

"The United States has been helping Ukraine over the last three years, and we want it to end, but it's not our war."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

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TO KNOW

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ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

Price spiral hits fixed-income families hard

SUKANTA HALDER and MD ABBAS

After a brief respite during Ramadan, the prices of rice, oil, eggs, onions, flour, and other essentials have risen again, putting more financial strain on low- and fixed-income families.

Supply chain experts and consumer rights activists blame the absence of consistent market monitoring, dwindling supply of winter vegetables, and the end of VAT exemptions granted during Ramadan.

This happens at a time when the government is trying to curb inflation, which was above 9 percent in March.

At kitchen markets in Mirpur-1, Duaripara, New Market, Moghbazar, Karwan Bazar, and Hatirpool, shoppers yesterday said almost every essential cost more than they did a week ago.

"The government has removed the VAT exemption for edible oil. Does it no longer feel it has responsibility to the general public?" said Nokib Hassan, a resident of Mirpur in the capital.

A shopper in Moghbazar, Himmel Sarkar, echoes the sentiment: "If the government could control prices during Ramadan, why can't it do that now?"

According to retailers and Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) data, each kg of coarse rice now sells for Tk 52.58, up from Tk 50.55, and fine rice for Tk 88.90, up from Tk 85.88.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A farmer shows potatoes he preserved under the shade of roadside trees in Rajshahi. Due to an inadequate space in the local cold storage facilities, farmers are resorting to such method. However, tarpaulin and leaves offer little protection from the elements as a lot of potatoes have started rotting. As a result, farmers are selling off their harvest at Tk 10 a kg. The photo was taken in Mahishkhanda village of Mohanpur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

DECEMBER POLLS DEMAND

BNP eyes joint
movement with
allies, Jamaat

To meet leaders of 12-party
alliance, LDP today

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP is eyeing a joint movement with Jamaat-e-Islami and like-minded parties to pressure the government to hold the next national election in December.

Starting today, the BNP will hold a series of meetings with parties that previously participated in joint movements against the Awami League-led government to devise a strategy. Separate talks will also be held with Jamaat, which the BNP said would not be part of its electoral alliance.

The party plans to host a press conference in Dhaka at the end of this month or early next month, bringing together top leaders of the parties to send a clear message to the government: most political parties are ready for the election and want it to be held in December.

According to party insiders, the move was finalised during the BNP's Standing Committee meeting on Thursday night at the party chairperson's Gulshan office, a day after senior leaders met Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PROPOSALS TO CONSTITUTION REFORM COMMISSION

22 out of 35 parties want caretaker govt system

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

As many as 35 political parties have sought a wide range of reforms to the constitution but one demand – the reinstatement of the caretaker government system – stands out with 22 of them vouching for it.

The caretaker government with non-partisan administration was introduced after the fall of dictator HM Ershad in 1990 as an ad hoc system and was incorporated into the constitution through the 13th amendment in 1996. It was abolished in 2011 through the 15th amendment.

Political parties that back the caretaker system are BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Nagarik Committee, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Bashod), Jatiyatobadi Samamona Jote, Bangladesh Jashod, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Party (BSP), Bangladesher Biplobi Communist League, Bangladesh Labour Party, both factions of

Gono Odhikar Parishad, Nagarik Oikya, Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), Ganosamhati Andolon, Rastro Sangskar Andolon, Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya

chief justice as the chief adviser. But if the last top judge is unavailable or unwilling to take the responsibility, the president may choose from among the previously retired chief justices. If all of them are unavailable or unwilling, the president may pick any other former judge of the Appellate Division, beginning with the one who retired last.

But if all these options fail, the president may, after consulting major parties, appoint a qualified Bangladeshi to head the caretaker government. If all these options are exhausted, the president may, as a last resort, assume the responsibilities of the head of the caretaker government in addition to his role as the president.

Jamaat advocates a provision of an impartial caretaker government in the constitution. It favours empowering the president to seek assistance from the United Nations and the international community to hold national elections.

The Nagarik Committee, comprising the July uprising SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

ITEMS (PER KG/LTR)	PRICE ONE WEEK AGO	PRICE YESTERDAY
	TK 50-55	TK 52-58
	TK 158-168	TK 162-170
	TK 38-45	TK 40-45
	TK 30-35	TK 65
	TK 38 FOUR PIECES	TK 40-45 FOUR PIECES
	TK 240-280	TK 250-300
	TK 15-20	TK 25-40
	TK 50-60	TK 60-70

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EARTHNA SUMMIT
Yunus flies
to Qatar on
Monday

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will be visiting Qatar on Monday to attend the Earthna Summit 2025 in Doha at the invitation of Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

He is also likely to hold a bilateral meeting with Sheikh Tamim on the sidelines of the summit, according to a foreign ministry official.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain, Energy Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan and Industries Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan may also accompany him during the visit.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



What looks like an under-construction road is actually a farm land next to the Halda river in Fatakchhara upazila of Chattogram. Various brick kilns in the area are removing the topsoil from the land to make bricks, which is diminishing the land's agricultural potential. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

A positive move to improve ties Say analysts on Dhaka- Islamabad FOC

PORIMOL PALMA

The first Bangladesh-Pakistan foreign office consultation (FOC) in 15 years is a positive move to improve ties, but how far the relationship can go depends on whether Islamabad is ready to settle historically unresolved issues, analysts said.

The foreign policy experts said the top leadership of both countries appear to have the political will to strengthen bilateral relations, which can also be the beginning of better regional cooperation.

"However, the ball is now in Pakistan's court," said Altaf Parvez, a researcher of South Asian history.

If Pakistan wants to advance the relationship only on economic and geopolitical considerations, it will not improve in a true sense. "The people of Bangladesh will not accept it from their hearts," Altaf said.

The foreign secretary-level consultation was held in Dhaka on Thursday ahead of Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar's visit to Bangladesh on April 27-28.

After the talks with Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin, his Pakistani counterpart Amna Baloch called on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain. Both sides agreed to foster deeper cooperation in different areas, including trade and investment, agriculture, education, culture and tourism.

While Bangladesh looked eager to improve the ties, it also raised the historically unsettled issues in the foreign office consultation. Secretary Jashim said the Bangladesh side emphasised that the issues need to be settled for a solid foundation of the relationship.

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Dhaka in bloom as BOUGAINVILLEA TAKES OVER

JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

Dhaka often feels like a city suffocating in its own chaos. I see it every day -- the heavy dust, the sky dulled by smoke, the endless traffic, the honking that never stops. It all makes the city seem tired, almost desaturated. Sometimes, I wonder how we manage to live in this endless traffic and concrete surrounding us. I often find myself exhausted by it, filled with a desire for something that heals our souls.

But then comes Baishakh, bringing bougainvillea with it. As summer covers Dhaka in heat and dust, vibrant bougainvillea begins to bloom -- I suddenly notice splashes of colour breaking through the grey. Bougainvillea, or as we call it by its beautiful Bengali name, Baganbilash, begins to take over.

It's a surprising contrast. This city of endless grey suddenly coming to life with bursts of pink, magenta, purple, red or orange bracts. The bougainvillea doesn't ask for permission, it just spills over balconies,



PHOTOS: JAWWAD SAMI NEOGI

climbs up rusty gates and wraps itself around old brick walls. It doesn't demand any attention, it simply blooms, wild and free.

Once known as Kagaj Ful or Kagaji Ful (Paper Flower) in our mother tongue, is now known by the name gifted by Rabindranath Tagore. He first saw it in the garden

of an Englishman and found its name "Bougainvillea" too formal, so he renamed it 'Baganbilash.' The flower that transforms a regular building or a paint-faded wall into something truly bilashi (luxurious) -- no wonder it deserves to be named so beautifully!

As I walk under the bougainvillea's shade, they make me pause and appreciate the beauty around. Surrounded by the chaos, I see rickshaw

pullers resting under the bougainvillea tree, tired after working all day in the hot sun. For a moment, Dhaka feels lighter, brighter and vibrant. I breathe relaxed, overwhelmed by the simple yet stubborn beauty of a plant that refuses to fade.

Does it understand the sorrow of the city? I think not. It just quietly soothes the sorrows around.

I love the fact that bougainvillea grows wherever it chooses, refusing to be within limits. There is something deeply meaningful about that -- a reminder that beauty finds a way, even in the most unexpected places. And in a city like Dhaka, that reminder means everything to me.

I often wonder if those who planted them ever imagined the impact. Did they picture someone like me stopping for a moment, from my busy life just to admire a flower? Did they know that in a city often struggling to breathe, something as simple as bougainvillea could bring unexpected joy? Perhaps they did. Or perhaps the bougainvillea simply bloomed on its own, unaware of the blessings it brought.

Bougainvillea doesn't erase the pollution, the traffic jams or the daily frustrations we hold, but it offers a beautiful distraction. And for that, I am grateful. It reminds me that, despite everything, Dhaka is still alive.

BNP eyes joint movement with allies, Jamaat

FROM PAGE 1

During that meeting, BNP leaders demanded a clear election roadmap. However, the chief adviser reiterated that polls would be held between December and June next year, a response that did not sit well with the party.

"We are not satisfied at all," said Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir after the meeting.

As per the committee's decision, BNP will begin today's meetings at the party's Gulshan office with the leaders of the 12-party alliance at 3:00pm, followed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the evening. BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan will lead the discussions.

A senior BNP leader said the party will announce peaceful programmes -- rallies and public gatherings across the country -- to press its demands following the talks.

Sources said the move is part of the BNP's broader strategy to maintain psychological and political pressure on the government.

Restoring voting rights and establishing an elected government will be the core issues, they added.

During Thursday's Standing Committee meeting, chaired by the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman, Fakhrul briefed members on key points from talks with the chief adviser and the National Consensus Commission.

At the meeting, leaders agreed that maintaining continuous pressure on the government is the only way to ensure polls in December. Coordination with previous allies, including Jamaat, will resume. Although the format for talks with Jamaat is yet to be finalised, one leader said it might follow earlier formats.

Sources added that the BNP will monitor the government's actions over the coming months. If there is no progress, stronger programmes may follow.

The BNP argues that December is the only practical time to hold the election, considering the country's weather and logistical realities. The party believes the necessary reforms can be completed in time for a December vote, and any delay beyond that would be deliberate.

A senior BNP leader said the absence of a clear election roadmap suggests internal disagreements within the interim government, with some factions possibly aiming to delay the polls.

"If we don't keep up the pressure, the election might be pushed back to late 2025," he said.

The BNP has also welcomed Jamaat's call for elections before Ramadan. Sources said that while the BNP prefers polls in December, some leaders are open to a slight delay, as long as the election is not pushed to June.

While mass mobilisations will remain limited for now, the BNP aims to show both domestic and international audiences that democratic parties in Bangladesh are united in their demand for timely elections, sources said.

22 out of 35 parties want caretaker govt

FROM PAGE 1

leaders, said the caretaker system would become redundant once "the state is freed from the interference of the executive branch". "However, the next two elections may be held under a caretaker government."

Bangladesh Jashod proposed a two-year tenure for the caretaker government.

Gono Odhikar Parishad (ex-Ducus VP Nur faction) suggested capping the government's tenure at four months, saying it should be formed on the basis of consensus among the political parties in parliament.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) also came up with a similar proposal saying the president should form a caretaker government in consultation with major political parties.

Based on the experience of 12 previous national polls, Bashod proposed a "supervisory" entity or caretaker government that will hold a free, fair, acceptable and participatory election in three months.

Favouring the restoration of the caretaker system, Ganosamhati Andolon suggested forming an interim government comprising members of the upper house. JSD also floated a similar proposal, saying the caretaker government should be formed with independent or non-partisan members of the upper house.

RastroSangskar Andolon proposed that a caretaker government take charge within a week of declaring the election date and dissolution of parliament. However, the ruling party leader, the opposition leader and the chief justice should meet and select the chief adviser before the polls date is announced. If the three fail to reach a consensus, the last retired chief justice may be made the head of the caretaker government.

COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS

The Constitution Reform Commission has proposed an interim government system to oversee elections and outlined a method for appointing the chief adviser. It recommended a National Constitutional Council that includes the president, the prime minister, the leader of the opposition, speakers of both houses, the chief justice, one opposition deputy speaker from the lower house, deputy speaker of the upper house, and another member, elected by members of both houses, who don't belong to either the ruling party or the main opposition.

This council will remain in office even after the dissolution of parliament. In the absence of the legislature, the council will consist of the president, the chief adviser, the chief justice, and two members of the advisory council nominated by the chief adviser.

The reform commission has outlined provisions for appointing a chief adviser with seven options by order of priority.

The first option, requiring seven of the council's nine votes, is to

appoint any individual who is not on the council. If that is not possible, the council may resort to the second option, requiring six votes, to appoint a former chief justice or a former judge of the Appellate Division. If that fails, the council may, upon unanimous agreement, appoint the president as the chief adviser. Failing that, it may appoint the last retired chief justice as the head of the caretaker government.

However, if the last retired top judge declines to assume the role, the commission will have to approach the one who retired immediately before and work backwards. If all former chief justices are unavailable or if all of them refuse, the commission will consider the last retired appellate judge. Failing that, it will work backwards till it finds one willing to shoulder the responsibility.

PROPOSALS REGARDING PRESIDENT

Both factions of Gono Odhikar Parishad, Bhashani Anusari Parishad, and Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar) proposed that the same person should not hold the posts of the head of the state, the head of government, and the chief of the party at the same time.

BNP and Gono Odhikar Parishad (Nur) proposed introducing the post of a vice president. JSD suggested that the vice president preside over the upper house.

Gono Odhikar Parishad (Nur) and JSD said a neutral and non-partisan person should hold the position of the president. Gono Odhikar Parishad (Nur) also suggested that members of both the houses and provincial assemblies vote to elect the president.

Jatiya Nagarik Committee and Islami Andolan Bangladesh suggested that the president be able to send proposals to parliament for discussions. Both parties proposed two-term limits for president with a stipulation that the person holding the post of president will be ineligible to become PM.

The Nagarik Committee proposed that the president should be the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Jamaat-e-Islami suggested that the lower house recommend the name of the president based on a majority vote, and the upper house approve it with a three-fourths majority. The president should have the power to dissolve parliament under certain circumstances without requiring the PM's advice.

Gono Odhikar Parishad (Faruk Hasan faction), Bhashani Anusari Parishad, and Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar) advocated for increasing the president's powers.

Gono Odhikar Parishad (Faruk) also suggested that the presidential election be held two and a half years after the parliamentary election.

Rastro Sangskar Andolon proposed that the president should be elected by MPs, with the opposition nominating the candidate.

The prime minister should keep

the president informed about matters related to national and foreign policies and, if requested by the president, refer any matter to the cabinet for consideration, the party proposed.

Gono Odhikar Parishad (Nur faction), Insaniyat Biplob Bangladesh, Jatiya Nagarik Committee, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh proposed countrywide polls for electing the president.

Nagarik Committee and Islami Andolan suggested that the PM may continue to advise the president on appointments to constitutional posts but that need not be binding.

PM'S TENURE

BNP proposed limiting the prime minister's tenure to two consecutive terms.

CPB, Gono Odhikar Parishad (Nur) and Pragatishil Green Party also proposed limiting the PM's tenure to two terms.

Bashod, Ganosamhati Andolon, JSD, Jatiyatobadi Samamona Jote, Bangladesh Labour Party, both factions of Gono Odhikar Parishad, Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Party, and Pragatishil Green Party proposed two-term limits for the president, the PM and also the MPs.

BNP proposed introducing the post of deputy prime minister.

Ganosamhati Andolon, Jatiya

Nagarik Committee, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Bangladesh Labour Party and Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar) are of the view that the same person should be allowed to hold only one of the three positions -- the prime minister, the leader of the house and the chief of a political party -- at any point of time.

Nagarik Committee and Islami Andolan Bangladesh proposed that a prime minister be disqualified from holding any position of the state and be restricted from joining corporations or businesses.

Nagarik Committee suggested that the central bank become the custodian of the prime minister's properties and assets.

Nagarik Okiya proposed that the PM be barred from holding any party position and cabinet members will be ineligible to become president or general secretary of any party.

COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS ON PM, PRESIDENT

The commission proposed limiting the tenures of the president and the prime minister (as well as that of parliament) to four years, instead of five, and two terms, consecutively or not.

The president will be elected by a majority vote of the electoral college, comprising all members of both houses, 64 district coordination councils and city corporation coordination councils.

An individual will be eligible to hold only one of the three positions of prime minister, the leader of the house and the chief of parliamentary party at the same time.

The prime minister should keep

Price spiral hits fixed-income families hard

FROM PAGE 1

Non-bottled soybean oil sells for Tk 162-170 per litre, up from Tk 158-168; palm oil for Tk 145-156 per litre, up from Tk 144-150; non-packaged flour for Tk 40-45 per kg, up from Tk 38-45; and brown eggs for Tk 40-45 for four pieces, up from Tk 38.

Onions have seen the sharpest rise with the Bangladeshi variant being priced at Tk 65 per kg, an increase of Tk 30-35.

Local garlic is priced at Tk 200-220 per kg, up from Tk 190-220; ginger at Tk 250-300, up from Tk 240-280; small cardamoms (elaichi) at Tk 4,600-5,100, up from Tk 4,500-5,100.

According to TCB data, retail prices have increased by 1.90 percent for coarse rice, 2.41 percent for non-packaged flour, 1.84 percent for non-bottled soybean oil, 2.38 percent for non-bottled palm oil, 1.64 percent for super palm oil, 38.16 percent for local onions, 2 percent for broiler chicken, and 2.41 percent for eggs.

Of the 14 vegetables tracked by the Department of Agricultural Marketing, seven have become pricier over the last month.

Tomatoes are now Tk 25-40 per kg, up from Tk 15-20; eggplants Tk 60-70 per kg, up from Tk 50-60; and gourds Tk 55-60 apiece, up from Tk 35-40.

Aurangzeb Lablu, who runs a wholesale store at Karwan Bazar, says, "The supply of winter vegetables has ended. Since it is early in the season for the ones grown in summer, the prices are high."

The price of bottled soybean oil has increased by Tk 14 per litre and palm oil by Tk 12 after the government removed VAT exemptions.

Commenting on the matter last week, Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashir Uddin said the government's

priority was on revenue collection.

