



Now, if for some reason one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say, 'you're foolish, you're fools, you're horrible people, and we're going to just take a pass'.

Donald Trump on Ukraine talks

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TO KNOW

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Navigating the US-China-India triangular labyrinth

P9



Our aspirations and Europe's contradictions

P8



Gaza enduring 'deprivation by design': UN

P7



Open drains turning into death traps in Ctg

P6

Eliminate gender disparities in laws

Women's Affairs Reform Commission pitches a slew of changes

NILIMA JAHAN

The Women's Affairs Reforms Commission has proposed a series of comprehensive reforms to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women embedded in the country's laws, constitution, policies, and institutions.

The 10 member commission yesterday submitted a report containing 433 recommendations, grouped under 15 thematic areas and categorised into three groups, to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus.

"There are those [recommendations] that can be implemented by the current government, those for the next elected government, and a separate section outlining the hopes," Shireen Huq, the commission's chief, said at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital.

Among the commission's most notable proposals are the elimination of all discriminatory and contradictory constitutional provisions and laws, and the adoption of a uniform family code to ensure equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and maintenance for women across all religions.

The commission also urged the effective implementation and strengthening of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act-2010, including increasing penalties and ensuring the resolution of divorce



- 1 Expand parliament to 600 seats with 300 seats for directly elected women
- 2 Introduce a uniform family code ensuring equal rights for men and women regardless of religion or ethnicity
- 3 Establish help desks for women, children, elderly, and persons with special needs in courts and police stations
- 4 Provide 6 month paid maternity leave and daycare centres in workplaces
- 5 Recognise domestic and sex workers as workers under labour laws

cases within three years.

To guarantee equal rights for mothers in matters of guardianship and custody, it called for amendments to the Guardians and Wards Act-1890.

The commission proposed that the government withdraw its reservations to articles 2 and 16.1(g) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which ensure legal equality in marriage and divorce. Additionally, it called for the ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organization's Conventions C189 and C190 on domestic workers' rights and protection from workplace violence and harassment.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Interpol red notice sought for Hasina, 11 others



UNB, Dhaka

The National Central Bureau (NCB) of Bangladesh Police has submitted a request to Interpol seeking a "red notice" against 12 people, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Confirming the development, Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) at the Police Headquarters (PHQ), said the NCB branch makes such requests to Interpol based on appeals received from courts, public prosecutors, or investigating agencies.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A traffic control volunteer rushes across the Gulshan-1 intersection to stop a battery-run rickshaw from entering. Battery-run rickshaws were banned from all roads in Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2 from yesterday morning, with only registered pedal rickshaws now permitted.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Toxic industrial waste has devastated Tangail's Louhajang River, wiping out all aquatic life since mills and factories were established along its banks nearly three decades ago. Once a source of life, the river is now a burden for locals, who continue to seek action from authorities in vain. The photo was taken from Sadar upazila's Khudirampur area recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Star INTERVIEW

'BNP's 31-point charter embodies public will'

Mahdi Amin, a former academic at the University of Cambridge, is in demand these days. As the adviser to BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman, people want to sit him down to learn of the latter's plans, policies and thoughts. Earlier this month, he met with The Daily Star's Zina Tasreen for an interview.

Before talks of reforms became the de rigueur, the BNP and its acting chairman Tarique Rahman have been talking about it. So the question on everyone's mind is why the party opposed some of the proposals by the six reform commissions.

"Many of the proposals that we vetoed seem experimental -- there are hardly any examples of those occurring anywhere in the world. We believe changes have to be sustainable and practical and in keeping with the culture and nature of the people of the land," Amin said.

For instance, the constitution reform commission proposed to establish a National Constitutional Council (NCC) with a majority of opposition representatives, alongside assigning opposition parliamentarians to lead all parliamentary committees.

"Allocating more seats to opposition parties than the ruling party within the NCC contradicts the electoral principle that the majority party should hold greater influence."

This structure could grant disproportionate leverage to opposition parties, potentially enabling them to obstruct government policies or destabilise governance if they do not act responsibly.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



If the BNP forms the government at this moment, Tarique Rahman has a concrete plan for what would be done in the first 100 days, 180 days and 360 days.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BANGLADESH CONSTITUTION

Do we need any fundamental principles at all?

Says NCP during talks with consensus commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stating that political parties have embedded their own ideologies as fundamental principles in the Constitution of Bangladesh, the National Citizen Party has questioned whether there should be any fundamental principles in the charter at all.

"In 1972, the Awami League included its own ideologies as fundamental principles in the Constitution. Later, several parties added their own ideologies through amendments," NCP Convener Nahid Islam told reporters after he and several other leaders of the party met the members of National Consensus Commission at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We questioned whether we need fundamental principles in the constitution, and whether we can think of another framework. Our constitution already declares Bangladesh a people's republic and a democratic state, and it also mentions the fundamental rights. Is there any need for additional fundamental principles?"

NCP Joint Convener Sarwar Tusher said lawmakers should be allowed to vote against party lines through amending Article 70 of the constitution.

The right to cross the floor is one of the conditions of an effective parliament, he said, adding that the only

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

JULY UPRISING

A martyr without a country

The state won't recognise 17-yr-old Nur Mostafa as he was a Rohingya

MASHFIQ MIZAN

Last year, 17-year-old Nur Mostafa, like many of his peers, took to the streets, standing shoulder to shoulder with the masses to protest the killings of hundreds at the hands of law enforcers during the July uprising and to demand the resignation of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

On August 5, when he joined the protest ignoring his father's warnings, Mostafa was shot in front of Eidgaon Police Station in Cox's Bazar. He died in a hospital a day later.

However, the local authorities refused Mostafa the martyr status reserved for the fallen heroes of the movement.

What was his fault? Why couldn't he get the recognition for the ultimate sacrifice?

Mostafa was a Rohingya and not legally a citizen of the country, despite being born and raised here.

His father, Shafiqul Alam, fled persecution in Myanmar and settled in Eidgaon upazila of Cox's Bazar in 1992. It was there his wife, Nur Begum, gave birth to Mostafa in 2007.

His birth certificate was issued by the Islamabad Union Parishad in 2008. However, he was not granted citizenship because Bangladesh does not grant citizenship to children born of non-citizen parents.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5





OLD DHAKA'S FOOD TRAIL A nostalgic gastronomic adventure

RBR

I went to the Lalbagh area last Saturday to finalise an interesting project for My Dhaka readers (stay tuned), but this business meet-and-greet was unlike any I had ever attended or conducted. It was exactly the "Dhakai way" of dealings -- warm-hearted, raucous, and with a table full of delicious food.

Old Dhaka people genuinely have a way of winning your heart through your stomach. A simple cup of milk tea or a glass of chilled lassi with a kabab paratha roll is all you need to melt away.

I was waiting beside the fort gate in the parking lot that was lined with all sorts of snack vendors. The aroma of corn cob being roasted on a coal fire, and peanuts being fried in a wok full of sand were inviting, but I chose to wait in front of an "aam shotto" cart.

Aam shotto is a sun-dried mango pulp roll mixed with sugar. This mouth-watering tangy snack cart had a line of buyers, waiting to get a pack of either the sweet aam shotto roll, or the sour one with a dash of rock salt and chilli flakes. Jalaluddin, the happy vendor, earns around Tk 800 a day.

But it was the worn-out wooden cash box, which also served Jalaluddin as a cutting board, that stole my heart. I tried in vain to buy it off him, and after a lot of laughs and paper packets full of aam shotto, we exchanged our cell numbers -- with me promising to haunt him till he makes a new one for himself and sells off the old one to me.



PHOTO: STAR

This type of bizarre meets is only possible in the narrow lanes of old Dhaka, where there is no pretence of class hierarchy, and every person is amiable and fun-loving.

Finally, when my mates came, we walked to the Mughal Kabab restaurant at the corner of Horonath Ghosh Road, opposite the pocket gate of the fort, to discuss our business agenda.

Informal and random, this place had the best juicy and tender kababs, done just right -- khiri kabab, beef boti, beef sheekh with rumali roti, and shukha paratha were just simply delightful.

The meal reminded me of a tiny

three-storyed kabab place beside the old Central Jail, where the evenings are at full gear, selling scores of orders of chicken tikka, chicken reshmi, mughalai beef sheekh, and parathas being sent down from the third-floor window, tucked in a bucket tied with a rope.

I had the best beef sheekh for just Tk 30 from an unknown roadside stall in Bakshi Bazar. Besides the popular restaurants, old Dhaka boasts tasty and tender kababs in all sorts of hole-in-the-wall restaurants.

I dare to compare the kababs here with Old Delhi, and



PHOTO: STAR

Interpol red notice Eliminate gender disparities in laws

FROM PAGE 1

"These applications are filed in connection with allegations that emerge during investigations or through ongoing case proceedings," he said.

Interpol plays a key role in identifying the locations of fugitives residing abroad, the AIG added.

In November last year, the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the International Crimes Tribunal formally requested the Police Headquarters to seek Interpol's assistance in arresting Sheikh Hasina and others deemed fugitives.

Will hold 'best election' in nation's history

FROM PAGE 1

Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka on Thursday.

ANFREL, a Bangkok-based independent non-governmental organisation comprising members from 18 countries, is dedicated to the advancement of electoral democracy in Asia. It has been actively supporting election observation, democratic reforms, and civic engagement across the region for over two decades.

The ANFREL delegation included Executive Director Brizza Rosales; Consultant for the Bangladesh Elections and Democracy Programme May Butoy; Senior Programme Officer for Campaign and Advocacy Tharindu Abeyrathna; Programme Officer Ayan Rahman Khan; and Programme Associate Afsana Amey.

