



"Everyone knows it is Russia alone that wants this war... showing its scorn for human life, international law and diplomatic efforts made by President Trump."

French President Emmanuel Macron on Ukraine war

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SECOND EDITION



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Toxic smoke  
damages crops  
in Chattogram

P3



Israeli missiles  
strike Gaza  
hospital

P7



The law is blind,  
but so are the  
people

P8



A confluence  
of nature and  
culture

P9

## 33% hike in gas tariff for new industries

Businesses, consumer rights groups slam the move

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government has set new gas tariffs for the industrial sector, hiking the price by 33 percent for new units, despite objections from businesses and consumer rights organisations.

According to the new rates announced by the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), upcoming industries must pay at this new rate, while the existing units that use more than their sanctioned load will have to pay at the new rate for the excess consumption.

On the other hand, plants that got primary approval for connections but have yet to start their operation will have to pay 50 percent of their bills at the existing rate and the rest of their sanctioned load at the new rate.

The latest rates mean new industrial connections will be charged Tk 40 per cubic metre, up from Tk 30.

Similarly, new captive users will have to pay Tk 42 per cubic metre, up from Tk 31.5. Captive gas consumers

### GAS PRICE SHOCK FOR INDUSTRIES

GAS PRICE TK/PER CUBIC METRE	EXISTING RATE	NEW RATE
Industries	30	40
Captive	31.5	42

- ⌚ New rate for new connections
- ⌚ Existing connections to be charged existing rate for sanctioned load
- ⌚ Existing rate to be charged for half the sanctioned load for approved connections

are entities that have their own gas-powered plants to produce electricity primarily for their own use.

The gas distributor companies had proposed that the tariff for new industries be raised by more than 150 percent, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said while announcing the new rates.

"But it would be tough [for them] to bear at the moment," he said, adding that the new prices were set after getting inputs from all stakeholders.

The BERC held a public hearing on February 26 on the proposal from the distributors to set gas prices for the new industries based on the actual cost of LNG imports.

Most of the stakeholders, including businesses and consumer rights bodies, opposed the proposal, saying it was illogical.

The Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) staged a human chain against the proposed hike, arguing that raising gas prices would stifle new investment, hinder job creation, disrupt exports and severely impact the economy.

Bangladesh has ample gas reserves, but the authorities have never taken the initiative to drill new wells, said Shawkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, one of the largest industrial gas consumers.

"Instead, they have become dependent on LNG imports,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## MAGURA RAPE Main accused charged with murder

STAR REPORT

A month after the death of the eight-year-old girl, who was brutally raped while visiting her sister's in-laws in Magura, police have pressed murder charges against the main accused.

The horrifying crime sent shockwaves across the nation, with many demanding that the government expedite justice for rape victims and reform laws related to the safety of women and children.

The charge sheet, which accused three others of concealing information and intimidation, came a month after her death at Dhaka's Combined Military Hospital (CMH), where she lost a week-long battle for her life.

"We have submitted the charge sheet to Magura Judicial Magistrate Court pressing charges against four persons," Inspector (investigation) of Magura

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



RACING AGAINST THE STORM... Farmers in Khulna are working tirelessly to harvest their ripe Boro paddy as fast as possible, worried they might get damaged by the nor'wester storms common during the Bangla month of Baishakh. The photo was taken from Pashchim Bilpabla area in Dumuria upazila. Related story on page 5.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

LAST-MINUTE PREP... Dhaka University's former fine arts students yesterday put the final strokes on traditional cloth-based scroll paintings known as "Patachitra". These artworks portray motifs inspired by Bangladesh's rural life, history, mythology, and folklore. Five of these expansive 20-foot artworks will be carried overhead as part of today's grand procession

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS Most parties want changes in basic principles, preamble

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Perceived to be an embodiment of the July uprising, the interim government was empowered with an overwhelming mandate for reforms. There is a firm expectation that this government would help bring about a state befitting the aspirations of millions who had taken to the streets in July. As such, constitutional reforms have become the centrepiece of the incumbent's efforts. Prior to the Consensus Commission's meetings, political parties came up with their proposals for constitutional reforms.

BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and 14 other political parties and platforms sought changes to the basic principles of the constitution. Of them, 15 called for revisions to the preamble, and 11 advocated for changes to both the basic principles and the preamble.

According to the proposals to the Constitution Reform Commission, the 16 parties and platforms that sought changes to the basic principles include BNP, Jamaat,

Jamaat-e-Islami and 14 other political parties and platforms sought changes to the basic principles of the constitution. Of them, 15 called for revisions to the preamble, and 11 advocated for changes to both the basic principles and the preamble.

Islam Andolan Bangladesh, Gono Odhikar Parishad (ex-Ducsu VP Nur faction), Bhashani Anusari Parishad, Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM), 12-party alliance, Khelafat Majlis, Ganosamhati Andolon, AB Party, Bangladesher Samantantri Dal, Jatiya Nagorik Committee, and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

Fifteen parties that sought changes to the preamble are BNP, Jamaat, Rastro Sangskar Andolon, Bangladesh Jashod, Labour Party, 12-party alliance, Ganosamhati Andolon, CPB, Jatiya Nagorik Committee, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlis, AB Party, Jatiya Gano Front, NDM, and Bangladesh Kalyan party.

**PROPOSALS ON PREAMBLE**  
BNP wants to keep "Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-Ar-Rahim" along with the Bangla text.

The party wants the preamble to read how it was prior to the 15th amendment, which was: "We, the people of Bangladesh, having proclaimed our independence on the 26th day of March 1971 and through [a historic war for national independence], established the independent, sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh..."

The 15th amendment changed this sentence to read "national liberation" instead of "national independence" in brackets, which had been introduced to the preamble through the fifth

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## MEGHNA ALAM'S DETENTION

Due process was not followed

Says law adviser; HC asks why her detention shouldn't be declared illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of public outrage, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday said the way model Meghna Alam was detained was not right.

The High Court also questioned the legality of Meghna's 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act.

On Saturday, the chief of the DMP's Detective Branch, which detained her from her home, was removed from his post.

These developments come as legal experts and rights groups raise concerns over the way she was picked up and how a late-night court hearing was held more than 24 hours after her detention.

They also term the Special Powers Act a draconian legislation and call for its abolition.

"There are some allegations against Meghna; but the process involving her arrest was not right," Prof Asif told a press briefing at the Secretariat.

"Her detention was approved by the home ministry. A meeting of senior government officials was held in this

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Power prices not going up anytime soon

Finance ministry informs visiting IMF mission

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The subsidy allocation for the power sector is not going down anytime soon as the interim government does not plan to increase electricity prices on inflationary fears.

The disclosure was made during a meeting between the finance ministry and the visiting mission of the International Monetary Fund. The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the discussion.

The IMF mission arrived in Dhaka on April 6 on a 12-day visit to review Bangladesh's progress against various conditions before releasing the fourth and fifth tranches of the \$4.7 billion loan.

A final meeting on this -- involving the finance ministry and the Bangladesh Bank -- will take place tomorrow.

The IMF has been concerned about Bangladesh's increasing subsidy allocation for the power sector for long as they deem it to be an inequitable distribution of scarce state resources.

Over the past few days, the visiting mission held discussions with several relevant ministries and departments to learn whether the government would increase electricity prices and whether it would allocate more funds for power sector subsidy.

This fiscal year, Tk 40,000 crore has been allocated as power sector subsidy, which was later revised upwards to Tk 62,000 crore, including arrears.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



**MY DHAKA**

# New year, new festivals

## Dhaka celebrates Pahela Baishakh

RRB

Dhaka is in a festive mood today, dressed in colours so vibrant that even in this blistering Chaitra-Baishakh heat you feel a sense of joy around you. City dwellers are out and about, attending various programmes organised to usher in the Bangla new year.

"Rishka Festival", taking place at Aloki in Tejgaon, is a space where tradition meets creativity. It deserves a mandatory visit today unless you have already been there.

The event has that classic Baishakhi mela feel. It began last Friday, April 11, and ends today, April 14. Rishka Festival is a one-of-a-kind celebration of Bangladeshi heritage, empowering local artists and taking Bengal's rich culture to the global stage.

The organisers planned each



PHOTO: STAR

with young creators. Their sharp and different perception of tradition and local heritage lined with global exposure makes their crafts interesting. We all know how a Ghazi pot painting is usually painted on thick cloth, but bringing it in screen print on a 'gamcha' is unique. The red and blue colours of the 'potchitra' are used on two-dimensional characteristics portraits against the checkered background of a 'gamcha' making it a modern collectible," says Shahida Rahman, a schoolteacher, who loves artsy crafts.

Visitors can access all the available activities using the "All-Access Pass".

Interestingly, there were a lot of activities planned for each day, like Rishka concerts, movie screenings, workshops like Ikebana making and mask painting, and evocative theatre performances.

Classics like "Pather Panchali" and

"Matir Moyna" were already screened, but the iconic "Beder Meye Josna" will be shown today on the big screen around 3:00pm. The event's grand finale will feature a soulful acoustic performance by Firoze Jong.

Fairs like this are fun to visit on any day, but particularly during Pahela Baishakh.

Rishka Festival 2025 celebrates Pahela Baishakh in all its colours and experiences, filled with music, art, food, and everything that makes an event memorable – filled with joy, tradition, and unforgettable memories.

However, this is not the only festival of note happening today. We also have a colourful, lively, and unique Baishakhi Mela and Nogor Uthshob 1432, under the initiative of Dhaka North City Corporation, organised by Gulshan Society at Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in Gulshan 2.

Aptly titled "Oligoli Halkhata", it is a three-day event, from April 13 to 15. The event is a cultural exchange organised by Dhaka North City Corporation in partnership with Catch Bangladesh Limited, supported by various sponsors and cultural organisations.

The event is full of activities like "Alpana" (traditional painting) and crafting clay toys for children. For shopping, there will be stalls featuring traditional handicrafts, ethnic attires, pitha puli, rural products, books, and much more.

Cultural performances of folk music and vibrant Baishakhi performances, along with a book launch on Dhaka's heritage and history will keep visitors busy. Besides there will also be food stalls and other fun activities.

The festival is open to all, ensuring a joyous Baishakhi experience for people of all ages.



activity to highlight the rich Bangla cultural essence and the timelessness of our heritage through the eyes of contemporary creators. They also told stories and evoked enchanting emotions and an experience that'll leave you astounded and happy to see how the new crop of creative minds are taking these age-old charms forward.

"I just visit these fairs to interact

with young creators. Their sharp and different perception of tradition and local heritage lined with global exposure makes their crafts interesting. We all know how a Ghazi pot painting is usually painted on thick cloth, but bringing it in screen print on a 'gamcha' is unique. The red and blue colours of the 'potchitra' are used on two-dimensional characteristics portraits against the checkered background of a 'gamcha' making it a modern collectible," says Shahida Rahman, a schoolteacher, who loves artsy crafts.

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## Power prices not going up anytime soon

FROM PAGE 1

However, the finance ministry informed the IMF team that the power sector's total expenditure could be trimmed by as much as Tk 11,000 crore by reducing the production costs.

So, about Tk 36,000 crore would be allocated as power subsidy in the next fiscal year's budget.

Besides, inflation has been on a declining trend, so the government is unwilling to take any measure that could reverse the trend.

Inflation dropped for three consecutive months before slightly picking up in March to 9.35 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The state of inflation, which has continued to stay above 9 percent for years, would inform whether the government will hike electricity

prices in the next fiscal year.

However, the government has been planning to increase subsidy allocation for LNG imports as it will increase the use of LNG for electricity production. The revised allocation for the overhead is about Tk 8,000 crore, up from Tk 6,000 crore in the original budget.

In the next fiscal year, about Tk 7,000 crore could be set aside as subsidy for LNG imports.

Alongside the power sector subsidy, the IMF mission also placed importance on the progress made in ramping up revenue collection, implementing market-based exchange rate, and keeping budget deficit low by lowering the budget size.

The IMF mission has stipulated raising the tax revenue-GDP ratio to 9 percent next fiscal year and 7.9

percent this fiscal year. Last fiscal year, the ratio was 7.4 percent.

The finance ministry though maintains the targets are ambitious and sought concessions from the IMF.

The issues will be discussed during tomorrow's meeting, officials said. Besides, further discussions would be held on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meeting in Washington DC later this month. Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed is expected to attend the meeting.

The IMF mission has also recommended going for a full market-based exchange rate, which the central bank has been resistant to given the precarious state of the country's foreign exchange reserves.

As of April 10, gross foreign reserves stood at \$20.9 billion, enough to meet about a little over three months of import bills.

### Main accused

FROM PAGE 1

Sadar Police Station Md Alauddin, also the case's investigation officer, told The Daily Star.

The prime accused, Hitu Sheikh, father-in-law of the victim's sister, has been charged with rape and murder. The other three – Hitu's wife Jaheda Begum, his son and victim's brother-in-law Sajib Sheikh, and Sajib's brother Ratul Sheikh – have been charged with destruction of evidence of the crime and intimidation, he added.

Contacted, Superintendent of Police Mina Mahmuda said the charge sheet was submitted to the court at 9:10pm.

Police said they had already received the DNA and autopsy reports of the victim.

"The DNA samples collected from the victim's body match with the prime accused, Hitu Sheikh," said Md Aiyub Ali, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station.

Earlier yesterday, speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said the charge sheet would be submitted "by the end of the day" and expressed hope that the trial would be completed within 90 days.

"It's unbelievable and tragic that the BERC took the side of corrupt businesses [gas distributors] whereas they are mandated to create a level playing field and transparency."

With the hiked tariffs, BERC protected the "predatory pricing tendencies of the distributor companies", said Shamsul.

The distributor companies are set to earn another Tk 1,100 crore thanks to the new tariffs, he added.

FDI inflows dropped by 71 percent year-on-year, falling to \$104.33

## Due process was not followed

FROM PAGE 1

regard. We are aware of the comments by various human rights activists. The police are currently investigating the matter."

Meghna, the winner of Miss Earth Bangladesh 2020, was picked up by police from her flat in the capital's Bashundhara on Wednesday evening. Law enforcers produced her before a Dhaka court around 10:30pm the next day, and the court ordered that she be detained for 30 days. Meghna was sent to Kashimpur jail by a Dhaka court.