Amanat Ullah, a wholesale egg trader in Tejgaon, says the demand has risen after offices and educational institutions reopened after Eid.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, says the government is focused on raising revenue and cutting subsidies to meet the conditions set by the IMF.

"In order to be eligible for the next IMF tranches, the government must boost revenue," he opines.

Prof Jahangir Alam of the Department of Agribusiness and Marketing at Bangladesh Agricultural University says Ramadan coincided with the abundance of winter vegetables, helping keep the prices down.

"It is no longer winter, and summer produce is costlier. Besides, during Ramadan, policy steps helped stabilise the market. Such measures are now missing," he says.

He added that extortion by political parties was also a reason for higher prices.

SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, suspects that the government prioritises business interests over public welfare.

"A day after raising soybean oil prices, it waived 5 percent advance income tax on its import," he says.

The government claims it wants revenue, but it offers tax-break to businesses. "This indicates that protecting business interests has taken precedence over public welfare."

He urged the government to revise the taxes on essentials.

Besides, the government should take action against cartels that manipulate the market, he adds.

Yunus flies to Qatar

FROM PAGE 1

Prof Yunus will present a keynote

in the second edition of the summit

that will bring together over 1,000

participants from more than 100

countries, including ministers,

business leaders, academics,

and youth leaders.

The summit will focus on "Building

Our Legacy: Sustainability, Innovation,

Abolish mobile court's power to impose jail sentence

Proposes reform commission

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Judicial Reform Commission has recommended abolishing the mobile court's power to impose jail sentences on people for committing offenses, saying that the imposition of imprisonment by such a court is contradictory to the constitution.

It also suggested keeping this court's jurisdiction to impose financial penalties intact and increasing the scope for judicial magistrate run mobile courts instead of those conducted by executive magistrates.

Mobile courts are mainly conducted to ensure environmental protection, safe food supply, consumers' rights, price control, and similar public-related issues, so they have special popularity among people, according to the commission.

"A maximum of two years' imprisonment can be imposed through conducting a mobile court. In case of imposition of fine by mobile court, any amount of fine can be imposed within the limit prescribed in the law, which is recoverable immediately. However, if it is not realised immediately, a maximum of three months' imprisonment can be imposed."

"Imposition of imprisonment without giving proper opportunity to any person to get shelter of law is inconsistent with the fundamental rights recognised in Articles 32, 33 and 35 of the Constitution. So, it is necessary to abolish the power of the mobile court to impose imprisonment by amending the Mobile Court Act."

"As a result, the mobile court will be able to impose the penalty prescribed in the law based on the confession, and its powers related to search, seizure and disposal of seized

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A large part of this road has been dug up and left in this state to accommodate underground electric line work. As a result, there is little space left for vehicles and pedestrians to pass. The photo was taken in the Hatirjheel area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Govt delaying polls so BNP can't come to power

Says Shamsuzzaman Dudu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is delaying elections so that BNP cannot come to power through the people's vote, claimed the party's Vice Chairman Shamsuzzaman Dudu yesterday.

"The nation is deeply concerned about the government's actions. We no longer understand what they [the government] want. We believe elections are being avoided to sideline the BNP so that the party cannot form a government by earning public support and securing votes," said the BNP leader.

He made the remarks while addressing a rally organised by the Bangladesh Democratic Council in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Urging the government to clarify its position, Shamsuzzaman said, "The question is not what

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

SHIBSA RIVER IN KHULNA

Once a lifeline, now a fading stream

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Once a thriving artery of communication in the Khulna region, the Shibs River is now a shadow of its former self. In the past, it was navigated by large boats, ships, launches, and steamers. The river connected Khulna with Kolkata.

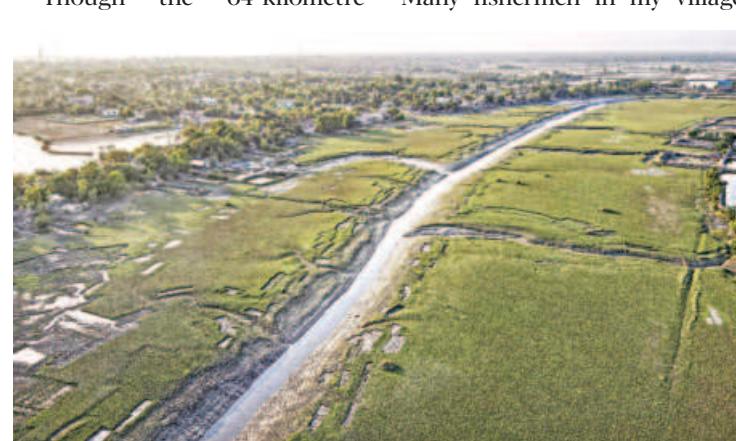
In recent decades, however, this vital waterway has been in decline. Waterlogging has become a persistent issue in areas along the river due to the drying up of canals.

Once, water from Tala and Sathkira Sadar used to flow out through the Shibs. But over the past 20 years, that flow has all but ceased, causing prolonged waterlogging in large parts of Tala and Sathkira Sadar upazilas.

The stretch of the Shibs that flows into the Sundarbans still functions as an inland waterway and remains part of the sea route under the Bangladesh-India Naval Protocol. But just east of Paikgacha upazila, near the Shibs Bridge, the river has withered to a narrow trickle.

The mighty current that once surged under the bridge has vanished, and during high tide, only a small stream offers a faint reminder of its past.

This dried-up condition spans roughly 27 kilometres of the river



as it flows through Paikgacha. From there, the Shibs continues eastward through Soladana and Garuikhali before entering the Sundarbans and merging with the Pasur River. Further downstream, the river branches off again before emptying into the Bay of Bengal as the Kuda River.

Though the 64-kilometre

old retired schoolteacher from Paikgacha's Sona Potti, said, "Launches and other vessels used to carry goods from Khulna city to other upazilas. Locals depended on the river for almost every aspect of life."

Torab Ali, a fisherman from Soladana, said the community now sees very few fish in the river. "Many fishermen in my village

entirely dry.

Professor Hashem Ali Fakir, a river researcher, said the Shibs is now dying due to siltation caused by polder systems built in the 1960s. "The northern part of the river in Paikgacha upazila has almost dried up. The rate of sedimentation is very high in the southern section flowing into the Sundarbans," he said.

"To save the rivers of the southwestern region, implementing Tidal River Management (TRM) is essential. This method helps restore the natural flow of tidal water, reduces waterlogging, and enhances soil fertility. Without TRM, the rivers will continue to silt up, leading to severe environmental and socio-economic consequences for local communities."

Dilip Kumar Dutta, former professor of environmental science at Khulna University, said coastal embankments have cut off floodplains from the river, halting natural sedimentation processes.

"This has hindered land formation in the region, which is part of the lower Gangetic Delta and still geologically immature. Settlement and river management activities were implemented before land formation was complete. Now the river has lost its existence and put us in danger," he said.

he added.

A recent visit to the river basin near Paikgacha Bridge revealed a nearly dry riverbed with only a faint current.

Around a hundred ponds and various structures have been built by villagers along its banks. The eight-kilometre stretch from Shibbari to Soladana is now

have had to change professions,"

he added.

A recent visit to the river basin near Paikgacha Bridge revealed a nearly dry riverbed with only a faint current.

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Scrap from broken-down vehicles remain scattered across this street in the Dholaikhali area of the capital. Sometimes, these items lay dumped in the same spot for months at a end, hampering vehicle and pedestrian movement. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Six killed, 4 hurt

FROM PAGE 5

The injured -- Sumon Kumar Das, Manik's brother and also a passenger of the microbus -- was undergoing treatment there, the OC added.

Police seized both the vehicles from the spot but the driver of the truck managed to flee, he said, adding that a case was filed.

In Mymensingh, two passengers of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw were killed and three others injured as the auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a microbus

on Bhaluka-Gafargaon road at Goari in Bhaluka upazila.

The deceased -- Md Lala Mia, 32, and Rokeya Akter, 48 -- were from Bhaluka upazila.

Bhaluka police said Lal Mia was declared dead at Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex.

The injured -- Rokeya, Taslima Akter, Joshua Ara and auto-rickshaw driver Roman Mia -- were referred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where Rokeya died, said the OC.

2 throat-slit

FROM PAGE 5

mother of the deceased children, the relatives found the bloodied bodies of the two children at the scene and informed police yesterday afternoon.

Later, police arrived at the scene and recovered the bodies. However, it could not be confirmed why the two children were murdered.

Tongi East Police Station Officer in Charge Faridul Islam said police are investigating the incident at the scene. Legal action is underway.

One held over

FROM PAGE 3

The incident took place near East West International School and College when the woman and her cousin arrived there by rickshaw.

A video of the mugging has gone viral on social media, showing the three men brandishing machetes as they stopped the woman and snatched her handbag, gold chain, and other valuables.

PRAYER TIMING

APRIL 19

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

Harvesting the field

FROM PAGE 3

takes place in haor areas like Hakaluki. "Here, agriculture is more than a profession; it is part of the culture. Farmers harvest paddy in groups with the help of relatives and neighbours," he said.

With assistance from the agriculture department and local administration, the harvesting process is being accelerated in some areas through the use of modern machinery. If completed successfully, the haor harvest is expected to positively impact food security and the local economy, he added.

Md Jalal Uddin, deputy director of the

Moulvibazar District Agricultural Extension Department, said boro has been cultivated on 62,140 hectares of land in and around the haors this year, against a target of 62,100 hectares.

The expected output is 2,48,400 tonnes of rice.

He said the BRRI-92 variety has yielded particularly well in the haor areas, having adapted to the local soil and climate. To support farmers during the harvesting season, 171 modern rice harvesting machines are currently operating in the district, significantly reducing the need for manual labour and saving time.

Teacher forced

FROM PAGE 5

Mahiuddin Ahmed was appointed chairman," he said.

"I had no role in the final selection," he added.

"On April 16, when Mahiuddin arrived at the school to assume the role of chairman, hundreds of BNP supporters showed up and created havoc. They forced me to resign. I signed the letter under duress to save my life."

He further alleged, "At first, they asked me to sign a statement saying I was resigning due to corruption. When I refused, they harassed me and then forced me to sign another letter citing personal reasons for my resignation. Both Nurul Anwar and Mahiuddin Ahmed were present at the time."

When contacted, Nurul Anwar said Kanti Lal had served as acting headteacher since 2019 and during this time misappropriated funds meant for a Shaheed Minar and collected extra money during admissions.

He claimed guardians and students had long been demanding his removal.

He denied any BNP involvement in the incident, claiming Jamaat activists were trying to shift the blame. He said he visited the school that day at the request of local guardians and

former students, though he admitted he had no documentary proof of the corruption allegations.

Mahiuddin Ahmed, chairman of the ad hoc committee, said if there were corruption allegations against the acting headteacher, they should have been addressed through legal channels.

He claimed the incident was the result of misinformation spread among senior BNP leaders by local opportunists.

"I am a supporter of Jamaat. My name was recommended by Jamaat, while BNP also proposed another candidate. The education board selected me from the three names submitted, though I am unaware of the basis for that decision," he said.

Sitakunda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Fakhrul Islam said, following a written complaint from the acting headteacher, the Chittagong Education Board had asked him to submit an investigation report within four days.

"We are currently reaching out to all involved. No further comments can be made until the probe is complete," he said.

He also confirmed that no formal corruption complaint against the teacher had been received.

Four held

FROM PAGE 5

enforcers then rushed to the scene and took them into custody.

Humayun Kabir, additional deputy police commissioner (south) of Khulna Metropolitan Police, said, "After storming into the house, they (the detainees) held the residents hostage and snatched gold ornaments. Later, they demanded Tk 2 lakh from Suman and physically assaulted him

when he refused to pay."

When their identities were questioned, the suspects identified themselves as DB members several times and at other times as coordinators of student organisations. After confirming their real identities, they were brought to the police station, said police official Humayun.

Legal action will be taken once the victim files a formal complaint, he added.

NEWS

Sreemangal's 'Lebu Bazar' thrives during peak season

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

With the warm days of summer already here, the wholesale lemon market at Natunbazar in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar is abuzz with farmers and traders.

Sreemangal is known as the largest hub of lemon cultivation and trading in the entire Sylhet division.

Different crops worth around Tk 30-35 crore, grown in nearby hilly areas, are sold daily at the Natunbazar wholesale market. However, lemon remains the most popular item traded at the market.

Lemon yield usually peaks during the summer months of May and June, with warmer temperatures also driving up demand for the fruit.

Traders from across the country, including Dhaka, Narsingdi, Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Sunamganj, Cumilla and Faridpur, flock to the market to purchase lemons wholesale directly from local farmers and agro-entrepreneurs.

Trading continues throughout the day, and during the peak season, lemons worth around Tk 30 crore are sold monthly.

"Lemon is always in demand. Hence, even if there is no shortage of supply, its price goes up every year. This time too it was no exception, with prices almost doubling in Sreemangal during Ramadan," said Bimol Chandra Some,

additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Sylhet division.

Moinul Islam, 69, a resident of the Natunbazar area, said the wholesale trading of lemon in the "Lebu Bazar" has been going on for generations.

Chandu Mia, who has been buying lemons at this market for the past 21 years, said, "The price is a bit high this time. I bought lemons at Tk 2.5-7 apiece. It costs Tk 120 to send a sack of 500-800 lemons to Sylhet and Sunamganj. The retailers there sell at different prices."

Elison Sungoh, a farmer from Patrakholo Punjee in Kamalganj upazila, said, "I sold 6,000 lemons to the market for Tk 14,000. The warehouse keeps five percent as a fee. Apart from that, there is only the transport cost."

The cost of cultivation has been rising due to the need for artificial irrigation during the dry season and the increased use of pesticides, fertilisers, etc," said Sumon Debbarma, a grower from Dolubari.

Nilufar Yasmin Munalis Sweety, additional deputy director of the DAE in Moulvibazar, said, "Different varieties of lemon, including Seedless, Colombo, Zara, Cardamom and Ada, have been cultivated on around 2,069 hectares of land in Moulvibazar district this season, including 1,300 hectares in Sreemangal upazila alone."



Traders from across the country -- including Dhaka, Narsingdi, Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Sunamganj, Cumilla, and Faridpur -- flock to the wholesale lemon market in Sreemangal to purchase the produce directly from local farmers and agro-entrepreneurs. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt delaying polls so BNP

FROM PAGE 3

you will or won't do in Bangladesh. Announce a clear roadmap to establish an elected government.

Specify when the election will be held -- mention the month and the year."

"First, it's December, then it's June -- this kind of inconsistency must

stop. We are not prepared to accept such antics," he added.

The rally was held to demand the immediate whereabouts of BNP leaders and activists who have gone missing, including M Ilias Ali and Chowdhury Alam.

The BNP leader further

alleged that the current situation in the country has been orchestrated to protect those who, he claimed, have destroyed democracy over the past 15 to 16 years.

"They are being allowed to continue their conspiracies in various ways," he said.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, আক্ষণবাড়ি

তারিখ: ১৭/০৪/২০২৫

প্রকাশ্য নিলাম দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি-০১/২০২৪-২০২৫

অত্যন্ত সর্বাধারণের অগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, নিম্নবর্তিত তত্ত্বাবেক্ষণ স্বাক্ষর মডেল থানা কম্পাউন্ড ১তলা নিশ্চিত একটি এবং সেমি-গ্রাম দূপুরি ভবন (অফিসার ইন্টার্জ এবং বাসভবন) নিলামে বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাবের অন্তর্ভুক্ত কর্তৃত স্বাক্ষর মডেল অবস্থানে আগামী ৩০-০৪-২০২৫ তারিখে বেলা ১২:৩০ ঘটিকার পুরীশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, আক্ষণবাড়িতে প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের মাধ্যমে বিজ্ঞপ্তি করা হচ্ছে। আগামী নিলাম ভাবের আক্ষণবাড়িতে প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের মাধ্যমে প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে।

প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের ক্ষেত্রে আক্ষণবাড়িতে প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের মডেল থানা কম্পাউন্ড ১তলা নিশ্চিত একটি এবং সেমি-গ্রাম দূপুরি ভবন (অফিসার ইন্টার্জ এবং বাসভবন) নিলামে বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাবের অন্তর্ভুক্ত কর্তৃত স্বাক্ষর মডেল অবস্থানে আগামী ৩০-০৪-২০২৫ তারিখে বেলা ১২:৩০ ঘটিকার পুরীশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, আক্ষণবাড়িতে প্রকাশ্য নিলাম ভাবের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে।

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The iron bridge over a canal on the Old Dhaka-Tangail Road lies in a derelict state and could collapse at any moment, leading to a fatal accident. The bridge was constructed around 1952, but has been worn out over the years due to a lack of maintenance and the pressure of hundreds of heavy vehicles crossing it daily. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Four held for extortion while posing as DB men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police detained four persons who were impersonating members of the Detective Branch (DB) during an attempt to extort money in Khulna on Thursday night.

Locals caught them in the city's Boyra Aziz Mor area and then handed them over to the police.

The detainees are Md Masud Rana, Md Faisal Mahmud, Md Salauddin, and Rifat Parvez Rafi.

Sonadanga Model Police Station Sub-inspector Abdul Hai said the house where the incident happened has been rented by one Suman, who is reportedly involved in online gambling.

These four persons raided the house around 8:30pm, claiming to be DB members, and demanded Tk 2 lakh from Suman, threatening to detain him and take him to the DB office if he failed to pay.

When the news of the extortion spread in the neighbourhood, locals caught the suspects and informed the police. Law

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Teacher forced to resign amid BNP-Jamaat rift in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The acting headteacher of Bhatiari Haji Tobarak Ali Chowdhury (TAC) High School in Chattogram's Sitakunda was allegedly forced to resign on Wednesday due to a rift between local leaders of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Kanti Lal Acharya, the acting headteacher, claimed he was compelled to sign a resignation letter after the newly formed ad hoc school committee appointed a Jamaat-backed individual as chairman.

He alleged that over a hundred BNP activists, led by Nurul Anwar, president of the BNP's Bhatiari union unit, came to the school and harassed him.

On Thursday, his daughter Bhavna Acharya posted a video of the incident on Facebook, triggering widespread criticism against BNP.

"You know, we girls can't sleep at night after watching the video of our father being humiliated. Think about it: he's not just a teacher, he's our father. Tell me, how would you feel if this happened to your own father?" Bhavna wrote.