During the meeting, ANFREL shared details of its ongoing initiatives in Bangladesh, particularly its commitment to rebuilding independent, citizen-led election observation efforts. The delegation also discussed its activities in conducting stakeholder mapping and needs assessments, aimed at identifying opportunities to strengthen civil society engagement and promote electoral transparency.

ANFREL expressed its appreciation for the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the chief adviser and reaffirmed its commitment to continued collaboration with stakeholders in Bangladesh to support transparent and credible elections.

Since December 16 last year, Prof Yunus on many occasions stated that the next parliamentary election could be held either this December or next June, depending on the extent of reforms implemented by the interim government.

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

A National Consensus Commission, led by the chief adviser, is currently holding discussions with political parties to finalise which recommendations will be implemented.

set an example for other countries around the world. The women of the world are watching this. They will wait. They will be inspired...

"This is not just a women's issue; it's a matter of national importance. The report will be printed and distributed. It will be published as a book, like a textbook. It cannot just be shelved as a document; it must be made accessible to people."

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The commission proposed transformative steps to boost women's representation in politics, such as introducing 300 seats for women in the national parliament with direct elections, thereby doubling the current total number of seats to 600.

Shireen Huq acknowledged the scepticism surrounding the proposal. "Although it may seem unrealistic to many, as there is currently no space for 600 people in the parliament chamber considering the country's population, [but] increasing women's representation is crucial."

The commission's report stated, "If an upper house of parliament is established, 50 percent of the seats should be filled using a 'zipper system' -- alternating male and female nominees on party lists to ensure gender parity. The remaining half should be filled with non-partisan representatives, including those from women's movements."

To ensure women's participation within parties, the commission recommended promoting democratic practices and creating an enabling environment, and formulating regulations to remove social and corruption-related barriers to women's political engagement.

It also strongly suggested that compliance with the provision of 33 percent women's participation in the Representation of the People Order be made mandatory.

At the local government level, each ward should have one general seat and one women's seat for the next three elections as a temporary special measure.

It further recommended establishing a system to ensure that female MPs are accountable to the wider community of women.

LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

The commission recommended ensuring 24 weeks (six months) of fully paid maternity leave and two weeks of paid paternity leave across all sectors.

It also proposed amending the labour law to replace the term "maternity welfare" with "maternity rights", prohibit dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave, and include all necessary related benefits.

The commission called for the formal recognition of domestic and sex workers as labourers under existing labour laws, along with the recognition of women's work in the

believe me, Dhaka's Mughal cuisine recipe should be the only one to follow. The hype that old Delhi kababs enjoy falls flat in front of our old Dhaka kababs.

Kababs, Nihari, biriyani, and chaaps are decadent here in Dhaka. Marinated beef chunks in skewers, slowly roasted in an open coal fire can give any Delhi minced meat sheekh a run for its money.

In my childhood, my grandmother's lavish two-storyed mansion in Purana Paltan was right beside Baitul Mukarram masjid, and all those lanes had restaurants lined up. Breakfast during weekends was vegetable labra and paratha, and transparent suji halwa, and evenings were about kabab, paratha rolls, and puri.

Neem shukha or Bakarkhani, and shutli kababs were sold by vendors coming to your doorstep till the 70's. Jhalfrezi, brain masala, and offal kabab were all the rage at Ruchita, a posh eatery in the late 70's at Bangabandhu Avenue. The beef chaap of the Provincial Hotel at the stadium market was considered the supreme treat of the times. These food tales and legacy continue to hold to date, with just the shops relocated deep inside the belly of the old town, rather than being on the fringes of Old Dhaka.

Ensure youth-led

FROM PAGE 12

With runaway inflation for three years, he said, restoring purchasing power through monetary policy is a priority.

He also emphasised the need to diversify exports beyond garments to sectors like leather, pharmaceuticals, plastics, and electronics. "We are working to attract foreign investment, but unless governance improves and corruption is checked, those efforts won't succeed," he cautioned.

He described the current administration as transitional and said foundational reforms will allow future governments to build further. "We hope to leave behind positive changes that the next elected government may continue—or the people will demand it," he said.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir expressed optimism that the nation is headed toward positive change, saying interim government chief Prof Muhammad Yunus would succeed in resolving political and other challenges.

"We have problems, and these will be resolved. Much progress has already been made. Let us all help him [Yunus], help ourselves, and move forward," he said.

Fakhrul asserted that the people of Bangladesh—not India, the US, or China—will determine the country's future.

He credited the youth as the driving force behind the nation's democratic and rights-based movements, from the 1952 Language Movement to the July-August uprising of 2024.

He also emphasised that there is no alternative to democracy. "And democracy cannot be imposed; it must be practised. The spaces for this practice must remain open."

In the second session, Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre, said marginalised communities must be able to see themselves reflected in the exercise of power.

"Only then will grassroots people feel empowered," he noted, stressing the need for a balanced distribution of authority within the police and local administrations.

Political analyst Dr Dilara Chowdhury said there can be no real empowerment of women in the country without their participation in policymaking.

"Women in Bangladesh are treated as second-class citizens, which starts from home and continues to the society and the state," she said.

Without women empowerment, the dream of a discrimination-free Bangladesh would be illusive, she added.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, adviser to the environment ministry, said the youth must be engaged more to build a new Bangladesh since they are not hesitant or cannot be restrained. "We need to understand the language and expectations of the new generation," she said.

Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, special assistant to the chief adviser; Jashim Uddin, foreign secretary; Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, NSU vice chancellor; Farah Kabir, ActionAid Bangladesh's country director; and Assaduzzaman Fuaad, the AB Party's general secretary, also spoke at the event.

Four students were awarded the Ambassadorial Serum Future Leaders Scholarship supported by a grant from the Dr Prabir and Mukul Roy Foundation. They are Fatema Tuj Johura and Arpita Paik from Dhaka University, and Shahnewaz Kabir and Samia Yesmin from NSU.

Do we need any fundamental

FROM PAGE 1

Exceptions should be finance bills and no confidence votes, because those can destabilise a government.

"Our view is to strike a balance between the freedom of MPs and parliamentary stability. This is why we want this reform."

The NCP also proposed that an individual may serve as prime minister no more than twice, and anyone who becomes prime minister would be considered ineligible to ever hold the office of president.

"We propose a cabinet-led government, not one led by the prime minister," Nahid said.

Any amendment to the constitution should be done through referendum even if two-thirds of the members of the upper and lower houses support the amendment, he said.

The party also recommends making uninterrupted internet access a fundamental right.

Prof Ali Riaz, vice president of the National Consensus Commission, delivered the opening speech at the day-long meeting between the NCP and the commission.

According to consensus commission sources, the participants discussed constitutional, judicial, and electoral reforms.

As all the topics were not covered due to time constraints, the adjourned meeting is likely to resume next Tuesday or later.

From the National Consensus Commission, Safar Raj Hossain, Badul Alam Majumdar, and Iftekharuzzaman attended the meeting while Justice Emdadul Haque joined in the afternoon.

A martyr without a country

FROM PAGE 1

At the time of his death, Mostofa was a 10th-grade madrasa student preparing to sit for the Dakhil exam.

His father Shafiu told this correspondent that when he stopped his son from joining the protests on August 4, Mostofa showed him a clip of Abu Sayed and said, "If Abu Sayed can give his life, if hundreds of our brothers can, why can't I?"

On the morning of August 5, as Mostofa was sneaking out to join the protests, he pleaded with a friend who spotted him not to tell his father where he was going.

That afternoon, he was shot. The bullet pierced through his back and exited through his chest, according to his inquest report.

He was rushed to a hospital. He breathed his last the following day, on the afternoon of August 6.

"My son was born on this soil. He was a student at a local madrasa. He would have sat for the Dakhil exams now if he had not been killed," said Shafiu.

"Only because we are Rohingya and don't have NID cards, Mostofa's name was struck off the official list of martyrs.

"I don't care about the money. But Mostofa was born here, he went to school here, and he died for this country. He deserves the recognition."

Nur Begum, Mostofa's mother, said, "Our biggest crime is that we are Rohingya. How else do we explain the disrespect and lack of recognition even after my son gave his life for the country?"

The incident drew attention only after July Records, an organisation archiving the atrocities of the July uprising, discovered his story and posted about it on social media on March 26.

Since then, there has been a campaign to ensure Mostofa receives his due recognition.

On April 17, July Records and the Student Alliance for Democracy held a human chain in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture on Dhaka University campus, demanding his immediate recognition.

Speaking at the demonstration, Umama Fatema, a leader of the mass uprising, said, "This is not just about money or compensation; it is about due recognition. We want the state to offer honorary citizenship to Mostofa's family."

In addition to July Records, activist Koli Kaye and her platform, Empowering Our Fighters, submitted a memorandum on the matter to Faruk E Azam, the Liberation War Affairs adviser, on April 4.

Contacted, Amirul Islam, personal aide to the adviser, said the adviser is aware of the issue and the ministry is currently reviewing the documents submitted.

Meanwhile, Md Salahuddin, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said, "Mostofa's family applied for his recognition as a martyr of the July uprising; however, we were unable to process the application since he had no NID. Now that the matter is with the ministry, the next directive will come from higher authorities."

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Standing with Palestine is a moral duty

Says Serajul Islam Choudhury

DU CORRESPONDENT

Standing with Palestine is no longer the duty of 1.5 billion Muslims alone but a moral responsibility of all seven billion people, said eminent academic and Dhaka University Emeritus Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury yesterday.

