACHITRA...** Former students from Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts apply the final touches to cloth-based scroll paintings, traditionally known as "Patachitra". The 20-foot-long canvases are adorned with motifs reflecting Bangladesh's rural life, mythology, and folklore. Five such vibrant artworks will be carried overhead as part of the grand procession celebrating the Bangla New Year on Monday. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## REGISTRATION DEADLINE NCP to seek 2-month extension from EC

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

The newly formed National Citizen Party will formally request the Election Commission to extend the registration deadline for political parties by two months, as the party is unlikely to meet the registration requirements by April 20.

NCP has formed a special team to handle registration-related tasks, which will soon engage with the EC. Ariful Islam Adeeb, NCP senior joint convener, told The Daily Star.

The party, which is based on the student-led July uprising, officially launched on February 28. Shortly after, the EC issued a public notice inviting applications from new parties for registration, with a submission deadline of April 20.

Meanwhile, the legitimacy of the EC's public notice has been contested with the High Court by Rastra Sangskar Andolan. Following a preliminary hearing on March 18, the court issued a rule with a stay order, though according to petitioner's lawyer Abeda Gulruk, this applies only to the Rastra Sangskar Andolan and not to other parties.

At least three key NCP leaders told this newspaper that they were working to fulfil all registration requirements, including the establishment of a central office, necessary district and upazila offices, finalising the party charter, and formation of committees, within the next two months.

"A divisional coordination team will soon be formed to take steps for announcing committees," said a central leader, adding that upazila committees were almost ready and district committees required further structuring.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## \$462m of RMG shipped through India in 15 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's garment industry transhipped over 34,900 tonnes of apparel products worth \$462.34 million through India to 36 countries in 15 months.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association shared the data yesterday after India abruptly cancelled the transhipment route for Bangladesh on April 8.

It came amid global concerns over new "reciprocal" tariffs announced by the US, which later paused the levy for three months for Bangladesh, India and other countries, except China.

Bangladesh's exports through India in the 15 months from January 2024 to March 2025 included various clothing items such as blouses, trousers, T-shirts, and baby garments.

The US, European Union nations like Germany and France, and Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea were among the destinations.

The United Arab Emirates, Australia, and Canada were among the top non-EU importers, while South Africa and Chile also featured prominently.

The shipments were routed through India as part of regional trade facilitation. The route, via Kolkata and Delhi airports, had grown popular for air cargo, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

It allowed Bangladesh exporters to move goods overland to India through the Benapole-Petrapole border and then air-ship them worldwide. The route offered faster service and, often, lower costs than relying on the overstretched Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

Industry estimates suggest about 18 percent of Bangladesh's garment air cargo was flown through Indian airports. Bangladesh exported roughly 3,400 tonnes of garments by air per week, with 600 tonnes flown through Indian airports before the transshipment ban, according to data from the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

In FY24, Bangladesh exported \$44.47 billion, with \$36 billion from garments. Of its \$8.4 billion exports to the US in 2024, 90 percent were ready-made garments.

## Medicine critically low due to Gaza aid block

Warns WHO; rescuers say Israeli air strike kills 10, including 7 Palestinian children

AGENCIES

Medicine stocks are critically low due to the aid block in Gaza, making it hard to keep hospitals even partially operational, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

"We are critically low in our three warehouses, on antibiotics, IV fluids and blood bags," WHO official Rik Peeperkorn told reporters in Geneva via video link from Jerusalem.

The United Nations said its analysis of 36 recent Israeli strikes in Gaza showed only women and children were killed and decimated the human cost of the war.

The UN rights office also warned that expanding Israeli evacuation orders were resulting in the "forcible transfer" of people into ever-shrinking spaces in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

Spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani warned the military strikes across Gaza were "leaving nowhere safe".

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defence agency said a pre-dawn Israeli air strike yesterday killed 10 members of the same family, including seven children, in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the attack, adding in a separate statement that it had struck approximately 40 "terror targets" across Gaza over the past day, reports AFP.

Israel resumed intense strikes on the Gaza Strip on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire with Hamas.

Efforts to restore the truce have so far failed.

"Ten people, including seven children, were brought to the hospital as martyrs following an Israeli air strike that targeted the Farra family home in central Khan Yunis,"

Netanyahu yesterday reiterated his pledge to bring back the hostages still held in Gaza in a message marking the Jewish Passover holiday.

His comments came after US President Donald Trump suggested progress in hostage release talks, telling a cabinet meeting on Thursday that "we're getting close to getting them back".

In a video message for Passover – a holiday celebrating the biblical liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt – Netanyahu said "for many families there will be empty chairs".

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people have become internally displaced by the war, with many making daily trips on foot to fill plastic containers with water from the few wells still functioning in remoter areas – and even these do not guarantee clean supplies.

The Palestinian Water Authority stated that most of its wells had been rendered inoperable during the war.

On March 22, a joint statement by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics and the Water Authority said more than 85 percent of water and sanitation facilities and assets in Gaza were completely or partially out of service.