BHAVNA ACHARYA
Daughter of the headteacher

Speaking to The Daily Star, Kanti Lal said the education board approved an ad hoc committee on April 6, and he was informed on April 10.

"Based on recommendations from local leaders of BNP and Jamaat, and guardians, I forwarded three names to the district administration through the local education officer. Among them, the Jamaat-backed candidate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

We can't sleep at night after watching the video of our father being humiliated. Think about it: he's not just a teacher, he's our father. Tell me, how would you feel if this happened to your own father?

Meanwhile, in response to her post, local BNP leaders held a press conference, denouncing the incident as a conspiracy by Jamaat. They accused the acting headteacher of corruption and demanded his resignation.

According to locals, the canals and drains of the port city have become death traps. Most of these canals and drains don't have retaining walls or protecting slabs, posing a risk for fatal accidents.

2 throat-slit bodies of children found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police recovered the throat-slit bodies of two children yesterday in Tongi, Gazipur.

The deceased are Abdullah, 3, and Maliha, 6, son and daughter of Abdul Baten of Tatowakandi village under the jurisdiction of Bancharampur Police Station in Brahmanbaria district.

The incident took place around 4:00pm yesterday in the Mar Tek area of Rupban in East Arichpur.

Abdullah Al Rumman, sub-inspector of Tongi East Police Station, said the throats of two children were slit with sharp objects. Police have detained the father and mother of the children for their involvement in the incident, he said without providing details.

The family were living as tenants on the second floor of an eight-storey building in the East Arichpur area.

Citing relatives, police said after receiving information from the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Six killed, 4 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed and four persons injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Chuadanga, two people were killed as a bus hit a rickshaw van on the Chuadanga-Jhenaidah highway in Chuadanga's Sadar upazila.

The deceased are Abdur Razzak, 60, the rickshaw van puller, and Golam Sarwar, 62, a rice trader, said police.

Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Khaledur Rahman said Razzak and Sarwar were traveling from Mohammadajuma village to Sorojganj Bazar for trading purposes.

On their way, the bus heading from Chuadanga town to Dhaka hit the van from behind, leaving them dead on the spot, he added.

The bodies were recovered and kept at the Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

Legal proceedings were being taken, the OC said.

In Sirajganj, at least two people were killed and another was injured when a truck collided head-on with a microbus on Bogura-Nagarbari highway in Noyangati area.

The deceased were identified as Manik Chandra Sheel, 42, a passenger of the microbus, and Monsurul Alom Babul, 40, the driver. They were from Harinathpur in Aminpur, Pabna.

Hatkumru Highway Police Station OC Md Abdur Rouf said the accident took place around 6:00am when a cement-laden truck hit a Kashinathpur-bound microbus in the area.

Both the drivers lost control over their vehicles. The truck fell into a roadside ditch.

Police and firefighters rushed to the spot and rescued the victims from the spot.

They were taken to Ullapara Upazila Health Complex where Babul and Manik succumbed to their injuries, the OC said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

31kg venison, deer parts seized in Mongla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The Bangladesh Coast Guard (West Zone) has seized 31 kilogrammes of venison, including a deer's head and legs, from the Joymonirghol silo jetty area in Mongla upazila of Bagerhat.

The illegal wildlife parts were recovered during a special operation conducted on Thursday based on a tip-off, said Lt Commander Siyam ul-Haque, media officer of the Coast Guard, yesterday.

During the operation, coast guard members discovered the venison stashed inside an abandoned sack. The contents included 31 kilogrammes of meat, one deer head, and four legs.

However, the hunters managed to flee the scene before law enforcement could apprehend anyone.

The seized items were later handed over to the Chandpal Range Forest Office for further legal procedures.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Assistant Director Office
Fire Service and Civil Defence
Agrabad, Chittagong

Date: 16/04/2025

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods under revenue budget. Details are given below:

SI No.	Description of the goods & package	Tender Id No.	Tender closing date & time	Tender security submission date & time
1	58.03.0000.014.36.001.23.2091, dated 17/02/25 Procurement of Lentil/Masur Dal (High Quality Dashi Small grain) for the months of January/25 to March/25 for Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence, Agrabad, Chittagong, Divisional Ration in financial year 2024-2025	1099286	05-May-2025 12.00.00	05-May-2025 11.00.00
2	58.03.0000.014.36.001.23.2091, dated 17/02/25 Procurement of edible Soyabean Oil (enriched in Vitamin-A) for the months of January/25 to March/25 for Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence, Agrabad, Chittagong, Divisional Ration in financial year 2024-2025	1099224	05-May-2025 12.00.00	05-May-2025 11.00.00

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
- To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).
- The fees for the downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to selling 04-May-2025.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

16.04.25
Md. Anwar Hossain (BFGM)
Assistant Director
Fire Service & Civil Defence
Agrabad, Chittagong

Office of the Benapole Pourashava

District : Jashore.

Date : 17.04.2025

e-Tender Notice (LTM) No-07/2024-25

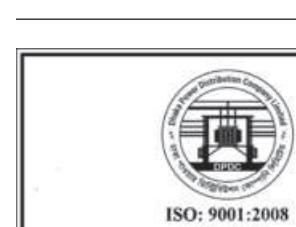
e-Tender is invited from the Enlisted Tenderers under Benapole Pourashava in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works as mentioned in the following table:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of Works	On-line(e-GP System) tender publication date & time	On-line(e-GP System) tender closing date & time
1099769	BENA/ADP/2024-25/W-01	a). Construction of Poura Store Room near Poura Bhaban under Benapole Pourashava) Sanitary works at Kagmari Non-Register Primary School under Benapole Pourashava.	20-April-2025 10:00:00	07-May-2025 13:00:00
1099797	BENA/ADP/2024-25/W-02	Construction, Installation & Supplying LED Street Light (12Nos) at Jashore - Kolikata Road under Benapole Pourashava	20-April-2025 10:00:00	07-May-2025 13:00:00

There are an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no off line/hard copies 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 tendering documents from the national e-GP Portal have to be deposited on line through any registered banks branches up to 07-05-2025 at 12.00 AM.

Further information and guideline in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

17.04.25
(Md. Mosharaf Hossain)
Executive Engineer
Benapole Pourashava
District : Jashore



Dhaka Power Distribution Co. Ltd.

ঢাকা পাওয়ার ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (ডিপিডি)

(An Enterprise of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh)

বিদ্যুৎ ভবন (৩য় তলা), ১ আবুল গণি রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।

Web site : www.dpdc.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through the national e-GP portal for the following procurement of works/goods.

e-Tender ID	Name of Works	Closing & Opening Date & Time	Procuring Entity/ Contact Persons
1098841	Construction of necessary toilets, tea rooms, installation of Thai partitions, addition of working cubicles, addition of false ceilings, installation of new AC on the 5th floor of the proposed English Road 132/33 KV Substation building for setting up the Executive Engineer, NOCS Bangshal office under DPDC.	30-Apr-2025 12:00	(Md. Rakhibul Hasan) Superintending Engineer Civil Works, DPDC BSMMU 33/11Kv Sub-Station (5th Floor), Mymensingh Road, Shahabag, Dhaka. Phone # +880 244863102 Email # secw@dpdc.gov.bd
1098628	Supply of Uniform and Liveries for office of the NOCS Kazla, DPDC.	05/05/2025 14:00 pm	(Engr. Md. Feroze Kabir) Superintending Engineer NOCS Circle Kazla, DPDC. 132/3311kV GIS Building (2 nd floor) 318/1/Ka/1, South Jatrabari Tel: 7541764, E-mail: sekazla@dpdc.gov.bd

The interested persons/firms/organizations may visit website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) to get the details.

DGM (HR) Public Relations, DPDC

Act fast before 'brief' 90-day tariff pause ends

FROM PAGE 12

The foreign secretary said the government was considering several measures to address the bilateral trade gap with the US.

He said Bangladesh is actively engaging stakeholders to find ways to navigate the new situation for the mutual benefit of both countries.

Jashim Uddin reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to improving labour standards and highlighted the reform initiatives undertaken by the interim government's 11 reform commissions.

The US delegation reiterated the US administration's support in this regard.

The foreign secretary also requested the US to reconsider recent USAID funding cuts, particularly in the health and agriculture sectors, and sought support for Bangladesh's inclusion in the US Development Finance Corporation (DFC).

The US said authorisation from Congress is required for the DFC matter.

Jashim Uddin thanked the US for its continued support for the Rohingyas and stressed the need for repatriation to their homeland in Myanmar.

He also highlighted the new influx of Rohingyas due to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State and sought US support and partnership in the upcoming conference on Rohingyas to be held in New York.

The US side appreciated Bangladesh's hosting of over a million Rohingyas and assured that it would remain engaged in the process.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing a strong commitment to further advancing the Bangladesh-US partnership in the days ahead.

Solving expats'

FROM PAGE 12

He said with just 50 officials at a mission there, how can they possibly address the problems of around 10 lakh people? "So, we have to start from Dhaka to minimise the problems."

However, he urged mission officials to recognise that most expatriates visit missions not by choice, but out of necessity. "While a few may cause trouble, the majority seek help in dire situations," he said, calling on staff to serve them with full dedication.

While mission officials may face challenges, the hardships of expatriates are often far greater, he said.

Efforts are underway to increase staffing, particularly at consulate general offices, he added.

Polytechnic students

FROM PAGE 12

Another central representative, Zubayer Patowari, said, "We do not want to cause suffering to people through our protest. We want to contribute to developing our country. But the government should address our problems."

The protesters said they would hold a meeting with senior students in Gazipur today to decide the next course of action.

Apart from the capital, polytechnic students brought out similar protests in Jhenidah, Lakshmpur, Khulna, Barishal, Rangpur, and other parts of the country.

The students organised the protest rallies expressing dissatisfaction over

the outcome of a meeting with the education ministry officials held at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Following the meeting, student representatives said they did not receive any official documents or see any concrete initiatives from the ministry, prompting them to agree to release fresh programmes.

Their six point demand includes the removal of "controversial craft instructors" appointed after 2021, conversion of the diploma engineering programme into a full four-year course with six-month-long semesters, and ensuring that only diploma holders can apply for the post of deputy assistant engineer (Grade 10) and equivalent positions.

India reacts to Shafiqul

FROM PAGE 12

India has been flagging its concerns over alleged attacks on minorities in Bangladesh after last year's political changeover. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue during his first bilateral meeting with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus in Bangkok earlier this month.

Bangladesh has maintained that the incidents were not communal, but political.

Meanwhile, deadly clashes erupted in Murshidabad earlier this week amid ongoing protests in different parts of India against the amendment to a law on Waqf properties, which are Muslim-donated lands. Opposition

parties and Muslim outfits have voiced concern over its implications for minority rights and religious freedom.

The Indian media published reports on a government probe that suggested involvement of "Bangladeshi miscreants" in the violence in Murshidabad.

During a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy on Thursday, Shafiqul protested any attempts to implicate Bangladesh in the communal violence in Murshidabad.

"We urge the Government of India and West Bengal to take all steps to fully protect the minority Muslim population," he added.

Bangladesh tops sea arrivals

FROM PAGE 12

workers, said, "The brokers now use social media and encrypted messaging apps to recruit. These migrants are promised jobs in Europe but end up trapped in Libya for months -- sometimes even years."

Once at sea, their journey remains fraught with danger. Overcrowded boats, engine failures, and the lack of life-saving equipment often lead to mass drownings.

Although no major incidents involving Bangladeshi migrants have been reported so far in 2025, rights groups fear the risks remain high.

Despite these dangers, the number of Bangladeshi making this journey continues to rise, said Shakirul.

He urged the government to step up awareness campaigns in high-migration districts like Madaripur, Cumilla, and Brahmanbaria, and to take stronger legal action against trafficking networks operating within Bangladesh.

"As no traffickers have been brought to justice, the network is operating more actively."

Shariful Hasan, associate director of the BRAC Migration Programme and Youth Platform, pointed to the limited scope of safe, regular migration pathways, inadequate reintegration programmes for

returnees, and a persistent culture of migration idealism.

"The solution lies in education, skill-building, and economic opportunity at home -- not just arrests and deportations. Until we give youth a reason to stay, they'll keep risking everything for a future that often doesn't exist."

"This is not a dream journey; it's a death journey. Around 93 percent of these migrants end up trapped in detention camps in Libya -- some lose their lives, and others' families must pay ransoms of up to Tk 30 lakh."

Shariful noted that they have identified three main regions -- Madaripur, Sylhet, and surrounding districts of Dhaka -- from where many are making this dangerous journey.

"It is heartbreaking that most of the migrants and their families are aware of the brutal conditions they'll face in Libya -- detention, abuse, extortion -- yet they still go, hoping Italy will be different," he said.

Shariful stressed the need for awareness among family members and called for both national and international joint operations to arrest trafficking network members.

"This route is not only being used by desperate people from Syria and Libya, but also by human traffickers exploiting it for illegal migration."

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তর

ডে-কেয়ার সেন্টার, বিবাসার মোড়

ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া

স্মারক নং-ম.বি.অ.দিবাঃ ত্রাক্ষণ-৪৭-২৫

তারিখঃ ০৮/২০২৫খ্রঃ

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তরাধীন ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া জেলা ডে-কেয়ার সেন্টারের শিশুদের জন্য মাসিক ভিত্তিতে একটানা ১২ (বার) মাসের জন্য (সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যৱতীত) খাদ্য দ্রব্যাদি সরবরাহের ঠিকাদার নিয়োগের নিমিত্তে নিম্নলিখিতভাবে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

১। প্রকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠান ও সরবরাহকারী, যাদের হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ ইনকাম ট্যাক্স ও ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক স্ট্রাটেজিল সরবরাহের ০২ (দুই) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

২। বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক বা সোনালী ব্যাংক সিডিউলের মূল্য বাবদ ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা ১-৩০২১-০০০০-২৩৬৬-১৪২৩০২৮, কোডে দরপত্র দাখিল কৃত অফেরত্যোগ্য জমা দিয়ে চালানের মূলকপি প্রদর্শনপূর্বক ফটোকপি জমা দেয়া সাপেক্ষে দরপত্র সিডিউল নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর কার্যালয় থেকে গ্রহণ করা যাবে।

৩। খাদ্য সামগ্রী বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্তবদী দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লেখ থাকবে।

৪। দরপত্র সিডিউল বিজ্ঞয়ের প্রক্রিয়া তারিখ ২১/০৮/২০২৫ইং তারিখ হইতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়।

৫। দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ২৪/০৮/২০২৫ইং অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।

৬। দরপত্র দাখিলের সাথে জামানত বাবদ সর্বমোট প্রাক্তনিত মূল্যের ৩% হিসাবে আন্দোলন পে-অর্ডার (ফেরত্যোগ্য) যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে ডে-কেয়ার সেন্টার, মিজান টাওয়ার, ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া অনুরূপে জমা দিতে হবে।

৭। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময় ২৮/০৮/২০২৫ইং বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকায় উপ-পরিচালক, মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তর, ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া (দরপত্রাধারা অথবা তাদের মনোনীত প্রতিনিধি যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) উপস্থিতিতে খোলা হবে।

৮। দরপত্রের সিডিউলের সাথে জামানত বাবদ সর্বমোট প্রাক্তনিত মূল্যের ৩% হিসাবে আন্দোলন পে-অর্ডার (ফেরত্যোগ্য) যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে ডে-কেয়ার সেন্টার, মিজান টাওয়ার, ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া অনুরূপে জমা দিতে হবে।

৯। কোন কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

স্বাঃ
নিরুপা তৌমিরিক
উপ-পরিচালক (অং দাঃ)
ও
সদস্য সচিব (দরপত্র আহবানক কমিটি)
মহিলা বিষয়ক অধিদপ্তর
ডে-কেয়ার সেন্টার
ত্রাক্ষণবাড়িয়া

Israel hits

FROM PAGE 12

Last month, the Israeli military broke off a two-month truce that had largely halted fighting in Gaza and has since pushed in from the north and south, seizing almost a third of the enclave as it seeks to pressure Hamas into agreeing to release hostages and disarm.

The military said troops were operating in the Shabura and Tel Al-Sultan areas near the southern city of Rafah, as well as in northern Gaza, where it has taken control of large areas east of Gaza City.

Egyptian mediators have been trying to revive the January ceasefire deal, which broke down when Israel resumed airstrikes and sent ground troops back into Gaza, but there has been little sign that the two sides have moved closer on fundamental issues.

On Thursday, Khalil Al-Hayya, Hamas' Gaza chief, said the movement was willing to swap all remaining 59 hostages for Palestinians jailed in Israel in return for an end to the war and reconstruction of Gaza.

Pakistan, however, will have to provide a formal apology and Bangladesh's share of the assets of undivided Pakistan.

These historical demands form the crux of Bangladesh's position, reiterated by academics and analysts alike.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, executive director of the Centre for Alternatives and former teacher of international relations at Dhaka University, said that Bangladesh has been forthcoming in resolving the issues of the stranded Pakistanis by issuing citizenship to those who wanted.

Pakistan, however, will have to provide a formal apology and Bangladesh's share of the assets of undivided Pakistan.

Since taking charge in August last year, Chief Adviser Yunus has been pushing to revive the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which remains dormant due to India-Pakistan rivalries.

Prof Imtiaz said instead of blaming India and Pakistan, the other SAARC members need to start working on certain aspects, including trade and tourism.

For example, they can start a common visa regime. If one has a Nepalese visa, he or she can visit the other South Asian countries. "Only three countries started a common visa regime in the European Union. It is now applicable for all EU nations," Prof Imtiaz said.

Asked if warming up Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan would affect its relations with India, Humayun said this should not be an issue because Bangladesh can and should choose how it will deal with other countries.

"Our focus should now be on trade and economy, not security," he said.

"We should do what we need to do for our national interests, not anything else."

The Dhaka-Islamabad relationship soured after Pakistan condemned the execution of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Mollah in 2013 for crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War. Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, the then interior minister of Pakistan, expressed sadness that Quader Mollah was executed for his "loyalty towards Pakistan".

The renewed efforts to improve the relationship were taken after last year's

A positive move

FROM PAGE 1

During the talks, Bangladesh demanded a formal apology for the genocide committed against the Bangladeshi by the Pakistani military in 1971.

It also demanded payment of \$4.52 billion in financial claims covering its share of undivided Pakistan's pre-1971 assets, and repatriation of more than 3 lakh Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh.