He made the remarks while addressing a solidarity rally at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, organised by the Palestinian Solidarity Committee Bangladesh.

Criticising the indifference of the United Nations, he said, "The conscience of the world no longer exists. The world is now split -- on one side stand the powerful, exploitative oppressors; on the other, the powerless, oppressed victims."

He described Israel's actions as "not a war, but genocide," carried out with "chilling brutality and premeditated cruelty." He said global capitalism has now transformed into fascism and is complicit in the ongoing massacre.

Also speaking at the event, noted economist and academic Prof Anu Muhammad.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Prominent citizens under the banner of "Palestine Solidarity Committee" form a human chain in front of the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, protesting against the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza. Among others, Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury and noted economist Anu Muhammad were present.

PHOTO: STAR

Battery-run rickshaw drivers clash with locals over ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Battery-run rickshaw drivers engaged in sporadic clashes with locals in Gulshan and Banani yesterday while protesting a ban on their vehicles in the area.

The protests disrupted traffic in both neighbourhoods, with drivers blocking roads and marching in procession. Tensions flared as scuffles broke out between the protesting drivers and locals, including pedal-rickshaw pullers and ride-sharing motorcyclists.

The ban, which took effect yesterday morning, was jointly enforced by the Gulshan and Banani Society, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and Dhaka North City Corporation, following complaints from residents about unregulated traffic and road safety concerns.

Under the new

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The high-powered task force, led by Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) chief Additional Inspector General Md Mustafa Kamal, has failed to submit any report to the High Court in connection with the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Rumi, despite the six-month deadline given by the court expiring over two weeks ago.

The HC on September 30 last year ordered the home ministry to transfer the responsibility of the investigation from the Rab to a new task force comprising experienced personnel from various law enforcement agencies. The directive came after years of delay in the investigation by Rab, which had taken over the case in 2012.

The newly constituted task force was instructed to complete the investigation and submit its report by March 31 this year.



The newly constituted task force was instructed to complete the investigation and submit its report by March 31 this year.

Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, counsel for the complainants in the case, said he would bring the matter to the attention of the HC bench when it reopens today.

The bench of Justice Farah Mahbub, now a judge of the Appellate Division, and Justice Muhammad Mahbub Ul Islam had fixed April 6 for the next hearing, which was deferred due to the court's annual vacation.

Contacted, Mustafa Kamal, who heads the taskforce, said the investigation is ongoing but the killers have not yet been identified. "We will submit a report updating the court on the progress of the investigation after the Supreme Court reopens," he added.

On April 2, Additional Superintendent of Police Azizul Haque, the current investigation officer involved with the taskforce, said, "I am conducting the investigation under the supervision of the taskforce. We are interrogating people concerned."

Regarding submission of the report, he added, "That decision will be taken by the taskforce chief."

Speaking to reporters on February 11, lawyer Shishir Manir said the current government had formed the taskforce with the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

End contractual appointments in civil admin Demands govt officials' platform

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of government officials under the banner of "Baisanya Birodh Karmachari Oikya Forum" has demanded cancellation of all types of contractual appointments across all levels in the civil administration.

The demand was made at a press conference held at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

ABM Abdus Sattar, president of the forum and a former secretary, placed five additional demands aimed at ensuring a neutral administrative structure, including: appointing all officials who have been subjected to discrimination to important positions in ministries, including the role of secretary, and in other agencies and departments; granting promotions to those deprived; and holding those who patronise fascist collaborators and corrupt officials accountable in matters of promotion and posting.

"To make the administration effective and to ensure a fair and impartial upcoming national election, all contractual appointments must be immediately cancelled," said Abdus Sattar.

To establish a transparent and accountable administration, officials who were loyal to the ousted ruling party, act as political lackeys, or are undue

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



The stellar duo -- Mabia Akhter Shimanta, left, and Afsana Luqman, right -- at a gathering at bti Celebration Point in Gulshan-2, Dhaka recently.

AIR POLLUTION

Govt plans 24 roadside monitors in Dhaka and Ctg

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is set to install roadside monitoring stations at 24 locations in Dhaka and Chattogram to curb air pollution caused by motorised vehicles, with technical and financial assistance from Japan.

Dhaka is among the worst cities in the world in terms of clean air, with vehicular emissions being one of the main contributors. According to the global AQI, Dhaka frequently tops the list of cities with the worst air quality. Chattogram also experiences similar conditions due to heavy vehicular movement.

To address the issue, the environment ministry will today place a Tk 103 crore project proposal at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne).

Under the plan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) will provide a Tk 68 crore grant, with the remaining funds to be covered by the government.



AT A GLANCE

- Dhaka, Ctg to get 19, 5 stations respectively
- Tk 103cr project to be placed at Ecne meeting
- Jica to fund Tk 68cr as grant
- Stations to monitor vehicle emissions
- Project aims to cut transport-related air pollution

Once implemented, the roadside monitoring stations will operate continuously. The project will also introduce vehicle-customised monitoring stations aimed at tracking vehicle emissions and drivers' behaviour.

Nineteen of the stations will be installed in Dhaka and five in Chattogram.

The objectives of the project include identifying the sources and levels of air pollution from road transportation, formulating effective policy guidelines and strategies for mitigation, and reducing health hazards caused by pollution.

Currently, the Department of Environment has 31 air quality monitoring stations, of which 16 function continuously. The department publishes real-time data based on readings from these stations.

According to the proposal, although motorised vehicles are a major source of air pollution, the country currently has no roadside monitoring system in place.

The air pollution control project is among five projects totalling Tk 1,090 crore that are expected to be placed at today's Ecne meeting. The other four focus on making urban areas more

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bti-*Star* honour two stellar women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Way back in the year 2023, bti and The Daily Star came together to launch the "bti The Daily Star Stellar Women" initiative -- a unique platform created to honour and celebrate women from diverse walks of life for their contributions to society.

The second season of the initiative began in September 2024, with the first two awards being presented in November.

Recently, a gathering was held at bti Celebration Point in Gulshan-2, Dhaka, where two more extraordinary women were recognised for their achievements.

National weightlifter Mabia Akhter Shimanta received the award in the "Sports" category

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

24th convocation of EWU held



CITY DESK

The 24th convocation of East West University (EWU) was held at Aftabnagar Sports Ground in Dhaka on April 16, said a press release.

Education Adviser Prof Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar conferred degrees on 2,885 students at the convocation.

Six students received gold medals.

Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear Limited, Bangladesh, was the convocation speaker. UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz attended the programme as the special guest.

Prof Mohammed Farashuddin, chairperson of the board of trustees of EWU, and Vice Chancellor Prof Shams Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Khalilur Rahman, the national security adviser; vice chancellors of different universities and cultural figures were present at the convocation.

Bti-Star honour two

FROM PAGE 3
for her representation of Bangladesh on the international stage. On the other hand, architect Afsana Luqman was also honoured in the "Architect (Residential & Commercial)" category for her innovative and impactful designs.

This season, several new award categories have been introduced, reflecting the initiative's commitment to expanding its recognition each year and ensuring deserving women from all sectors receive the spotlight they deserve but are often deprived of.

The Stellar Women

initiative is now halfway through, and it continues to gain momentum the further it goes.

Nominations are now open across multiple new categories, including "Art & Culture," "Engineering (Civil, Structural, Water Resources & MEP)," "Bank & Financial Institutions," "Healthcare," "Environment," and "Agriculture."

The event was attended by bti's Managing Director FR Khan, Head of Sales and Marketing at The Daily Star Imran Kadir, and bti's Executive Director of Brand & Communication Management Aysa Siddiqua.

Danger lurks

FROM PAGE 6
"Work is ongoing. At the site of the recent incident in Kapasgola, the city corporation has temporarily set up bamboo fencing as a safety measure," he added.

Pranab Kumar Sharma, deputy chief cleaning officer of the CCC, said, "The major drains and canals under the CCC are still open. Once the waterlogging project is complete, we plan to cover them with slabs."

When asked whether the CCC maintains data on how many people have died in such incidents over the past five years, he replied, "We don't have such data."

Chittogram urban planner Delwar Mazumder said, "We have urged the City Corporation before to build protective barriers around roadside drains, canals, and water bodies, and to initiate related projects. But no one listened. Such tragic incidents happen every year in Chittogram. It's heartbreaking."

"At the very least, if proper fencing is installed along roadsides, the number of such accidents will decrease," he said.

These include: an immediate halt to

the rally.

Leaders from the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Left Democratic Alliance, and Anti-Fascist Left Front also addressed the rally.

Meanwhile, a case under the Road Transport Act has been filed on Friday against the bus owner as it did not have a valid fitness certificate.

Noticing police and army vehicles behind, the driver reportedly panicked and drove recklessly. The bus later hit the expressway railing at Samashpur, causing its entire roof to be torn off. Despite the damage, the driver

Govt plans 24 roadside

FROM PAGE 3

liveable, transforming the agriculture sector, and rehabilitating farmers affected by last year's floods.

One of these is a Tk 53 crore project funded by the Gates Foundation, aimed at transforming agriculture to reduce climate-related risks. It will target coastal, Barind, drought-prone, haor, and flash flood-prone areas by addressing gaps between policy and investment. The project will be implemented jointly by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

Another project, costing around Tk 75 crore, seeks to make cities more inclusive and liveable by strengthening the capacity of climate-related institutions at both local and national levels.