Asked whether the Special Powers Act should be abolished, Asif the adviser said, "There should be no repressive laws.... However, there are political considerations.... Suppose we do away with the Special Powers Act. Then a political government assumes power and does away with our decision. Wouldn't that be pointless?"

Police on Friday said Meghna was arrested on charges of spreading lies about an important individual to deteriorate relations between countries. It was later known that the individual in question was a diplomat of Saudi Arabia.

When a reporter asked Prof Asif whether the issue could affect recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in the Middle Eastern country, he said the labour market in Saudi Arabia was of crucial importance.

"When I was an activist, I used to think, 'Why are they applying the Digital Security Act or the Special Powers Act?' Now that I am in the government, should I not consider the interests of the expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia? Should I not worry about whether that market can shrink for some reason?"

The statement added that she had harmed national security and was involved in a conspiracy to damage the economy.

### HC ISSUES RULE

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain in two weeks why Meghna's detention should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench led by Justice Razik Al-Jalil issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Meghna's father Badru Alam, said his lawyer Qazi Zahed Iqbal.

Rights activist and lawyer Sara Hossain placed arguments as principal lawyer for the petitioner.

### "When I was an activist, I used to think, 'Why are they applying the Digital Security Act or the Special Powers Act?' Now that I am in the government, should I not consider the interests of the expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia? Should I not worry about whether that market can shrink for some reason?"

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul

Meghna's detention order stated that she was taken into custody as per section 2(f) of the Special Powers Act, 1974, to prevent her from engaging in activities harmful to public safety and law and order under.

### DB CHIEF REMOVED

DB chief Additional Commissioner Rezaul Karim Mallick was removed from his position and attached to the DMP Headquarters.

DMP commissioner's office in an order on Saturday said Rezaul has been transferred in the interest of administrative purposes.

Meghna's detention saga unfolded when she went live on her Facebook page on Wednesday, saying that individuals identifying themselves as law enforcers from Bhatarai 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

## Govt to reinstate 'except Israel' on passports

UNB, Dhaka

The government has instructed the immigration authorities to reinstate the words "except Israel" on Bangladeshi passports, reversing a 2021 decision that had removed those.

The home ministry's Security Services Division sent a letter in this regard to the director general of the Department of Immigration and Passports on April 7.

Earlier, Bangladeshi passports contained the declaration: "This passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel."

In May 2021, the government removed the "except Israel" words from e-passports, citing international compliance.

On Saturday, speakers at a mammoth rally organised by the Palestine Solidarity Movement, Bangladesh demanded the restoration of the "except Israel" words on the passports and the cancellation of all agreements with Israel.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in the capital's Suhrawardy Uyan for the rally as part of a March for Gaza programme to express solidarity with Palestine and to protest against Israel's atrocities.

## 'PORTRAIT OF FASCISM' FIRE Fellow DU students 'identify' suspect

STAR REPORT

The suspect who set fire to two motifs prepared for the Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra at the Faculty of Fine Arts (Charukola) at Dhaka University (DU) has reportedly been identified.

Students of the Department of Arabic at DU claim the individual is Rabiu Islam Rakib, a student of the department and reportedly an activist of the banned student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League. He is a resident of Surja Sen Hall.

"After the video [of the motifs being set on fire] circulated, students from his department and close associates posted on social media identifying the suspect. They also provided us with some screenshots confirming his identity," DU Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"We have sent the evidence to the police," he added.

Ramna Division Deputy Commissioner (DC) Masud Alam told The Daily Star that drives are underway to apprehend the suspect.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3



Country belongs to people of all religions, ethnicities  
Says army chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army is committed to maintaining peace and harmony in Chattogram Hill Tracts and the rest of the country, Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman said yesterday.

Bangladesh belongs to people of all religions and ethnicities, he said.

"We want a peaceful and orderly country. We do not want conflict or hatred here. Whatever it takes to uphold peace in the Chattogram Hill Tracts, we are ready to do

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Journalist Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa, former chief reporter of The Daily Star, passed away at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 76.

He left behind his only son to mourn his death.

He will be buried at Azimpur Graveyard after a namaz-e-janaza at a mosque on Elephant Road after the Asr prayers today.

Nafa served at various English newspapers in Bangladesh, including The Independent, New Age, and the now-defunct Bangladesh Times.

He started his journalism career as the editor of a weekly magazine published from Chowmuhani in Noakhali.

He was also press minister in the UK.

Nafa also played a role as a managing committee leader of Jatiya Press Club.

Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Hafiz and General Secretary Ayub Bhuiyan expressed deep shock at his demise and extended their sympathy to the bereaved family.

## CAMERA AT MADRASA DORM MJF concerned over safety of female students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed outrage and deep concern over the violation of privacy and safety of female students at a madrasa in Jashore.

Sixteen CCTV cameras -- some equipped with night vision -- were reportedly installed inside the girls' dormitories at Fatimatuzzohra Qawmi Female Madrasa in Navaron, Sharsha upazila, Jashore.

The discovery came to light after a parent filed a complaint and alerted the authorities.

MJF described the incident as a flagrant act of surveillance, constituting a serious breach of trust, dignity, and human rights -- particularly of minors -- within an educational institution where families rightfully expect safety and security for their children.

"This is not merely a violation of privacy -- it is a criminal breach of their sanctity and safety in a place of learning," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF.

"That such equipment was installed in dormitories where girls reside and sleep is utterly shocking. We demand an immediate, impartial, and transparent investigation, along with the swift arrest and prosecution of all those responsible," she added.

MJF also voiced concern that the incident may not

Ex-JCD leader Jakir walks free after acquittal in 32 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Jakir Khan, who had been accused in 33 criminal cases including murder, walked out of jail yesterday morning.

He was released after being acquitted in 32 of the cases, having already served time for the remaining one.

Mohammad Forkan Wahid, superintendent of Narayanganj District Jail, said Jakir was released around 10:15am after all necessary legal procedures were completed.

Supporters gathered outside the district jail early in the morning with floral garlands and a motorcade to welcome Jakir.

Following his release, he led a procession through the city, causing a two-hour traffic jam on the Dhaka-Narayanganj link

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A woman browses pottery items at a stall on the first day of a two-day fair organised by the Gulshan Society at Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in Gulshan-2 yesterday, marking the start of Bangla New Year celebrations. The event, titled "Oligoli Halkhata," aims to bring together residents through cultural festivities to celebrate Pahela Baishakh.

## JULY UPRISING

## 60 more injured to go abroad for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will send an additional 60 individuals injured during the July-August mass uprising abroad for advanced medical treatment, Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital, she also revealed plans to establish a 1,000-bed hospital in Rangpur to improve healthcare access in the region.

"So far, we have sent 40 people abroad for advanced treatment based on recommendations from a board of specialist doctors," she said. "They receive free services at all hospitals across the country by showing their health cards. The government has spared no expense in covering treatment costs."

Of the Tk 25.37 crore allocated from the Chief Adviser's Relief Fund for overseas treatment, Tk 19.5 crore has already been spent, she added.

The new batch of patients includes eight to be sent to Bangkok and Singapore, 21 to Turkey, and 31 to Pakistan.

Nurjahan said there is an urgent need for a national air ambulance service, adding that four critically injured individuals had to be flown abroad in rented Thai air ambulances.

From August 9 to April 13, a total of 40 patients have been treated overseas -- 26 in Bangkok, 13 in Singapore, and one in Russia.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## CONSENSUS COMMISSION First phase of talks nears completion



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

'We seek balance in ties with China, India'  
Khalilur Rahman tells seminar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday said Bangladesh does not consider its relationships with China and India as a zero-sum game but aims to maintain meaningful and balanced ties with both.

Speaking at a seminar titled "Reassessing Sino-Bangla Relations: Chief Adviser's Landmark Visit," organised by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU), he said Bangladesh's foreign policy is now entirely its own, no longer reliant on any external power, according to an NSU press statement.

He described Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus's recent visit to China as a historic milestone.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said the visit was both symbolic and substantive. He reaffirmed China's commitment to deepening ties beyond politics, including cooperation in education, healthcare and people-to-people contact.

Dr Liu Zongyi, senior SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Talks with BNP are set for April 17, followed by meetings with the National Citizen Party and Jamaat-e-Islami.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



## Russian warships arrive in Ctg on goodwill visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three Russian Navy warships arrived at Chattogram Port yesterday for a four day goodwill visit to Bangladesh.

Upon their arrival at Chattogram Port, the ships were welcomed by the chief staff officer of the commander, Chattogram Naval Area, who greeted the officers and sailors on board.

The visiting ships are — “Rezkiy”, “Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov”, and “Pechenga”.

Also present at the welcoming ceremony were the Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh, the military, air, and naval Attachés, the Honorary Consul of Russia in Chattogram, and senior officials of the Bangladesh Navy.

Earlier, as the visiting ships entered Bangladesh's maritime boundary, they were received by the Bangladesh Navy ship BNS Khalid Bin Walid.

During their stay, the captains of the visiting warships, along with the Russian ambassador and a delegation, are scheduled to pay courtesy calls on the commander of the Chattogram Naval Area, the commander of the Bangladesh Navy Fleet, and the chairman of the Chattogram Port Authority. The Russian warships are scheduled to depart on April 16.

## Two killed as lift cable snaps at Sitakunda factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two workers were killed when a cable of a lift snapped at GPH Ispat, an iron rod manufacturing factory in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram yesterday, said police.

The deceased are Md Rifat, 25, and Md Mostafa, 24.

The incident took place in the afternoon, said Mojibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station.

The two were declared dead upon arrival at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

## Nation ushers in spirit of hope, renewal

FROM PAGE 1

Faculty of Fine Arts, the procession, formerly known as “Mangal Shobhajatra,” is to be called “Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra”, a change that has stirred criticism from various quarters.

Meanwhile, Chhayanaut is set to hold its iconic Pahela Baishakh cultural programme at Ramna Batamul, featuring the theme “Amar Mukti Aloy Aloy” (My Freedom Lies in Light).

This year's theme resonates deeply, carrying messages of hope, resilience, and renewal.

The event is particularly poignant, as it is dedicated to Sanjida Khatun, the co-founder and president of Chhayanaut. Her lifelong dedication to music, culture, and the nation's identity remains a beacon of inspiration, said Sarwar Ali, executive president of Chhayanaut. The programme will begin at 6:15am.

Except for a few occasions, the revered cultural institution has been hosting the event

since 1967, greeting the rising sun with timeless classical ragas under the banyan tree at Ramna.

Pahela Baishakh, one of the most colourful festivals held in the country, is when the Bangalees welcome the new year and bid farewell to the old. Symbolising the unity and cultural richness of the nation, the event is celebrated by people regardless of religion, sect, or creed.

Business communities also organise the age-old tradition of Halkhata, the ceremonial opening of new ledger books.

At a programme in the capital, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has greeted the people saying that Pahela Baishakh is one of the symbols of our harmony. Everyone will celebrate it in their own way, following their own customs.

Meanwhile, a group of current and former students of DU's Faculty of Fine Arts yesterday said that fellow students of Arabic department have reportedly identified Rabiu Islam Rakib, who had set fire to the two motifs prepared for the new year's procession.

The DU authorities on

April 11 changed the name of the procession, saying they haven't renamed the procession rather they have “restored” original name of the celebration to “Anondo Shobhajatra”, which was introduced in 1989.

During yesterday's press briefing, the students criticised the new system of organising the procession, which excludes students from taking lead roles, a departure from previous years. They also voiced concern over what they described as a lack of adequate security measures surrounding the event.

Talking about security, Rab DG AKM Shahidur Rahman yesterday said that security has been beefed up to prevent any untoward incidents during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations.

DU Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed yesterday said that fellow students of Arabic department have reportedly identified Rabiu Islam Rakib, who had set fire to the two motifs prepared for the new year's procession.

in the early hours of Saturday.

Motifs were “Portrait of Fascism” describing face of fallen prime minister Sheikh Hasina and “a dove figure” describing peace.

This year's procession will have the theme, “Symphony of the New Year, End of Fascism,” was designed to capture the spirit of the July uprising and in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

The cultural affairs ministry will organise a drone show and concert on Manik Mia Avenue in the afternoon. A seven-day Baishakhi Fair will begin at Bangla Academy jointly organised by Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation and Bangla Academy.

Cultural organisation Shurer Dhara and Channel i will welcome the new year at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi in the morning.

Mughal Emperor Akbar introduced the tradition of celebrating the Bangla New Year to mark the closing of the annual tax collection.

Meanwhile, a group of current and former students of DU's Faculty of Fine Arts yesterday said that fellow students of Arabic department have reportedly identified Rabiu Islam Rakib, who had set fire to the two motifs prepared for the new year's procession.

## Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur

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Memo No-KKP/Engg/ADP/2025-322(1-5)

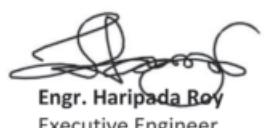
Date- 13.04.2025

### e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following Procurement-

Sl No	Tender ID No	Package No	Description of the Works	Last Selling Date &Time	Closing Date &Time	Opening Date &Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1097282	KKP/ADP/REV/2025/W-01	Improvement of Roads & Construction of Drains at word 1,2,3 Under Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur.	28-Apr-2025; 17:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM
2	1097287	KKP/ADP/REV/2025/W-02	Improvement of Roads & Construction of Drains at word 4,5,6 Under Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur.	28-Apr-2025; 17:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM
3	1097289	KKP/ADP/REV/2025/W-03	Improvement of Roads & Construction of Drains at word 7 Under Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur.	28-Apr-2025; 17:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM
4	1097291	KKP/ADP/REV/2025/W-04	Improvement of Roads & Construction of Drains at word 8,9 Under Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur.	28-Apr-2025; 17:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM
5	1097293	KKP/ADP/REV/2025/W-05	Improvement of Dumping Station & Shafipur Bazar & Cleaning of Drains Under Kaliakair Pourashava, Gazipur.	28-Apr-2025; 17:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM	29-Apr-2025; 15:00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/ hardcopies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank Branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@procure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@procure.gov.bd)).

  
Engr. Haripada Roy  
Executive Engineer  
Kaliakair Pourashava

GD-860

## PANGSHA UPAZILA IN RAJBARI

# Bridge work not finished after 5yrs



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Construction of a 650-metre-long bridge over the Gorai river in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari remains incomplete five years after the project began.