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Prof Imtiaz said that given the global trade barriers under the current US administration, South Asian countries need to improve intra-regional trade, which is below 5 percent of their total trade. Even in Southeast Asia, the rate is 30 percent.

Pakistan can also be a gateway to Central Asia for Bangladesh, he told The Daily Star.

Russia rains drones, missiles on Ukraine

2 killed, dozens hurt; US mulls peace talks exit

AFP, Kharkiv

Russia fired a fresh volley of missiles and drones at Ukraine overnight, wounding dozens of people, Kyiv said yesterday, as the United States warned it could end efforts to broker a ceasefire if it did not see progress soon.

US President Donald Trump has been pressing Moscow and Kyiv to agree to a truce, but has failed to extract any major concessions from the Kremlin, despite repeated negotiations between his administration and Russia on the three year war.

After meeting European officials in Paris to discuss Ukraine, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington needed to figure out soon whether a ceasefire was "doable in the short term".

"Because if it's not, then I think we're just going to move on," he told reporters at Le Bourget airport before leaving the French capital.

The US is pushing Ukraine into a deal that would give Washington sweeping access to its mineral resources.

Ukraine's prime minister will visit Washington next week for talks with top US officials aimed at clinching the minerals and resources deal by April 26, according to a US-Ukraine signed "memorandum of intent" published yesterday. Trump wants the deal—designed to give the United States royalty payments on profits from Ukrainian mining of resources and rare minerals—as compensation for aid given to Ukraine under Biden.

Myanmar's opposition, junta set to extend truce
Says Malaysia PM

REUTERS, Bangkok

Myanmar's junta and a key opposition group have indicated they will extend a ceasefire to support more aid efforts after a devastating earthquake, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday, following rare high-level talks.

Myanmar has been in the throes of an expanding conflict since its military ousted an elected government in 2021 and formed the State Administration Council (SAC) to run the country.

In late March, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit the country, killing over 3,600 people and creating a humanitarian crisis.

Anwar, who is also the chair of the Asean regional bloc, has held talks since Thursday with Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and with the shadow National Unity Government (NUG) that is battling the military, seeking to curb the ongoing conflict to push aid into the country.

"There will be a ceasefire and no unnecessary provocations, because otherwise the whole humanitarian exercise would fail," Anwar told reporters in Bangkok.

"My initial exchange with both the SAC prime minister and NUG has been very successful," he said.

After the March earthquake, Myanmar's junta announced a 20-day ceasefire on April 2, following a similar move by the NUG.

Karachi mob kills member of Ahmadi minority

REUTERS, Karachi

A mob attacked a place of worship of Pakistan's Ahmadi minority community in Karachi yesterday, killing one man, police said.

Ahmad community spokesperson Amir Mahmood said the mob of 100-200 people beat a 47-year-old owner of a car workshop to death with bricks and sticks. Mohammad Saldar, superintendent of police for Karachi's Saddar area, confirmed the death.

Saldar said that the mob was later dispersed, allowing 15 people trapped inside the building to be rescued. Mahmood said 30 people had been trapped.

Outline of minerals deal signed with US: Ukraine



Lebanese soldiers inspect the site near a burnt-out vehicle reportedly hit by an Israeli strike in Ghazieh, near Sidon, yesterday. A Hezbollah official said that the Iran-backed movement categorically refused to discuss handing over its weapons to Lebanon's army unless Israel withdrew completely from the south and stopped its "aggression".

PHOTO: AFP

China pushes anti-'bullying' agenda

Keeps up diplomatic pressure on Trump to roll back his punitive trade tariffs

REUTERS, Beijing

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned Global South nations that "unilateral bullying" was hurting a rules-based world, as Beijing kept up the diplomatic pressure on US President Donald Trump to roll back his punitive trade tariffs.

Power politics and unilateral bullying were undermining international rules and creating divisions and confrontations, Wang told a roundtable of developing country diplomats and scholars, according to a statement released by the foreign ministry yesterday.

In a written speech delivered to the event on Thursday, Wang also said the world was at a critical crossroads, and urged countries to oppose "unilateral protectionism".

He did not name the US directly in his comments.

Trump on April 2 announced "reciprocal" tariffs on many US trading partners, with China taking the biggest blow. While levies on many countries have since been postponed for 90 days, Trump did not relent on the 145 percent tariffs he added on Chinese imports, prompting Beijing to punch back with duties on the US.

China has also taken the lead in lobbying other countries to resist Trump's tariffs, with President Xi Jinping this week on a visit to Southeast Asia personally urging Vietnam and Cambodia, hit with US tariffs of 46 percent and 49 percent respectively, to oppose "unilateral bullying".

Next week, China is planning an informal United Nations Security Council meeting to accuse the US, the world's biggest economy, of bullying.

A note inviting all 193 UN member states to attend the April 23 meeting in New York specifically criticises the United States for imposing tariffs.

Some countries, such as Japan, have

China's FM Wang Yi said the world was at a critical crossroads, and urged countries to oppose "unilateral protectionism".

want people to buy and, at a certain point, people aren't gonna buy," he said.

The new US ambassador to Japan said yesterday he was "extremely optimistic" that the two countries will agree a trade deal, after Tokyo's tariff envoy visited Washington.

Ryosei Akazawa met President Donald Trump on Wednesday and held talks with senior US officials as Japan looks to pare back stiff levies announced by the White House.

While there was no immediate breakthrough, the next round of negotiations is scheduled before the end of the month.

"I've met now with most of the principals who are in the room and doing the negotiating... I'm extremely optimistic that a deal will get done," ambassador George Glass told reporters.

"(We) have the best and the brightest from Japan there doing the negotiations. We have the best and brightest from the United States," he said at Tokyo's Haneda Airport.

Some countries, such as Japan, have

US VISA APPLICANTS

US orders Gaza-linked social media vetting

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration on Thursday ordered a social media vetting for all US visa applicants who have been to the Gaza Strip on or after January 1, 2007, an internal State Department cable seen by Reuters showed, in the latest push to tighten screening of foreign travelers.

The order to conduct a social media vetting for all immigrant and non-immigrant visas should include non-governmental organisation workers as well as individuals who have been in the Palestinian enclave for any length of time in an official or diplomatic capacity, the cable said.

"If the review of social media results uncovers potential derogatory information relating to security issues, then a SAO must be submitted," the cable said, referring to a security advisory opinion, which is an interagency investigation to determine if a visa applicant poses a national security risk to the United States.

The cable was sent to all US diplomatic and consular posts.

The move comes as President Donald Trump's administration has revoked hundreds of visas across the country, including the status of some lawful permanent residents under a 1952 law allowing the deportation of any immigrant whose presence in the country the secretary of state deems harmful to US foreign policy.

The cable dated April 17 was signed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said in late March that he may have revoked more than 300 visas already.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump officials have said student visa holders are subject to deportation over their support for Palestinians and criticism of Israel's conduct in the war in Gaza, calling their actions a threat to US foreign policy interests.

Trump's critics have called the effort an attack on free speech rights under the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

Japan bus driver steals \$7, loses \$84,000 pension

AFP, Tokyo

A Japanese bus driver with 29 years of service lost his retirement package worth \$84,000 after being fired for stealing \$7 from passengers' fares.

Kyoto City sacked the man, who was not named, after he was filmed by the security camera of his bus pilfering 1,000 yen (\$7) in 2022.

After he was denied his retirement money of more than 12 million yen (\$84,000), the driver sued the city but lost the case.

The verdict was overturned in his favour, with a court ruling that the punishment was excessive.

But on Thursday the Supreme Court delivered a final ruling in the city's favour, reinstating the original penalty.

It ruled that the man's conduct could undermine public trust in the system and the sound operation of the bus service.

TOXIC HEAVY METALS

Study finds 17pc of world's arable land contaminated

AFP, Washington

Up to 17 percent of cropland worldwide is contaminated with at least one type of toxic heavy metal, posing health risks to up to 1.4 billion people, scientists warned Thursday.

Published in the journal Science, their study is a first-of-its-kind global overview of heavy metal contamination in soils, based on a meta-analysis—an approach drawing on data from many previous studies—of almost 800,000 samples.

After ensuring the reliability and representativeness of the data, for example by ruling out samples taken purposefully at contaminated sites, the researchers used machine-learning algorithms to identify the worst-affected areas of the world.



HIV advocates, carrying mock coffins, protest in front of the US State Department, demanding the full restoration of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Washington, DC, US, on Thursday.

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US unveils new port fees for Chinese-linked ships

AFP, Washington

The United States unveiled new port fees on Chinese built and operated ships Thursday, in a bid to boost the domestic shipbuilding industry and curb China's dominance in the sector.

"Ships and shipping are vital to American economic security and the free flow of commerce," US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement announcing the new fees, most of which will begin in mid-October.

Beijing warned yesterday the new fees would be "detrimental to all parties."

"They drive up global shipping costs, disrupt the stability of global production and supply chains, increase inflationary pressure within the United States, and harm the interests of American consumers and businesses," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

Thaw in Pakistan ties a welcome direction

It should apologise for '71 role to smoothen transition

It is encouraging to see constructive discussions at the first foreign-secretary level talks held between Bangladesh and Pakistan in 15 years. Given the complex and often strained history between the two countries, the meeting marked a gradual thawing of relations as both sides sought to build on earlier interactions between the two heads of state in September and December. At the meeting, among other topics, Dhaka notably raised two historically unresolved issues: it asked for \$4.52 billion as Bangladesh's share of pre-1971 assets and dues as well as a formal apology for the genocide committed during the Liberation War. It also requested the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh. In response, the Pakistani delegation expressed a willingness to continue discussions.

We must say that while economic imperatives likely, and rightly, drive ongoing efforts, addressing these issues is vital to a solid foundation for bilateral relations. Pakistan's pre-1971 role remains a deep wound for Bangladeshis and a stumbling block to building a truly fruitful partnership. There may be debates about the number of civilians killed by Pakistani forces, but the repressions and brutalities we suffered during our independence struggle are a matter of historical record. For us, asking for a formal apology or reparations is not about seeking revenge, it's about the need for admission of a historic tragedy and fostering genuine reconciliation. That said, we must also be prudent given the complexities involved.

For context, apologies issued by Japan for wartime atrocities in South Korea and China were often seen as insufficient as they were deemed vague, lacking legal reparations, or undermined by subsequent statements and actions of politicians. This highlights the difficulty of securing apologies that are both meaningful and enduring. Nevertheless, sustained diplomatic pressure has, at times, prompted renewed gestures of atonement from Japan. We must learn from such examples and engage with Pakistan accordingly. On Pakistan's side, a formal apology would also help its own collective reckoning as much as it would mend ties with us. The economic aspect of Bangladesh's demands could prove to be more challenging, however. As of April 4, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$15.75 billion. Meeting the demand for \$4.52 billion would mean parting with more than a quarter of those reserves—an unfeasible prospect at the moment. We, therefore, need to approach the issue with patience and strategic foresight.

It's important to remember that both sides have much to gain from an improved relationship. Bangladesh's exports to Pakistan stood at \$61.98 million in FY2024, while imports from Pakistan were \$627.8 million—a gap that greater cooperation can help address. However, these imports are still considerably lower than those from China and India. Enhanced trade ties with Pakistan could diversify our sourcing markets and offer competitive advantages. Already, direct shipping has begun between Bangladesh and Pakistan, while trade and visa procedures are getting easier, with direct flights on the cards.

Of course, sensitivities rooted in something as crucial as 1971 will not vanish overnight. But a future-oriented approach—combining constructive dialogue, historical reckoning, and acknowledgement of mutual benefits—can go a long way. The first steps in that direction have already been taken. We hope that the scheduled visit of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar later in the month would further normalise Bangladesh-Pakistan relations.

Make public hospitals more patient-centric

CMCH's MRI machine out of service for three years

It is quite perplexing that the prime public health facility in Bangladesh's port city does not have a functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. According to a news report, Chittagong Medical College Hospital's (CMCH) only MRI machine has been out of service for three years now, forcing patients to go to private facilities for the test. Thus, instead of paying Tk 3,000-5,000 for MRI scans at the CMCH, they are spending Tk 9,000-20,000 for the diagnosis at private facilities.

This is not the first time that inadequacy and unavailability of essential equipment have been reported at public hospitals. Often, the reason behind the unavailability is not a shortage of funds. Rather, the hospital authorities' mismanagement, inertia, and perhaps even a lack of compassion for general patients leave medical equipment without maintenance and timely repair. Some machines even remain unused for years because of a lack of trained operators. In the case of the MRI machine at the CMCH, the hospital authorities' refusal to pay the supplier Tk 1 crore for a comprehensive maintenance contract after the expiry of the warranty period in 2020 resulted in patients paying higher prices for MRI scans elsewhere.

Apparently, the CMCH authorities wanted to save Tk 35 lakh by offering the supplier Tk 65 lakh. What happened instead was that patients bore the burden of their failure to negotiate a deal. If a minimum of 12 patients at the CMCH require MRI scans daily, then a minimum of Tk 12.5 crore has been spent by general patients, out of pocket, over the three years just to get MRI scans. This raises the question: what public money did the CMCH save by not accepting the supplier's terms? While easier terms and even change of suppliers are indeed options that can be explored, did the authorities carry out a patient-centric cost-benefit analysis at any stage? Ironically, Tk 3.5 crore has now been allocated to repair the machine, with specialists from the supplier company as well as engineers from the National Electro-Medical Equipment Maintenance Workshop and Training Centre working for the last two months to repair the broken machine.

The saga of CMCH's MRI machine shows how our healthcare system continues to fail patients as decisions are not made with their best interests in mind. We urge the government to focus more on health sector reforms, initiating a comprehensive overhaul so that public healthcare becomes more accessible, efficient, and patient friendly.

EDITORIAL

Stop scapegoating the curriculum



Dr Intiaz Sifat is assistant professor and chair of international economics at Radboud University in the Netherlands. He can be reached at intiaz.sifat@ru.nl

IMTIAZ SIFAT

Ever so often, education authorities unveil yet another revolutionary curriculum reform, promising to transform Bangladesh's youth into critical thinkers equipped for the global economy. The fanfare is predictable: glossy publications, enthusiastic press conferences, international consultants nodding approvingly. Meanwhile, in many (if not most) classrooms within a five-kilometre radius from the announcement ceremony, 60 students are crammed into a space designed for 30, memorising passages verbatim for their upcoming exams. Their teacher, untrained in the previous curriculum revision, is already anxious about implementing yet another change.

This national obsession with curriculum reform is not just ineffective, it is a charade masking deeper systemic failures while producing the illusion of progress. The curriculum is a favourite scapegoat, a convenient target for change that allows the authorities to appear progressive while avoiding the messy, politically challenging work of addressing the structural



FILE VISUAL: MAHIYA TABASSUM

of the curricular legacy) received inadequate training, classrooms remained overcrowded, and the examination system continued to reward regurgitation rather than genuine creativity.

Our curriculum fixation serves vested interests. For politicians, it offers visible, announceable actions that suggest educational progress without demanding

2010 articulated a visionary curriculum emphasising creativity and critical thinking. A decade and a half later, we celebrate students achieving GPA 5 by reproducing memorised content while employers lament having to deal with graduates who are unable to draft a coherent email or solve basic workplace problems. Governments of all stripes

flawed pattern. We revise religious education curricula to include modern subjects without addressing the pedagogical approaches, teacher qualifications or institutional cultures that determine whether these subjects are meaningfully taught.

Breaking this cycle requires confronting uncomfortable realities. First, no curriculum reform succeeds without a parallel investment in the human infrastructure of education. Teacher preparation isn't a supporting element of curriculum reform; it is part of the reform. Second, examination systems that reward memorisation will always undermine curricula designed for critical thinking. Third, the socioeconomic realities of Bangladesh, where education represents economic survival, mean that unless reforms address the connection between educational outcomes and life opportunities, they will remain theoretical exercises.

To redress, this author has a five-course wish list: a) establish a five-year moratorium on new curriculum changes to focus instead on implementing the existing curricula effectively; b) redirect curriculum reform budgets towards sustained, practice-based teacher development programmes; c) transform assessment systems to evaluate the ability of application, analysis, and problem-solving rather than recall; d) reduce class sizes by increasing the number of teachers rather than continually revising what those overwhelmed teachers are expected to teach; and e) elevate the teaching profession through improved compensation, autonomy, and social standing. This final point underlines an economic truth: value begets quality.

Granted, these measures are messier, more expensive, and politically challenging compared to the clean, donor-friendly process of curriculum revision. They require confronting entrenched interests and rethinking resource allocation. Yet, they address the actual antecedents of educational quality rather than its most visible but least consequential component.

Bangladesh's aspiration towards the higher middle income status means we can no longer afford the luxury of educational theatre. The curriculum obsession is both a misdiagnosis of our educational ailments and a distraction from the cure. The next time officials proudly present a new curriculum, we should ask not what has changed on paper, but what will change in practice.

Our curriculum fixation serves vested interests. For politicians, it offers visible, announceable actions that suggest educational progress without demanding significant resource reallocation. For bureaucrats, it creates opportunities for workshops and committees. For development partners, it represents a tangible, measurable intervention that fits neatly into project documents and logframes.

foundations that determine whether any curriculum should succeed or fail.

Consider the much-celebrated creative question method. Designed to foster higher-order thinking, it has instead mutated into another memorisation exercise, with students memorising creative answers from guidebooks. It collapsed not because the curricular concept was flawed, but because teachers (themselves

products of a regressive iteration significant resource reallocation. For bureaucrats, it creates opportunities for workshops and committees. For development partners, it represents a tangible, measurable intervention that fits neatly into project documents and logframes. The curriculum becomes the perfect performative reform, visible enough to claim credit but divorced enough from classroom realities to avoid accountability for actual learning outcomes.

The National Education Policy,

shadow institutions thrive not despite our curriculum reforms but because of them—they promise to translate the ideal curriculum into the practical reality of examination success. Their existence is a rational market response to the system's hypocrisy, where what is officially taught bears little resemblance to what is tested and valued. The madrasa education modernisation efforts follow the same

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The Global South will pay for Trump's trade war



Dr Jayati Ghosh, professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome's Transformational Economics Commission and co-chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

JAYATI GHOSH

US President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs have unleashed economic chaos, roiling stock and bond markets and triggering panic around the world, especially in lower-income countries that rely heavily on exports to the United States. The result could be an entirely manufactured global recession, with the developing world bearing the brunt.