Palestinian and United Nations officials said most of Gaza's desalination plants were either damaged or had stopped operations because of Israel's power and fuel cuts.

- » 36 Israeli strikes in Gaza killed 'only women and children': UN
- » Witnesses report heavy Israeli tank fire in Khan Yunis
- » Trump cites progress on Gaza hostage talks

agency spokesperson Mahmud Bassal told AFP. Witnesses also reported continuous and intensive Israeli tank fire in Khan Yunis.

Medics and rescuers transported the dead and injured to hospital in multiple ambulances, with several bodies wrapped in white shrouds and blankets, AFP footage of the aftermath showed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

## New logo for police finalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Police has finalised its new logo or monogram, replacing its older emblem featuring a sailboat.

The new logo has the national flower shapla (water lily) sitting on water surrounded by wheat and paddy wreath tied with three jute leaves on top.

The word "police" in Bangla is written below the lower joint of the paddy and wheat wreath.

Police headquarters issued an order in this regard on Thursday signed by its Additional Deputy Inspector General (Logistics) Nasima Akhter.

The PHQ has asked all concerned to prepare to use the new logo for flags, signboards, uniforms, and other items in districts and units.

The order said the monogram has already received the approval of the appropriate authorities and was awaiting a gazette notification.

The police monogram was previously revised through a gazette notification issued on February 10, 2004. Later in 2009, a new logo was introduced featuring a sailboat flanked by garlands of wheat and rice stalks. The emblem also included a

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



## Scientists recreate brain's pain circuit in world first

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have recreated the brain circuit responsible for transmitting feelings of pain for the first time.

The breakthrough, made by a team at Stanford University in the US, could help with developing better treatments for pain disorders.

The mapping of pain pathways in a lab dish could also allow experiments and tests to be conducted on nerve circuits without causing pain to laboratory animals.

"We can now model this pathway non-invasively," said Sergiu Pasca, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences at Stanford University, who led the study.

"The [lab-built circuits] don't 'feel' any pain. They transmit nervous signals that need to be further processed by other centres in our brains for us to experience the unpleasant, aversive feeling of pain."

It is the first time that scientists have witnessed waves of electrical activity travel along the entire nervous pathway responsible for sensing pain – from the body's skin to the brain.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**The watermelon harvest is in full swing in the Dakop upazila of Khulna.** These watermelons, known for their sweetness and rich flavour, are highly sought after across the country. Farmers invest around Tk 35,000 to Tk 40,000 and three months of hard labour into cultivating each bigha of watermelon. This season, wholesalers are spending between Tk 70,000 and Tk 1 lakh to acquire a bigha of farmland, which typically yields 600 to 700 watermelons. The photo was taken in the Bajua Khajurtala area yesterday.

## Govt mulling out-of-court settlements Says BB governor on recovering laundered money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

The government is considering out-of-court settlements as an option to recover laundered money from abroad, as the formal legal process is often time-consuming.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur revealed the information during a discussion on "Anti-Money Laundering and Contemporary Banking Issues" at the central bank's Chattogram office yesterday.

"Many countries pursue alternative means beyond formal procedures. The government is willing to consider them if settlements can help expedite the return of funds," the governor said.



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

**BEYOND THE BEACH**

Exploring the wonders around  
**COX'S BAZAR**



Salsa beach.

**MOKAMMEL SHUVO**

**Cox's Bazar is not just about the world's longest sea beach. From its breathtaking Marine Drive to its historic Buddhist temples, wildlife parks, and hidden islands, the region offers a variety of unforgettable experiences.**

For city dwellers yearning for an escape from their mechanical lives,

Cox's Bazar stands as a beacon of natural beauty and serenity. Famous for its sun-kissed beaches and rolling waves, this coastal gem captivates the hearts of travelers.

Yet, beyond the familiar shoreline and bustling markets lies a treasure trove of breathtaking destinations waiting to be explored. As the sun rises over the horizon, casting a golden hue across the expansive sea, visitors flock to the shores, eager to embrace the soothing embrace of the ocean.

Roza Islam, a tourist from Dhaka, couldn't hide her excitement as she gazed at the vastness of the Bay of Bengal. "The moment I stepped onto the beach, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. The sound of the waves and the cool breeze instantly washed away my worries," she says.

The beach stretches endlessly, inviting visitors to sink their toes into the warm sand, while the rhythmic sound of waves crashing against the shore creates a serene soundtrack that calms the soul.

Many travelers limit their Cox's Bazar trip to hotels, restaurants, and the main beach, with stops at the Burmese market, the dried fish market, or aquarium. While these attractions hold their charm, the true essence of Cox's Bazar lies in its hidden gems waiting to be uncovered.

**MARINE DRIVE: A SCENIC COASTAL JOURNEY**

Beyond the beach, Marine Drive emerges as the first name that comes to mind when thinking of

tourist spot, an old and well-known attraction featuring a captivating waterfall and a viewpoint on a hill, providing a unique panoramic view of the sea.

"The view from the top is simply mesmerising," said Ahmed Sharif, a visitor from Chattogram.