According to the officials concerned, the construction work has been going on with a sluggish pace due to complication with installation of spans and acquisition of land for connecting roads.

The bridge is expected to improve road connectivity between Rajbari, Magura, and Jhenaidah districts once operational.

According to the sources of Local Government Engineering Department in Rajbari, the bridge is being built under the Critical Infrastructure in Rural Roads project at a cost of Tk 63,91,68,170. The contract was awarded to Mir

Habibul Alam's MM Builders Engineering. The work started on June 3, 2020 with an initial deadline till June 3, 2023. Later, the deadline was extended.

Visiting the construction site at Naduria Ghat in Pangsha upazila, this correspondent saw five spans and three girders are yet to be installed, while only a few workers were engaged at the site.

Locals said officials had discussed acquiring land in 2023, but in February last year, they were informed that it would not proceed. Now, fresh discussions about land acquisition have emerged, further delaying the project.

“In absence of a bridge, we have to cross the river on boats at risk, especially during monsoon. The bridge will significantly ease our connectivity with neighbouring Jhenaidah and Magura districts,”

said Apurbo Kumar Ghosh, a resident of Bangana village under Kalukhali upazila.

Md Kheyar Uddin of Bitidanga village under Pangsha upazila, said, “The bridge would be beneficial for businessmen like me as it would make goods transport from Rajbari to other neighbouring districts convenient and less costly.”

KM Yahia, a representative of the contractor firm, claimed that 80 percent of the construction work has been completed, while the remaining work cannot proceed without land acquisition.

SM Abu Darda, upazila nirbahi officer of Pangsha, said steps are being taken to resolve complication regarding land acquisition.

Yusuf Hossain, executive engineer of LGED in Rajbari, said, “Once the land acquisition is done, the work will be completed promptly.”



## SYLHET'S HAOR REGION

### Weather fear drives early boro harvest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Harvesting of boro paddy has begun early in Sylhet's haor region, including Hakaluki and Kawadighi haor areas, as farmers rush to avoid possible losses due to inclement weather.

Hailstorms, a recurring event towards the end of the Bangla month of Chaitra, often disrupt the harvest process and damage crops. Fearing a repeat of such events, farmers are opting for an early harvest to ensure minimal disruption.

Despite the concerns, growers remain hopeful for a profitable season following favourable weather conditions. Many are looking forward to repaying their loans taken from local lenders.

According to Bimal Chandra Shome, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Sylhet division, boro paddy was cultivated on 4,97,219 hectares of land across Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, and Habiganj districts this year.

In Moulvibazar alone, 62,140 hectares were cultivated with a production target of 2.48 lakh tonnes. The early variety BRRI-92 is currently being harvested on 350 hectares of cropland in the district.

During a recent visit to the haor belt from Alinagar and Parkandi to Jabda and Futbeel in Moulvibazar, this correspondent witnessed golden paddy swaying in the breeze as hundreds of farmers gathered to reap their harvest. In Hakaluki haor, harvesting began four days ago.

Md Jalal Uddin, deputy director of DAE in Moulvibazar, said, “So far the paddy has been harvested from 350 hectares of land.”



## বাংলাদেশ এনার্জি রেগুলেটরী কমিশন

টিসিবি ভবন (৪র্থ তলা) ১, কারওয়ান বাজার, ঢাকা-১২১৫

ওয়েবসাইট: [www.berc.org.bd](http://www.berc.org.bd)

নং-২৮, ০১, ০০০০, ০১২, ১৪, ০০১, ২৫, ১৮৮০

তারিখ: ৩০ টৈক্রি ১৪৩১ বঙ্গাব্দ

১৩ এপ্রিল ২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

### প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাসের শিল্প ও ক্যাপ্টিভ বিদ্যুৎ প্রেসিটে নতুন, প্রতিশুল্ক ও বিদ্যুত্বান (অনুমোদিত লোডের প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস ব্যবহারকারী) প্রাক্করে ভোকাপর্যায়ে মূল্যহার সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি।

বাংলাদেশ এনার্জি রেগুলেটরী কমিশন আইন, ২০৩০ এর ধারা ২২(খ) ও ৩৪ এ প্রদত্ত দায়িত্ব ও ক্ষমতাবলে বাংলাদেশ তেল, গ্যাস ও খনিজ সম্পদ কর্তৃতৈরেশ (পেট্রোবাংলা), তেজস প্রক্ষেপিসন এবং ডিপ্লিভিউশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড, বাখরাবাদ গ্যাস প্রক্ষেপিসন এবং পক্ষিমাল গ্যাস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড, পক্ষিমাল গ্যাস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এবং প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাসের শিল্প ও ক্যাপ্টিভ বিদ্যুৎ প্রেসিটে নতুন, প্রতিশুল্ক ও বিদ্যুত্বান (অনুমোদিত লোডের প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস ব্যবহারকারী) প্রাক্করে মূল্যহার প্রস্তাবের বিষয়ে আগ্রহী পক্ষগুলোকে গণশুনানি প্রদানপূর্বক সকল তথ্যাদি পর্যালোচনা ও বিশ্লেষণাত্মক গ্যাস বিতরণ লাইসেন্সসমূহ ক

'AMAR MUKTI ALOY ALOY'

# The spirit of defiance and freedom fuels Pahela Baishakh

DOWEL BISWAS

As the nation now stands on the cusp of renewal, Pahela Baishakh 1432 arrives at a time when the people of Bangladesh are eager to reclaim their cultural voice—seeking a deeper connection to its identity, heritage, and hope. For centuries, it has been an occasion of collective celebration, resilience, and unity.

One of the country's most revered cultural institutions, Chhayanaut, will usher in Pahela Baishakh 1432 with its signature early morning celebration *Borsho Boron Onusthan* at the Ramma Batamul. The event will begin at 6:15am with Rabindranath Tagore's *Amar Mukti Aloy Aloy*, beckoning the first light of the new year as it rises over Dhaka.

Now in its 58th year, the tradition continues with 150 vocalists and instrumentalists—prepared since January—to offer a deeply rooted presentation of music and poetry.



is through this atmosphere that our cultural identity is reaffirmed."

This year's lineup includes 12 solo songs, nine group performances, and three poetry recitations. The programme will end by 8:30am.

At the break of dawn today, crowds will gather in Shahbagh, ready for the year's most symbolic procession—*Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra*. Following Chhayanaut's *Borsho Boron* at Ramma Batamul, the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University (Charukola) will lead the colourful march with the national anthem.

First launched in the 1980s as a defiant cultural act against military rule, the procession has since grown into a nationwide emblem of unity, joy, and resistance—recognised by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage in 2016.

This year, Charukola promises the grandest, most inclusive Shobhajatra yet, themed "Nabobarsh-er Oikhyatan, Fasciab-

er Oboshan" (in harmony with the new year, towards the fall of fascism). Featuring six major installations and hundreds of handcrafted motifs—tigers, fish, masks, traditional tools, and a bold depiction of "the face of fascism"—the event will highlight Bangladesh's rich folk traditions and voices of resistance. With participation from 28 ethnic communities and symbolic solidarity with Palestine through a watermelon motif, the procession aims to send a message of peace, inclusivity, and defiance.

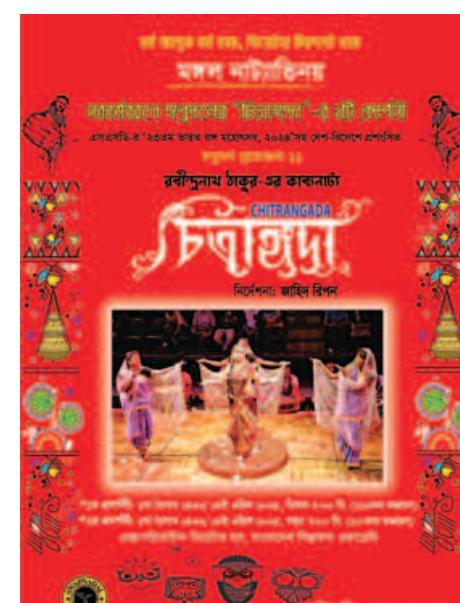
This year's *Shobhajatra* is set to resonate with powerful new voices, as over 200 musicians—including members of popular bands like Miles, Warfaze, Lalon, Vikings, AvoidRafa, and Dalchhut, alongside ethnic bands like F Minor (Garo), Lao Rong (Marma), Emang (Tripura), Unity (Khasi), and Invocation (Chakma)—will join to sing *From the river to sea, Palestine will be free* in a dedicated segment of solidarity. Musicians will carry

the Palestinian flag and perform songs of resistance as part of the procession.

A drone show, themed "New Bangladesh in New Year" and sponsored by the Chinese Embassy, will illuminate the sky over Manik Mia Avenue as part of this year's Pahela Baishakh celebrations at 3pm. Meanwhile, Bangla Academy will host a vibrant Baishakh fair, adding to the spirit of the national festivities.

Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy is arranging a cultural programme titled "Baishakh Sangskritik Onusthan" from 4:30pm today at the National Theatre Hall where seasoned artistes will welcome the new year with songs, dances and poetry recitals.

In celebration of the Bengali New Year,



Swapnadal's production of 'Chitrangada'.

The structure will remain true to its origins, opening with classical ragas and concluding with an address from Chhayanaut's president and the national anthem.

Despite political shifts, Chhayanaut holds firm in its mission. "The spirit of the programme—awakening the Bengali consciousness through music at dawn—remains unchanged," said Dr Sarwar Ali, vice president and a Chhayanaut trustee. "It



various departments of the University of Dhaka and Rabindra Sarobar are hosting cultural programmes. Dhaka North City Corporation is organising a Baishakh Fair at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Smriti Park, featuring diverse stalls with traditional handicrafts, ethnic clothing, *pitha puli*, and cultural performances of folk songs and Baishakh music from 10am to 10pm for three days.

Popular theatre troupes Shwapnadal and Prangonemor will showcase their revered plays titled, *Chitrangada* and *Shesher Kobita* at 5pm and 7pm at BSA's Experimental Theatre Hall and Bangladesh Mohila Samiti, respectively.

Yet, as Pahela Baishakh dawns with its usual splendour—bursting with colour, music, and collective energy—it arrives this year with a shadow of unease. The recent decision by Dhaka University authorities to rename the iconic "Mangal Shobhajatra" as "Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra" has sparked widespread criticism. For many, the change feels like more than just a name—it is seen as a symbolic erosion of a cultural landmark born out of defiance during military rule in the 1980s. That unease deepened when the fascism-themed motif at Charukola was set ablaze by an arsonist, leaving behind a charred emblem of protest and a lingering question about the future of this beloved tradition.

Still, the Bangladeshi spirit is not easily dimmed. We are a people who sing the same songs to express both celebration and dissent. As thousands gather beneath the Ramma Batamul and march through Shahbagh, the name on the banner matters less than the spirit in the steps. The procession—whatever it may be called—remains a powerful testament to cultural memory, resilience, and unity. It is a living, breathing archive of our collective struggle for expression, shaped through centuries of resistance.

## NEWS

### Most parties want changes in basic principles

FROM PAGE 1  
amendment of 1979 during the rule of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman.

BNP proposed that the section enshrining the ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism be reverted to the form as prescribed by the fifth amendment. Currently the section reads, "Pledging that the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the national liberation struggle, shall be the fundamental principles of the constitution."

The party suggested that it should read, "...Pledging that the high ideals of absolute trust and faith in the almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism, meaning economic and social justice, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the war for national independence, shall be the fundamental principles of the constitution..."

Jamaat called for significant changes to the preamble, saying that the "July revolution" should be recognised in the preamble.

It proposed that the first paragraph should read: "We, the people of Bangladesh, have established the independent and sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh declaring independence on March 26, 1971, through the historic struggle for national liberation; and are making all-out efforts to safeguard democracy in the country through different democratic movements, including the July Revolution of 2024."

The Islamist party also said that nationalism, democracy, economic and social justice, full trust and faith in almighty Allah, and multiculturalism should be the basic principles of this constitution.

Jatiya Nagorik Committee proposed drafting a fresh constitution, forming a constituent assembly, and recognising the July uprising in the new constitution.

The proclamation of the Liberation War should be included as a proposal of the first republic, while a proclamation of the second republic should be included as a preamble to the new constitution, said the civic platform comprising the July uprising leaders.

Ganoshamhi Andolon suggested that the proclamation of the Liberation War in 1971, the long struggle against fascism and dictatorship, and people's aspirations expressed in the 2024

mass uprising become the basis of a democratic constitution.

According to Islami Andolan Bangladesh's proposal, in the preamble, "the legitimate judgment of the people" must be recognised as the basis for government formation.

Khelafat Majlish sought the inclusion of two sentences in the preamble: "We, the people of Bangladesh, having declared independence on March 26, 1971, have established the independent and sovereign people's democratic Bangladesh through the historic struggle for national liberation.

"We, the people of Bangladesh, established a democratic Bangladesh by overthrowing the erstwhile regime on August 5 (through a historic uprising for the formation of a non-discriminatory state) in July-August 2024."

Rastro Sangskar Andolan and AB party proposed significant changes to the preamble.

AB party advocated rewriting the constitution and making sweeping changes in the preamble to read: "After the independence, the old system of the republic based on the three principles of the proclamation of 1971 independence—equality, human dignity and social justice—had failed and become ineffective.

"Time and again, the people were shackled by one-party, military-civilian and dynastic dictatorships over the last 53 years, and the first republic fell in July-August 2024, ending a long period of fascist oppression in a student-led uprising.

"In the light of the Declaration of Independence, and since the first republic failed, the establishment of a second democratic state [second republic] has become imperative to build Bangladesh 2.0."

Jatiya Gonofront demanded abolishing the 1972 constitution.

NDM proposed that the preamble should uphold the three principles of equality, human dignity and social justice, and reflect the dreams of the 2024 mass uprising.

#### REFORM COMMISSION'S PROPOSED PREAMBLE

The Constitution Reform Commission proposed rewriting the first two sentences to read: "We, the people of Bangladesh, who achieved independence through a people's war as a continuation of the historic struggle for the liberation of the people of this land, and united in resistance against autocratic and fascist regimes to establish democracy;

"We, in solemn memory of all the

martyrs' sacrifices, pledge to uphold the ideals of equality, human dignity and social justice that inspired the people of Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War and the ideals of democracy and equality that united us in 2024 against fascist rule, aiming to establish these noble principles within the state and society."