The brief calm in financial markets following Trump's abrupt announcement of a 90-day "pause" on most of his "reciprocal" tariffs—excluding those on Chinese imports, which he raised to 145 percent—has proven premature. While some billionaires and loyalists may have made a killing by correctly interpreting Trump's social media posts ahead of his sudden policy reversal, the disruptions to global trade and finance caused by his tariffs continue to pose serious risks.

Moreover, despite the pause on some tariffs, a universal 10 percent tariff on all US imports remains in effect, along with sector-specific tariffs of 25 percent on steel, aluminium, automobiles, and auto parts. There are new exemptions for smartphones, computers, and other electronic devices, even as Trump has also threatened new duties on pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, copper, and lumber. Taken together, these measures will reduce the availability of imported goods, raise

prices for US consumers, and impose steep costs on exporting countries.

But ultimately, the tariffs imposed on each country will depend on future negotiations, where the US is expected to play hardball. Trump has already made clear his disdain for foreign leaders, boasting that many were "kissing my ass" and willing to "do anything" to reverse the tariffs. As a result, the final scope of Trump's tariffs remains uncertain.

Most critically, Trump's latest tariff hike on Chinese imports all but ensures that the Sino-American trade war will continue to escalate. The increase to 145 percent is largely symbolic—a tit-for-tat move after China raised its own tariffs—since the previous 104 percent rate had already made most Chinese imports commercially unviable. In effect, the administration has signalled its intent to shut down trade with China.

The implications for US consumers and domestic producers that rely on Chinese inputs are profound. Trump's open distrust of goods from Chinese-owned factories, even when routed through third countries, has forced governments hoping to maintain access to the US market to scramble for alternative sourcing and production options. The mere expectation of such shifts has already severely disrupted global supply chains.

Uncertainty has always been a major deterrent to economic activity,

and the unpredictability of the Trump administration's policies (marked by erratic decision-making, sudden reversals, and on-again, off-again announcements) has made future developments nearly impossible to anticipate using standard risk models. Trump's preference for shock-and-awe tactics, reminiscent of other "strongmen" like Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, compounds the problem.

Rising uncertainty will inevitably discourage investment, as businesses shelve new projects and postpone planned expansions while waiting to see how events unfold. The subsequent slowdown could weigh heavily on US growth and employment, with consequences that extend far beyond the direct economic impact of Trump's tariffs.

Worse still, the US cannot win its trade war with China. The Chinese government clearly knows this and is playing the long game. At any moment, the two superpowers' economic war of attrition could spiral into a major financial crisis or even a military confrontation.

The alarm bells are already ringing. The falloff in demand for US Treasury bills, long considered the world's safest asset, signals diminishing confidence in the economic leadership of the US. Moreover, the simultaneous drop in US stocks, bonds, and the dollar points to growing doubts about the US Treasury's ability to serve as the global benchmark for asset prices, even as they remain the preferred vehicle for high-volume financial transactions.

As with previous self-inflicted economic crises, the US economy will undoubtedly suffer, but the heaviest burden will fall on the developing world. Cancelled or delayed export orders are already

undermining production and fuelling unemployment. Meanwhile, financial volatility is threatening economic stability long before the full impact of Trump's tariffs can be felt.

These developments are already reflected in the yield spreads on developing countries' sovereign bonds, particularly those of lower- and middle-income economies. In the month leading up to April 9, emerging market sovereign dollar debt values fell by an average of 2.9 percent, while average yields rose to 7.4 percent. The sovereign bonds of debt-stressed countries like the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Gabon, and Zambia dropped by more than 10 percent.

Unfortunately, developing countries are all too familiar with this kind of financial and economic turmoil. For decades, many have been trapped in a cycle of currency depreciation, rising borrowing costs, strained public finances, forced spending cuts, and domestic market instability that constrained investment and private-sector activity.

The lessons for developing economies are clear. Not only is globalised trade being upended, but financial globalisation is bound to become even less appealing to countries seeking stable, long-term financing to support their development goals.

Trump is determined to dismantle the global economic order, which in his view allows other countries to take advantage of the US. In response, many developing economies will likely begin to reconsider their participation in—and subordination to—an unequal system that no longer serves their interests. But the road ahead will remain perilous until a credible alternative takes shape.

The sorry state of our green passports



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The immigration lines in most developed countries are smooth as most passengers simply scan their e-cards and walk through. Bangladeshi passport holders, however, often appear to be a spanner in the wheel that blocks the flow. The queue behind us grows longer and more restless. Officials need time to verify our documents. Occasionally, their superiors surface from hidden cubicles to cast more suspicious eyes. Once cleared, our bags come under a fresh round of random profiling. Our alien-coloured green passport is a symbol of exclusion. While the image-driven media creates a hearty narrative of global mobility full of opportunities and connectivity, the aspirations of most Bangladeshis are met with resistance through no fault of their own.

Bangladeshi passports are ranked among the weakest in the world. According to the latest edition of the Henley Passport Index, our passport stands at 100th, with war-torn states like Libya and the Palestinian territories in our cohort. The weak status of our passport is a reality check for many who suffer from false-inflated egos. It exposes

visa applications by Bangladeshis, against the global average of 21 percent. The figure is nearly the same for Schengen states. Last month, the Malaysian airport authority denied entry to 51 Bangladeshi nationals despite their having valid visas, allegedly for "loitering suspiciously in the arrival hall."

The difficulty in getting visas has contributed to the rise of an "industry" that profits from complexity and opacity. Many embassies employ middlemen or agents who levy hefty consultation or processing fees. In some instances, digital slots are allegedly monopolised by syndicates and sold by informed insiders. Then there is the added trouble of travelling to a third country to obtain consular services. If things are less than favourable there, you may encounter additional challenges in obtaining a second visa before attending your main interviews.

Even licensed visa service firms are not beyond criticism, being accused of delaying regular punters to encourage the purchase of premier services. A recent exposé revealed that a renowned visa agency held onto Italian

zone of legality. Victims have hardly any legal protection from these scheming agents and scammers. The reason is simple: the state does not value its citizens enough.

In most cases, we consider visa rejection to be a personal failure. But it is time for our state, particularly our diplomats, to realise that the refusal is often a failure of our soft power diplomacy. The state must stand by its citizens to reclaim the narrative.

them drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. Authorities arrested many and relocated them to temporary refugee shelters. Some ended up working as undocumented labourers in various regions of Europe.

The lack of a global reputation for Bangladeshi travellers discourages not just migrants, but also tourists and professionals. With the middle class on the rise, there is a growing demand for travelling abroad,

facilitation agreements with key partners, particularly for students, businesses, and migrant labourers. There should be advocacy for establishing more embassies in Dhaka, joint application centres, and long-term visa processing setups. We must examine the reasons behind Dhaka's status as a challenging posting for overseas envoys and enhance the basic amenities provided to them. Conversely, we need to upgrade our documentation process to enhance the credibility of our certificates and paper trails.

Additionally, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare must coordinate with law enforcement, civil aviation, and anti-corruption bodies to end the nefarious "visa industry." Government-run support portals must be empathetic and supportive to promote transparency and reduce dependency on middlemen. There should be steps to increase our skilled labour pool, targeting specific countries for fast-track mobility arrangements. Already, the chief adviser has mentioned the need for nurses and carers in the global market.

We can follow bilateral models like the Indo-German skilled workers' agreement or the Sri Lanka-Japan Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) programme to curate a niche market. The foreign ministry also has a mandate to raise the fair visa issue through diplomatic and multilateral channels. We must remind the Global North of its touted moral high ground and emphasise that mobility is a development right, not a privilege.

The time has come to promote our culture through public diplomacy. We need a database of our diaspora talent and showcase them to promote national reputation before the host countries, replacing the "risk" label. At the same time, we need to invest in our youth so they become globally informed citizens of the world. It is our duty to give them the freedom to study, to love, to work, and to dream beyond borders. We must train them to export our ideas, forge partnerships, and bring knowledge home. But first, we need to unlock our windows before expecting the world to open its gates for us. It's time to reclaim the dignity of our green passports, not with misplaced patriotism, but with strategic interventions. We look forward to the day when Bangladeshis walk through green channels, proud of their green passports.



VISUAL: STAR

If Bangladeshis are considered burdens or threats, it will affect our labour market, trade, education, and cultural exchanges. As a country with a high unemployment rate, many see the outside world as a provider of life-changing opportunities. Yet, they are frustrated by the obstinacy of the legal channels. Aspiring immigrants frequently fall prey to scammers, who encourage them to undertake perilous journeys involving smugglers, fake documents, and alternative travel routes through forests, hills, or oceans. The popular code used for such a process is known as "game." In recent years, thousands of Bangladeshis have reportedly tried to enter Europe through gaming. Some of

attending international events, and sending children to overseas institutions. Genuine students with scholarships or businessmen with all-paid-for trips are denied visas for no apparent reason. The stated reasons, such as "low income" or "insufficient ties to home," often exacerbate the situation. The weak positioning of our travel document is due to weak diplomatic initiatives, inefficient migration services, and a non-existent passport strategy.

With a global icon now at the helm of the government, the time is right for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to push for fair visa policies for Bangladeshi nationals. The ministry must take proactive steps to establish bilateral visa

In most cases, we consider visa rejection to be a personal failure. But it is time for our state, particularly our diplomats, to realise that the refusal is often a failure of our soft power diplomacy. The state must stand by its citizens to reclaim the narrative.

us to dehumanising processes that include visa hassles, exploitative syndicates, and immigration humiliation. It affects our global mobility in business, education, family visits, and tourism. In the year up to March 2024, the UK Home Office rejected 53 percent of

visas for over a year, demanding heavier fees. On the other hand, freelancers entice visa-seekers with promises of guaranteed visas. First-time travellers and those unfamiliar with the digital protocol are easy targets. These visa consultants operate in the shadow

When will women be safe?

A question that reveals a grim reality

Fauzia Ibrahim
is programme manager at Mongol Deep Foundation.

FAUZIA IBRAHIM

Over the past few months, there has been a spat of violence against women, including harassment and rape. According to Manabadihikar Shongskriti Foundation, 42 women and children were raped in January this year; the number rose to 57 in February. For many years, women's safety in Bangladesh has been a growing concern, and yet the solutions seem far out of reach. So, when will women be safe?

From March 6 to March 8 this year, Mongol Deep Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to social development through the arts, launched a campaign to gather public opinion on women's safety. The social media campaign started on their official Facebook page, posting three thought-provoking questions. The first question was: "when will women be safe?" The options given were: when she stays at home; when she covers; when men change; and never. The second question was: "what can women do to keep themselves safe?" The options were: remain at home after evening; always keep pepper spray or pocketknife; learn self-defence like karate/martial arts; and demand to keep men indoors. The last question was: "were you ever sexually harassed?" Here, the options were: yes; no; and don't want to answer.

This campaign aimed to gather elicited responses along the lines of what would make women and girls feel safe. We chose

social media as the platform because the cyber world often acts as a parallel reality, where people express their opinions more freely than they would in person. Here, intrusive thoughts turn into public



FILE VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHON

statements without hesitation. What we got was a predominantly male perspective filled with protectionist rhetoric. The posts reached thousands across Bangladesh, and 1,674 men and women engaged. What was surprising, though, was that most of the

comments came from men—males who felt entitled to dictate the terms of women's safety. The responses painted a bleak and unsettling picture of how deeply ingrained misogyny is in our society.

A staggering 23.4 percent (393 individuals) claimed that women are unsafe because they don't "cover up," and of these commenters, 89 percent were men. Meanwhile, the other seven percent (129 individuals) took it further, explicitly blaming revealing clothing for sexual harassment and assault. The message is clear: women's bodies are the problem, not the men who harass, assault or rape them. Another 186 individuals insisted that women's safety could only be ensured through

lower their gazes as well, the responses here clearly highlight how certain religious interpretations are often misused to justify blame on women's clothing.

A silver lining was to find 10.5 percent (176 individuals) of the total commenters offering civic solutions to ensure women's

said women will never be safe in Bangladesh. Their responses didn't just express fear, they expressed resignation. These respondents don't believe change will come because our society will never evolve, and law enforcement will remain weak. This is not pessimism; this is their lived reality.

Perhaps the most horrifying revelation was that 25 men openly stated that some women don't deserve to be safe at all. Their reasoning? Women who "freely mix" with men, work outside home, travel at night, or break the so-called societal norms should expect to be assaulted.

safety. Their suggestions were among the basic measures that should already be in place, like stricter laws, proper enforcement, and women's financial independence. But in a sea of victim-blaming, these reasonable voices were drowned out.

In light of the recent attack on two women for smoking in public, it wasn't shocking to find 34 individuals (all men) claim that women smoking in public is the reason the entire female population is unsafe. The idea that a woman's safety is determined by whether she smokes, whereas the habit is equally harmful for all genders, is just another excuse to control and punish women for existing in public spaces. This adds to the critique of how women are unfairly blamed for their own lack of safety in situations where men face no such concerns. Perhaps the most horrifying revelation was that 25 men openly stated that some women don't deserve to be safe at all. Their reasoning? Women who "freely mix" with men, work outside home, travel at night, or break the so-called societal norms should expect to be assaulted.

On the other hand, 149 frustrated individuals, 75 percent of whom are women,

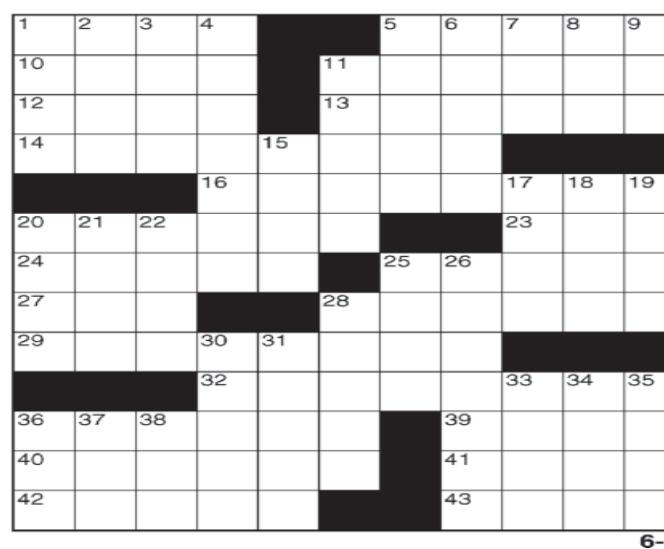
While this campaign provided valuable insights, it also had limitations. Social media engagement does not represent the entire population, and those who chose to comment were likely individuals with strong opinions, whether in support of or against women's rights. Additionally, the format of the questions may have influenced responses, as multiple-choice options can sometimes oversimplify complex issues. Despite these limitations, the sheer volume of engagement and the nature of the responses highlight a troubling reality that cannot be ignored.

The responses to this campaign are not limited to Facebook. They are reflections of our streets, our homes, and our workplaces. They show us that many still see women's safety as conditional, dependent on how much they conform to patriarchal norms, how much they cover up, and how much they give up their freedom. The streets remain unsafe, the laws are inadequately enforced, and societal attitudes continue to facilitate this crisis.

So, coming back to the original question: when will women be safe? If this campaign has shown us anything, the answer is probably: not anytime soon.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Weary word
5 Record company
10 River sediment
11 Greet a superior
12 Concept
13 Royal heir
14 Spiky flower
16 Bright flower
20 Optimally
23 Mine material
24 Strata
25 Spills the beans
27 Count start
28 Eye parts
29 Showy flower
32 Spring flower
36 Stand up to
39 Marine
40 Cave sounds
41 Strong smell
42 Frost creations
43 Flank
44 DOWN
1 "In your dreams!"
2 Beach resort
3 Baseball's
4 Rodriguez
4 React to a punch
5 Tadpole, e.g.
6 Saucer pilot
7 Frank holder
8 List-shortening
abbr.
9 Writer Harper
11 Cricket or crew
15 Minus
17 Charged
particles
18 Goad
19 Base meal
20 Physics bit
21 Turner of music
22 Keg contents
25 Egotist's focus
26 Not alfresco
28 Barn areas
30 Figure of
speech
31 Nebula makeup
33 Zwei follower
34 Tea type
35 Ontario, for
one
36 Workout unit
37 Green prefix
38 That lady



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Of de-extinct 'dire wolves' and the importance of science communication

Communication is a concept built around the idea of collaboration. When science is made inaccessible, either by the politics of academia or by simply being too niche, it alienates itself.

RAIAN ABEDIN

On March 5, 2025, the current president of the United States made a claim about 'wasteful government funding' being spent on making mice transgender: a baffling claim to anyone with the patience and reservation to think about it. As proof, the White House's official website released information about *transgenic* mice, i.e. mice that have been artificially infused with genes from a different organism — undergoing hormone therapy as part

some high-concept theory. Science is moving further and further away from the realm of easy accessibility and, to make matters worse, scientists in their ivory towers rarely offer help. The language of science is one that is heavy with jargon, and rarely communicates well to anyone not well-versed in that field to begin with. Knowledge, thus, remains trapped in a bubble. But what makes matters worse is that this leaves knowledge open to be co-opted and warped to sell to the media and, by extension,

misleading way. The unifying factor for both the dire wolf and the transgender mice situations lies solely in how science, scientific development and study, and the accrued knowledge acquired through careful and laborious research have become a hotbed for misleading mass media coverage. Marketers, advertisers, and politicians are experts in the art of 'communication' — the fact that the thing they're communicating may be misleading is of no consequence to them. This is precisely why communicating science — the intricacies of it — by those well-versed in the science is crucial. Now more than ever, the heavy jargon of science needs to be made more comprehensible by storytellers and writers alike. The responsibility is simple, but it has crucial implications. Otherwise, we risk otherising everyone who isn't aware of the niche work presented within conferences and paywalled research journals.

The communication aspect of science is a skill that requires concentrated effort to ensure that the message is clear and safe from blemishes. This much we understand of the responsibility of science communication. But there is an additional factor at play here. While the niche factor of science makes it difficult to communicate, the financial barriers of academia act as a fortress, concealing any and all knowledge generated within their journals. Take *Nature* — the world's leading science journal — which costs upwards of EUR 185 for a year's subscription. No part of this money, or really any money paid to journals, ends up in the scientists' pockets. The publishers take all, and thus they continue charging exorbitant prices for crucial scientific knowledge.