Next on the journey is Salsa Beach, known for its crystal-clear blue water and views of the city skyline. Adventure seekers can enjoy parasailing here, adding an exhilarating twist to their beach experience.

"Parasailing at Salsa Beach was the highlight of my trip," says Fahmid Khan, a university student from Dhaka. "The thrill of soaring high above the water, with the wind in my hair and the sun shining down, was unlike anything I've ever experienced."

As travellers continue down

is unparalleled, featuring towering hills on one side and the vast sea on the other.

One of the most famous hills here is Hollywood Hill, which offers a panoramic view of the entire area.

Upon reaching Teknaf, visitors can explore Shah Porir Island Transit Point, as well as the Teknaf Transit Point, which offers stunning views of the Naf River and the hills of Myanmar.

A notable historical site in Teknaf is Mathin's Well, located inside the local police station. It is linked to the tragic love story of a Rakhine zamindar's daughter, Mathin, and a police officer, adding a touch of romance to the region's history.

**HIDDEN ATTRACTIONS NEAR COX'S BAZAR CITY**

While the beach and Marine Drive attract many visitors, Cox's Bazar offers a range of lesser-known

the sandy beaches, showcasing the region's diverse landscape.

**BUDDHIST TEMPLES IN RAMU**  
The Bakkhali river flows through Ramu upazila, shaping its picturesque landscape with hills and water bodies.

Ramu is best known for its Buddhist temples, which attract visitors seeking peace and spirituality. The most famous is the Vipassana Meditation Center, which houses a stunning 100-foot reclining Buddha statue.

Another significant site is the Ushai Ching Rakhine Temple, a wooden temple over a hundred years old. The intricate carvings and peaceful surroundings

preservation.

**SONADIA ISLAND: A HIDDEN GEM**

Off the northwest coast of Cox's Bazar, Sonadia Island is a small but ecologically rich island. This 9-square-kilometre island combines sea and mangrove forests, making it a haven for diverse wildlife, including rare birds, sea turtles, and red crabs.

There is no direct transportation to the island; visitors must rely on tidal schedules and travel via Maheshkhali. Alternatively, private boats or speedboats can be hired directly from Cox's Bazar, though this option can be costly.

A cruise company recently introduced tour packages covering Maheshkhali, Sonadia, and other areas, but these services are not yet regular.



Ramu Boro Kyang.

**MAHESHKHALI AND ADINATH TEMPLE**

Maheshkhali, Bangladesh's only hilly island, is accessible via speedboats or large wooden boats from Cox's Bazar's No. 6 Jetty. The boat ride itself, with waves crashing against the hull, is an exhilarating experience that sets the tone for the adventure ahead.

Most visitors come here to see the Adinath Temple, a revered Hindu pilgrimage site perched on a hill. The temple's historical significance and stunning architecture attract countless visitors each year. The island is also known for its salt production and betel leaf farming, with its betel leaves being highly regarded across the country.

**KUTUBDIA ISLAND: A QUIET RETREAT**

Kutubdia is another offshore island of Cox's Bazar, located beyond Maheshkhali. To reach it, travelers must cross the sea by boat.

The island's main attractions include the wind power center and the lighthouse. Although the wind power centre is now defunct, it remains a notable landmark. Kutubdia's untouched beauty and quiet surroundings offer a peaceful retreat for those looking to explore beyond the usual tourist spots.

Cox's Bazar is not just about the world's longest sea beach. From its breathtaking Marine Drive to its historic Buddhist temples, wildlife parks, and hidden islands, the region offers a variety of unforgettable experiences.

Whether you are looking for adventure, culture, or relaxation, there's much more to explore beyond the usual tourist trail.



Shahporir Dwip jetty on the bank of Naf River in Teknaf.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO



Wind power plant at Chawfaldandi village.

Marine Drive, they arrive at Reju Khal, a scenic spot where tourists can go kayaking.

"The calm waters provide an ideal setting for paddling. It's peaceful and invigorating," says Kausar Ahmed Sojol, who came to Cox's Bazar with his wife Shima Rahman.

One of the highlights of Marine Drive is that every section of the coastline possesses its own unique charm. Another must-visit location is Inani Beach, famous for its stunning coral formations, which give the shoreline a distinctive beauty.

"Inani Beach is absolutely breathtaking," Shima says. "The coral reefs add a touch of magic to the landscape, and I felt like I was in a postcard."

As travelers drive along Marine Drive, they also witness fishermen returning with fresh catches, adding a sense of authenticity to the coastal experience. The beauty of Teknaf's section of Marine Drive

attractions that showcase the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

To the extreme south of the city lies Nazirartek Beach, known for its crystal-clear blue waters. Visitors can spot red crabs and seagulls here, creating a picturesque scene.

This beach is also a hub for fishermen who bring in fresh catches, allowing tourists to witness the traditional drying process of fish. "Seeing the fishermen at work was a highlight of my visit," Roza said. "It felt so genuine and connected to the local culture."