#### BASIC PRINCIPLES

BNP said the current principles of the constitution were added through the 15th amendment and should be repealed.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh is of the view that full trust and faith in almighty Allah should be the basis of all activities of the state.

The party proposed that the principles of the constitution should include equality, human dignity, social justice, government accountability, the abolition of fascism and hegemony, the elimination of bad culture, and good education aimed at creating ideal citizens.

Gonofront Parishad (Nur) and Bhashani Anusari Parishad demanded that equality, human dignity and social justice be included as basic principles.

The 12 party alliance wants "religious freedom for all people" instead of "secularism", and "social justice and equitable distribution of wealth" in place of "socialism".

Khelafat Majlish suggested that steadfast trust and faith in Allah, active participation of the people, creation of a society free from exploitation, oppression and discrimination and ensuring public representation in all aspects of the state should be the basic principles.

Jatiya Gonofront proposed that "nationalism, democracy, and economic and social justice, full trust and faith in almighty Allah and multicultural society" should be the principles.

Ganoshamhi Andolon called for a non-discriminatory and democratic state that upholds the 2024 aspirations of students, workers as well as the masses, in the light of equality, human dignity, and social justice as stated in the Proclamation of the War of Independence in 1971.

AB Party recommended "equality, human dignity and justice" as the basic principles.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal proposed incorporating equality, human dignity, and social justice, as mentioned in the Proclamation of Independence, into the preamble, in line with the spirit of the 1971 Liberation War and the 2024 mass uprising.

It also suggested keeping democracy, socialism, secularism intact, and qualified nationalism, "as being free from

the influence of imperialism to ensure independent national development".

Jatiya Nagorik Committee advocates five new fundamental principles—equality, human dignity, social justice, citizen rights and democracy.

Insaniyat Biplob Bangladesh proposed removing nationalism and socialism as basic principles, and suggested that they be replaced with religious values, state ownership by the people, freedom of life, and universal human rights.

The existing preamble contains the principles of nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy, while the Constitution Reform Commission proposes equality, human dignity, social justice, pluralism and democracy.

The commission also recommends the deletion of articles 8, 9, 10, and 12, which elaborate on these key principles.

#### PROPOSALS ON STATE RELIGION

BNP and Rastro Sangskar Andolon don't want any changes in the Article 2A as it stood after the 15th amendment. This article deals with state religion. It says, "The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal right in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions."

The eighth amendment, made during dictator HM Ershad's regime in 1988, declared that Islam would be the state religion.

BNP also wants articles 8, 9, 10, and 12 on nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism to be reverted to the versions prior to the 15th amendment.

Jatiya Gonofront proposed that people of all religions in Bangladesh shall have full freedom and equal rights, and religions should not be used in politics.

CPB, Bangladesh Jashod and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal sought scrapping of state religion and also proposed repealing the article.

Khelafat Majlish said Islam should remain the state religion, but the state will ensure dignity and equal rights for those practising other religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

The party also suggested that the state should take effective measures to protect the dignity of Prophet Muhammad (SM) and this should be included in the constitution.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) said respect for Prophet Muhammad (SM) should be an integral part of the moral and spiritual foundation of the state. Any intentional insult to the prophet should be regarded as an offence and punishable under the law for protecting public order and religious sentiment.

Trump said Saturday that he would give a "very specific" answer to the question of any future semiconductor levies today.

Facing steep tariffs, China has sought to present itself as a stable alternative to an erratic Washington, courting countries spooked by the global economic storm.

### BNP questions Yunus' repeated 'shifts'

FROM PAGE 12

Salahuddin said that whenever the BNP demands a roadmap for an election by December from the chief adviser, it hears statements from government advisers that the people suppose want them to stay for five years.

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury made a similar remark recently, the BNP leader said. "But we have seen numerous comments [on social media] calling for his [the home adviser's] resignation. Hasn't he seen those?"

Salahuddin said he wanted to criticise Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akther less than others because he has a "very good relationship" with her.

"Now she has said the people elected them through the mass uprising. Then why does this country have an Election Commission?"

"If governments are changed through street protests, that perhaps reflects the will of the people. But you [interim government] cannot be an alternative to an elected government. You are definitely unselected. And you will be reminded of that every single day."

"And her husband, our Bhai Saheb Farhad Mazhar [poet, writer, and thinker] gave a speech two or three days ago that a realm of looters, not democracy, is created through elections. What more can I say?"

Salahuddin said.

He asked why the advisers and their allies were denying the right to vote after thousands of people sacrificed their lives and mounted a mass uprising for the restoration of their democratic and constitutional rights.

Recalling Yunus's remarks at a meeting with the BNP, Salahuddin said the chief adviser assured them that all the activities of the government were aimed at holding the election with December as the possible time in mind.

"We also sat with the Election Commission, and it said all preparations for the polls would be completed by June. It said it was very eager to hold the election by December."

The BNP leader also said he has seen criticism on Facebook whenever the topic of the election is raised. "Is it good for democracy when you speak about democracy but create confusion over the election?"

Salahuddin said that the BNP appreciates the work of some people holding top positions in the government who dedicate their talent to the service of the state. "But can you do that without democracy?" he asked.

The BNP leader said those who orchestrated 1/II also made various attempts to remain in power two years.

"I'm not suggesting that similar measures are currently visible. But don't you remember Moeen U and Fakhrudin of 1/II? Didn't they make significant efforts toward depoliticisation?"

Trump's reciprocal tariffs have "not only failed to solve any of the United States' own problems but have seriously undermined the global economic and trade order", Beijing's commerce ministry said in the statement yesterday.

Commerce Minister Wang Wentao on Friday warned that tariffs would "inflame serious harm" on developing nations in a call with the head of the World Trade Organization.

Chinese President Xi Jinping kicks off a five-day Southeast Asia tour today for talks with the leaders of Vietnam, a manufacturing powerhouse, as well as Malaysia and Cambodia.

It comes after Xi said China and Europe should "jointly resist unilateral bullying practices," state media quoted the leader as saying in a meeting with the Spanish prime minister.

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Facing steep tariffs, China has sought to present itself as a stable alternative to an erratic Washington, courting countries spooked by the global economic storm.

# INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA MONDAY APRIL 14, 2025

BAISHAKH 1, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

7

## Separatists kill eight Pakistanis in Iran

AFP, Islamabad

Separatists killed eight Pakistanis in Iran, Islamabad said yesterday, across the border from Pakistan's Balochistan province where there are regular deadly attacks.

The Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), a Pakistani separatist group, and Jaish al-Adl, a Baloch jihadist group that is based in Pakistan but is also active in Iran, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the "brutal killings of eight Pakistanis", calling on Tehran to "immediately arrest the culprits, give them appropriate punishment, and make the reasons behind this brutal act public".

The eight men killed were from Pakistan's most populous province, Punjab, according to the Associated Press of Pakistan news agency.



In this handout photograph, taken and released by the Ukrainian Emergency Service yesterday, a rescuer works to extinguish a fire at the site of a Russian missile attack in Sumy, northeastern Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israeli missiles strike Gaza hospital

**Hundreds of patients evacuated; separate strikes in Khan Younis kill 14, including police head, brothers**

REUTERS, Cairo

Two Israeli missiles hit a building inside a main Gaza hospital yesterday, destroying the emergency and reception department and damaging other structures, medics said, in a strike which Israel said was against Hamas fighters exploiting the facility.

Health officials at the Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital evacuated the patients from the building after a phone call from someone who identified himself as Israeli security shortly before the attack.

No casualties were reported in the strike. The Israeli military said in a statement it had taken steps to reduce harm to civilians before it struck the compound, which was being used by Hamas members to plan attacks.

The hospital - an institution of the Anglican Church and a major medical facility - was knocked out of operation, according to Gaza's health ministry. The strikes also came after the United Nations

warned that medicines and related supplies are rapidly running out in Gaza as casualties surge.

"Hundreds of patients and injured people had to be evacuated in the middle of the night, and many of them are now out in the streets without medical care, which puts their lives at risk," said the ministry's spokesperson, Khalil Al Deqran.

Separate strikes in the enclave yesterday killed at least 14 Palestinians, including the head of a police station in Khan Younis, in the southern part of the Hamas-run enclave, according to Hamas and health authorities. Six brothers were killed when an Israeli strike hit their car in Deir Al Balah in central Gaza Strip, medics said.

Yesterday's strikes at the Baptist Hospital came as Hamas leaders began a fresh round of talks in Cairo, in a bid to salvage a stalled ceasefire agreement with Israel, as Egypt, Qatar, and the United States have stepped up efforts to bridge gaps between the sides.

## Fellow DU students

FROM PAGE 2

"We are trying to verify the evidence," he said.

Two installations -- Portrait of Fascism, presumably depicting deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and Dove of Peace -- were set ablaze on the premises of DU's Faculty of Fine Arts early Saturday.

The fire destroyed Portrait of Fascism, while Dove of Peace was partially damaged.

On Saturday, police claimed that the arson was "a deliberate act."

After reviewing CCTV footage, police and university authorities said a young man wearing a black T-shirt, brown pants, and sandals, with his hair tied in a bun, was seen entering and exiting the premises by climbing over the central gate between 4:44am and 4:46am, before heading toward the Chhobir Haat gate of Suhrawardy Udyan.

The suspect was seen pouring a liquid -- presumably flammable -- on Portrait of Fascism and igniting it with a lighter. The DU administration has formed a five-member committee, headed by Prof Dr Mohammad Siddiqu Rahman Khan, dean of the Faculty of Arts, to investigate the incident.

Khaled Mansur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said a case has been filed under the Special Powers Act, 1974, over the incident.

This year's Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra theme -- Symphony of the New Year, End of Fascism -- was designed to reflect the spirit of the July mass uprising.

According to organisers, Face of Fascism was the main motif for the rally. Standing 20 feet tall and crafted from bamboo and cane, the structure portrayed a woman with a toothy grin, four horns on her head, a large nose, and two fearful eyes. The striking image led many to believe it resembled ousted PM Sheikh Hasina.

## SUDAN'S DARFUR

**56 killed in paramilitary attacks: UN**

AFP, Port Sudan

Sudan's paramilitaries killed 56 civilians over two days in attacks on a newly-retaken town on the road to El-Fasher, the last major city in Darfur still in army hands, activists said yesterday.

The killings, which occurred on April 11 and 12, targeted residents in Um Kadah, around 180 kilometres (112 miles) east of El-Fasher, "on an ethnic basis", said resistance committee.

## Tk 3,100 crore promised: BIDA

FROM PAGE 12

for improvement. However, this was our first attempt to organise an investment summit of a global standard..."

Around Tk 5 crore was spent on organising the summit, of which around Tk 1.5 crore came from the government and the rest from partner organisations.

If the costs and returns are compared, the outcome is fantastic, Ashik said.

He said that those experienced in such events understand that significant investments don't happen overnight; investors must first visit and experience the

country. The summit played a key role in changing global perceptions of Bangladesh. Many foreign participants remarked that what they saw online was different from reality.

Concerning the process for converting potential investments into actual investments, he said that a diligent registration process was followed, collecting contact information to maintain engagement with interested parties. Follow-ups are planned to ascertain their decision-making progress and the potential for further visits, aligning with standard business

development practices.

During the BIDA's executive committee meeting, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the chief adviser directed to form a committee to expedite the launch of the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Additionally, a directive was issued to explore bringing various investment promotion agencies, about eight, under a single umbrella for better coordination. The chief adviser also suggested developing an exclusive economic zone for Nepal.

Shafiq said that there

is also strong interest of foreign investors in the Chittagong Port.

The BIDA executive chairman said a decision has been made to cancel the plan of developing 10 economic zones. "We don't think these are necessary."

Acknowledging the current higher costs of flying goods from Dhaka compared to transhipping via Kolkata or Delhi, he said that the government is considering India's revocation of transhipment facility for Bangladesh as an opportunity to enhance the efficiency of Bangladesh's airports.

## Arrest warrants issued against Hasina

FROM PAGE 12

Rehana's daughters Tulip Siddiq, Azmina Siddiq and her son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby are among those against whom the arrest warrants were issued.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after accepting the charges brought against them.

The court has now accepted charges against Hasina and her family members in four out of a total of six cases filed over the plot allocation irregularities, said an

official of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The ACC officials showed all the 23 accused as fugitives, as they did not secure bail from any courts in the country.

The judge directed the officers in charge of over a dozen police stations in Dhaka and other parts of the country to submit progress reports on the execution of the arrest warrants by April 27.

On March 25, the ACC pressed charges against Hasina, Rehana, Tulip, Radwan, Azmina and 18

others in these three cases. On the same day, charges were pressed in the other three cases as well.

The ACC filed six separate cases over alleged irregularities in the allocation of the six plots, each measuring 10 kathas, in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27 in the Purbachal New Town project.

Hasina has been made a common accused in all the six cases filed in connection to the irregularities.

The court is scheduled to pass an order on April 15 on whether it would take cognisance of the charges in the two remaining cases.

## Pahela Baishakh a symbol of our harmony

FROM PAGE 12

are united by a shared diversity of language, culture, and tradition.

The International Buddhist Monastery, he said, is one of the symbols of communal harmony in Bangladesh. Since its inception, it has played a significant role in issues of national interest, including those related to the

Buddhist community.

Referring to Gautam Buddha's message of non-violence and equality, Prof Yunus said the monastery has been engaged in various public welfare programmes, such as preserving the religious, social, and cultural heritage of the Buddhist community and providing technical

education.

He expressed hope that the "Sampriti Bhaban" will play a notable role both nationally and internationally by reflecting the values of harmony and humanity upheld in Bangladesh.

Religious Affairs Adviser Dr AFM Khalid Hossain, Chattogram Hill Tracts Affairs Adviser Supradip

Chakma, Army Chief General Waker Uz-Zaman, Religious Affairs Secretary AKM Altab Hossain Pramanik, Bangladesh Buddhist Federation Advisory Council Acting Chairman Prof Sukomal Barua, and International Buddhist Monastery Deputy Chief Ven Bhikkhu Sunandapriya also spoke at the event.