A Tk 599 crore project will be carried out by the Water Development Board to support sustainable flood recovery and

enhance emergency preparedness. The project will be implemented in Feni, Cumilla, Noakhali, Laxmipur, and Brahmanbaria.

The fifth project, titled "agricultural system restoration", is estimated to cost Tk 260 crore. Of this, Tk 244 crore will be provided by the World Bank as a loan.

The Department of Agricultural Extension and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation will jointly implement the project, which includes training and the distribution of agricultural equipment among flood-affected farmers in the same five districts.

PRAYER TIMING

APRIL 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:25 12:45 4:45 6:27 8:00
JAMAAT 5:00 1:15 5:00 6:31 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Battery-run rickshaw

FROM PAGE 3

restrictions, battery-run rickshaws are prohibited on both main and inner roads of Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2. Only registered pedal-powered rickshaws are now permitted to operate.

Locals said the vehicles began entering Gulshan after August 5 last year, claiming their speed and unregulated movement posed risks and contributed to traffic congestion.

To enforce the ban, 20 additional guards were deployed by the Gulshan Society at nine entry points to assist police.

Around noon, 80 to 100 drivers rallied from Gulshan-2 towards Gulshan-1.

Ziaur Rahman, ADC (Traffic Gulshan), said the drive will continue.

He said the protest was called off after police assured them they could use alleyways but not main roads.

Ziaur Rahman, ADC (Traffic Gulshan), said the

drive will continue.

While protesters alleged they were assaulted during the demonstration, locals claimed the drivers turned aggressive first.

Shahidul Islam, a driver, said he was beaten by a ride-sharing biker near Gulshan-2.

Abdul Jalil, president of the Gulshan Banani-Badda Autorickshaw, Easybike Drivers Association, said around 8,000 such rickshaws operate in the area.

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NEWS

‘BNP’s 31-point charter embodies public will’

FROM PAGE 1
“Such an imbalance is uncommon in other democracies and could undermine effective governance.”

The suggestion to change the country’s name in Bangla appears to be a symbolic gesture rather than a substantive reform.

“Such changes may not address the core issues affecting citizens’ lives and could divert attention from more pressing matters that require practical solutions, and the name ‘Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea’ can be an example.”

Changing the voting age to 16 years is another suggestion that the party opposed. Only a handful of countries in the world including Argentina, Brazil and the Channel Islands have that as the voting age, Amin said.

The constitution reform commission proposed a four-year term for the prime minister. The BNP maintains that it should be for five years, following the norm in the Westminster parliamentary system followed in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and others.

The four-year tenure of the presidential system that is followed in the US and some Latin American countries is not suitable here, Amin said.

In its landmark 31-point charter, the BNP said none should be the prime minister beyond two consecutive terms, a position the party has stuck to. However, the commission proposed an individual cannot be the prime minister for more than two terms in their lifetime, following the US practice.

“If we look at the best cases of Westminster style democracy, there is no cap on the prime minister’s tenures. As the most liberal political party in the country, we are still proposing it – and we were the first to do it. The logic was to develop and allow leadership to grow but at the same time allow the previous democratically elected leader who did a good job to get another shot, reflecting the wishes of the people.”

It is unfortunate that reforms and elections have been made mutually exclusive, he said, while recalling the discussions that took place between the party leadership and the other stakeholders between August 5 and August 8 last year before the formation of the interim government.

The main deliverable of the interim government back then was to organise polls after implementing the election-related reforms.

From day one of the interim government, the party insisted on reforms in four areas: election commission, law enforcement, bureaucracy and judiciary.

The issue of wholesale reforms, which has now become a tool to linger the

election procedure, was not discussed then, Amin said.

“We see new tools and mechanisms popping up to prolong the duration of the interim government and one may ask if it goes with the aspiration of the mass uprising that we saw. The main job of the interim government is to fulfil what we saw people discuss leading up to the 5th of August and that was the lack of agency and opportunities, which is a by-product of an unelected government where people were deprived of their voting

roadmap after eight months as a case in point.

“As a deep-rooted political party with public engagement, we understand people have the common interest to have an election as soon as possible. It is about time that the interim government looks beyond the urban-centric narratives that are disconnected from the grassroots or real-world problems.”

The leisurely pace of the trial for atrocities committed during the July uprising and the lack of support of victim

a specific timeframe and then an elected government will come – does that mean the elected government will not do any reforms? Does the country become static? It never works that way.”

The BNP views reforms as a holistic exercise that would not only ensure checks and balances in the government but also correct the system to enable the development and welfare of the people, said Amin, who has been instrumental in giving form to Rahman’s vision of a progressive, tolerant and rules-based Bangladesh, which has been in the works for about a decade and a half.

His association with Rahman goes back to 2011, when the latter was engaging with bright Bangladeshi minds in British academia to give intellectual and practical heft to his vision.

A PhD student of management studies then, he was inducted into Rahman’s team to work on inclusive development policies and state reforms and was subsequently made his adviser in 2014.

“I particularly appreciated the opportunity he gave me to work on the contextual application of the best practices of the Westminster-style democracy in Bangladesh. That was a whole different world in 2011, 2012, 2013 – no one could think of such a massive shift in the political culture back then but Tarique Rahman thought about it. That was the vision.”

Specifically, Rahman was fascinated with the bicameral parliament system; establishing the independence of the judiciary; creating a balance of power between the executive branch, the parliament and the judiciary; and creating a balance of power between the head of state (president) and head of government (prime minister).

Rahman’s vision was articulated in what became the 31-point charter unveiled in 2023, which his teams in Bangladesh and abroad put together from countless brainstorming sessions with relevant professionals, experts and pro-democracy stakeholders; empirical research and grassroots feedback.

The charter accommodated the views of all like-minded political parties involved in the movement against the previous regime and was adopted by them, too.

Each of the 31 points came about through an iterative process, Amin said.

“Our 31-point reform agenda not only attempts to ensure accountability and transparency in the state structure, it also attempts to financially empower people regardless of profession and background and to solve problems in their regular life. The BNP’s biggest pride is that whatever discourse there

rights for 16 years.”

Asked if the party miscalculated when it passed on the chance to be part of a national government after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, he said that would have been betraying the values and motivations of the party’s decade and a half fight, which was to restore democracy in Bangladesh and the caretaker system for conducting elections.

When the interim

families and the injured have been disappointing, he said, adding that the BNP is trying to support the victims with limited capacity, but the state has “all the resources to cover each case”.

“And despite the trust and belief that they would not be running in the election, someone has come out of the interim government and formed a political party.”

That political party is getting state patronage for its

“At least two of them remain in the government and we don’t know yet if they will run in the election. We see student representatives in almost all ministries and there is an inherent conflict of interest: are they representing their political party or the interim government?”

“We have seen many rags-to-riches stories since the 5th of August among other stakeholders but we saw no visible action against those individuals. In a departure from the culture of impunity indulged by the political parties in Bangladesh, the BNP is the only party that is investigating all incidents and has expelled about 2,000 members after allegations against them proved true.”

government was formed, there was a segmentation: the traditional political parties who had fought over the last 16 years and wanted to run in the election; and the non-political stakeholders who had a notable role in the July uprising but had no intent to run for office.

“We had an understanding that those who would go to the interim government would organise a free, fair and credible election as soon as possible, Amin said.

“As part of a changing political culture and a fair political landscape that we want to create together, we urge them to remain over and above any political controversy.”

Both reforms and elections are dynamic, continuous processes in a democracy, he said.

“Now, if someone says that they will do all reforms within

expansion, Amin said.

“At least two of them remain in the government and we don’t know yet if they will run in the election. We see student representatives in almost all ministries and there is an inherent conflict of interest: are they representing their political party or the interim government?”

That conflict of interest should be resolved as soon as possible, Amin said.

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“Now, if someone says that they will do all reforms within

the target head on, going all guns blazing right from the word go, with captain Hayley Matthews (70 off 29), Qiana Joseph (26 off 12) and Chinelle Henry (48 off 17) keeping them on course for an incredible chase.”

However, despite failing to achieve the first two targets with the score at 162 for four in 10.4 overs, West Indies were still in with a chance to get to 172 runs off 11 overs with a boundary off the next ball and a six off the final delivery.

But former captain Stefanie Taylor, perhaps unbeknownst of the equation, hit a six off the fifth delivery of the over, sealing the victory but in the process allowing

In reply, Pakistan, powered by Muneeba Ali’s 69 and an unbeaten 52 from Aliya Riaz, chased down the target in 39.4 overs and with six wickets in hand, leaving Bangladesh with a rollercoaster ride of emotions over the next few hours till the West Indies-Thailand fixture arrived at a dramatic conclusion.

The Caribbean side took

Tigresses qualify

FROM PAGE 12

Turned out, that innings from Chantham, which helped anchor Thailand’s innings from 64 for two to 166 all out, kept Bangladesh in contention for one of the two spots from the six-team competition.

West Indies, having started the day with a much inferior net run-rate to Bangladesh’s, were faced with a daunting task of chasing down the target between 10.1 and 11 overs. They had three scenarios to overtake Bangladesh’s net run-rate – a win by 10.1 overs, a win with 170 runs on the board off 10.4 overs, and a win with 172 runs on the board off 11 overs.

The Caribbean side took

Bangladesh (net run-rate of 0.639) finish ahead of West Indies (0.626).

Earlier in the day, Bangladesh put on their worst batting display against Pakistan, managing only 178 for nine in 50 overs, with Ritu Moni’s 48 and Fahima Khatun’s unbeaten 42 helping avoid utter humiliation.