Communication is a concept built around the idea of collaboration. When science is made inaccessible, either by the politics of academia or by simply being too niche, it alienates itself. Science has a duty to exist for the sake of a society that asks for help. Science communication builds trust between the scientific world and those who seek to benefit from it.

The problem now remains in the fact that our political systems seem to thrive in the dearth of proper communication of science between scientists and non-scientists. To tackle this, an effort must be made head-on. Communities of scientists and teachers have a responsibility to establish the necessity of science communication to the youth. Youth organisations have a similar role to play, hosting workshops and establishing clubs that promote said activity. Even at a professional level, the importance of science communicators cannot be understated. Be it for the development of science itself or in how it is utilised, there is no denying that the current era is one that absolutely requires their presence.

Raiyan is a poet, a student, and a contributor at The Daily Star



of experiments for the treatment of Asthma, HIV, and even physical wounds. Of the claims made regarding transgender mice, no evidence was to be seen anywhere.

The conclusion, while crystal clear, leaves room for questions in my mind: Why is it that such an argument became a hot topic for people around the globe? Why was the lack of knowledge regarding science allowed to be weaponised for bigotry?

The inaccessibility of science has always been one of its biggest detractors. Today, whatever bleeding-edge technology exists typically functions to deliver answers regarding

the masses. Take another example, one slightly more recent. The 'de-extinct' direwolves made headlines across the spectrum of news media. Everyone was too caught up in celebrating this incredible feat of science (or how adorable those pups look) to actually look into the science of how this was achieved.

The pitch that was sold to these news outlets was that these were the same species of dire wolves that went extinct many years ago. However, the truth of these dire wolves being genetically modified variations of grey wolves was, while not hidden, kept at a distance from the limelight. It was only after the initial wave of excitement died out that people took to reading through the available data in order to come to a different conclusion: the science, while groundbreaking, was sold in a rather

The life altering mundanity of adulthood

ANICA BUSHRA RAHMAAN

As children, we all wanted to fast-track our childhood and become adults. We assumed adults had infinite money, could stay out or up as late as they wanted to, or never had to ask for permission for anything. They had freedom, autonomy, and fun. We couldn't wait to be a part of it. However, now that I have entered my 20s, the rose-tinted glasses have come off. As we unfortunately step onto the throes of adulthood and grasp how taxing it truly is (pun intended), life is a series of concurring thoughts, constantly screaming: "No, this is not what I asked for! Give me a refund."

As an adult, you're constantly exhausted. You have no idea where your money goes. You're not sure if you even want to know. After a certain point, your whole body hurts, all the time. You discover the value of a proper sleep schedule. You have to fight against all odds to have an emblem of a social life while also ensuring your social battery does not get depleted. And the list goes on.

Thus, as an ode to the chaotic ordeal which is adulthood, below are some moments that have shocked or will shock all new adults at some point with the realisation: 'Oh, I'm an adult now'.

Watching your friends get married

Watching your dear friends, with whom you hold the fondest memories of being dumb, embarrassing, and chaotic together, getting married is a surreal experience. These are people we used to play with, shared our tiffins with, and always found just a call away. We were kids together. And now they're starting a family, following different threads in life. Of course, it is



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

a joy to witness. But the reality of it, of how far we have come, and how farther life is yet to take us, is always hard to accept.

Filing taxes for the first time

We were never really taught how to navigate the intricate web of taxation. While we all clearly remember that 'the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell', we are rarely given a clue about what entails the process of filing taxes in school.

As we grow up, we gradually get a glimpse of what taxes are, only to learn it is something the rich avoid to preserve their wealth while the rest are left to scramble. Hence, finally getting a proper look at the bureaucratic nightmare of taxes — with its vague eligibility criteria and rules, endless forms and errands — can be disconcerting.

Beginning to pay rent

The concept of home as a kid was unmarred — cosy and free of obligations. As you grow older and finally reach the age where you have to pay rent, you realise just how expensive it is to have a place just to rest and belong; that home actually has a price tag. Sure, it also instills a more solid sense of belonging and assurance, but the amount it takes away from your income each month also leaves you in a cold sweat which refuses to fully dry up.

Shopping for groceries and keeping inventory
As kids, core memories in grocery shops consisted of us whining to our mothers to get us a snack, only to get a reluctant "Fine" as a response. But as adults, a trip down the grocery aisle is organised and stressful. You almost always opt for the necessities, only going for a few occasional treats, but even then, the resulting bill results in hair loss. To make matters worse, realising that each grocery haul lasts only a handful of days just feels like a never-ending cruel joke.

Finding out that there is no room for excuses

The biggest thing about reaching adulthood is realising there's no space to make excuses anymore, no space to stumble and learn. Adulthood does not offer the safety net that childhood did. Gone are the days of trial and error. You are always expected to keep it together. To have a plan, to be responsible.

You cannot act on a whim. You are always expected to keep your cool, especially with your parents because they are old now and so are you, somehow. You cannot do a single thing, such as missing out on sleep or eating too much junk food, without experiencing the consequences.

The world demands you know better, and you are expected to deliver.

Anica Bushra Rahmaan is ankle-deep in adulthood and already hates it. Reach her at anicarrahmaan@gmail.com

Five digital platforms for journaling

PUNOMI RAHMAN TITIR

Whether you're a seasoned journaling veteran or just thinking to start off, embracing digital platforms for bullet journaling can simplify your experience and keep you inspired. Here we have compiled five digital platforms that elevate the art of journaling into a convenient and paperless delight.

Day One

The Day One app is a virtual haven for journaling. It beautifully captures the essence of owning a physical journal while introducing dynamic features that surpass traditional mediums. Imagine seamlessly integrating videos, images, audio clips, weather updates, and even your location into your entries — bringing your memories to life with vibrant details.

Day One's calendar view provides a captivating visual journey through your entries, with coloured dots marking each day's musings. You can hover over a date and get a glimpse of your entry, inviting you to revisit past moments.

The 'On This Day' feature is a delightful touch, highlighting entries from previous years, offering a reflection on how your life has evolved. The app also tracks your journaling streak, which encourages regular writing and helps you maintain consistency.

GoodNotes

GoodNotes is a popular note-taking app that allows you to create and organise your journals digitally. It offers an extensive library of custom templates, handwriting recognition, and multimedia integration, making it convenient for bullet journaling purposes.

Moreover, the app facilitates users with a range of functional features including the 'Lasso' tool that enables precise selection and dragging of elements across templates. The 'Shape' tool is undeniably clever too. It smartly interprets your imperfect freehand strokes, transforming them into probable shapes and lines.

GoodNotes is available over iOS,



ILLUSTRATION: ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

iPadOS, Android, and Windows, making it compatible and user-friendly.

Journey

Journey is a secure and versatile journaling app that offers a sleek and inviting interface to chronicle your thoughts, memories, and personal growth. With seamless integration of photos and videos, mood tracking and location tagging, Journey enriches your journaling experience with a rich tapestry of multimedia.

Journey's elegant design features a captivating calendar and timeline view, allowing you to effortlessly track your journaling progress and revisit past entries. The app's cloud-based storage ensures your precious memories are safely backed up and readily accessible across all your devices. Its clean and distraction-free interface creates an ideal environment for consistent journaling, making it effortless to nurture your writing habit.

Daily Bean

Daily Bean is a minimalist tracking app

that embraces simplicity. Its intuitive design makes it easy to quickly capture your daily thoughts, moods, and experiences with just a few taps.

What truly sets Daily Bean apart is its focus on mood journaling. Each entry can be tagged with a variety of mood indicators, providing a visual snapshot of your emotional landscape over time. This insightful feature empowers you to identify patterns in your moods, gain a deeper understanding of your emotional well-being, and cultivate greater self-awareness.

The app's design is a burst of charm, enveloping you in a warm and inviting atmosphere with its soft pastel hues, cute illustrations, and smooth, rounded elements. Journaling with Daily Bean feels like a warm hug, making the experience truly delightful.

Carava

For those seeking a more creative journaling experience, Carava is a popular choice. Widely known for its design capabilities, this graphic design

platform doubles as an excellent tool for digital journaling. With a vast array of templates, fonts, and stickers, it allows you to create personalised, visually appealing planners that reflect your unique style.

Carava's intuitive design tools provide the creative freedom to curate your digital notebook pages exactly the way you want, without the hassle of purchasing or organising physical scrapbooking materials. It provides a digital canvas where you can explore your creativity without limitations and experiment with different aesthetics and styles to find what resonates with you the best.

Digital journaling adapts the traditional method into a sleek, tech-forward approach. With hundreds of amazing platforms available, each offering unique features and customisation options, there's a tool for every style and preference. The possibilities are endless, allowing you to find the perfect digital space to undertake your journaling escapade.

Another chance for Tigresses to seal WC berth

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh go into their final game of the ICC Women's World Cup Qualifiers against Pakistan today knowing that their fate is still in their hands. If Bangladesh win today, they will ensure a second consecutive berth in the ODI World Cup behind already-qualified Pakistan.

The Tigresses' three-wicket loss to Windies on Thursday has complicated the scenario a bit following three straight wins in the ongoing qualifiers. It has also brought West Indies and Scotland into contention -- both sides on two wins and much-inferior run-rate to Bangladesh prior to yesterday.

West Indies take on Thailand in the day-night game today, hoping they get a big-margin win and that Bangladesh lose by a big margin against Pakistan in the day game.

Although the loss against West Indies may dampen spirits, Tigresses do have an edge over Pakistan in terms of past records, having won seven matches and losing four.

They also have a bit of security in regards to net run-rate as they can qualify even if they lose to Pakistan while West Indies and Scotland win their final matches. Scotland, in with an outside chance, were playing Ireland yesterday at the time of filing this report.

BTV to air Ban-Zim Tests as media rights go unsold

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Television (BTV) has confirmed that it will broadcast the upcoming two-Test series between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe live, following a feed received via the production satellite designated by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The announcement came via a BTV press release issued yesterday.

The decision arrives against the backdrop of BCB's ongoing struggle to secure a media rights partner for the series, scheduled to begin in Sylhet on April 20 before the action moves to Chattogram where the second Test will be played, starting on April 28.

Despite issuing an open call for Expression of Interest (EOI) along with financial proposals on March 19, the board received no bids by the April 7 deadline.

With no takers for the rights and time running out, the BCB has turned to the state-run broadcaster to ensure that the series still reaches cricket fans nationwide.

A BCB source, speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, had said the lack of interest stemmed from doubts over the commercial viability of the two-match series. In recent years, Bangladesh's home series had been aired on T Sports and GTV through the Millennium Media Consortium, but that agreement expired after the South Africa series in October last year.



Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, and Najmul Hossain Shanto were busy sharpening their slip-catching skill yesterday during Bangladesh's training session at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium. Aside from not fumbling at the slip cordon, the quartet will also have to make runs at the top order when the Tigers take on Zimbabwe in the first of the two-Test series in Sylhet tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

Tigers look to move away from spin dependency

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons yesterday said that he does not want to smother Zimbabwe with spin, rather he wants to face them on a 'proper wicket' in the first Test in Sylhet starting on Sunday.

The Tigers' think tank often prepare spin traps for opponents in home Tests. But this ploy does not always come through, for instance, in the last home Test series against New Zealand they tried this formula but the Bangladesh batters could not counter Kiwi spinners.

On the back of their most successful campaign in the ICC Test Championship,

I think they are excellent. I have watched the Bangladesh pace attack grow and grow through the years. The amount of players they get to select from, is incredible. There's a lot of people who can bowl fast nowadays. Not just one person. We are prepared for that. We have bowling machines that bowl faster than human beings.

Zimbabwe's SEAN WILLIAMS praised Bangladesh's pace attack but took a dig at speedster NAHID RANA



Phil Simmons

where they secured four wins, Bangladesh now wants to carry on with the same momentum in the upcoming two-Test series, which is not part of the cycle, on fair wickets.

"Our plan is to prepare proper wickets and try to play as we want to take the Test team in that direction. We don't necessarily have to prepare a spin track. There's no talk of preparing a spin or seaming track," Simmons told reporters in Sylhet yesterday.

While ace paceman Taskin Ahmed is out injured, Tigers can bank on the pace of Nahid Rana, Tanzim Sakib, Khaled Ahmed and Hasan Mahmud. There was a question over whether a left-arm pacer like Shoriful Islam would have been handy but Simmons was happy with the pacers on offer.

"It is good to have a left-arm pacer nowadays in international cricket, but if

you don't, as long as you have two or three quality right-arm pace bowlers. We are happy with the four quicks we have in the team right now," said Simmons.

"Nahid Rana has the pace that most fast bowlers are dying for. If he is bowling in the right areas, he is definitely going to trouble batters," he added.

The Tigers will have to find replacements for key veteran stars who are coming into the final stage of their careers. Mushfiqur Rahim has appeared in 94 Tests and might be eying a 100th before calling time. The 37-year-old has been preparing well ahead of the first Test according to the head coach.

"[Mushfiqur] is as professional as they come. He thinks he can get the runs that he deserves from the point of view of how much he is working. He wants to do well. He is working on being in good nick. He has had a phenomenal run against Zimbabwe," he said.

Mushfiqur has informed the management he will not be keeping wickets and Mahidul Islam and Jaker Ali are waiting on the wings to show their mettle behind the stumps. Simmons said the team are still in the phase of making that decision and will finalise it a day before the game.

The Tigers would also be on the lookout for solidity at the top, especially the opening pair. The management has three opening options in Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam and Mahmudul Hasan Joy and any two of them will get the chance to stake their claim on a surface that is likely to reward pacers.

Barca look to ratchet up pressure on Real

AGENCIES

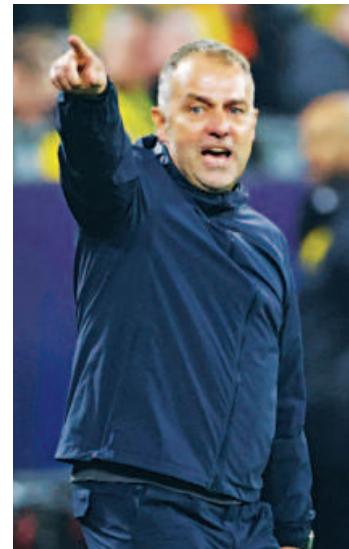
Barcelona will be aiming to open up a seven-point lead at the top of LaLiga table when they welcome Europe-chasing Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Hansi Flick's side sit four points clear of second-placed Real Madrid at the summit heading into the next gameweek, while Celta are seventh, five points behind sixth-placed Real Betis in the battle for Europe.

Barcelona have a record of 22 wins, four draws, and five defeats from their 31 league matches this season, with a total of 70 points.

The Catalan outfit have an incredible 84 league goals this term, and a victory over Celta in this contest would see them put more pressure on a struggling Real. The 15-time Champions League winners were dumped out of the competition after losing 5-1 on aggregate to Arsenal last week in the quarters and will be missing suspended Kylian Mbappe for their Sunday's game against Athletic, a team that have lost just once in their last 22 league games and beat Real 2-1 in December.

Barcelona will be looking to



exact some measure of revenge when they host Celta after the reverse fixture ended 2-2. Barca were up 2-0 before Marc Casado was sent off, and the 10 men conceded two late goals to draw 2-2.

And unlike Real, Barcelona are still in the hunt for a treble in Flick's first season, with Real

and Barca set to meet in a much-anticipated Clasico clash in the Copa del Rey final later this month in Seville.

"I am really satisfied with the team and the performances this season," Flick said.

"We're still in three competitions. We're in the Champions League semifinal. This is a huge success and we can be happy for that."

Barcelona were down in the dumps on Tuesday after losing for the first time in 2025 in a 3-1 Champions League quarterfinal second-leg defeat at Borussia Dortmund, and it was up to coach Flick to offer his players some perspective.

Having thrashed last year's finalists 4-0 in the first leg, Barca qualified for the semifinals with a 5-3 aggregate win and will play Inter Milan in the last four.

"The team has a lot of merit. There is still a long way to go and we are not at the end," Flick said.

"In the dressing room there was no euphoria either. I reminded them that we are in the semifinals. Then it changed a little, and they were happier."



Manchester United centre-back Harry Maguire celebrates after scoring the winner deep into stoppage-time of extra-time in the second-leg of their Europa League quarterfinal at home against Lyon yesterday. United, who were staring at defeat and crashing out of the competition against a 10-man Lyon, staged an incredible comeback, thanks to a couple of goals in the 120th and 121st minutes, scored by substitute Kobbie Mainoo and Maguire, respectively. The goals gave United a 5-4 victory on the night and a 7-6 aggregate win, taking Ruben Amorim's side to the semifinals of the competition where they will face Athletic Bilbao.

What to WATCH

T Sports

IPSL
Gujarat vs Delhi
Live from 4:00 pm
Rajasthan vs
Lucknow
Live from 8:00 pm

Nagorik TV
PSL
Peshawar vs Multan
Live from 9:00 pm
Star Sports Select HD 1
Premier League
Everton vs Manchester City

Live from 8:00 pm
Aston Villa vs Newcastle Utd
Live from 10:30
Sony Sports 2
Bundesliga
Heidenheim vs Bayern
Live from 7:30 pm

Bangladesh off to a flying start in AHF Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bangladesh made a flying start in the AHF Cup with a 5-1 win against Kazakhstan in their Pool B opener in Jakarta, Indonesia yesterday.

The charges of Mamun Ur Rashid, however, had to work hard initially to break the Kazakhstan challenge.

Four-time champions Bangladesh took the lead through a penalty corner converted by Ashraful Islam in the 24th minute but the Central Asian side hit back on the half hour mark, soon after resumption of the match following heavy downpour.

The Bangladesh coach made some tactical changes in the third quarter and his players grabbed control of the midfield instead of trying to use wing play for the attacks, unlike in the first two quarters.

The men in red and green scored three goals in the third quarter with Naim Uddin restoring the lead from a rebound home before Rokibul Hasan made it 3-1 from open play and Shohanur Rahman Sabuj converted a penalty corner.

In the fourth quarter, Bangladesh kept their dominance with lion's share of possession and earned three penalty corners. However, it was Ashraful's second goal -- from a penalty stroke in the penultimate minute -- that wrapped up the victory.

'FIFA very careful with calendar, player welfare'

REUTERS

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said player health and welfare remains a key consideration for the global governing body amid concerns about expanding tournaments in an already crowded calendar.