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## A chilling reminder of past legal abuses

### Circumstances surrounding a model's arrest raise alarm

Repressive laws have no place in post-uprising Bangladesh. It's unfortunate that such a thing needs to be reiterated even now—after over eight months since the political changeover—following an abuse of the Special Powers Act that led to a model being incarcerated. Both the manner in which she was first picked up and her subsequent detention under this law have brought, for many, painful memories of similar abuses of draconian laws during the rule of now-deposed dictator Sheikh Hasina. For decades, this law has been a symbol of state repression. That it is still being invoked today, under a non-political government no less, raises questions about whether the state machinery has truly turned a corner, or whether it remains addicted to the same old authoritarian tools of control.

Reportedly, former Miss Earth Bangladesh Meghna Alam was forcibly taken from her home by men identifying themselves as police officers on Wednesday. They produced no warrant, and even violated the High Court guidelines on warrantless arrests—that officers must properly identify themselves, explain the reason for arrest, and allow the person to contact a lawyer or meet their relatives. Moreover, Meghna was held incomunicado for over 24 hours, and later sent to jail under vague and sweeping allegations—mostly based on a personal dispute involving a Saudi diplomat—that fail to meet the threshold of a “prejudicial act” as defined by the law, according to legal experts. We understand the sensitivity of the issue involved, but that is all the more reason why due process should have been followed from the start.

On Sunday, the law adviser of the interim government acknowledged that the arrest procedure was flawed. The authorities have already removed Detective Branch chief Rezaul Karim Mallick from his post. This can be indicative of the government taking accountability measures or, alternatively, it is just damage control amid fierce criticism by rights activists and social media commentators. Whatever the reason may be, the fact is, such statements and initiatives mean little if they are not followed by concrete actions to repeal the very abusive law in question and bring in systemic reforms to ensure that officers never bypass due process under any circumstances.

The incident serves as a wake-up call for the interim government. The people did not hold a bloody uprising simply to change the faces in power. Their want a complete overhaul of the way power has been abused, whether by police or powerful political actors. So, all repressive laws like the Special Powers Act must go, and overzealous officers still beholden to past abusive tendencies must be duly punished. The authorities also must allow for a fresh, impartial investigation into the whole Meghna Alam saga, ensuring her rights and dignity as an accused.

## Preventive steps vital to control dengue

### Public awareness is also crucial

The scorching summer sun may give us a false sense of safety regarding dengue threats, as we often associate the disease with rainfall. The reality is, 16 people have already died from dengue this year. Some 2,074 have also been hospitalised, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A report in this daily warns of the growing risk of dengue with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecasting rain and thunderstorms in many parts of the country this week. Entomologists say that even light rain can lead to an increase in dengue cases, as the mosquito population will proliferate once the first generation of Aedes mosquitoes matures after rain. Therefore, the larvae must be destroyed now to keep the mosquito population under control. Such preventive action is crucial to help us avoid a situation similar to 2023, when Bangladesh saw the highest number of cases and fatalities from dengue in recorded history. That year, a total of 321,179 people were hospitalised, and 1,705 people died from it.

By comparison, last year's dengue prevalence was better—101,214 hospitalisations and 575 deaths. These numbers, however, can be disputed as last year's political turmoil upended anti-mosquito drives at the local government level, with almost all councillors and public representatives arrested or on the run since the July uprising. Over eight months later, the situation has somewhat improved, with public officials now supervising basic municipal duties including cleanliness. However, proactive early actions to tackle the threat of dengue in advance of the monsoon are still not visible. This is particularly true for areas outside Dhaka, where mosquito populations are nowhere near under control and almost no anti-mosquito drives are being carried out.

We urge the authorities to act early to keep dengue in check. They must identify and eliminate breeding grounds not just in Dhaka but also in places like Barishal, which has seen a spike in cases this year. Anti-mosquito drives should be carried out in neighbourhoods where people have been infected with dengue. Larvae should be destroyed using environment-friendly methods before they hatch, and public awareness campaigns must be launched before the regular downpours begin. Preventive measures will not only save millions in public health expenditure but also hundreds of precious lives.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### 275 girls abducted in Nigeria

On this day in 2014, the Islamic sectarian movement Boko Haram abducted more than 275 girls from a boarding school in Chibok, Nigeria, sparking worldwide condemnation.

# The law is blind, but so are the people



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H.M. NAZMUL ALAM

In 1835, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay laid down the framework for the Indian Penal Code, a legal system meant to be clear, comprehensible, and universal across the subcontinent. His vision was pragmatic: law should be a self-evident truth, requiring no special knowledge to understand. It should be, in essence, as obvious as the laws of nature. And yet, nearly two centuries later, the legal landscape in many “Third World” nations has become a confusing maze of incomprehensible statutes, selective enforcement, and mass disobedience.

Today, the reality of law in many developing nations, including Bangladesh, is anything but self-evident. Rather than being a respected pillar of civilisation, law often becomes an alien, distant force—feared, manipulated or outright ignored. Public beatings occur under the watchful eye of cameras, legal verdicts are swayed by corruption rather than justice, and police forces often act as enforcers of power rather than defenders of the rule of law.

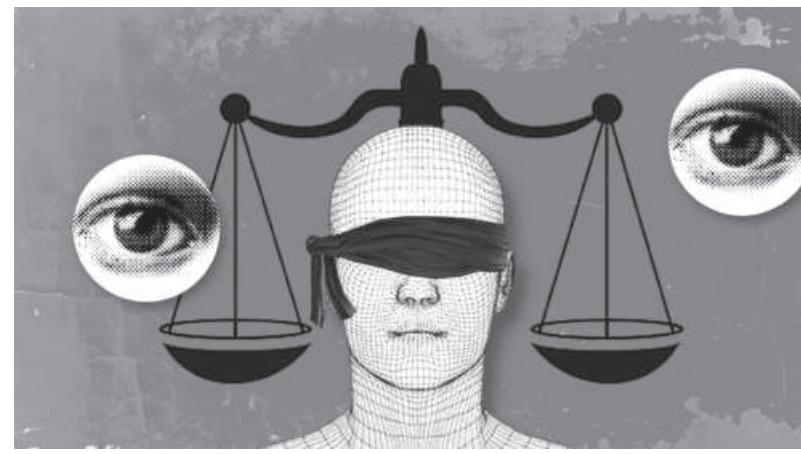
How did this happen? How did Macaulay's dream of a transparent and rational legal system morph into a fractured, distrusted institution?

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*, famously argued that laws are legitimate only when they stem from the general will of the people. However, in many developing countries, the law does not feel like a social contract; it feels like an imposition. Legal codes, drafted in colonial times or shaped by elites, are written in legalese so convoluted that even the educated struggle to grasp them. As British jurist Jeremy Bentham noted, “The power of the lawyer is in the uncertainty of the law.” This uncertainty has bred a system where the common man feels alienated from the very institution that's meant to protect him.

Consider the phenomenon of mob justice, a manifestation of this alienation. If the law is perceived as distant, corrupt or ineffective, people take justice into their own hands. In recent months, viral videos have captured brutal street beatings across

Bangladesh, where mobs—aware that they are being recorded—continue their violent acts unfazed. Why? Because the fear of legal consequences is absent. The legitimacy of law is undermined when its enforcement is selective, corrupt, or incompetent.

In his *Theory of Justice*, John Rawls emphasised that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. Yet, in many developing countries, justice is either unseen or glaringly absent. The powerful evade punishment with impunity, while the weak suffer the full brunt of a draconian legal system. This inconsistency erodes the very foundation of legal respect.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

The adage “Justice delayed is justice denied” is nowhere more relevant than in the slow-grinding judicial systems of developing nations. Court cases often drag on for decades, sometimes outliving the accused and even the complainants. The legal backlog in countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan runs into the millions, leaving justice not only delayed but effectively denied.

Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, argued that laws derive their power from their ability to discipline and surveil society effectively. However, when enforcement is inconsistent, the disciplinary function collapses. This is why a corrupt minister, despite glaring evidence, may walk free, while a poor labourer is jailed for a minor infraction.

Selective enforcement further

fuels distrust. In many countries, the law is not an impartial force—it is a weapon wielded by those in power. Police forces are frequently accused of bribery, political allegiance, or outright lawlessness. Hannah Arendt warned against this in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, where she noted that when legal institutions lose their integrity, they become mere instruments of oppression rather than justice.

Why do people in developing countries fail to respect the law? One possible answer lies in the psychological conditioning of the populace. In *Authority and the Individual*, Bertrand Russell observed that respect for institutions is cultivated through consistent and fair enforcement. If a system is consistently seen as unjust, people cease to regard it as legitimate.

In contrast, legal obedience in many Western democracies is not necessarily a result of harsher punishments but rather a deeply ingrained belief that the law functions as it should. When a

law is seen as just, people are more likely to follow it.

that law should be clear and self-explanatory. Yet, in most post-colonial countries, legal texts remain obscured in archaic, technical jargon. German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, argued that true democracy requires transparent, comprehensible laws that enable public discourse. But when laws are written in dense, colonial-era language, they alienate the average citizen, rather than empowering them, as they are unable to comprehend the legal talk.

Legal philosopher Lon L Fuller, in *The Morality of Law*, argued that the law is not just a set of rules but a reflection of a society's moral fabric. If people do not see morality in the law, they will not respect it. In many developing countries, laws are perceived not as ethical guidelines but as bureaucratic obstacles. The result is legal nihilism—where people follow the law only when convenient, and break it when they can get away with it.

The consequences of this are dire. When legal respect collapses, the rule of force takes over. The weak are left defenceless, and the powerful operate with impunity.

What happens when people lose faith in the legal system? The rise of “people's courts”—extrajudicial mobs delivering instant justice—is a disturbing trend in many areas. From lynchings in Bangladesh to vigilante killings in Latin America, these acts are not mere crimes but symptoms of a society that no longer trusts its judiciary.

Italian criminologist Cesare Beccaria, in *On Crimes and Punishments*, warned that when laws become instruments of oppression rather than justice, society will naturally rebel against them. This rebellion manifests not in political uprisings but in the daily disregard for legal structures—whether through bribery, mob justice, or outright anarchy.

In many ways, “Third World” societies are walking a precarious tightrope. The monster of lawlessness, once unleashed, is not easily contained. Macaulay envisioned a law that would be obvious and self-evident, but in much of the developing world, the law is neither respected nor feared—it is merely negotiated.

The legal crisis in developing countries is not just a governance problem, it is a moral and social one. As long as the law remains distant, selective and incomprehensible, it will continue to be ignored. And if that remains the case, the anarchy of the jungle will continue to reign.

## How will LDC graduation impact our RMG sector?



RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin  
is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

Set to officially graduate from the United Nations' Least Developed Country (LDC) category in November 2026, Bangladesh is on the brink of entering a new chapter in its development journey. The decision to proceed with the graduation on schedule, despite recent global economic shocks, was reaffirmed by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus last month, dispelling any lingering uncertainty surrounding a potential delay. While this move symbolises remarkable progress and reflects our steady economic growth since the country's war-torn beginnings in 1971, it also brings with it significant challenges, particularly for our ready-made garment (RMG) sector, the backbone of our export economy.

Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category is a long-awaited milestone, achieved through meeting all three of the UN's eligibility criteria: Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, Human Assets Index (HAI), and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). It shows the nation's impressive strides in poverty reduction, human development, and economic resilience. Initially designated an LDC in 1975, Bangladesh benefited from a wide range of international support measures. These include duty-free, quota-free market access to many

developed nations, as well as relaxed rules around intellectual property rights and development finance. These preferential treatments have helped power our rapid industrialisation and trade growth, especially in the dominant RMG sector.

The RMG sector is the crown jewel of our economy, accounting for over 80 percent of the country's exports and employing around 40 lakh people. The industry has leveraged LDC trade privileges to become the second-largest global apparel exporter after China, becoming highly dependent on the trade preferences. Presently, 78 percent of Bangladesh's exports enjoy duty-free or reduced-tariff access in 38 countries under LDC schemes. Removing these preferences will significantly alter the cost dynamics of our RMG exports, which are highly price-sensitive.

Once the LDC benefits expire, we will potentially lose over \$8 billion in trade annually, and face tariffs of 12 percent or more in many major markets. For a sector built on low-cost competitiveness, these added duties could erode the price advantages that have long fuelled our global rise.

The decision to stick to the 2026 graduation deadline has stirred mixed reactions. Some economists, industry insiders, and even cabinet members

had called for a deferment of two to three years, citing the economic toll of the COVID pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and persistent global inflationary pressures. Their argument is that Bangladesh needs more time to build resilience and adjust to the impending loss of preferential market access.

Yet, the interim government, after consulting with experts, has chosen to embrace the transition, acknowledging the potential drawbacks but also preparing mitigation strategies.

One of the critical aspects of this transition is that certain LDC benefits will remain in place for three years post-graduation. This “grace period,” extending to 2029, offers a window of opportunity for industries to adapt. Encouragingly, key trading partners like the European Union, the UK, Canada and Australia have signalled their willingness to maintain favourable trade terms during this transition period, albeit with some conditions.

While the concerns are valid, this graduation also presents new opportunities for our RMG sector and broader economy. Removal of the LDC status can bolster our international reputation, potentially leading to better credit ratings, increased foreign direct investment (FDI), and a greater bargaining power in global trade negotiations.

The transition could also serve as a catalyst for much-needed reforms in the RMG sector. It would incentivise manufacturers to climb up the value chain, shift towards more sophisticated products, and invest in quality, branding, and sustainable practices. There is also an urgent need to diversify export markets and reduce overdependence on a few destinations,

such as the EU and the US.

Additionally, the industry must improve efficiency and productivity through automation, upskilling of workers, and infrastructure enhancements. Innovation and environmental sustainability will become critical in ensuring long-term competitiveness in a post-LDC landscape.

Our strong performance in sustainability certifications, green factories, and labour compliance could serve as differentiating factors in an increasingly conscious global market.

The garment industry, which has been both the symbol and engine of Bangladesh's rise, now stands at a pivotal moment. How well we adapt to this new environment will largely determine our economic trajectory in the coming decades.

A collaborative approach is essential. The government must actively support the private sector through targeted policy measures, including export subsidies, tax incentives, and upskilling programmes. Trade negotiations should focus on securing duty-free access under alternative frameworks such as GSP+ (Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus) with the EU, or bilateral and regional trade agreements. Equally important is fostering innovation and value addition within the industry. Only by moving away from dependency on basic, low-margin apparel can Bangladesh truly future-proof its RMG sector.