In reply, Pakistan, powered by Muneeba Ali’s 69 and an unbeaten 52 from Aliya Riaz, chased down the target in 39.4 overs and with six wickets in hand, leaving Bangladesh with a rollercoaster ride of emotions over the next few hours till the West Indies-Thailand fixture arrived at a dramatic conclusion.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) in a statement urged city dwellers not to be afraid about the flash processions of banned organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and several like-minded groups.

These groups were attempting to create panic, the DMP said.

It said the BCL activists watch out for police movement and march for a minute or two before disappearing from the scene. They later share the photos and videos of these processions on social media.

“Although it is not always possible to arrest these miscreants on the spot, many have been apprehended later,”

Law enforcers ordered

FROM PAGE 12
where their hometowns are so that they do not have to live too far away from their families.

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“Although it is not always possible to arrest these miscreants on the spot, many have been apprehended later,”

said Amin, who shared how Rahman worked round-the-clock to see the movement to its finishing line.

With Rahman’s direction, dedicated backend teams are working to fine-tune the working procedure for each of these reform and development policies.

So much so that if the BNP forms the government at this moment, Rahman has a concrete plan for what would be done in the first 100 days, 180 days and 360 days.

“Our leader is very confident of delivering those – and he is promising only as much as we can deliver.”

The teams and the roadmap would be unveiled before the election, Amin said, adding that a glimpse of the party’s plan for the economy and businesses was shared during the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025.

“How do we create jobs? How can we empower women and ensure their safety? How do the labourers and farmers get fair compensation for their efforts? How can we provide quality multilingual education and healthcare for all? How do we solve the traffic problem? How can we keep inflation at a tolerable level? Our leader has worked on those and has targeted policies.”

This leads to the question of the BNP’s involvement in the epoch-making July uprising, which has created the ground for the party’s second coming. The BNP – and particularly Rahman – was more involved than what it publicly takes credit for, according to Amin’s version of events.

About 1,400 died during the uprising, according to the estimates of the UN’s fact-finding mission – and more than 500 of them were BNP party workers, Amin said. About 5,000 of the party’s members were arrested, including the top brass, while its central office was raided and district offices were vandalised, according to reports.

However, the party does not want unilateral recognition for toppling the Goliath Awami League-led government.

The BNP as the main opposition party was always in the field against the Hasina regime, but when a ruling party loses its nature and becomes a human rights violator and takes a turn towards fascism, it cannot be toppled through a political movement – a mass uprising is needed.”

This is what happened in the July uprising.

“For the first time in 16 years, people from all walks of life at home and abroad came out and participated in their own capacities, on the internet and the streets. And the BNP leaders and activists ensured the numbers on the ground and were prepared for the ultimate sacrifice,”

Rahman has zero tolerance for such activities and does not the harshest punishment if credible proof of the offences is obtained “as there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation”.

The conversation then veers towards the BNP’s preparedness to lead the government after so many years in the wilderness.

“We have the capacity and the technical human resources and most importantly, the commitment to the country’s development, as demonstrated by the past BNP governments of President Ziaur Rahman and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.”

And stumping out corruption will be the single overarching ethos of the BNP government.

The party will commission a white paper in all ministries to unearth the length and breadth of corruption over the past 16 years and start an ombudsman, a system through which people can lodge complaints against any government official and

the fundamental democratic values, which are freedom of expression, human rights and rule of law.”

In a BNP-led government, press freedom, safety and security of journalists and freedom of expression will be ensured, he said.

However, the party will have zero tolerance for extremism, terrorism and separatism.

“Living in a multicultural environment and pluralistic society for so long, our leader Tarique Rahman’s vision is to replicate that setting here, where different beliefs and ideologies coexist.”

Asked how pragmatic that vision is in the Bangladesh context, he said: “He is aware of the ground reality and will work to educate and engage people through awareness campaigns and school curriculum.”

Besides, the political ideology of the BNP is “Bangladeshi nationalism”, which means ensuring the ownership of people and that every Bangladeshi has the same rights and freedom irrespective of creed, religion, ethnicity and beliefs.

This ideology informs any BNP government’s foreign policy, which is based on “equality, fairness and justice”.

The underlying philosophy is that Bangladesh will forge sustainable relations at bilateral and multilateral levels that will take no masters but only friends. The BNP-led government will not side with a camp at the cost of our national interest and instead focus on policies of mutual interest. We like to foster global integration through trade and investment and ensure that we play a responsible actor in this integrated world.”

This then leads to the million-dollar question: when would the party’s leader Tarique Rahman be coming back given that there is no legal bar to his return to Bangladesh?

“Arrangements are being made for his return as we speak – it’s just a matter of time. He is eager to be among his people and the people of Bangladesh and fight for the rights of his activists who are still in jail or have fake politically motivated cases on them.”

REFORMS BNP ASKED FROM INTERIM GOVERNMENT

Structural, personnel changes within civil administration, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, election commission

Removal of politicised individuals aligned with the previous regime

Supreme Judicial Council

Judicial independence to acquit millions of fabricated cases Confirmation of constituency delimitation

Strengthening of the independence and functioning of constitutional bodies

members of parliament in a transparent manner.

It also proposed an all-party parliamentary committee to vet recruitment for key posts in state institutions such as the heads of the Anti-Corruption Commission, law enforcement agencies, the Election Commission as well as the judiciary.

As for the ongoing allegations of extortion and capturing institutions by BNP men, Amin maintains that

League government could not find any proof against Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman – it’s a shocking development.”

Amin maintains that the BNP is committed to media freedom, as has been the case since the party’s inception.

“As the largest victim of curbs on freedom of speech, the BNP commits to the nation that this sort of vengeance would not be tolerated. We commit to build a Bangladesh based on

BlueHaven By Asset DEVELOPMENTS

4-BEDROOM APARTMENTS

AT BASHUNDHARA R/A
Single unit per floor, Double-Height Entrance, Elegant Guest Reception, Community Hall and a Serene Rooftop Garden.

ENQUIRIES

No elections without trial of fascists, reforms
Jamaat ameer tells rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Lalmirhat

J a m a a t -
e - I s l a m i
Ameer Dr
S h a f i q u r
R a h m a n
yesterday
said no
national election should
be held without necessary
reforms and the trial of
fascists.

"We want to support the government in the reform process. But no election should take place without reforms. An electoral environment must also be ensured," he said while addressing a public meeting organised by Lalmirhat district Jamaat on the Collectorate Ground in Lalmirhat town.

He said fascism has collapsed, but fascists remain active. "A group is still involved in extortion. People want a Bangladesh free from extortion."

On relations with India, he said, "We seek friendly ties with India, but it is up to India to determine the nature of that relationship."

Man hacked to death in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

A man was hacked to death allegedly by a group of miscreants in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Hai, 60, a resident of Jarulia village in the upazila, said Md Nur Alam, officer-in-charge of Chunarughat Police Station.

Abdul Hai was reportedly cutting bamboo by the roadside at around 1:00pm when a group of people attacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him dead on the spot, locals said.

He sustained multiple injuries, including severe wounds to the head.

On information, police went to the spot around 2:00pm, recovered the body, and sent it to Habiganj 250-bed District Sadar Hospital's morgue for autopsy, said OC Nur Alam.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Danger lurks in the open drains

14 die in five years; 6-month-old becomes the latest victim

MD NAZRUL ISLAM

Men, women, children... even infants.

In Chattogram, no one is safe from the deadly grip of open drains and canals. Every year, lives are lost as people fall into uncovered drainage systems scattered across the city. It has become a tragic and seemingly inevitable fate for its residents.

The latest victim is six-month-old Seherish, who went missing after falling into an open drain in the city's Kapasgola area on Friday night. Her tiny body was recovered 14 hours later.

According to the Chattogram City Corporation, the city has around 1,600 kilometres of drains, sewers, and canals.

Of these, about 300 kilometres fall under the jurisdiction of the Chattogram Development Authority, while the rest are maintained by the CCC.

Seherin Mahbub Sadia died after falling into a drain while walking in the Agrabad area.

In 2022, a child named Kamal went missing after falling into a drain in Shoholshahar. His body was discovered three days later in Muradpur.

On August 28, 2023, one-and-a-half-year-old Yasin Arafat fell into a drain in Agrabad Rangipara.



Father of six-month-old Seherish holds his daughter one last time before burial. The infant's body was recovered 14 hours after she fell into an open drain at Kapasgola in Chattogram city on Friday night.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

them into open death traps.

Neither the CCC nor the CDA maintains accurate data on how many people have died after falling into these hazards. However, based on reports from various media outlets, at least 14 people have died in the past five years, while two remain missing.

The unofficial tally shows five deaths in 2021, one in 2022, three in 2023, and four in 2024 so far.

Kapasgola resident Zahid Hossain said, "Most of the city's drains and canals have now become death traps. Even after so many lives lost, there has been no effective action. Every time someone dies, there's a public outcry for a few days, and then it fades away."

Following the latest incident, CCC Mayor Dr Shahadat Hossain yesterday said the CDA is currently working on 36 canals under the city's waterlogging project, while the CCC is responsible for one canal. "The projects are progressing rapidly, and we hope to soon install safety barriers along the canals," he said.

Residents have long been complaining that most of the city's canals lack protective fencing, and many drains remain uncovered, effectively turning

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

His body was recovered 16 hours later by fire service personnel.

In June 2024, seven-year-old Saidul Islam fell into a drain in Gosalidanga. His lifeless body was found the next day in Nasir Canal.