Players' union FIFPRO, Spain's LaLiga and the European leagues' group filed a joint complaint to European Union antitrust regulators earlier in October, accusing FIFA of "calendar abuse".

Critics argue FIFA's revamped quadrennial 32-team Club World Cup and other expanded tournaments will increase the number of matches each season and leave players with little time off between campaigns.

Infantino told CNN that the Club World Cup's impact on player welfare would be limited.

"It is a competition which takes place once every four years. The winner plays seven games -- which is like one game and a half, almost, more a year -- so it doesn't have a big impact," he added.

"What happens in world soccer is that there are many games for very few teams, very few players. Those who reach maybe the final stages of all competitions, which again is very rare ... So all in all, it balances itself out quite a bit."

"But we're very careful about the calendar and about the health of the players. I mean, we want to do everything for the players to be in the best conditions to perform in the best way. That's what many players tell me as well, what you want is to play rather than to train, right?"

Infantino also said the FIFA taskforce led by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was analysing the impact of Club World Cup on player welfare.



PHOTO: AFP

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Israel hits 40 targets in Gaza

24 Palestinians killed; ceasefire efforts stall

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli airstrikes hit around 40 targets across the Gaza Strip over the past day, the military said yesterday, hours after Hamas rejected an Israeli ceasefire offer that it said fell short of its demand to agree a full end to the war.

Gaza's civil defence agency said 24 people, including 10 from the same family, had been killed in two strikes.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said on Telegram that "our crews recovered the bodies of 10 martyrs and a large number of wounded from the house of the Baraka family and the neighbouring houses targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Bani Suhaila area east of Khan Yunis," in the southern Gaza Strip.

Bassal later announced that a separate strike hit two houses in northern Gaza's Tal al-Zaatar, where crews had "recovered the bodies of five people".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



A Palestinian man inspects the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

India reacts to Shafiqul's comments on Murshidabad violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

India has reacted sharply to the remarks of Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam who urged New Delhi to take steps to protect the Muslim population of Murshidabad in West Bengal.

A statement from India's external affairs ministry termed his comments a "barely disguised and disingenuous attempt to draw a parallel with India's concerns over the ongoing persecution of minorities in Bangladesh".

"We reject the remarks made by the Bangladesh side with regard to the incidents in West Bengal," the ministry's spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in the statement issued yesterday in response to media queries on Shafiqul's comments.

"Instead of making unwarranted comments and indulging in virtue signalling, Bangladesh would do better to focus on protecting the rights of its own minorities," Jaiswal said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Bangladesh tops sea arrivals to Italy

UNHCR data shows 2,589 reached Italian shores in first two months of 2025

MD ABBAS

The number of Bangladeshis crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy doubled in the first two months this year compared to the same period last year.

According to the latest data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2,589 Bangladeshis landed in Italian shores in January and February this year while 1,206 went to the European country in the two months last year.

The sharp rise has alarmed migration experts, who warn that the trend reflects both deep-rooted socio-economic challenges at home and the lure of dream jobs there.

"All of them embarked from Libya," said the UNHCR's February edition of the Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard, which was published on Thursday.

Libya has long served as a gateway for human smuggling networks operating in North Africa.

February alone saw 1,383 Bangladeshis arrive in Italy, up from 1,206 in January. In contrast, only 585 Bangladeshis arrived in January last year and 621 in February that year.

With this surge, Bangladesh became the top nationality arriving in Italy by sea between January and February this year.

Regarding this trend, Asif Munier, a Dhaka-based labour migration specialist, told The Daily Star, "This is not just a migration issue. It's a reflection of growing despair."

"Many young Bangladeshis are unemployed or underemployed. Those who cannot migrate through legal channels -- mostly young people -- take risky routes in hopes of a better future. But most of them

fall into the trap of brokers who sell them dreams of Europe."

The journey to Europe typically begins with travel to Libya -- often through legal or semi-legal means -- and ends in a hazardous sea crossing arranged by transnational trafficking networks.

These trips can cost from Tk 5 to 8 lakh, with the migrants funding the journey through loans, land



An overcrowded migrant boat.

PHOTO: AFP

sales, or support from relatives abroad.

"They risk their lives believing that once they land in Italy, the government there won't deport them and will grant them temporary stay permits, as Italy is considered a migration friendly country," Asif added.

Bangladeshi migrants have long been vulnerable to trafficking, especially in North African transit hubs like Tripoli, Zuwara, and Sabha.

Talking to this correspondent, Shakirul Islam, chairman of Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Programme, an organisation working for the welfare of migrant

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Solving expats' issues must begin at home
Says foreign adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday said that efforts to address the challenges faced by Bangladeshi expatriate workers must begin at home, as around 80 percent of the issues originate before they even leave the country.

Although only 20 percent of issues arise in destination countries, he said the responsibility to resolve all of them falls on Bangladesh missions.

He made these remarks while speaking at a programme marking "Foreign Service Day-2025," held at the Foreign Service Academy. The event was broadcast live on the foreign ministry's official Facebook page.

The adviser said Bangladesh's missions, despite limited manpower and resources, serve around one crore expatriates worldwide.

Citing Saudi Arabia as an example, he noted that about 32 lakh Bangladeshis reside there. "Even if all of them follow local laws, many still face various issues," he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Polytechnic students continue protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of polytechnic institutes demonstrated in various parts of the country yesterday to press home their six-point demand.

Draped in white shrouds, the demonstrators carried banners and placards while chanting slogans, calling for urgent government intervention.

The students warned that if their demands are not met promptly, they will intensify their movement in the coming days.

In Dhaka, several hundred students under the banner of "Technical Student Movement" began their protest from Dhaka Polytechnic Institute around 2:15pm. The procession marched through different roads and concluded with a rally in front of the institute.

At the rally, Mashfiq Islam, a central representative of the platform, said, "It is a matter of our existence. We will remain united to meet our demands through a tougher movement."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Students of polytechnic institute continued their protests in various parts of the country yesterday to press home their six-point demand. In Dhaka, they brought out a procession in the Tejgaon area in the afternoon.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

US strike on Yemen fuel port kills 74 Say Houthi media

AGENCIES

US strikes on a fuel port in Yemen killed at least 74 people yesterday, Houthi-run media said, one of the deadliest days since the United States began its attacks on the Iran-backed militants.

The United States has vowed not to halt the large-scale strikes begun last month in its biggest military operation in the Middle East since President Donald Trump took office in January, unless the Houthis cease attacks on Red Sea shipping.

Al Masirah TV said 102 people were also wounded in yesterday's strikes on the western fuel port of Ras Isa, which the US military said aimed to cut off a source of fuel for the Houthi militant group.

Responding to a Reuters query for comment on the Houthis' casualty figure and its own estimate, the US Central Command said it had none beyond the initial announcement of the attacks.

The objective of these strikes was to degrade the economic source of power of the Houthis, who continue to exploit

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

A researcher's journey to the FROZEN CONTINENT



From McMurdo station, the Allan Hills are across Transantarctic Mountains. There is typically no wildlife there for around 300 miles. An initial challenge for me was adjusting with the fact that there is no "night time" in that region of Antarctica during the summer because of the high latitude.

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

Fairuz Ishraque, a Bangladeshi scientist, recently journeyed to the icy continent of Antarctica, where he spent 69 days conducting research in the Allan Hills, a notable group of hills in the region.

During that time, through his exploration and field activities, Fairuz gained hands-on experience about how research is conducted in the region. His research was part of the US Antarctic Program.

After he returned to the US, The Daily Star sat down with Fairuz for an exclusive interview for insights into the secrets that lie deep inside the icy regions.

The Daily Star (DS): Could you tell us about your research experience in Antarctica? How does one even begin to make their way to Antarctica?

FAIRUZ ISHRAQUE: From the US we went to Christchurch, New Zealand. We stayed there for two days in the US Antarctic Program clothing distribution centre (CDC) to get necessary gear like jackets, boots, pens, etc. The flights from New Zealand to Antarctica are highly dependent on the weather and the conditions of the runway. There are two ways to get there, either on a C130 small aircraft or a C17 cargo flight. I went in a C17 aircraft, which took six hours to get to the McMurdo station in Antarctica.

There, we received training in McMurdo station for one week before heading to Allan hills. I am a part of The Higgins Research Group which drilled and collected ice cores from here over the last decade. Because of these ice cores, we have a really good idea of what the Earth's atmosphere looked like around 8,00,000 years in the past.

Overall, I was there from November 17, 2024 to January 24, 2025.

DS: What was your initial reaction upon arriving in Antarctica?

FAIRUZ: From McMurdo station, the Allan Hills are across Transantarctic Mountains. There is typically no wildlife there for around 300 miles. An initial challenge for me was adjusting with the fact that there is no "night time" in that region of Antarctica during the summer because of the high latitude. Also, summer time in Antarctica usually starts in October and ends in March, which in itself can be odd. So, not only did I have to get used to a "summer season" where temperatures were negative 30-40 degrees, but I also had to get used to having no typical "night time". Also, in Allan Hills, there are extremely high winds as fast as 80 kilometres an hour. The atmosphere is completely dry, with no humidity. So everything felt upside down.

TDS: What piqued your interest in researching Antarctica? Could you provide insights on your research?

FAIRUZ: We are interested in the Allan Hills because of ice cores that can be found there. Ice cores are like cylinders of ice drilled out from the ice sheets. They serve as a really good record regarding climate change from the past.

Different chemicals and gases are trapped in the ice as it settles in Antarctica. More and more ice settles on top and mixes till it almost becomes like sedimentary rocks made of ice and various chemicals.

I am a part of The Higgins Research Group which drilled and collected ice cores from here over the last decade. Because of these ice cores, we have a really good idea of what the Earth's atmosphere looked like around 8,00,000 years in the past.

However, the Earth's geologic and

climate history goes back billions of years. Unfortunately, ice sheets are usually only thick enough to fit 8,00,000 years of information.

What makes Allan Hills special is because it is one of the few locations at the periphery of Antarctica that traps really old ice as it flows from the centre of the continent to the edge. These are called "blue ice areas". Blue ice areas are special in the sense that the ice we get from that area sometimes holds even more information within the ice.

Generally, when drilling an ice core, an ideal location would be further inside the continent, somewhere like the south pole where the ice is two kilometres thick. There, you would have to drill 2 kilometres to access that information and that's what we have been doing for the last two decades.

TDS: How does your work with ice cores contribute to our understanding of past climate conditions?

FAIRUZ: With the ice cores collected from the field, researchers are able to run chemical analysis. We melt these ice cores and they contain "bubbles" which tell us atmospheric

These are events in our history which are very similar to what is happening now. By using these ice cores, which contain records of these incidents, you can see how the atmosphere reacted to these changes. -- what happened to the sea levels, ocean circulation, atmospheric circulation? Did we have more storms or more typhoons in the past? We can make and understand these connections from the chemistry that are kept recorded in these ice cores.

TDS: As you are drilling for ice cores, is there any harm to the ecosystem while conducting research in Antarctica? What kind of equipment do you use?

FAIRUZ: Primarily, we do not have worry about the ecosystem as there are no living beings in most of interior Antarctica. However, when you are drilling really deep, like two and a half kilometres deep, it can become tricky. There are rivers and lakes under the 3 kilometre mark. The last thing you want to do is to drill into a river. Because we use an oil-based lubricating fluid for the drilling, which can contaminate the water system under the ice if we

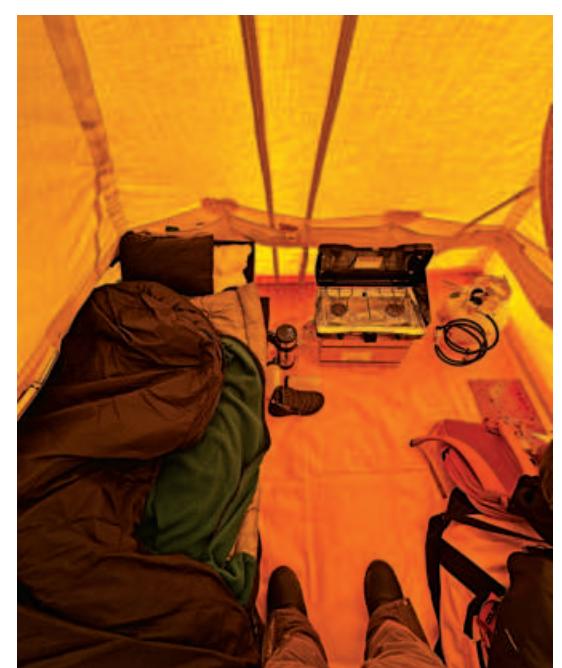
Europe has the longest ice core in the world and that puts pressure on countries with major scientific interests to have the same ice core records. So, there are also national interests alongside scientific developments. However, according to the Antarctic Treaty that was signed by all countries active in the icy continent, military activities are prohibited. Antarctica is supposed to only be used for scientific research.

TDS: Currently you are a graduate student at Princeton University, pursuing your PhD. But what inspired you to choose this career path?

FAIRUZ: I completed my SSC in 2015 and HSC in 2017 from Chattogram Cantonment Public College. Afterwards, I got admitted in the department of Geology at the University of Dhaka for an undergraduate degree.

But after five months, I received a full-ride scholarship to study at Colgate University in the US. So, in 2018 I came to America.

I was very interested in participating in Olympiads when I was a high schooler. In 2016, I represented the Bangladesh team



compositions from the past. We are essentially creating a timeline of the earth's atmosphere.

The main reason we need to do this is because it's extremely hard to make predictions about climate change in general. The Earth's climate system is complex and it's a chaotic system. If you try to make computational models of it, they would never tell you the same thing every time you run it. The way to get around that is to understand what happened in similar situations in the past.

Behind today's climate change situation, the main culprit is carbon dioxide, which is rising due to human consumption. In earth's history, there were similar instances in the past. One of the main examples can be the Paleocene-Eocene thermal maximum (PETM) which happened around 55 million years back.

drilled that far.

Generally, when we drill ice, the small cylindrical holes we make, also known as boreholes, close up within a year thanks to the movement of the ice sheets. If anyone drills through the ice and hits the water in a river underneath the ice, it could cause significant damage to the ecosystem.

Thankfully we have a lot of safety measures so that does not happen. Also, Allan Hills is so far on the edge of the continent, the ice sheet is not deep enough. So, we only drill through about 200 metres of ice at a time.

TDS: Is there any military involvement with this field research?

FAIRUZ: Similar to the sixties space race between the US and Russia, the same race is happening for ice cores.

in the International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA). I also became a part of the National Earth Olympiad in Bangladesh. I was part of the national team for the International Earth Science Olympiad (IESO) in Japan in 2016. In 2017, I was a team leader for the Bangladesh team in the International Earth Science Olympiad in France. I learned a lot from these Olympiads and from my peers at that time. These experiences led me to pursue a career in science.

TDS: What are your future plans?

FAIRUZ: I want to finish my PhD, complete a postdoctoral research, ideally in a setting where I get to do ice core field work and analysis with computational models. Eventually, I want to try to get to a faculty position where I can develop and lead my own Antarctic field research.





ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

FICTION

The burden of words

SHAHRIAR SHAAMS

I shouldn't have written that on top, I was just trying to be dramatic. I figured I should have a hardcopy of my writings on the off-chance something happens. Who would be checking my hard-drive or emails, you know? Sometimes you only get discovered through a friend after death. Like Kafka.

It was not often that I received odd parcels. True, my job at the paper did occasionally warrant a few peculiar hate-mail or rebuttals, but this was nothing of that sort. It was a large brown envelope, which held a few rims of paper. Manuscripts. Stories and novels, with some underlined red lines and infrequent comments on the margins. The note "If I die" had been scrawled on top with a black marker and had alarmed my wife.

"Who is it by, does it say?" She asked.

I checked the address. "Akbar," I said. A writer I had befriended earlier this year. He was older than me, in his mid 40s, but carried himself as if he were still a university student. Enthusiastic. Full of life. He wore lightly faded jeans with white Keds and dress shirts with colourful prints.

Akbar had begun to drop by my desk almost weekly, sometimes every other day to excitedly talk about a writer or a story he was writing. I had never been the literary type. I worked the longest on the business beat. Only last year I was promoted to handle the supplements sections, which came out on certain anniversary days. This was how I ended up editing one or two of Akbar's pieces. But what was this "If I die" business?

I called him up.

"I will be travelling next week," he explained. "I want you to have my literary oeuvre, in case anything happens."

"In case what happens?"

"...If I die, you know," he said. He seemed unsure.

"Meet me today, Akbar," I said. "How about Purnima's for tea? 5pm-ish. Don't be late."

I had to know where exactly he was headed off. A safari that posed real, physical danger? Oh, how I often wished for a vacation like this! Just a few months ago Akbar and I had made some preliminary plans for a tour of the islands down south. He wanted to see the ramshackle buildings that people lived in over there. But now he was going off alone somewhere, leaving me with his life's work. Why could he not just email this, either? I had to understand this: Why me? I wouldn't lie, a little part of me was flattered. To be trusted with someone's dream. All Akbar ever wanted was to be a successful writer. Every time he visited me, this desperation had clung to his face. He had boxed as a teenager. Perhaps, that is where he had gotten the discipline. But writing was not a matter of putting in the hours. There was, he had told me, a certain weight the words had to carry. He suspected his did not. His words, he once told me, were light, airy. He longed to write sentences that weighed an anvil. "I don't know if I can make it today," he mouthed, "I have lots to pack still."

"Come for a few minutes," I insisted.

It turned out I was the one late. I shrugged an apology. Akbar had already ordered. I sat down to the familiar smell of milk-tea boiling in Purnima's. We sat in the back row of a corner. I could see towers of glasses on a counter being snatched by fours (on each hand) onto other tables.

I asked, "Akbar, why are you sending me your manuscripts?"

He looked like he now regretted doing this. "I shouldn't have written that on top, I was just trying to be dramatic. I figured I should have a hardcopy of my writings on the off-chance something happens. Who would be checking my hard-drive or emails, you know? Sometimes you only get discovered through a friend after death. Like Kafka." He shrugged.

I shot him a long look. "Are you Kafka now?"

"I'm just saying," he said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to burden you with anything. It's nothing really. You just keep it inside a drawer at your home and you can return it to me once I'm back. I have so many things I've written that no one ever bothered to publish but I still keep all of them because god knows what might just work. You never know. It's more to do with me feeling safe. No one would understand its

worth if it was just stacked up at my place."