With the right mix of policy, innovation, and global cooperation, we have the potential not just to survive the post-LDC era, but to thrive as a confident, competitive developing nation. The path ahead is steep, but not insurmountable, if navigated wisely.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### 275 girls abducted in Nigeria

On this day in 2014, the Islamic sectarian movement Boko Haram abducted more than 275 girls from a boarding school in Chibok, Nigeria, sparking worldwide condemnation.

## YEAR-END AND NEW YEAR FESTIVALS

## A confluence of nature and culture



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## PAVEL PARTHA

We are gradually becoming disconnected and displaced from a once-thriving agrarian world. A clear indication of this trend is our tendency to engage in needless debates over the rituals and festivals associated with year-end and new year celebrations. We constantly attempt to impose artificial binary divisions and authoritarian narratives upon the majority of the country's rural, subaltern population. To truly understand the festivities of the year's end and another beginning, we must understand the local ecosystems and seasonal cycles. It is essential to understand how rural communities establish their cultural relationships with the ecosystems across different seasons.

The relationship between the subaltern population and the living environment is deeply intricate. That is why, during year-end observances, some in the hills prepare Pazon (festive dishes), while those in the plains cook *tita shak* (bitter greens). Some mark the year's end with the blooming of Bhatjara flowers, others with the Bhat flower, some with the Nageshwar, and others with the emergence of Salleaves. These are the outcomes of a millennia-old, complex interaction between nature and culture. Such experiences cannot be hidden or erased by the fabricated binaries of Hindu versus Muslim. Exploitative and oppressive regimes often fear the influence of the rural subaltern culture. Throughout human history, the transitions, beginnings, and ends of seasons have been celebrated through rituals and festivals. These year-end and new year celebrations deliver a collective message about the protection of life and nature, and that message poses a serious threat to the ongoing neoliberal system.

Bhatiporob in Baishakh, Kormadi in Jaishto-Ashar, Korondi in Shraban, Karam in Bhadro, Dasai in Ashwin, Lalabarta in Kartik, Wanna in Agrahan, Pushra in Poush, Baghai Shirni in Magh, Ghatabandha in Phalgun, and Chaitporob or Chaitra Sankranti in Chaitra—each marks the seasonal transition with unique cultural expressions. In each season, nature signals its ending and beginning through various living forms. Communities organise rituals to seek permission and blessings for harvesting and using nature's new produce. During the months of Phalgun and Chaitra, nature blossoms

with Bhath, Bhathjara or Biju flowers, Sal, Mahua, sweet pumpkin, Bilimbi, Venna, Amrul, Nageshwar, Palash, Kanthalcharpa, Dolancharpa, and Konokcharpa. Fields and lands become filled with the spread of *tita shak*. Nature offers leaves, flowers, and fruits of all tastes—bitter, sour, sweet, salty, and spicy.



Locals perform the ritual of Charak Puja in the Sundarbans to mark Chaitra Sankranti, or the end of the Bangla year.

Across different regions of the country, year-end and new year celebrations are marked by festivals such as Chaitra Sankranti, Gajan, Del, Neel Puja, Charak, Halkhata, Noboborsho, and the Baishakh fairs. Chakmas observe the Biju festival in three phases—Phulbiju, Mulbiju, and Gojjapojje. Tanchangyas, Pangals (Muslim Manipuris), and Bishnupriya Manipuris celebrate the Bishu festival. The Gurkhas and Assamese communities in Rangamati also observe the Bihu festival during this time; for the Koch people, too, the festival is known as Bihu. Many among the Hajong community celebrate the Hongorani festival. The Indigenous Bawm people celebrate Chapchar Kut festival. Around the same time, the Marmas observe Sangraing, the Tripuras celebrate Baisu or Baisuk,

Bangla letters from the names of three different festivals: Baisu, Sangraing, and Biju. For the matrilineal societies of the Mandi (Garo) and Khasi people, the timings of the year-end and new year celebrations are entirely different. According to the Mandi calendar, the last month of the year is Wachengza (February), and the first month is Galmakza (March). The Galmakdua festival is observed by the Mandis in March or April, although it is not a new year celebration. In the Khasi punji of Magurjhara, the Khasi year-end festival Seng Kutsnem is observed in the month of November. Among the Mros as well, year-end rituals such as Pratla Poi or Ningchhur Poi are held in certain places during the month of May.

Each season brings with it specific signs: nature's guidance. For

the Rakhines observe Sangrain, the Chaks also celebrate Sangraing, the Mros celebrate Changkran, and the Khiyangs mark the new year with their Sanglan festival. The Barman and Koch communities of Bhawal and Modhupur Garh celebrate Chaitra Sankranti through Sanyasi Puja, Gajan, and Charak Puja. Many Indigenous people in the tea gardens of Sylhet observe the Dondoborto festival during this period.

These year-end and new year festivals are generally held around the same time—at the end of Chaitra and the beginning of Baishakh. However, there is no such festival anywhere in the world called "Boi-Sa-Bi." This awkward and nationalistically motivated term was coined by combining the first

thousands of years, the rural subaltern population has revered these instructions of nature, integrating them into the rhythm of life. From this reverence have evolved numerous rituals and festivals like those marking the year's end and beginning. The mass uprising of July-August 2024 raised a strong collective voice in favour of expanding this space for people's culture. The state must recognise this public aspiration and channel cultural reform and transformation into an inclusive and pluralistic framework.

## The role of bitter greens

In both Bangalee and Indigenous communities, year-end rituals are incomplete without bitter greens and vegetables. Across different regions of the country, people consume 13 to



PHOTO: DIGANTA CHAKMA

Chakma community celebrates Biju festival in Rangamati.

together to the *kyang* (temple).

## Puas and fairs

One of the most widely recognised symbols of Chaitra Sankranti is the Gajan, Del, Neel, or Charak troupes that roam village to village. Dressed in red clothes and adorned as Shiva and Gauri—or sometimes masked—they collect alms. The Charak tree made from Sal wood and the Neel wood used in Neel Puja are iconic features of the celebration.

The traditional rural fairs held during Chaitra Sankranti and Pahela Baishakh also serve as grassroots cultural markers. In Gazipur, Moulibazar, Habiganj, Sylhet, Tangail, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Natore, Pabna, Sirajganj, Chattogram, and various corners of the country, ancient fairs still survive. Records indicate that an ancient Biju fair was once held in Kadelpur, Chattogram, but it has disappeared over time.

## People, not the state, are keepers of nature

We are gradually moving away from the intricate markers and symbols of nature. We are losing our connection to the transitions of the seasons and the historical language they embody. As a result, unnecessary debates are emerging around the year's end and beginning, dominated by self-serving elite narratives. The historical relationship between the rural subaltern, agricultural production, and Mother Nature is repeatedly being dismissed.

In the hills, the blooming of the Biju or Bhatjara flower signals the arrival of the Biju festival—also referred to by some as the Bei flower. During this time, the Biju bird can be heard calling at the hills. Children, adolescents, and women roam on the hills, in the forests and villages, gathering Bhatjara flowers. These wild blossoms are used to make garlands, exchange greetings, and decorate homes.

Kaikono or Nageshwar flowers are also natural markers of the year's end and beginning. During Sangraing, the Chakma people gather these flowers. On *Paingshwet*, or Flower Day, villages host traditional Chak games like *peko* (spinning tops), *gyang* (top toss), and *maiikanikcha* (blindfold game). The second day of Sangraing is *Akyai*, when village youths play instruments like *baik* (drum), *langhowak* (cymbal), and *hne* (bamboo flute) and proceed

29 varieties of bitter-tasting greens such as Gima tita, Naili, Gima, Dandokolosh, Amrul, Thankuni, Neem, Nishinda, Telakucha, Maloncho, Kanshira, Bashok, Ghrithikanchan, Shefali, Kolmi, Helencha, Ghum, Adabaron, Pipul, Gandhabhadali, Kantakhudi, and Khetpapra. In the hills, the Chakma community prepares Pazon, a dish made from bitter gourd, local aubergines, honagulo, wild potatoes, taro, bamboo shoots, and other indigenous vegetables. This mixed vegetable dish—made from as many as 30 to 107 ingredients—is called Kainbong in the Chakma language, *Hang Ro* by the Marmas, and *Moijarbong* by the Tripura community.

## The appeal of green mango

Around this time of the year, small

The Bangla New Year calendar is exclusive to Bengal and its people. No one else in the world can claim its ownership. Bangalees observe their new year with utmost devotion, whether they are at home or live abroad. What is the reason for such devotion and excitement? This is because Bangalees link their ethnicity to and equate their identity with the celebrations. It is a symbol of our identity.

This spirit highlights our human identity along with our Bangalee identity. We identify ourselves as a part of the global humanity. We utter the prayer, "Open our hearts," and we reiterate commitment "We are humans," which is our original and utmost identity. With our strong faith in universalism, we hold high the virtues of tolerance, mutual respect, friendship and peace. The spirit of universalism urges us to pray, "Connect us with everyone else and open all the doors which are shut." With the spirit of the universalism of the Bangla New Year, we connect with everyone else and free ourselves from all pettiness, divisive attitudes and hatred against others.

The relevance of all these spirits and virtues of the Bangla New Year is enormous in today's Bangladesh. Today, intolerance is on the rise in our society, and the historical communal harmony of our land is quite fragile. Our traditional virtues, with humanity at their centrepiece, seem to be struggling to hold ground. Resistance against such trends requires the spirit of the Bangla New Year to be at the forefront of our thoughts and attitudes.

At the dawn of the first day of 1432, when the eastern sky appears with colourful hues of the sun, when the blue sky and the calm earth is ready to welcome the new year, we should pray with all humility, "Let our mind rise above all the pettiness, all the bad thoughts, and let us clean our mind. Let the world of tomorrow be beautiful and bright, and let us create a world of peace." On the first morning of the new Bangla year, let this be our desire, our prayer, and our pursuit.



FILE PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHE

The baul songs in rural fairs, the musical gatherings of Chhayanaut in Ramna; dressed-up men and women, boys and girls in new colourful outfits, all the happy and excited children reflect the celebratory aspect of the Bangla New Year.

## SELM JAHAN

Selim Jahan  
is former director of the Human Development Report Office under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and lead author of the Human Development Report.

"What does the Bangla New Year mean to you?" I could hear the question as if coming from thousands of miles away, as a journalist interviewed me on the occasion. She is the head of the Bangla section of a renowned radio station in Europe. We were discussing the Bangla New Year of 1432. As she finished her question, I paused for a while. Usually, at the beginning of a new year, the question that most people face is "how do you feel?" But no, that was not the question asked of me. I hurriedly put together my thoughts and somewhat answered her question. But that question did not leave me altogether. I took time to contemplate further, and it seemed that the Bangla New Year holds five meanings for me: celebration, heritage, identity, universality, and humanity.

The celebratory aspect of the new year is well known. The fairs in villages, in cities, in big fields, by the roadsides; all those clay dolls, figures of horses and elephants, brides and bridegrooms; the merry-go-rounds and various games all are part of the Bangla New Year celebrations. The Baul songs in rural fairs; the musical gatherings of Chhayanaut in Ramna; dressed up men and women, boys and girls in new colourful outfits; all the happy and excited children—they all reflect the celebratory aspect of the Bangla New Year.

In fact, on the first day of the Bangla New Year, every nook and corner of Bangladesh is brightened. Colours come up on the sarees of women, the punjabis of men, in flower arrangements, in arcades erected. Lines take their places in alpanas, on walls, masks, and

paintings. The fine arts students of Dhaka University spend the whole night before the new year drawing alpanas, finishing graffiti on the walls, making masks of various colours and kinds, and creating different figures with coloured papers for the processions next morning. All of these are parts of the Bangla New Year celebration. We welcome the new year by exchanging greetings, singing songs, and savouring traditional Bangalee food. The environment around us becomes thick with the chattering of men and women, of boys and girls, and of the old and the young. Joy, excitement and interest abound all

**The Bangla New Year has a universal aspect. On the first day of Baishakh, we come together, irrespective of colour, creed, religion and beliefs. The new year belongs to all of us—we all feel an ownership of it. Yes, there is an English New Year, and various Indigenous communities have their new years, too. Yet, over and above everything, people from all groups take part in the celebrations, enjoy the events, and observe its rituals. It is observed in villages as well as in cities; the rich and the poor observe it simultaneously.**

around—happiness and celebrations mark the occasion.

The Bangla New Year has an aspect of tradition based on the age old heritage, the culture, life and the living of the Bangalee society. Some rituals have emerged over time. In some rural areas, at dawn, women swim across the ponds and in one breath and pick green mangoes from the stooping branches of a mango tree. Similarly, the act of cleaning the front yard of the house and drawing alpanas also reflect the tradition of rural Bengal. The simple faith that "If you are fed well on the first day of the new year, you will eat well during the rest of the year," or the ritual of halkhata—new accounts ledger—by businesses and shopkeepers holds that tradition too.

During the halkhata event, shopkeepers welcome their regular customers and serve different kinds of sweets to them with the

utmost affection and love. The shopkeepers ask for the blessings of the customers so that their businesses do well the whole year. And the red-coloured halkhata, leaning against the cash box of the shop is also part of the tradition. Nearby, one can see the tips of mango leaves in a brass pot, beside which rests a pen and an inkpot.

The Bangla New Year has a universal aspect. On the first day of Baishakh, we come together, irrespective of colour, creed, religion and beliefs. The new year belongs to all of us—we all feel an ownership of it. Yes, there is an English New Year, and various Indigenous communities have their new years, too. Yet, over and above everything, people from all groups take part in the celebrations, enjoy the events, and observe its rituals. It is observed in villages as well as in cities; the rich and the poor observe it simultaneously.

# Jamdani as the battleground

## The neo-imperialism of the “shared history” narrative

SHAHANA SIDDIQUI

### The Dangers of “Shared History”

Against my better judgment, I found myself in a rather heated online debate with Indian Bengalis regarding a video made by a popular Indian influencer on the issue of Jamdani. Ishita Mangal, in her series on regional Indian outfits, highlighted the Jamdani saree as a symbol of pride for West Bengal, noting how the British attempted to destroy or erase it but ultimately failed.

There are several things happening in the short clip: a quick photo of a Bangladeshi Jamdani, a reference to Charulata, and then her own Rabindric styling of what she presents as a Jamdani but is, in fact, a Dhakai Jamdani. In trying to explain the mistakes in the video—and that the Jamdani is not an Indian product but a Bangladeshi one—I was bombarded with a barrage of unsubstantiated claims and comments, all under the guise of “shared history.” Indian sentimentality had been hurt.