Residents have long been complaining that most of the city's canals lack protective fencing, and many drains remain uncovered, effectively turning

6-POINT DEMAND
Polytechnic students to hold nationwide rallies today



PHOTO: TITU DAS
Polytechnic students rally in Barishal yesterday amid presence of members of joint forces.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Polytechnic students across the country are set to hold rallies today to press home their six point demand. The announcement was made yesterday during a human chain organised in front of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute.

Students, under the banner of Karigori Chhatra Andolon, said the demonstrations would take place simultaneously at polytechnic campuses nationwide. Their primary objective is to draw the attention of top government officials. They also urged fellow students to maintain order and avoid causing public inconvenience during the rallies.

As part of yesterday's "Rise in Red" campaign, students draped red cloth over campus gates and formed human chains, holding placards at strategic locations and along roadsides.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

316 rice mills lose registration

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The registrations of 316 rice mills in Dinajpur have been revoked after they failed to reach an agreement with the government for supplying rice and paddy during the recently concluded Aman procurement season.

The cancellations were confirmed in an official order issued by Subir Nath Chowdhury, district food controller. According to the District Food Controller's Office, the Aman procurement drive began on November 17 last year. The procurement

deadline was set for February 28 for boiled rice and paddy, and March 15 for non-parboiled (Atap) rice.

A total of 911 rice mills signed contracts to supply boiled rice, while 83 mills initially signed up to supply Atap rice. By the end of the season, the government managed to procure 48,724.40 tonnes of boiled rice (98 percent of the target) and 11,306.460 tonnes of Atap rice (96 percent).

However, paddy procurement remained low, with only 2,258 tonnes collected, just 13 percent of the target.

Owners of several mills, whose registrations were revoked, cited high market prices for paddy and increased production costs as reasons for not participating in the procurement.

Food Controller Subir Nath said Dinajpur has 1,210 rice mills eligible to supply boiled rice and 110 eligible for Atap rice. "Many millers did not sign the contracts during the recent procurement drive. Actions have been taken as per the directives."



SREEMANGAL HEALTH COMPLEX

Patients suffer due to shortage of doctors, nurses

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Patients are being deprived of essential healthcare services at the grassroots level.

A recent visit revealed overcrowded wards for women, children, and men, with no vacant beds available. Long queues were seen outside doctors' chambers, where the deputy assistant community medical officers were offering only basic treatment.

Many patients expressed their

poor sanitation, lack of lighting during power outages, and insufficient medicine supplies.

A senior nurse said, "We have had no gynaecologist for nearly a month, so we had to suspend C-section surgeries."

A senior staff member of the emergency department added, "We are currently offering only primary care and referring all other patients



frustration. "I have been waiting with my child for two hours. He has an ear problem, but there is no ENT specialist here," said Solaiman Hossain, a local resident.

Husna Begum, a patient, said she had been waiting for more than an hour without being able to consult a doctor. "I'm already ill, and this prolonged wait is making it worse."

Patients also complained about

to Moulvibazar."

Dr Cynthia Tasmin, health and family planning officer of Sreemangal upazila, acknowledged the mounting pressure on the existing workforce. "We have only 10 doctors against 23 approved posts. I've written to the higher authorities requesting urgent recruitment. Once manpower is appointed, service quality will improve," she said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National board of Revenue Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1: National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization IDEB Bhaban (10th floor), 160/A, Kakrail, Dhaka

Memo no. 1(192) Active items/ Hardware /NSW/2024/2690

Date: 17.04.2025

Subject: Addendum to bidding document for supply and Installation of Hardware and Infrastructure (network, communication, cabling etc.) and standard software for NSW solution; other network, communication equipment, structure, Hardware and cabling: Server & Storage and Network & Security components for NSW Server Room & DR. Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1: Request for Bids (RFB) No. NBR-GD2A.01.

Addendum No. 11

This is for the information of all Bidders concerned that the following amendments have been made for the procurement mentioned in the subject above;

Ref	Existing Entry	Amended entry
SI No. of 6, SPN ITP-23.1 & 26.1	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: April 21, 2025, Time: 14.00 hours. Date & Time for Bid Opening April 21, 2025, Time :14:30 hours	The deadline for Bid Submission is: Date: April 28, 2025, Time: 14.00 hours. Date & Time for Bid Opening April 28, 2025, Time :14:30 hours

All the terms and conditions of bidding Documents (RFB) NBR-GD2A.01 shall remain unchanged. This Addendum No. 11 shall be considered an integral part of the Request for Proposals Document along with earlier addendums and shall be binding on all Bidders who have obtained the Request for Proposals Document from the Purchaser and intends to obtain in accordance with ITP 6.3.

(Pramila Sarker)

Deputy Project Director

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity project 1:

National Single Window Implementation and strengthening Customs Modernization

Email: pdnsw.nbr@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 20, 2025

BAISHAKH 7, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

7

HUNGER IN GAZA 'Deprivation by design': UN

92 killed by Israel in two days

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes killed at least 92 people in the Gaza Strip in the last 48 hours, the health ministry said yesterday, as UN said the tiny Palestinian territory is being subjected to "deprivation by design".

The death toll from the Israeli aggression has risen to 51,125 martyrs and 116,724 injuries since October 7, 2023," the ministry said in its statement, adding that since Israel resumed hostilities on March 18, 1,783 have been killed.

According to Al Jazeera, at least 39 people have been killed yesterday in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip.

After 18 months of devastating war and an Israeli blockade on aid since March 2, the United Nations has warned of a dire humanitarian situation for the 2.4 million inhabitants of the Palestinian territory.

Hamas on Thursday accused Israel of using "starvation as a weapon" against Gazans by blocking aid supplies.

The heads of 12 major aid organisations warned on Thursday that "famine is not just a risk, but likely rapidly



unfolding in almost all parts" of the territory.

Jonathan Whittall, an official with the UN humanitarian affairs office (OCHA), said in a video message recorded yesterday that Israel's continuous blockade of Gaza has been disastrous for all areas of life in the Strip.

"In Gaza today, people are being deprived of the basic necessities of life," he said from Rafah, in southern Gaza.

It has been almost 50 days of total aid blockade.

"This is deprivation by design," he said.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has warned of plans by settler organisations circulating on Hebrew-language platforms that discuss attacking and demolishing Al-Aqsa Mosque and constructing a temple in its place.

In a statement published on X, the ministry said it considers the plans a "systematic incitement to escalate the targeting of Christian and Islamic holy sites in occupied Jerusalem".



People gather at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the day of the Holy Fire ceremony in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran, US end talks in Rome

Agree to meet next week; talks held in 'constructive atmosphere'

AGENCIES

Iran and the United States yesterday agreed to hold another round of talks next week over Tehran's nuclear ambitions, Iranian state TV reported, as they ended their second round of negotiations in Rome over their decades-long standoff.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff negotiated indirectly through an Omani official who will shuttle messages between the two sides, Iranian officials said, a week after a first round of indirect talks in Muscat that both sides described as constructive.

Araghchi and Witkoff interacted briefly at the end of the first round, but officials from the two countries have not held direct negotiations since 2015 under former US

I'm for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon. They can't have a nuclear weapon. I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific.

DONALD TRUMP

President Barack Obama.

Araghchi, in a meeting with his Italian counterpart ahead of the talks, said Iran had always been committed to diplomacy and called on "all parties involved in the talks

to seize the opportunity to reach a reasonable and logical nuclear deal".

"Such an agreement should respect Iran's legitimate rights and lead to the lifting of unjust sanctions on the country while addressing any doubts about its nuclear work," Araghchi was quoted as saying by Iranian state media.

He said in Moscow on Friday that Iran believes reaching an agreement on its nuclear programme with the US is possible as long as Washington is realistic.

Tehran has however sought to tamp down expectations of a quick deal, after some Iranian officials speculated that sanctions could be lifted soon. Iran's utmost authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said this week he was "neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic".

Portrait of a Gaza boy wins Press Photo of the Year

CNN ONLINE

A striking portrait of a young Palestinian boy who lost both arms in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City has been named Press Photo of the Year.

Photographer Samar Abu Elouf, who is also from Gaza, met nine-year-old Mahmoud Ajjour three months after an explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other. Ajjour and his family were evacuated to Doha, Qatar, where Abu Elouf is based, to receive medical treatment.

"One of the most difficult things Mahmoud's mother explained to me was how, when Mahmoud first came to the realisation that his arms were amputated, the first sentence he said to her was, 'How will I be able to hug you?'" Abu Elouf wrote in her accompanying notes on the image, which was taken for and published in The New York Times.

The photo is a stark reminder of the long-term costs of the war in Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands and led to widespread destruction and displacement of its residents. The UN's Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates about half of those killed are women and children.

"This is a quiet photo that speaks loudly. It tells the story of one boy, but also of a wider war that will have an impact for generations," said Joumana El Zein Khoury, executive director of World

Press Photo, in a press statement.

The jury observed three central themes – conflict, migration, and climate change – in the entries this year, says Lucy Conticello, director of photography for Le Monde's M magazine and one of the judges.

"Another way of seeing them is as stories of resilience, family, and community," Conticello said in a press statement. The contrast in the winning photo – light and dark, beauty and pain – captured the attention of the judges, she added.

The winning photo was selected from nearly 60,000 entries submitted by 3,778 photographers across more than 140 countries.

Two other works were selected as runners-up: an otherworldly image of Chinese migrants warming themselves by a fire after crossing the US-Mexico border, and a haunting image of a young man walking to his village, once accessible by boat, along a desert-like riverbed in the Amazon.