Not far from the city, Chawfaldandi village is home to large wind power mills that contribute to Cox's Bazar's electricity supply. This area has become a unique tourist attraction, offering visitors a chance to see both wind energy production and traditional salt farming. The sight of these windmills against the backdrop of rolling hills is a striking contrast to

create a calming atmosphere for visitors.

Other notable attractions include Ramkut Tirthadham, Rangkut Buddhist Temple, Lamarpara Buddhist Temple, Ramu Scema Vihara, and Ramu Jadi Hills.

**DULAHAZARA SAFARI PARK**

Located in Chakaria Upazila, Dulahazara Safari Park is about a 1.5-hour drive from Cox's Bazar. This expansive wildlife park spans 600 hectares and is home to deer, tigers, lions, bears, gaurs, crocodiles, and many other species. One of its standout features is its dense Gorjun trees, which are characteristic of the local forests.

Visitors can take guided tours through the park, learning about the diverse flora and fauna that call this area home. The park also emphasises conservation efforts, making it an educational experience for those who wish to connect with nature while supporting wildlife



Adinath temple jetty in Maheshkhali.



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

FICTION

# HOME for RENT

**The house boasts many antique pieces of furniture painstakingly curated by the previous owners. The master bedroom with attached bathroom sports a queen-size bed, which replaces the original four-postered one with curtains. The change was made by Mrs X's sister-in-law Tara, who found the Victorian bed to be suffocating.**

SOHANA MANZOOR

**BDT 80,000/3200 ft<sup>2</sup> — Two-storey building built during the late 1970s with three baths, two verandas, and two garages @ Dhanmondi 33 (also known as Lost Property Lane), Dhaka.**

Welcome to this partially furnished two-storeyed house situated in a most coveted and family-oriented area in the city of Dhaka. The house is 46 years old and was built by the father of the current owner of the house who wants to remain anonymous (I'll call her Mrs X) at the moment. She inherited the house after a tragic accident killed her brother and his wife, who were childless. As you can understand, the building has always been a family home and very well kept. The three-bedroom house, two of them on the second floor and one on the ground floor, can be your dream home provided that you treat your son and daughter equally.

The house boasts many antique pieces of furniture painstakingly curated by the previous owners. The master bedroom with attached bathroom sports a queen-size bed, which replaces the original four-postered one with curtains. The change was made by Mrs X's sister-in-law Tara, who found the Victorian bed to be suffocating. But you will find the original wooden side tables, wardrobe, two small wooden chairs, and a small bookcase still intact. An old built-in closet in the room has recently been blocked by Mrs X as it evokes bad memories of her childhood. She was often locked inside it by her mother for playing truant. You would not want to imagine those ugly, dark things when visiting a lovely house as this, would you? The attached bathroom is spacious with a soaking tub of crimson hue and white marble slabs for the floor. It was decorated according to the wishes of Mrs X's mother. She had studied interior design even though she never worked professionally since her husband, whose family claims ties to the Nawab family, did not approve of women working outside the home. The veranda attached to the master bedroom is replete

with hanging plants and pots of English Ivy and Chinese Evergreen. These were favourites of Tara and even though I never met her, I understand that the colorful evergreens reflect her boisterous personality.

The other upstairs bedroom was originally designed to be a boy's bedroom, for a boy who had special interest in music. Two guitars, bass and electric, still hang on the wall. The furniture consists of a twin bed with an upholstered headboard, a reading table, and a chair. While the table in the corner is nondescript, the comfortable chair in front of it is clearly a gaming chair. Mrs X says this was added later because there were no computers when she and her brother were growing up. She also says that their parents would give him anything he desired, probably the reason why the relationship between the siblings was strained. While he played guitars, she cleaned the fridge. The way the parents of Bangladesh discriminate between their sons and daughters, it creates a master-slave dynamic right at home. But what can you expect from a system that allows a girl child to have only half of the property inherited by a boy? The daughters are outsiders from the beginning—to be uprooted from the parents' house to be installed elsewhere. For many it becomes a trauma of homelessness that haunts them for the rest of their lives.

The attached bathroom in this room is smaller than the master bedroom's, but well designed. When Ashraf was a little boy, it had tiles designed like a Ludlo game board, but upon her return from the hostel one summer,

**The last room is the third bedroom that Mrs X inhabited during her time as the daughter of the house. You might be surprised because the room has no furniture whatsoever.**

The kitchen is an elaborate affair. The stove has six burners and was only recently installed by Tara. The place is quite airy with an exhaust fan, a microwave oven, cabinets, a fridge, and a freezer. But Mrs X says that most of these are Tara's doing. During her childhood, the place was much smaller, with little ventilation. Her mother had developed throat problems from spending extended hours in the kitchen.

The last room is the third bedroom that Mrs X inhabited during her time as the daughter of the house. You might be surprised because the room has no furniture whatsoever. Mrs X says that the furniture in her room were the old unwanted things. There were either too plain or too gaudy—a cot that originally belonged to her grandmother, a wardrobe from her mother's maiden days, and such like. Mrs X's parents were not interested in spending money on their daughter's room because they would have to give her new furniture when she got married. She also said, "I was disinherited by my own parents because I failed to live with their chosen groom." After a pause, she continued, "I think they were happy that they did not have to divide their property. But look at the way fate worked—the house ended up in my hands." I can understand why Mrs X feels no connection with the house she has inherited. It was never hers to begin with.