I usually enjoy Mangal’s content, which blends good humour with well-researched fashion and styling insights. And yet, just like a Sanjay Leela Bhansali film about Bengalis that prioritises grandeur over depth, Mangal made a rather khichuri—a debacle—out of Jamdani classification in a 30-second reel.

More so, the online comments—often ill-informed yet brimming with confidence—fall squarely within the current trend of Indian insistence on their dominance over all things Bangladesh. What is more interesting is the construction of the “shared history”



COURTESY: LS ARCHIVE/SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

narrative by a certain section of Indians who consider themselves critical of their right-wing government and yet live and function quite comfortably within that regime.

The “shared history” narrative operates under the guise of liberalism, aiming to diffuse any form of tension and co-opt Bangladeshis into accepting Indian narratives. Yet in the face of any critique—let alone criticism—there is immediate defensiveness and often racialised remarks against Bangladeshis.

The lack of critical self-reflection and awareness while positioning oneself as “liberal,” in my view, is far more dangerous and detrimental than bigots who are open about their hatred. At least with the latter, there is no pretence.

But before I delve into the problem with “shared history”, let me revisit Mangal’s video and some basic history of the Jamdani to set the stage.

In the video, Mangal is wearing what is known as the Dhakai Jamdani, a West Bengali cotton saree with motifs embroidered on the jomin (body) and anchol (end). These sarees have geometric patterns similar to those of the original Jamdani, but neither the quality of the fabric nor the designs meet the established criteria of what constitutes a true Jamdani (see CPD & NCCB Report 2014).

That is what Mangal is wearing—a Dhakai Jamdani—which is a misnomer, because why would a West Bengali saree be called Dhakai Jamdani? A simple internet search shows that after the partition of India and Pakistan, many Hindu Bengali tantis (weavers) were forced to migrate to West Bengal, where they formed their own community. It is important to note that Jamdani was the specialisation of Muslim weavers. The weaving community in West Bengal (mainly Hindus) likely created sarees inspired by Bengal’s Jamdani tradition. The term Dhakai, therefore, refers more to the origins of the tantis than to the actual fabric or weaving technique.

Additionally, the video features a photo of Madhabi Mukherjee as Tagore’s protagonist Charulata, made iconic in Satyajit Ray’s film, where she is seen wearing a Bengal Jamdani. During Tagorean times, Jamdani was worn



At the Jamdani Saree market in Narayanganj's Rupganj, shopkeepers display their wares to eager buyers. Open from midnight every Thursday, the prized sarees—priced between Tk 4,000 and Tk 20,000—are usually sold out within hours.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

by the elites but was also recognised as a saree from Dhaka, not from Kolkata or its surrounding regions. There’s also a quick image of a contemporary Jamdani—one that any Bangladeshi woman might have in her wardrobe. Again, this is not a Dhakai Jamdani but a Bangladeshi Jamdani, wrongly labelled as a West Bengal product.

One may argue—what is the harm in a little mix-up? This is precisely where the danger of the “shared history” framing comes in. Another quick internet search reveals hundreds of Indian websites extensively discussing “Bengal Jamdani,” using photos of sarees that are clearly not Bangladeshi Jamdani—or even related to it. Many of these sites also mention that Jamdani is UNESCO GI-protected, but conveniently omit the fact that this recognition belongs to Bangladesh, not India. It is an act of deliberate misinformation by omission. As a result, Jamdani is increasingly portrayed as an Indian fabric and form of craftsmanship.

Little lies have big consequences.

From the Indian side, the “shared history” framing appears frequently—be it in seemingly trivial cricket banter, difficult trade and diplomatic negotiations, or even the dangerous reduction of Bangladesh’s War of Independence to the so-called “Indo-Pak War.” This framing becomes a convenient

who routinely undermine Bangladeshi colleagues. They attempt to “educate” us in our own areas of expertise.

Some have even committed gross academic dishonesty by ignoring well-documented Jamdani history and presenting it as their own research at world-renowned universities. The “shared history” narrative has been used to play dirty, while expecting us to roll over and take it.

But why this fascination—almost obsession—with the Jamdani?

The simple answer is that the Jamdani is magnificent. According to the seminal book Traditional Jamdani Designs (2018) by the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh (NCCB), the Jamdani, as it is crafted in Bangladesh, is the last remnant of Bengal’s muslin weaving tradition, which was systematically destroyed during British colonial rule. It is cotton weaving at its finest.

Unlike other sarees, the motifs are not embroidered or printed, but woven directly on the loom. This craftsmanship is a family affair, passed down orally from generation to generation. In the same book, one of the pioneers of Bangladeshi heritage conservation, the late Ruby Ghuznavi, wrote extensively about the indigeneity of cotton in ancient India, the superior Indian cotton looming techniques that captivated the world through Arab traders, the evolution of

weavers remained in the greater Dacca region—a reality that holds true to this day.

Jamdani is not just the material or the motifs; it encompasses everything—from the river system and flora-fauna of the Dhaka region, to the pit loom, the weaving technique, the oral directives, the family heritage, and the way of life surrounding this art.

Along with the story of master craftsmanship, the Jamdani is also one of quiet resilience and resistance—surviving British atrocities against Bengal/Mughal muslim, colonial and World War-induced famines, the partition of India and Pakistan, and later, Bangladesh’s War of Independence.

The Jamdani, I will argue, is a material expression of Bengal’s decolonisation. Its sheer existence is an act of resistance—with the weaving technique serving as the subaltern’s way of speaking to power, telling their stories, and expressing the human necessity to create art, even in the face of great adversity.

There was a time when the Jamdani community was dying out. Through extensive resurgence efforts by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in the 1980s and 1990s—supported by designers, craft specialists, academics, development organisations, and patrons—the Jamdani Village was established in Sonargaon, Bangladesh (Ghuznavi 2018: 33).

On a personal note, growing up in different countries as a child, I was taught by my mother and the Bangladesh Foreign Service aunties the importance of always having at least one Jamdani and one Nakshi Kantha saree in our wardrobes. It was predominantly a women’s collective effort to support local craftsmanship and ensure that the younger generation understood the importance of representing our heritage on the world stage. This is a lesson I continue to practise to this day.

But we are a long way from that earlier struggle. Today, the Jamdani industry in Bangladesh is booming—with established handicraft stores such as Aarong, Aranya, Kumudini, and others boasting wide collections, hosting fashion shows and fairs dedicated to Jamdani.

There are innumerable saree stores across the country selling affordable Jamdanis, as well as niche boutiques specialising in high-end, one-of-a-kind pieces.

And yet, despite this thriving Jamdani industry, it continues to be subsumed under the Indian “shared history” narrative.

Moreover, under this insidious framing, global art exhibitions and conservation projects continue to showcase Bangladeshi Jamdani as Indian heritage, almost never acknowledging that the Jamdani is thriving in this part of Bengal.

Last year, I was able to visit The Design Museum of London’s SARI/STATEMENT exhibition in Amsterdam twice. And while the exhibition was well-curated, the West Bengal Jamdani on display was perhaps one of the worst I have ever seen.

No self-respecting Bangladeshi woman or tanti would ever own or claim such a poorly woven saree—nor insult Jamdani by calling it such. And yet, it was one of the main pieces in the exhibition, claiming to be the continuity of Bengal’s muslin legacy.

Our weak diplomatic efforts, our inability to effectively market Bangladesh and showcase our histories, allow for such blatant misrepresentation to go unchecked. When enough layers of falsity are repeated, even well-documented history can be overturned.

There are those working across the two Bengals to curate and restore our shared heritage. But the exhibitions, research, and

technical expertise largely remain on the Indian side of the border—with only a select few Bangladeshis having access to such spaces.

Social media-driven commerce has created immense opportunities for entrepreneurs across the region.

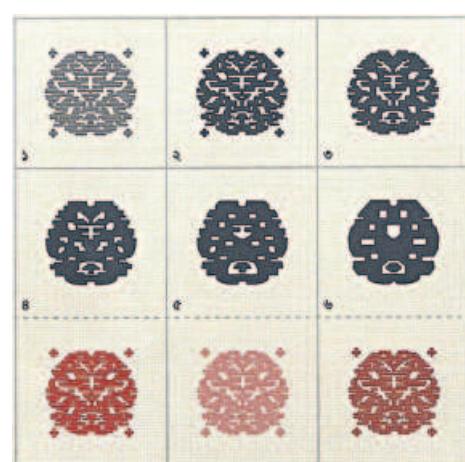
There is no doubt that Indian fashion houses play a significant role in globalising regional craftsmanship. Designers like Sabyasachi, Rahul Mishra, and Anita Dongre have become synonymous with luxury, comparable to global icons like Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Dior.

Indian fashion houses excel in e-commerce, and Bangladeshi counterparts have started adopting similar strategies. To appeal to the Indian market, Bangladeshi Jamdani sellers either directly sell pieces to Indian boutiques—who then rename them as “Dhakai Jamdani”—or, worse, Bangladeshi boutiques themselves have begun calling Jamdanis “Dhakai Jamdani.”

While it is both difficult and morally unjustifiable to police individual sellers who are simply trying to keep their businesses afloat, this act of compliance—to make Jamdani more digestible for the Indian market—is a manifestation of Bangladesh’s perpetual approval-seeking behaviour from India in all matters: from politics to economics to socio-cultural production.

**What’s in a name? Jamdani by any other name would not be Jamdani!**

Some may argue that perhaps I am too sensitive about what gets called “Jamdani”—



A collection of traditional Jamdani motifs

because, to quote the famous bard, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet.”

And yet, there is something specifically known as the “English Rose,” which is a trademark in and of itself!

Correct naming, recognition, and differentiation of Jamdani matter. It is crucial to ensure that the regal Jamdani is not lost in the misnomer of the “Dhakai Jamdani.” Our Jamdani is uniquely a Dhaka story, intricately woven into the region and the city. It is a story of resilience through waves of turmoil, of a community’s continuity in the face of change, and of resistance to adversaries—both large and small, foreign and local.

It would be a tragedy if, after surviving all these challenges, the name and history of Jamdani became blurred with “Dhakai Jamdani” for the sake of social media relevance and Indian comfort.

Perhaps now is the time to hold ourselves and our national agenda to higher standards.

### A big step towards that would be:

- engaging in critical archival research,
- restoring historical documents and monuments,
- ceasing the demolition of buildings and structures simply because we disagree with their politics, and
- investing in arts and craftsmanship.

And perhaps, this is also a good time to reflect on how much of this regressive “shared history” discourse we are willing to endure in the name of maintaining neighbourly peace.

Maybe we can learn from the Jamdani itself—how it survived immense adversity and still carries its resplendence.

Many of the motifs have changed over time, and yet the cotton yarn, weaving techniques, tutelage, and pit loom have remained enduring markers.

My personal favourite part of the Jamdani’s history is that all the original materials are indigenously Dhaka: the cotton that grew in the region, the mineral-rich silt deposited by the Meghna and Shitalakha rivers, and the *boal* fish bone that was initially used for weaving.

The topography of Dacca/Dhaka is woven into the Jamdani—*nodi, mati, maach*. To lose Jamdani is to lose ourselves.

**Shahana Siddiqui** is an anthropologist and currently a guest researcher at the Universiteit van Amsterdam. She is a saree—especially Jamdani—enthusiast.

(Special thanks to Maheen Khan, Sheikha Saifur Rahman, and Sharmin Rahman for expert insights. Thank you, Seama Mowri and Muntasir Mamun, for your valuable comments.)



A weaver meticulously crafts intricate motifs on a Jamdani saree, each thread a testament to centuries-old artistry.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

tool to water down political tensions while subtly encroaching on anything uniquely Bangladeshi.

In recent years, India has tried to register the GI status of Tangail craftsmanship—a tradition from a Bangladeshi district nowhere near India. Designers like Gaurang Shah have even blatantly lied (and gotten away with it) in interviews, claiming to have “invented” the Jamdani, a weaving tradition that dates back centuries.

This “shared history” narrative offers an easy way out when Indians are caught in an international lie or fact-checked on social media. It is layered with neo-imperialism that manifests as a constant infantilisation of Bangladeshi.

Even in global academic circles, while I’ve been fortunate to work with phenomenal mentors and students of Indian origin, there remains a significant number of Indian academics—both seniors and juniors—

muslin, and the perfection that was Bengal/Dhaka muslin during the Mughal era.

Important for this piece is her discussion of the factors that made Dhaka muslin superior to any other of its time:

(a) Phuti karpas—a specific cotton that grew around the Dhaka region due to the mineral-rich silt deposits of the River Meghna,

(b) the fineness of its handspun yarn, and

(c) the delicate yet extraordinary skills of the weavers—initially Brahmin women.

Bit by bit, design motifs—jaam (flower), dani (vase)—inspired by Persian designs, appeared on the muslin yards, becoming what is now known as Jamdani.

“While muslins were woven mainly by Hindu weavers (tantis), Jamdanis were primarily the forte of Muslim weavers (julaha)” (Ghuznavi 2018: 25).

Due to various factors, muslin weavers migrated to other textile centres in what is now West Bengal. Interestingly, Jamdani

# Star SPORT

DHAKA MONDAY APRIL 14, 2025, BAISHAKH 1, 1432 BS

## What to WATCH

T SPORTS

IPL

Lucknow vs Chennai

Live from 8:00 pm

NAGORIK TV

Islamabad vs Peshawar

Live from 9:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1

Premier League

Bournemouth vs

Southampton

Live from 1:00 am

(Tuesday)

## Hridoy gets 2-match ban for 'unacceptable' behaviour

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board director Iftekharul Ahmed Mithu termed Mohammedan captain Towhid Hridoy's behaviour as unacceptable after the cricketer was sanctioned for a Level 2 offence following continuation of his grievances against umpiring decisions during Saturday's DPL match against Abahani.

The match referee sanctioned the player with Tk 80,000 and added three demerit points to four already slapped, in effect handing him a two-match suspension which originally was of one match.

Talking with The Daily Star, Mithu said that Hridoy's overall behaviour was 'unacceptable' and that he didn't know where the cricketer got this attitude from.

Hridoy was slapped with four demerit points and a one-match suspension for his heated exchange with on-field umpires Tanvir Ahmed and Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid Saikat during the match.