Sarjis, Hasnat take flak at NCP meet

FROM PAGE 12

raised concerns about Sarjis's perceived lavish lifestyles, extravagant motorcade in his locality in March, alleged financial irregularities involving Tanvir, and repeated instances of sensitive party matters being aired publicly on social media by Hasnat and Sarjis.

Sarjis and Hasnat also faced criticism for independently taking positions on various issues and allegedly "dealing" with matters without prior party consultation.

In response, Sarjis defended himself, saying his family bore the cost of his motorcade and that his lifestyle was "nothing new". He said he sometimes rents luxury cars for security reasons and claimed that most of the social media allegations were exaggerated.

Hasnat, for his part, denied all accusations and said he would resign if any allegation could be proven. He maintained that his controversial Facebook post about a meeting with army personnel had already been clarified and did not warrant further explanation.

Both leaders alleged that they were being targeted by vested quarters aiming to discredit the NCP. They claimed that they had helped numerous people following the July uprising without any financial gain.

They claimed that many people want to take photos with them when they visit places across the country. However, if allegations later arise against those individuals, people tend to associate them with the wrongdoers, they said.

On April 9, the two leaders met with Anti

over person," a joint convener of NCP told The Daily Star. "A decision was also taken to discuss issues related to the party on the party forum before making any statements online."

The meeting, chaired by NCP Convenor Nahid Islam and moderated by Member Secretary Akhter Hossen, also addressed organisational matters.

It decided to take steps to meet the Election Commission's registration requirements within the next month, formulate the party's future programmes, and finalise state reform proposals.

NCP has divided the country into 19 organisational zones to facilitate party activities across 64 districts.

The meeting decided that district committees will consist of 31 to 51 members, and upazila

committees will have between 21 and 41 members. The minimum age for a convener will be 40.

A press release issued after the meeting said the party discussed ongoing global issues, including the Israeli violence in Gaza, India's Waqf act protests, and domestic ones such as trial for Awami League men who took part in killings during last year's uprising, border killings and rising commodity prices.

The new "discipline and investigation" committee will be formally constituted today, the release added.

Meanwhile, the party's Dhaka city unit is set to launch protests this week, pressing for the trial of Awami League members over the July killings, state reforms, and the formation of a constituent assembly.

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Open drains continue to claim lives

Why is such gross negligence being tolerated?

The body of a six-month-old baby was recovered on Saturday from a canal in Chattogram after the child had gone missing on Friday. A woman and her baby were travelling in a rickshaw when the baby fell into an open sewer, which had a strong current after rainfall. This story has tragically become one that plays out every now and then in Chattogram, notorious for its open drains and canals, where many have perished while others have been severely injured. A significant number of the victims were children. Despite lofty—and expensive—projects by the authorities to fix the city's drainage system, something as basic as closing all the open drains and canals to prevent people from falling into them has not been completed. Why such apathy for public safety?

In the last several years, there have been innumerable reports of people falling into open drains or canals, with some of the bodies never found. People have been expressing their fear, as most drains do not have protective slabs or retaining walls, which make them deadly after rainfall. The media has been relentlessly reporting on these incidents. Yet these deaths continue, robbing families of their loved ones.

The Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) and the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) are the agencies responsible for maintaining and repairing the drainage system. They are therefore the main government bodies that should be held responsible for such criminal negligence. In 2021, the CCC found 5,527 risky spots along the drains, canals, and footpaths of the city. While around 80 percent of these spots have been covered and 70 percent of retaining walls built along the canals (according to a news report), there are still many vulnerable spots that are potential death traps—which is why a six-month-old baby had to die.

It is well known that these open drains and canals become clogged with silt and waste during the rainy season, causing them to become submerged, making it impossible to see them on the flooded roads. Thus, pedestrians or rickshaws falling into the drains, or people getting swept away by the open canals, has become a common occurrence. Yet the four projects worth Tk 14,389 crore initiated by the Awami League government could not complete the renovation of these canals and drains.

We expect the interim government to immediately take steps to demand answers from the CCC and CDA, and instruct them to cover the remaining risky spots on an urgent basis. Deaths caused by official negligence can no longer be tolerated. With the upcoming rainy season, they cannot afford to waste any more time.

A father's death and the state's failure

Authorities must arrest and hold the perpetrators accountable

It is outrageous that a father had to lose his life for protesting against his daughter's harassment in Rajshahi City's Talaimari area on April 16. Reportedly, the victim's daughter was returning home from private tuition that day when a local youth named Nantu verbally harassed her on her way back. After she informed her parents of the incident, her father, Akram Hossain, complained to Nantu's parents about the harassment. At this, Nantu became furious and, along with his gang, attacked Akram Hossain and his son. One of the attackers struck him on the head with a brick, causing critical injuries. The man later died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

This incident highlights the miserable state of women's safety, and the security of people in general, across the country. While harassment and stalking of adolescent girls are common occurrences, these incidents mostly go unreported unless they escalate to more severe forms of violence such as rape or murder. According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), at least 11,758 women and girls have fallen victim to torture and violence, with 6,305 of them being raped between 2020 and 2024. During this time, a total of 2,624 women and girls have suffered sexual harassment.

Parents of girls do not always protest such incidents for fear of retaliation from the harassers. Since the perpetrators are often powerful and politically connected, victims often lack the courage to go to the police, file cases, or seek protection. In many instances, parents stop sending their adolescent daughters to school and marry them off at a young age to prevent cases of stalking and sexual harassment. While it is the state's responsibility to ensure the safety of our women and girls in educational institutions, workplaces, and public places, it has failed us miserably in this regard, emboldening the perpetrators to continue their crimes with impunity.

The situation is so dire that anyone attempting to stop harassment and violence often becomes a victim themselves. For instance, earlier in April, a man was stabbed for protesting against the harassment of a schoolgirl in Netrakona's Atpara upazila. Several similar incidents have been reported in recent times.

We must ask: why should a father lose his life for standing against his daughter's harassment? Why doesn't the state take decisive action to ensure such crimes are never repeated by holding perpetrators accountable under the law? In the Rajshahi incident, the victim's family filed a case against Nantu and his associates. We hope the police will swiftly arrest all the accused and ensure they are punished according to the law. Only by ensuring justice can such violence be curbed.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Deepwater Horizon oil spill

On this day in 2010, the largest marine oil spill in history occurred due to an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig located in the Gulf of Mexico.



DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Our aspirations and Europe's contradictions



Zakir Kibria
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ZAKIR KIBRIA

On April 17, 2025, two stories unfolded in Europe, each a mirror to the other. In Amsterdam, the "Best of Bangladesh in Europe 2025" event began with fanfare, celebrating the nation's economic dynamism, its booming ready-made garment sector, and its aspirations to become a \$1 trillion economy by 2040. Meanwhile, in Italy, the United Nations revealed that 2,589 Bangladeshi had arrived by sea in the first two months of 2025, a 115 percent increase from the previous year. Many more Bangladeshi were lost to the Mediterranean's unforgiving waves. This duality—a nation lauded for its progress even as its citizens perish in pursuit of a mirage—demands a reckoning.

Bangladesh's economic narrative is one of resilience. From a war-torn nation in 1971 to the 35th largest economy in 2022, its growth has been fuelled by export-led industrialisation, digital innovation, and a youthful population. The Netherlands event showcased this success: 32 exhibitors from sectors like apparel, IT, and agro-food promoted "Made in Bangladesh" as a symbol of ethical production and opportunity. The European Union (EU), Bangladesh's largest trading partner, praised the country's "skilled workforce" and pledged support for labour rights and green energy transitions.

Yet, beneath this veneer lies a darker truth. While the elite negotiate trade deals in Amsterdam, young men from Madaripur, Cumilla, and Sylhet pawn ancestral land to pay traffickers Tk 5–16 lakh (\$4,500–\$14,500) for a seat on a rickety boat to Italy. Their desperation is not born of ignorance but of systemic failure: unemployment, wage stagnation, and a culture where migration is seen as the only escape from poverty.

The Mediterranean has long been a mass grave. In 2024 alone, 10,457 migrants died attempting to reach Spain, while UNICEF estimates 3,500 children perished on the Central Mediterranean route over the past decade. For Bangladeshi, the journey begins in Libya, which is a "false gateway" where 93 percent endure torture, extortion, or indefinite detention. Survivors describe boats

capsizing, fuel tanks suffocating passengers, and families drowning together.

The EU's border policies exacerbate this carnage. By outsourcing migration control to states like Libya and Tunisia, which detain migrants in warehouses and push them onto riskier routes, Europe has turned



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Young Bangladeshi men pay huge sums of money to traffickers for a seat on a rickety boat to Europe.

the Mediterranean into a "kill zone." Spain's aerial surveillance and Italy's refusal to rescue distressed vessels epitomise a regime that prioritises deterrence over humanity. As Shariful Hasan, head of programme of migration at BRAC, notes, "This is not a dream journey; it's a death journey."

The hypocrisy of EU-Bangladesh relations

The EU's "Talent Partnership" with Bangladesh, aimed at promoting legal migration, rings hollow against this backdrop. While Erasmus+ scholarships and renewable energy projects are commendable, they pale

year of exploitation in Libya. Titu, 19, suffocated in a fuel tank, betrayed by a broker who promised a work permit. These are not isolated tragedies but symptoms of a global order that commodifies hope.

Survivors like T. D., a Malian man who watched his brother drink seawater to death, recount horrors that defy comprehension. For every body recovered, countless others vanish into the Atlantic unidentified, unmourned and, erased from history. As Rayhan Kabir, a migration specialist at BRAC writes, "The wrong ship does not take you to Europe. It sinks you in the deadly sea".

about the realities of the journey is a must.