A double garage is right outside the main house beside the flower garden where bougainvillea and hydrangeas grow alongside red and pink roses. These are also changes made by Tara. Mrs X's father only allowed sweet-smelling white flowers like jasmine and night queens in the garden. Mrs X laughed and said that he believed women were like flowers—you can smell and enjoy them, but it is better to hide them from strangers. She says wistfully that she never really got to know Tara well. Her brother had married her against the wishes of his parents who were scandalised when their son chose to marry a Hindu girl. Eventually, they came round and accepted her, but they never forgave the daughter who finally found another life by marrying a man of a different culture and religion.

Notes to applicants: The rent is less than half of the regular house rent in the area. But the prospective tenant must fulfill the following:

Security Deposit: A full month's rent which will be adjusted at the end of the lease.

Lease term: June 1, 2025 – May 31, 2027.

Pets are encouraged as Mrs X was never allowed to have one as a child.

Prospective tenants with daughters will get preference.

In case the prospective tenant has a son, at least two reference letters are required vouching for equal treatment of gender in the family.

Tenant responsible for Internet, electricity, and gas bills.

**If you would like to view:**

Please EMAIL to the address below to schedule viewings (no calls or texts). Also please send some details about yourself. The owner of the house would definitely like to know more about the prospective tenant of her house.

homelessgirl@gmail.com

*Sohana Manzoor is a writer, translator and academic from Bangladesh, with a PhD in English from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Her work has appeared in Bellingham Review, Litro, Eclectica, SUSPECT, Best Asian Short Stories 2020 and elsewhere.*

POETRY

## DELILA'S QUEST

(20 October 2014)

TIASHA IDRAK

Li'l Del is walking all alone  
Li'l Del wants to find her way home.  
She walks across the desolate streets and plaza,  
She's staggering along the broken boulevards of Gaza.  
How strange fate is! So fickle, so absurd!  
For Delila's morning was so ordinary, so undisturbed!  
A kunafe from mama, a kiss from yaba (papa),  
Then she went to school, our child from Gaza.  
So she walked, her dress brand new,  
Dancing in the wind, blue in hue,  
Tied with blue ribbons, her brown hair,  
Her brother's touch, filled with care.  
So she reached her school, played with her friend,  
Who knew that it was near the end?  
As she was learning poems, math, riddles of science to crack,  
Boom! Boom!  
All on a sudden, her world went black.  
As she woke up amidst dust and rubble,  
She saw something unseen before,  
Her school, playground, teachers and friends,  
There was nothing left there anymore,  
Delila is now walking all alone,  
She wants to find her way home.  
Her tattered dress, now caked with dust,  
Her bare feet now drenched in blood.  
She is now walking on the path where angels don't tread,  
Delila is now walking in the city of the dead.  
As she looks at the blood stained sky, does she know?  
That Death is watching hell reign down below!  
Delila is staggering all alone,  
Her tears have dried on their own.  
Look, how cruel the world is!  
Where tyranny reigns and justice weeps!  
A statistics, that's what she is,  
A pawn in a game,  
Stripped off her rights, freedom, her name!  
She stares at the messengers of death above,  
Soaring furiously, devoid of mercy or love!  
Delila walks in the city of the dead,  
Humanity has Albatross around its neck!  
So she walks among corpses,  
Oh how it reeks!  
Tired, numb and limp,  
She still seeks!  
Humiliated cross of Jesus, broken domes,  
She saw it all, but she didn't find home.  
The tree near her home, she sees it finally!  
At last she's going to be reunited with her family!  
Another corner, just a little more...  
She'll see her mom near the door...  
But wait, stop... Where is her house?  
Fear crept as the question roused.  
No.. No.. Something is horribly wrong—  
Reality hits after the search for so long.  
For there is no house, only rubble,  
As death smirks, bursting her bubble.  
Her eyes averts to the now crimson stained, her brother's ball,  
Its owner is now unable to hear her tired calls.  
Grasping it tightly, now she wails,  
For all her search has now failed!  
Dead, gone, her family is gone!  
This time she truly is all alone!  
As tears streamed down, did she notice?  
"They" have found another target to practice?  
As she looks at the scarlet sky, now she knows  
That death is watching hell reign down below.

*Tiasha Idrak is drowning in a swamp of her own thoughts at the moment. She writes and daydreams, the latter is more applicable most of the time.*



PHOTO: REUTERS | HATEM KHALED

**Khero Khata**

Khero Khata is Star Books and Literature's writing corner, where we post prompts soliciting submissions in the form of flash fiction and poetry. Selected pieces will be published in print and/or online.

**This month's prompt:**  
**Suspension**

Email us your submissions (500 words) at  
dsliteditor@gmail.com by  
April 26, 2025.



PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**“My journey began with English songs, and I still also compose in English. Last year, I released *Spicy*, which was in English. Ironically, the Bengali part—‘Sona Bondhu Tui Amare’—went viral!”**

SHARMIN JOYA

This Eid, Xelifer Rahman surprised fans not just with new music, but also with her return to acting. After her debut in Mostofa Sarwar Farooki’s *Monogamy*, she appeared in the highly anticipated web-series *Myself Allen Swapan 2*, directed by Shihab Shaheen. She not only shared the screen with Nasir Uddin Khan but also lent her voice to the series with the track *Boyam Pakhi 2.0*. Simultaneously, her song *Niye Jabe Ki* from the film *Daagi* added to the festive lineup.

**How did you find yourself joining the cast of ‘Myself Allen Swapan 2’?**

It all started when Shihab *bhai* and I had a meeting for the song in *Daagi*. During our conversation, he mentioned that he was considering me for a role in his upcoming web series. At that point, I didn’t know which role I would play or what the project was about. But once I learned more, it was hard to say no. Shihab Shaheen is known for his craft, and *Myself Allen Swapan* already has a massive fan base. I also wanted to take on roles that would help shape my acting career. That’s one of the core reasons I joined the team.

**How was your experience sharing the screen with Nasir Uddin Khan?**

I had previously worked with Nasir *bhai* on *No Dorai*, where I was the executive producer. Back then, he wasn’t as popular as he is now, and OTTs weren’t popular in Bangladesh. He has this rare quality—wherever he goes, he stands out. Working with him as a co-actor

was inspiring, and I was particularly moved when he said that we would both “give it our all, together” during our scenes.

**Tell us about your song ‘Niye Jabe Ki’ from ‘Daagi’.**

Many people think I’m only a vocalist—mostly because I’m a woman—and they often overlook the fact that I compose as well. It is something that triggers me. In most cases, whenever you hear me sing a song, it’s likely one I’ve composed myself.

When I was speaking to Shihab *bhai*, I told him the same thing, and said I’d like him to use a song composed by me. What touched me most was that during the shoot, the cast and crew would listen to the demo of my composition. Later, I co-wrote the lyrics with Badhon, based on the plot of the film, and completed the track.

Though people know me more for *Jhumka*, I want to do more melodious songs—this genre has been close to my heart since childhood. The song was released with the film’s theatrical debut, and now that it’s out on all platforms, people have been searching for it. That is incredibly fulfilling for me.

**You not only voiced but appeared in the song ‘Boyam Pakhi 2.0’. What was the experience like?**

The previous version was already popular, but it had only the male perspective. Now, with my voice added, it includes a female gaze, which I think adds depth and relatability—especially for female listeners. That’s what makes it

beautiful. Also, my voice and appearance added an extra strength to it, I believe!

**You started your career with English songs and became popular for your covers. Any plans to return to English releases?**

Absolutely. My journey began with English songs, and I also compose in English. Last year, I released *Spicy*, which was in English, though, ironically, the Bengali part—“Sona Bondhu Tui Amare”—went viral! (laughs)

This year, most of my releases will be in Bangla, but I plan to keep nurturing my English catalog as well. I’m also thinking of converting some of the Bengali songs that the audience loves, into English versions.

**This Eid-ul-Fitr saw several film songs become popular. Aside from your own, which ones stood out to you?**

Definitely *Chand Mamaby* Pritom Hasan from the film *Borbaad*. I also really liked *Ektukhaani Mon* by Tahsan Khan and Masha from *Daagi*. I’m happy that all five films released during Eid had a good response. If we keep up this momentum, our industry will continue to grow—and that includes the music scene as well.

**Since your acting debut, your appearance has changed dramatically. Do you miss your previous look?**

Honestly, no. I carried that look for a long time. I can always go back to it if I want, but right now, I’m enjoying the change. Since I’m acting alongside making music, I don’t want to be tied to one look.

**OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA**



**Noboborsho Concert**  
April 13 | 2pm onwards  
Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka University



**Chhayanaut Borshoboron**  
April 14 | 7am onwards  
Ramna Batamul



**Play: ‘12 Angry Men’**  
April 17 | 7pm-8:30pm  
Experimental Theatre Hall,  
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

**STYLE STATEMENT**  
**ADRIEN BRODY**

Oscar-winning actor Adrien Brody, who captivated audiences with his performance in *Brutalist*, recently fronted J Crew’s Spring 2025 menswear campaign after becoming the new face of the brand.

Clad in a rich navy sweater paired with coordinating sleek trousers, Brody exudes understated elegance—his minimalist ensemble enhanced by sharp tailoring and natural charisma.

J Crew handpicked the versatile actor to showcase one of their spring styles, hailed for its crisp structure and effortless appeal.