"A notice has been sent to the player and if he accepts the sanctions, there would be no further hearing," a BCB umpires' committee official told The Daily Star. However, if Hridoy does not accept the verdict, a further hearing will take place on Monday.

Following his public grievances to the media regarding umpiring after the match, three more demerit points were added, making it seven demerit points in total.

It was learnt that Hridoy misbehaved during the hearing of the initial sentence and the match officials found him to be in breach of section 2.7 and 2.8 of BCB's Code of Conduct.



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Ten members of the Bangladesh cricket team, including skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, joined a training camp in Sylhet ahead of their opening Test of the two-match series against Zimbabwe, starting on April 20.



## Alcaraz claims maiden Monte Carlo title

REUTERS

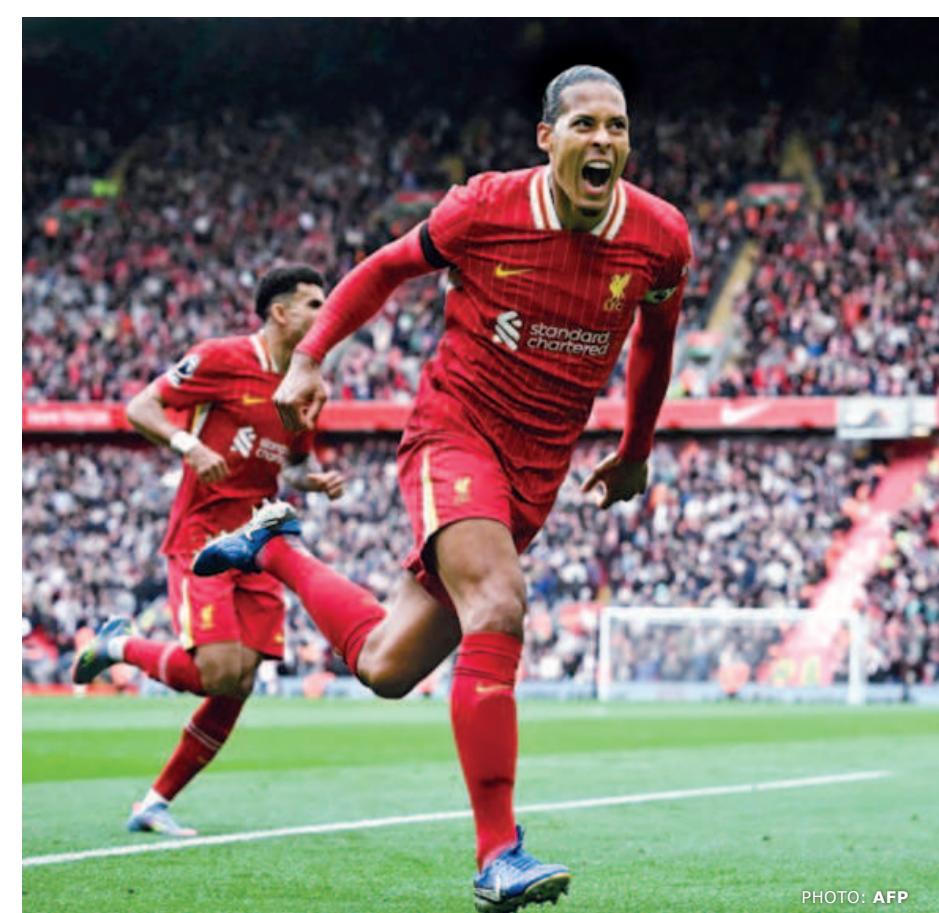
Carlos Alcaraz overcame a slow start to beat Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 in the Monte Carlo Masters final on Sunday, clinching his first title at the prestigious claycourt event and gaining momentum ahead of next month's French Open.

The Spaniard dropped his opening two service games and struggled to find his range early on, particularly on his usually reliable forehand, as Musetti took full advantage to claim the first set.

But Alcaraz responded with a dominant display in the second, winning five straight games to take control of the match.

His physical power and improved shot selection proved too much for the Italian world number 16, who was seeking his first Masters 1000 title.

Alcaraz broke in the first and third games of the deciding set, maintaining his grip on the contest to seal victory in the first major European claycourt event of the season.



Liverpool extended their lead to 13 points at the top of the Premier League with a hard-earned 2-1 win over West Ham at home yesterday. Luis Diaz scored the opener in the 18th minute, a lead which Liverpool managed to hold till the 85th minute. Left-back Andre Robertson scored an own goal which levelled the scoreline but captain Virgil Van Dijk found the net three minutes later to clinch the game for The Reds.

## Penalty corner now our main strength: Mimo

ANISUR RAHMAN

Converting penalty corners will be Bangladesh hockey team's "main strength" during their title defense in the upcoming Men's AHF Cup in Indonesia, said new captain Pushkor Khisa Mimo yesterday.

Bangladesh have struggled to convert from penalty corners in past, with hardly any penalty corner specialists in the squad.

But the 26 member Bangladesh contingent that will leave for Jakarta in the early hours of Tuesday to take part in the 10-team competition, from which the top two teams will qualify for next Asia Cup, has as many as four penalty corner specialists, a prospect that excited Mimo.

"We have participated in the last four editions of the AHF Cup and have become champions every time. We are going there to defend the title but it is going to be challenging because only two teams instead of four will qualify for the Asia Cup," Mimo told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I think converting penalty corners is going to be our main strength this time because we have drag and flick specialists like [Sohanur Rahman] Sabuj, Hujaifa [Hossain], Ashraful [Islam] and Amirul [Islam]," said the 31-year-old forward who is going to captain Bangladesh for the first time since co-captaining the side during the 2017 Asia Cup in Bangladesh.

Under coach Maman Ur Rashid, the team had a six-week-long preparation camp ahead of the tournament but did not play any practice matches against international sides.

Heading into a tournament without



**FIXTURES**

- April 18 – Bangladesh vs Kazakhstan
- April 20 – Bangladesh vs Indonesia
- April 22 – Bangladesh vs Thailand
- April 23 – Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
- April 25 – Semifinals
- April 27 – Final

"We had a plan to play three practice matches in Malaysia before heading to Indonesia but we could not arrange it despite going door to door for funds."

– BHF joint secretary and team's assistant manager Abu Jafar Tapan

PHOTO: STAR

playing practice matches is nothing new for the team. Expectations were that the newly-formed adhoc committee would break away from this practice and arrange practice matches before the tournament but much like the previous committees, it failed to do so.

"We are happy with the preparation, with the way the boys practiced. They were out of action for a long time, they improved

their fitness by 80 to 90 percent. The only lacking is that we couldn't evaluate the team's capacity due to not playing any practice matches," Bangladesh Hockey Federation joint secretary and team's assistant manager Abu Jafar Tapan said.

"We had a plan to play three practice matches in Malaysia before heading to Indonesia but we could not arrange it despite going door to door for funds."

## Ritu, Nigar guide Bangladesh to thrilling win over Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

All-rounder Ritu Moni played the innings of her life to give Bangladesh a thrilling two wicket victory in their ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier fixture against Ireland at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

Ritu's tremendous knock under pressure -- an unbeaten 61 ball 67 featuring six fours and a six -- rescued Bangladesh from the brink of a likely defeat as the Tigresses chased down Ireland's 235 run total with eight balls to spare after being reduced to 82-4 in the 22nd over.

**Ritu Moni and Nahida Akter's 54-run partnership is the highest for the ninth wicket in WODIs, breaking the record of 37 between Panna Ghosh and Jahanara Alam.**

Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana Joty 68-ball 51 alongside useful contributions from the middle and lower order ensured Bangladesh got their second win in two matches, following a 178-run win against Thailand in their opening game on Thursday.

While the top-order failed to produce anything of substance, Ritu, batting at six, put together a 45-run stand with Fahima Khatun (28 off 38 balls), a 40-run partnership with Jannatul Ferdus (19 off 23 balls), and a record 54-run ninth wicket stand with Nahida Akter (18 off 17 balls) to see the Tigresses through. Earlier, Rabeya Khan had taken three wickets and Fahima Akter two wickets as Bangladesh restricted Ireland to 235-5 after being asked to field first.

Bangladesh, who sit second on the points table, will take on Scotland in their next match tomorrow.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

### IRELAND

235-8 in 50 overs (Prendergast 41, Delany 63; Fahima 2-50, Rabeya 3-39)

### BANGLADESH

240-8 in 48.4 overs (Sharmin 24, Joty 51, Ritu 67 not out, Fahima 28, Jannatul 19, Nahida 18; Prendergast 2-14, Kelly 2-53)

### RESULT

Bangladesh won by two wickets.

### PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH

Ritu Moni



## DHAKA PREMIER LEAGUE

## Wasi shines as Gazi secure third Super League spot

SPORTS REPORTER

An 18-year-old Wasi Sddiquee, who first grabbed the spotlight during the ACC U-19s Asia Cup in 2023, is coming up through the ranks as the leg-spinner claimed six wickets to help Gazi Group notch up a 51-run win over Brothers Union in a Dhaka Premier League (DPL) game at BKSP 4 yesterday.

Gazi's win saw them secure third position in the DPL Super League standings, with eight wins in 11 games. Wasi's six wickets saw him equal Rishad Hossain in the top wicket-takers' list with 11 wickets. Wasi, however, has a better average and economy rate than Rishad, who is now away to play in the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Shamsur Rahman Shuve struck a 90-ball 84 while Mohammad Salman's rapid 27-ball unbeaten 51 saw Gazi post 301 all out as Brothers' Sumon Khan bagged four for 64.

Brothers got off to a rapid start with a 10-run stand off 97 deliveries between Mahfujul Islam and Zahiduzzaman Khan. Wasi came into the attack in his second spell and had an immediate effect. First, Mahfujul holed one out at long-off, unable

to clear a flighted delivery before Wasi.

Wasi castled Aich Mollah in the next delivery with a googly that came in sharply to bamboozle the batter. On a hat-trick, Wasi produced another googly that rattled Mushukur Rahman's pads, but the batter survived as the impact was outside the line.

Wasi would account for Mushukur Rahman later in the 31st over, and when Zahiduzzaman departed in the 33rd over to Wasi after a dazzling 122 off 92, the momentum shifted towards Gazi as Wasi picked up the final wicket in the 44th over.

Agrani Bank, meanwhile, secured fifth position as Shadman Islam starred with 87 in their 89-run win over Legends of Rupganj. The Shadman Islam and Amite Hasan while veteran Marshall Ayub came up with a handy 36-ball 48 to help Agrani to 306 for six.

In reply, the majority of the star-studded Legends of Rupganj batters got starts but could not counter Agrani. Tanzid Tamim managed 27 while Soumya Sarkar, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, and Afif Hossain scored 27, 32, and 29, respectively.

Medium pacer Robiul Haque bagged four for 39 for Agrani. As the league phase ended today, Shadman and Joy joined the national team in Sylhet for the Tigers' camp ahead of their two-Test series against Zimbabwe this month.

At BKSP 3, Partex Sporting clinched a two-wicket win over Dhamondi Sports Club despite a 90-run knock from Yasir Ali. Yasir's 90 and Moin Khan's 80 saw Dhamondi reach 229 all out while Ahran Amin's unbeaten 85 saw Partex secure their third win in the tournament.

Partex, Brothers, and Shinepukur Cricket Club will now play the relegation league.



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## POLLS TIMELINE

**BNP questions Yunus' repeated 'shifts'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salauddin Ahmed has questioned Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' "repeated shifts" in the election timeline.

Speaking at the National Representative Conference 2025 of the Bhasani Anushari Parishad at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Salauddin said that such changes would not be well-received.

"Whom are you encouraging? Which undemocratic forces are you giving benefits to midway? To serve whose agenda is the chief adviser constantly wavering between 'December to June', 'December', 'June'? Why can't you stay still?" the BNP leader said.

"You [chief adviser] are a world-renowned, respected person. This kind of shifting will not be well-received by the nation or international community," he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## PURBACHAL PLOT GRAFT

**Arrest warrants issued against Hasina, Rehana**

**Rehana's children Tulip, Azmina, Bobby, also wanted**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, and 21 others in three cases filed over irregularities in plot allocation in Purbachal New Town.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



The preparations made for today's Pahela Baishakh festivities at Chattogram's DC Hill were ruined last night when a group of vandals swooped on the organisers, wrecked the stage, smashed chairs, and tore down banners. The event held here to welcome the Bangla New Year is one of the major celebrations in the port city.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Cancel reciprocal tariffs

China calls on US after Washington announces exemptions for consumer electronics

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday called on the United States to "completely cancel" its reciprocal tariffs after Washington announced exemptions for consumer electronics and key chipmaking equipment.

"We urge the US to... take a big step to correct its mistakes, completely cancel the wrong practice of 'reciprocal tariffs' and return to the right path of mutual respect," a commerce ministry

spokesperson said in a statement.

The world's two largest economies have been engaged in a tit-for-tat tariff war since US President Donald Trump announced this month sweeping global tariffs — since escalating the blanket duty on Chinese goods to 145 percent.

Retaliatory Chinese import tariffs of 125 percent on US goods took effect Saturday, with Beijing standing defiant against its biggest trade partner.

But after his tariff sent global markets into a tailspin, Trump announced a 90-

day delay for most countries.

China was excluded from the reprieve. Washington again dialled down the pressure Friday when the US Customs and Border Protection office said smartphones, laptops, memory chips and other products would be excluded from the global levies.

Beijing's commerce ministry yesterday called the exemptions a "small step" by Washington and said that China was "evaluating the impact" of the decision.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

**Pahela Baishakh a symbol of our harmony: Yunus**

UNB, Dhaka

Extending greetings to all on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said people of all faiths and communities in Bangladesh are members of one family.



"Tomorrow [Monday], the first day of Baishakh, is one of the symbols of this harmony. Everyone will celebrate in their own way, according to their customs, and take part in the festivities," he said while laying the foundation stone of "Sampriti Bhaban" at the Dhaka International Buddhist Monastery.

Yunus said despite differences in beliefs, religions, and customs, the Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and other communities living in the mountains and plains of the country

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

## INVESTMENT SUMMIT Tk 3,100 crore promised: BIDA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recently concluded Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025 has yielded investment declaration worth Tk 3,100 crore, says Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

He shared the information at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital yesterday.

"Personally, I believe the summit hasn't achieved a perfect 10. There's still plenty of room

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

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