My tea had arrived. Akbar seemed too interested in dying suddenly. It was crowded in Purnima's now. I forgot how much I missed idling away my time here with college friends, how all those friends had gone abroad or become bankers, with no time left for old friends.

"Where are you even going that you're so worried?" I asked.

"To my in-laws," he said.

"Akbar," I said, wondering if I should laugh, "Are you being serious? You're never so cheeky in your writing..."

He looked at me straight. "Oh no, I'm serious. They hate me, Mina's father, her brothers... They all do."

"Well, obviously they aren't plotting your murder!" I said.

"I tried to divorce her so many times! Then I realised I need her money, so I can't even do that. Without her job, we'd be starving," Akbar said.

"Akbar, you're overthinking," I said, finishing my tea.

The waiter flipped over our empty tea cups and gave the table a quick swipe with a towel before leaving. A sign that we had to make room for new customers.

"Calm down, really," I said to him, "Your father-in-law isn't waiting in the village with a machete. Go get some fresh air. You might

not care? Akbar would say everything was up to me, that it was my decision, but I have a feeling they want you to run around to get them discovered. They want through their deaths for something to happen. I hope Akbar does not end up doing something stupid, I don't want him to harm himself. I have a hard time as it is getting his work printed while he is alive. I don't think death would do him any good. Not every writer's words become gospel after their demise. Not everyone gets discovered. As I often looked over my desk at Akbar's parcel those three days, I came to the realisation that not everyone should get discovered, either. I would be, I knew now, a vile literary executioner. At the very least, just lazy enough to forget about the parcel altogether.

When Monday arrived, I patiently waited for Akbar to waltz into the office and take away his stuff. The commute that day to the office had been different, I felt my haversack to be heavier than usual and I clutched my bag tightly, hoping nothing would get stolen in the bus. Work kept me preoccupied most of the day and at the end of my shift, when I saw the package still at my desk, I felt a trepidation. He had just returned to town, I surmised. He was probably sleeping the day off. He will be back soon. I did not want to call him, for that would look like I couldn't wait to get rid of this! I just had to be off of Akbar's burden. I left the package at the office. My wife would think the

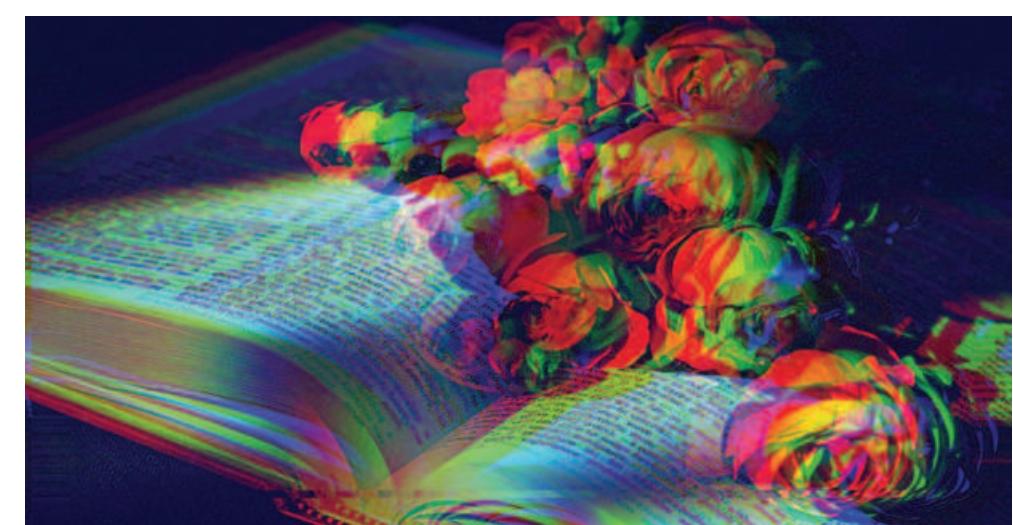


PHOTO: COLLECTED

even feel inspired to write a story. Don't worry about the package. I'll keep it safe with me, until you're back. When are you back?"

"Mina has to be back at work by Monday, so in three days...that is, if everything goes alright," he said, getting up.

I gave him a strong pat on the shoulder. I said, "Don't worry so much. Enjoy yourself. Give me a call on Monday, or better, come by the office. I'll have your life's work in pristine condition for safe return."

My wife and I stared at the manuscripts that night. "Does he want you to read them?" she asked.

I did not know the etiquette here. Appointed literary executioner all of a sudden, how was I to handle this? "He probably just feels at ease, knowing someone else has his work, you know?"

A strange thought came into my mind. What if I just burned all this? How would Akbar react? He wasn't crazy enough to not have softcopies of all this, so I would not be ruining his life. He did, after all, grant me the powers. I wondered if his being alive, still, had any effect on this. I knew Akbar would not mind if I read his manuscripts. On the contrary, he would be the happiest. Like all writers I had seen, he begged around people to read his work. He would take out his phone and read from the blog sites where he had published a piece, hoping to impress and inspire a reader on the spot. Really, I should not even be thinking so much. He would soon return and take what belongs to him, and the off-chance he doesn't—God!—do I have to, then, run around looking for publishers for my dead writer? What if I just

matter to be closed. What's a day or two, here and there? It would all be over soon.

Monday turned to Tuesday and then Wednesday. By Friday, I was close to panicking. Not just about the package, about Akbar himself. He said he would call and he had not been in communication at all. I decided to phone in myself, dialing up his number and waiting patiently.

The call did not go through the first couple of times and I let it be. He must still be stuck there in the village. It had to be a network issue. I wasn't exactly family either, or his closest friend that he would need to keep me posted on him. But something about how I merited the safeguarding of his dream, made me uneasy. I was in a position I could not describe. Back home in the evening, I called again. This time the call went through, and the spaced ringing made my heart beat take a jump. A lady answered. "Hello? Hello?" I said, but her words to me were incoherent. I could make out a long wail in the background. "Hello? I want to talk to Akbar," I said, loud enough for my wife to come over to the room. I asked, "Is he there?" But the woman didn't know how to answer. Amidst the patchy network, she seemed finally to be crying too in glitchy bursts. I fell down to the sofa, my thoughts taking me to the worst possibility. What did Akbar do? I looked at my wife and she only held me for she could see the panic in my face was severe enough. Where was the package? Back at the office? Where was Akbar? Dead?

Shahriar Shaams has written for The Business Standard, Dhaka Tribune, and The Daily Star. Find him on Instagram @shahriar.shaams.

POETRY

Mould

NUBISHA RABYA TOPOTE

Love wears different shades,
Not like the rainbow, not like the sky,
But like the strawberry high up in the tree
Far enough that I can't reach it,
But close enough that I can see it,
The colors, the softness, the way it glows.
First, it's white, and light pink
So calm, almost like it knows it's growing, it's
settling in,
Like it's sure of where it's going.
A quiet, seniority in its touch,
A tenderness that feels like it's meant to last.
But then
It starts to turn,
Deep red, full of fire,
Passionate, alive,
Until it isn't just love,
But something else, something that hurts,
Something in between,
And when it's not from both sides,
You see it—the mould,
It starts to grow,
Spreading like poison through the sweetness,
Slowly, quietly, destroying
Everything that was once good,
Everything that could have been.
It never helps.
It never feels right.
It never ends in a way
That doesn't leave you broken.
Love wears its colors,
And sometimes,
It's the wrong shade
At the wrong time.

Nubisha Rabya Topote, a class 10 student at Nigarunnisa Noon School and College, is a budding poet who finds inspiration in every opportunity to write.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

ESCAPE

KASHFIA NAHREEN

You tried to run, didn't you?
Tried to get as far away from everything
As you could.
You crossed thousands of miles,
Made yourself a home
In a land
So strange, so foreign
That you always felt out of place.
You thought you had escaped, didn't you?
Outran everything that weighed you down.
You swore allegiance to a nation
That tore yours apart,
Adopted the tongue of your conquerors,
Only to realise,
You can't escape you.

Kashfia Nahreen, an aspiring poet and writer, is pursuing a Master's in Creative Writing at the University of Liberal Arts. Vocal and loud, she is a steadfast intersectional feminist. Other works are available at the.k.atelier.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

Can Bangladesh ride out the wave of US tariffs?

Currently, Bangladesh is the third largest apparel supplier to the US market after China and Vietnam respectively, accounting for around 9.3 percent of total US garment imports of \$105 billion in a year, according to official data.

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The global trading system, largely unchanged for a century, got a rude awakening on April 2 when US President Donald Trump slapped massive tariffs on imports into his country. The move sent shockwaves through world markets -- because when America sneezes, the global economy catches a cold.

At the heart of the storm is a staggering 145 percent tariff on Chinese goods. For Bangladesh, the hit was smaller but still painful -- a new 37 percent duty on top of existing taxes.

The announcement sent businesses scrambling. Orders froze. Buyers demanded discounts. Stock markets plummeted.

The tariffs were to take effect on the night of April 9. Then, at the eleventh hour, Trump suddenly paused the tariffs for 90 days -- except for China, which remains locked in a trade war with Washington.

However, the 10 percent baseline tariff on all products entering the American market will continue.

WHY NOW?

Trump had promised brutal tariffs during his 2016 campaign, vowing to bring manufacturing back to America. By following through, he aims to revive American manufacturing and boost domestic agricultural sales.

His administration specifically wants to bring back production of high-tech goods like microchips, where China dominates the market.

China's stranglehold on high-tech industries, like semiconductor chips -- a \$400 product that takes just hours to make but which the US can't produce cheaply anymore.

But why hit Bangladesh, a country that mostly sells garment items?

in garments from Bangladesh. But now, with tariffs set to jump from 16.1 percent to 53.5 percent, factory owners are sweating.

Currently, Bangladesh is the third-largest apparel supplier to the US market after China and Vietnam respectively, accounting for around 9.3 percent of total US garment imports of \$105 billion in a year, according to official data.

Bangladesh's garment export to the US was recovering from a slowdown over the last two years brought on by the severe fallout of Covid-19, Russia-Ukraine war, and historic inflationary pressure on the Western consumers.

The American government does not allow duty benefits on garment imports except for from 39 African countries under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

could steal market share.

If Trump enforces the full tariff structure after the 90 day pause, countries like China, Vietnam, and Cambodia could lose competitiveness.

However, India and Pakistan -- facing lower tariffs than Bangladesh -- could attract more work orders, causing some buyers to shift from Bangladesh to these nations, along with Egypt, Kenya, and Turkey.

Despite these challenges, trade experts say Bangladesh remains cost-competitive due to its skilled workforce, lower production costs, and large manufacturing capacity.

For example, if international clothing retailers and brands pay \$10 for a T-shirt from China or Vietnam, it might cost only \$5-\$6 from Bangladesh.

billion in 2023. Bangladesh mainly imported cotton, soybean seeds, iron and steel products from the USA.

While Trump's tariff strategy aims to protect domestic industries, American consumers could ultimately bear the cost. Since importers pay the tariff and often pass it on to consumers, prices are expected to rise.

As such, major US trade bodies, including the American Apparel and Footwear Association, the United States Fashion Industry Association, and the National Retail Federation, have expressed concern. They warn that higher tariffs may increase living costs, spark inflation, and possibly lead to a recession.

BANGLADESH'S DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE

Bangladesh has already taken steps to

Rubana Huq, a former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

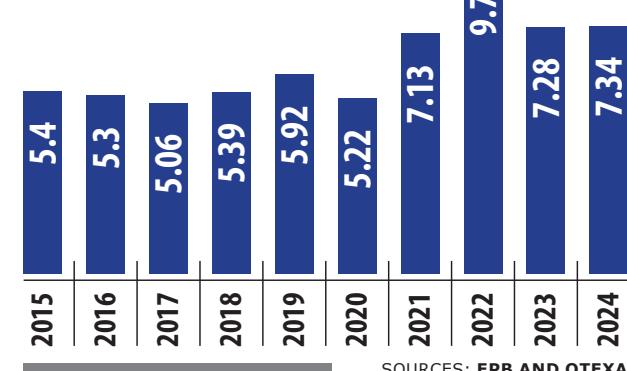
"Everything will depend on strong diplomatic moves. Above all, we must connect with the key personnel in the Trump administration, who in this case is Scott Bessent, who has been entrusted by Trump to deal with individual countries. Strategic alignments are needed besides committing to more imports and removal of non-trade barriers," Huq said.

"Let's remember that Vietnam, in spite of reaching out to Trump at the very beginning, is now being viewed as an adversary of the US administration just because there are discourses on regional interests, which have just started in Asia."

Meanwhile, India is in a comparatively favourable position as

BANGLADESH'S GARMENT EXPORTS TO US

In billions of \$

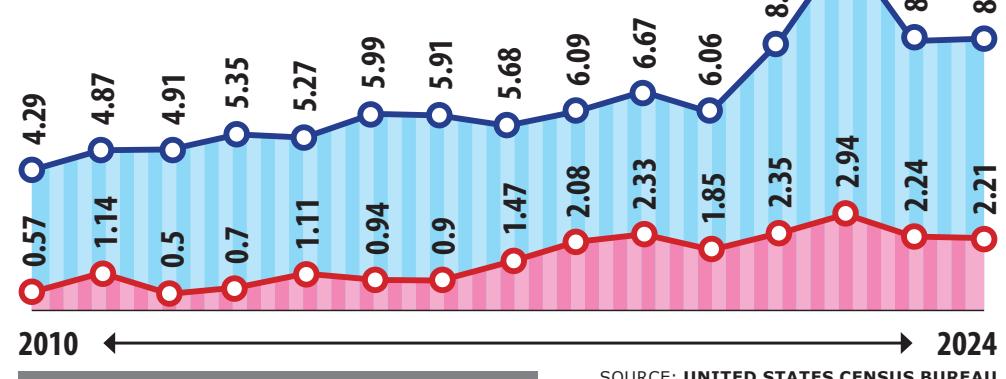


SOURCES: EPB AND OTEXA

OVERALL TRADE WITH US

In billions of \$

EXPORT IMPORT



SOURCE: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU

So, Bangladesh does not enjoy duty benefits on garment shipments to the US.

Although the US agreed to allow duty free benefit for 97 percent of goods originated in the least developed countries (LDCs), it kept Bangladeshi garment items in the remaining three percent.

Still, Bangladesh's apparel exports to the US reached \$1.5 billion during the January-February period of 2025, up 26.64 percent from \$1.18 billion year-on-year, according to the US Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA), a wing of the US Department of Commerce.

In the same timeframe, the US' global apparel imports increased by 11.2 percent to \$13.55 billion.

During this time frame, the growth rates for apparel imports from other key countries stood at 8.85 percent for China, 25.70 percent for India, 23.05 percent for Pakistan, and 11.14 percent for Vietnam.

The US imported 23.38 percent more from Bangladesh, 7.25 percent more from Vietnam, 5.78 percent more from China, 31.90 percent more from India, 24.68 percent more from Pakistan compared to January-February 2024. The unit price per piece experienced a positive growth of 2.64 percent for Bangladesh.

There's a twist in the latest tariff shock, though.

China and Vietnam -- Bangladesh's top rivals -- got hit even harder.

If their goods become too expensive for American buyers, Bangladesh

GLOBAL PRICE WARS AHEAD?

With higher tariffs pushing China and Vietnam out of the US market, they may focus more on European and Asian markets, sparking fierce price wars. This could affect all major apparel suppliers, including Bangladesh, as global buyers push for lower prices.

If China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan supply to the same markets, the international clothing retailers and brands will take the opportunity to seek price cuts from the local suppliers.

At the same time, US-based retailers, who pay the tariffs, are negotiating with suppliers in Bangladesh to share the added costs. This pressure could impact profitability for Bangladeshi manufacturers.

CURRENT US-BANGLADESH TRADE OUTLOOK

Historically, the balance of trade between Bangladesh and the US has been heavily tilted towards Bangladesh because of higher garment shipments to American markets, especially woven garments such as trousers and T-shirts.

Last year, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$8.36 billion to the US, up from \$8.27 billion in 2023, according to data from the United States Bureau of Census.

On the other hand, Bangladesh imported just \$2.21 billion worth of goods from the US in 2024, down from \$2.24

address the situation.

Chief Adviser to the interim government Professor Muhammad Yunus sent a letter to Trump seeking a pause for 90 days and Commerce Adviser Sh Bashir Uddin sent another letter to the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the chief trade negotiation body for the American government, offering duty-free benefit to another 100 American goods in addition to the 190 already privy to such benefits.

A team is scheduled to travel to the USA on April 21 to hold negotiations with the USTR for lowering the tariff rates for Bangladesh.

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

Like other countries, Bangladesh has also been left to calculate whether this is an opportunity or a threat. So far, analyses show that while the tariffs pose challenges, they may also offer opportunities if Bangladesh plays its cards right.

For instance, China may lose a big market share due to the 145 percent tariff.

Bangladesh has a lot of skilled workforce, higher installed capacity, lower prices, lower production cost and lower tariff rates compared with China and Vietnam.

So, losing Chinese and Vietnamese competition could help Bangladesh gain market share -- if it acts strategically.

"It's an opportunity if we can play our cards right. It's a disaster if we don't engage in meaningful economic diplomacy," said

they are single-handedly wooing the Trump administration. So, it's about giving the right dose of attention to the US for being the single largest export destination for Bangladesh."

AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem Group which exports 90 percent of its products to the US, said Bangladesh should negotiate with the aim of gaining something positive from this game.

Bangladesh should offer a zero-duty rate on the import of American goods. If it does so, then the US may also offer zero-duty benefits on Bangladeshi imports. This will be a huge benefit for Bangladesh from this game, Azad said.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), said if the 145 percent tariff on China is finally fixed, it may present a window of opportunity for Bangladesh.

Since Vietnam has also been facing higher tariffs, the Chinese investment in Vietnam may also be affected. However, it is really difficult to say anything definite because Trump is unpredictable, Razzaque said.

At the same time, Bangladesh's supply side should also be increased and improved.

For instance, 75 percent of Chinese garments exported to the US are composed of man-made fibre-based items, but Bangladesh is not so strong in man-made garment items.

If Bangladesh does not invest more in backwards integration of the garment industry, the country may not benefit a lot from this tariff game, he added.



PHOTOS: STAR