**TRENDY STREAMS**

<p><b>HBO Max</b> The Last Of Us</p>	<p><b>Hulu</b> The Handmaid’s Tale</p>	<p><b>Bongo</b> How Sweet</p>	<p><b>Hoichoi</b> Jimmi</p>	<p><b>Chorki</b> Myself Allen Swapan 2</p>
--	--	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------	--

**1-MINUTE REVIEW**

**‘THE MEHTA BOYS’**  
Exploring the unspoken bonds of family

In his directorial debut, *The Mehta Boys*, actor-turned-director Boman Irani offers a heartfelt portrayal of an urban Indian family, exploring the timeless father-son dynamic.

Along with co-writer Alexander Dinelaris, Irani skillfully navigates a fractured relationship, leaving a lasting emotional impact. The film is rich in detail, filled with sadness, and offers a thoughtful dialogue between two generations without being preachy.

The premise is around Amay (played by Avinash Tiwary), a young architect, who returns home after his mother’s sudden death to find his father, Shiv (Boman Irani), emotionally withdrawn. Despite their shared grief, they

remain distant. In a revealing moment, Shiv questions Amay’s architectural knowledge, making Amay feel belittled and dismissive of his father’s outdated views, unaware that he himself is still a work in progress—a dynamic that is profoundly represented.



The production design, camera work, and score enhance the film’s atmosphere. Motifs like the sound of a car and Holi’s vibrant colors transform the ordinary into magic. Symbolic elements, such as the red sari and white veni, represent grief and memories, while the film contrasts modern Indian architecture with father-son dynamics.

**WHAT’S PLAYING**

**‘Azizam’**  
by Ed Sheeran



Ed Sheeran’s *Azizam* is a radiant blend of global pop and Persian musical heritage, released in celebration of Nowruz—the Persian New Year.

Produced by Stockholm-based Ilya Salmanzadeh, the track draws heavily on Iranian instrumentation, incorporating the sounds of the *daf* and *santur* into a bright, danceable hook. It moreover features backing vocals from legendary Iranian pop stars Arash and Andy.

*Azizam* stands out for its vibrant arrangement—mixing traditional Persian rhythms with polished Western pop production. Its chorus, driven by layered percussion and a soaring melody, is both infectious and nostalgic, echoing the communal joy of Nowruz celebrations.

The music video, which quickly garnered over 8 million views within two days, is a colourful and visually rich tribute to Iranian culture. Filled with symbolic imagery, traditional dance, and family gatherings, the video amplifies the track’s celebratory tone while offering a global stage for Persian identity.

From wedding halls to festival playlists, *Azizam* is poised to become a cross-cultural anthem.



PHOTOS: RAJIB RATHAN, PRABIR DAS

# From lost playgrounds to BOOMING BUSINESS

**Md Sazzadul Alam, owner of Eco Sports, said there is almost no public playground in Chattogram, although the number of people is rising. So, he realised that there was a demand for playgrounds. His venture, located in Chattogram's Halishahar area, opened in May 2024.**

AHSAN HABIB

In the memories of those who grew up before the turn of the millennium, the playground was a second home. Schoolyards echoed with the shouts of children chasing footballs, cricket balls flew through the air, and makeshift badminton nets stretched between trees.

Evenings ended only when the sun dipped below the horizon, often followed by a scolding from parents for returning home late, grass stained and breathless.

But today, the fields are silent. The children of the 21st century are scolded for the opposite reason – for staying indoors, eyes glued to screens, fingers swiping across smartphones.

Yet, the blame does not lie solely with them. The playgrounds of their parents' youth have vanished, swallowed by concrete, shopping malls, and apartment blocks.

The few remaining open spaces are either locked away or too crowded to accommodate a proper game.

Dhaka and even Chattogram – cities once dotted with open fields – now suffocate under the weight of urbanisation. The guardians of today's youth lament the lack of space, the absence of a place where their children can run freely.

The problem is not laziness; it is scarcity.

**THE RISE OF FUTSAL: A BUSINESS BORN FROM NECESSITY**

But where there is a void, entrepreneurs see opportunity.

In the 2000s, a new trend emerged in Bangladesh's urban centres – futsal, a scaled-down, faster version of football, played on smaller, artificial turfs.

Unlike traditional football, which

Jahangirnagar University, he used to play every day.

But when he moved to Dhaka for work, his playing days seemed to be over. But he soon came to know of the turf fields and latched on, chasing memories of his childhood.

"Playing gives me fresh recreation, which I cannot get in any other way. As there is no open space or public playground, I managed some of my

in May 2024.

Almost 80 percent of his clients are those working for corporates, who do their job in the day and seek a ground for recreation at night.

"Previously, our ground was booked for three to four games a day and seven to eight on Fridays. Now, six to seven groups play every day on the ground. Now, it has two grounds. Sometimes, educational institutions also book the

Futsal is more than just a business – it's now reshaping urban sports culture.

Leagues and tournaments are sprouting across Dhaka and Chattogram, giving amateur players a taste of competition. Some facilities even provide referees, locker rooms, and spectator seating, turning a casual game into an event.

For many, it's a social escape. "You meet people from all walks of life here,"

could use some quality time after their usual campus hours or workday, the idea of establishing a sports complex came to mind. My partners have been immensely helpful in making this entrepreneurial dream a reality as well," Md Nayeb Mahmood, the owner, says.

Costing around Tk 3.5 crore, the 21,000-square-foot complex rose steadily in Tejgaon's heart, its two football turfs and cricket pitch taking shape behind MH Samorita Hospital.

Soon, the parking lot overflowed with cars as professionals rushed from work and middle-aged businessmen dusted off their cleats. The founder smiled watching strangers become teammates over shared victories and defeats.

His usuals are mostly corporate employees, students and young professionals. "But we are seeing a surge of individual entrepreneurs, business people and older professionals come along and maintain an active lifestyle through sports activities here with their friends and community members."

He also shed light on other similar venues, saying: "In Dhaka, aside from futsal courts, there are several privately owned sports grounds offering facilities for football, cricket, and other sports. However, the number of these private grounds is relatively low compared to the demand. In the urban landscape of Dhaka, where land is limited, the availability of privately owned sports grounds is scarce, making futsal a popular and practical option for sports enthusiasts."

**THE COST OF PLAYING**

Yet, the industry faces hurdles.

Despite its rising popularity, high rental costs for land, limited government support, and maintenance expenses for artificial turfs pose challenges.

Additionally, accessibility remains a concern, as most futsal fields are concentrated in affluent areas, making it difficult for underprivileged communities to participate.

Moreover, land is expensive, and rental costs eat into profits. Maintenance is relentless – rain damages the turf, and electricity bills for night games add up.

Management is also a big thing if any dispute happens among players. So, management needs to be strong, and there should be CCTVs, Alam said.

Despite the obstacles, the trend shows no signs of slowing. Online platforms like Khelboko and Turf Booking allow users to reserve slots weeks in advance. Some even help form teams for those short on players.

As the sun sets over Dhaka, the floodlights of rooftop turfs flicker to life. The sound of sneakers scraping against artificial grass, the shouts of players, the occasional cheer – it's not the same as the open fields of the past, but it's something.

And through each of these vibrant green courts, those who once went to sleep only to wake up to a grim reality may have just started dreaming again.



requires vast open fields, futsal could be squeezed into rooftops, vacant lots, and repurposed buildings.

Rezaul Islam, a corporate employee in his early 30s, remembers playing football every evening in his village in Cumilla. It was a common practice to play either football or cricket every day. Even when he got admission to

colleagues who also love to play futsal in the private playgrounds."

"We play in the evening as it is very tough to play under a sunny hot period in a day," he added.

**THE ECONOMICS OF ARTIFICIAL GRASS**

The business model is simple: find underutilised space, lay down artificial turf, install floodlights, and charge based on time.

Operators charge 90-minute rates, typically ranging between Tk 1,500 and Tk 10,000 per session, depending on the location, amenities and booking time.

The rate is high during peak hours, from 5 PM to 10 PM, while it is lower in the daylight hours, considered off-peak.

As demand soars in the evening, the rate is higher in this period. On the other hand, this period includes electricity bills too.

Md Sazzadul Alam, owner of Eco Sports, said there is almost no public playground in Chattogram, although the number of people is rising. So, he realised that there was a demand for playgrounds. His venture, located in Chattogram's Halishahar area, opened

grounds for their students," Alam said.

The initial investment depends on the land's situation, advance money, overall structure, and turf quality. Based on turf quality, the costs differ.

If the land situation is such that it does not much work, then a turf may cost around Tk 50 lakh. Every two to three years, the turf needs to be changed, so it needs reinvestment.

In Chattogram, most such facilities have two fields, meaning the investment amounts to around Tk 35 crore.

Alam said his project was built on low land, so he had to pay around Tk 15 lakh in advance to the owner of the land. After that, he had to spend around Tk 1.2 crore to prepare two fields along with washrooms and a restaurant.

In Dhaka alone, there are over 20 commercial turfs.

The Bashundhara area is home to futsal courts like Offside, JAFF, and The Stadium, which buzz with activity from 5 pm to midnight.

Most have seating arrangements for visitors. So, friends and family can enjoy the games, making it an ideal choice for a memorable outing.

**A NEW SPORTING CULTURE**

says Rifat Ahmed, a regular at a Tejgaon futsal court. "Bankers, students, even small business owners – everyone just wants to play."

The passion for football in Bangladesh has always been undeniable. When Argentina's football federation thanked Bangladeshi fans for their World Cup support last year, it was a reminder of how deeply the sport runs in the country's veins.

Futsal, in many ways, is the urban answer to that love – a compromise between space constraints and the undying need to play.

**THE TALE OF TURF NATION**

On a humid June morning in 2024, construction crews broke ground on what would become one of Dhaka's most vibrant sports hubs. As the founder watched the first turf being laid, he recalled childhood days playing cricket in cramped alleyways – the spark that ignited his vision for Turf Nation.

"I am a sports enthusiast myself, and I have been a fan of cricket for as long as I can remember since childhood. I also had an entrepreneurial mindset early on. So, when I saw a market opportunity and realised that people