Europe cannot claim moral leadership while its shores are littered with corpses. Bangladesh cannot celebrate "growth" while its youth drown in despair. The Mediterranean, a sea that once connected civilisations, now symbolises our collective failure. The Amsterdam event should not be just another photo op but a catalyst for change. For every garment displayed, let us remember the hands that stitched it, and also the hands that grasped at a lifeboat, only to sink into darkness.

The dead have no use for elegies. But the living owes them action.

Economic lessons from the tariff war



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

The first round of Trump's tariff war has ended in a stalemate. China and the US, the two key players, are contemplating their next move. President Xi Jinping is visiting Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia to shore up support for the next round of the war. Before President Trump declared the 90-day pause, the global financial market was jittery, and many developing countries, including Bangladesh, were scampering for a countermove or a response to offset the damage to their respective economies.

The current tariff war offers some important lessons for economists as well as the practitioners of statecraft. In this age of artificial intelligence (AI), one wonders why the small group of US policymakers, including the Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Stephen Miran, sign off on the so-called Liberation Day tariff package, which marked the beginning of a global trade war and triggered a global stock market crash?

During my studies at the Dhaka University and the graduate school at Boston University, we were reminded that tariffs can be harmful to the domestic economy, but developing

countries may use tariffs to protect an "infant industry" only for a temporary period. However, US President Trump is using tariffs to achieve some of the economic and political goals he promised during his election campaign. For months, his team has worked on the policy package, particularly its timing, target commodities and countries. However, we now know that some of the resultant fallout has surprised his core team of advisers.

What can policymakers and the next generation of economists take away from the first round? I will answer these questions and add some notes for economics professors.

First, in most textbooks, economic models are based on the assumption of free trade, perfect competition, and "small country." It can be shown that tariffs harm the consumers and should be avoided since they reduce economic welfare. However, in real life, gains from trade are distributed unequally between trading partners. Some countries, particularly the rich and the strong, have the upper hand in trade negotiations. Therefore, the discussions on trade theory in economics must be part of a broader discussion, touching upon political

EDITORIAL

Moving beyond exploitation and empty promises

The solution lies not in tighter borders but in addressing root causes. Investment in rural job creation and skill-building is needed to counter migration idealism. The EU's Talent Partnership should be expanded to include low-skilled workers and streamline visa processes. Cracking down on traffickers is crucial. Strengthening cross-border prosecutions and social media monitoring can help dismantle smuggling networks. Libya and Tunisia should be pressured to end migrant detention and collaborate on search and rescue missions. Finally, public awareness by educating families in high-migration districts

agree with Paul Samuelson..., who has recently spoken and written about how comparative advantage as it is classically understood may not be descriptive of the 21st century economy in which we find ourselves."

Fifth, countries use tariffs today for reasons other than protection. As discussed in my previous column in this newspaper, tariffs can be used for retaliation, as the US is now doing. However, politicians who use tariffs as a tool of statecraft, which is the skillful management of state affairs, should be conscious that issues of statecraft require great deliberation.

The next generation of economics professors should review and remove some prevalent misconceptions about tariffs. For example the assertion that higher tariffs strengthen the value of a country's currency is not totally correct.

As we saw, Trump's tariff announcement sent the value of the US dollar plunging. One of the goals of Trump's tariff war is to weaken the dollar. By weakening the dollar and imposing strategic tariffs, Stephen Miran believes that the US could correct long standing imbalances in the global system. He outlined his idea in a 41-page essay titled "A User's Guide to Restructuring the Global Trading System."

If students of economics are taught that tariffs are bad, they should take it with a grain of salt. If civil servants, businesspersons, or policymakers face export tariffs, they should consider the current environment, assess the situation, and then negotiate a deal with their opponent or trading partner.



Navigating the US-China-India triangular labyrinth

Foreign policy challenges for Bangladesh's new political party



Alaudin Mohammad is joint member secretary of National Citizen Party (NCP) and executive director at Institute of Policy, Governance and Development (IPGAD).

ALAUDIN MOHAMMAD

The advent of a new political party in Bangladesh demands a diplomatic vision rooted not in traditional alignments but in nimble strategic thinking. As global power dynamics tilt towards a volatile balance between the United States, China, and India, the party's survival and success depend on its ability to chart this complex triangle without compromising sovereignty, economic prospects, or democratic integrity. In this context, the nature of a political party's foreign policy, especially how it balances international friendships while securing domestic legitimacy, emerges as a cornerstone of governance. A right negotiation on the global stage will determine the party's resilience at home.

The National Citizen Party (NCP), being a newcomer to the political landscape, is no exception to the demands of strategic manoeuvring. It, too, must engage in the gauzy act of balancing within the triangular dynamics of the US, China, and India—an essential yet knotty task that defines political survival, foreign policy coherence, and long-term relevance in a shifting global order.

Historical geometry of foreign powers in our domestic politics

Since its inception, Bangladesh's political landscape has been influenced by the gravitational pull of external powers. The nation has endured ideological shifts, economic dependencies, and strategic coercions from India, China, and the US. While some political actors maintained longevity by bending towards one pole or another, others perished due to diplomatic miscalculations despite

considerable domestic support.

India, being the first state to recognise Bangladesh's sovereignty in 1971, has maintained deep-rooted influence through security, cultural, and economic ties. China, on the other hand, has capitalised on economic diplomacy and military assistance, becoming Bangladesh's top trading partner and largest source of foreign investment. The US, often donning the cloak of democratic advocacy, exerts its power through developmental aid, political influence campaigns, and geopolitical manoeuvring—most notably its interest in strategic installations like Saint Martin's Island.

The challenge for the new political party is therefore more nuanced than before. It must not only balance three giants but do so while managing their competing pressures within Bangladesh's own political narrative. This, in effect, transforms Bangladesh's foreign policy into a diamond—multifaceted, precious, and at constant risk of shattering under pressure if not managed with precision.

Context of the new party

The emergence of this new political force is not taking place in a vacuum. It is born into a climate where propaganda, perception, and political branding have become more vital than ideology. With competing narratives, both domestic and foreign, already attempting to define the party's image, it must actively shape its own identity. This requires a disciplined diplomatic front that reflects neither overt alignment nor vague neutrality, but a deliberate

strategy of "strategic equidistance."

In such a context, the party must constantly update its foreign policy toolkit. Unlike previous eras where ideology could offer direction, today's diplomacy requires a technocratic blend of pragmatism, optics, and influence management.

The call for a middle path doctrine

Bangladesh's new political leadership must move away from the binary Cold War framework of choosing allies. Instead, it must institutionalise the doctrine of "Middle Path Diplomacy." This approach seeks partnerships based on mutual benefit, national interest, and non-alignment—a more pragmatic version of the old Bangladeshi principle of "friendship to all, malice to none."



Bangladesh's new political leadership must move away from the binary Cold War framework of choosing allies.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

The US, China, and India each bring both opportunity and risk. Bangladesh must leverage China's economic clout without falling into debt traps. With India, it must pursue neighbourly diplomacy that respects sovereignty and mitigates asymmetry. The US remains a key partner in trade and security, but its interventions in domestic politics necessitate a cautious engagement model.

For this middle path to succeed, it must be fluid, not fixed, evolving as regional and global tensions shift.

Strategic hedging, multilateralism, and soft power projection should be the tripod of this new diplomatic architecture.

India: The hardest balancing act in the tripartite game

Among the three, India poses the most complex diplomatic challenge. As both a neighbour and a hegemon-in-waiting, India's relationship with Bangladesh is deeply connected with domestic politics, water and energy security, border stability, and cultural memory.

India's support of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and its scepticism of the BNP (seen as pro-China and Islamist-leaning) have long impacted Bangladesh's internal political equilibrium. Transit agreements,

and public opinion in both countries must anchor this engagement, not emotion, nostalgia, or ideological romanticism.

Revitalising regional frameworks

No foreign policy of balance is sustainable without multilateral anchors. Regional organisations such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, and ASEAN must be rejuvenated as platforms for non-hegemonic cooperation. These frameworks can act as diplomatic equalisers, giving smaller states like Bangladesh collective bargaining power in a polarised global order.

SAARC, though stymied by India-Pakistan tensions, can still be instrumental in people-to-people connectivity and climate resilience. BIMSTEC, with its focus on the Bay of Bengal, provides a strategic maritime pivot point, while ASEAN's economic corridors can help Bangladesh diversify its alliances beyond the big three.

The African Union's (AU) model is worth studying here. With its assertive stance against foreign domination, emphasis on intra-continental trade (AfCFTA), and pushback against debt-trap diplomacy, the AU exemplifies how regional coalitions can counterbalance global pressures. Bangladesh's new political party must take inspiration from such models to propose a "Bay of Bengal Compact" or a "South Asian Strategic Community" that ensures collective self-reliance.

The inconvenient truth about meddling

The entanglement of the US, India, and China in Bangladesh's domestic affairs is not speculative—it is empirical. The US has deployed soft power via USAID and programmes like IRI's "Promoting Accountability, Inclusivity, and Resiliency" initiative, funding activists, cultural projects, and civil society movements critical of the ruling party. Allegations of attempted regime change, pressure campaigns against politicians, and the leverage of military base proposals

(Saint Martin's Island) further expose the depth of American interest.

India, meanwhile, has utilised both carrot and stick—offering infrastructure projects and energy cooperation on one hand, while exerting pressure through border policies, trade asymmetries, and political favouritism on the other. China, though more restrained in public diplomacy, quietly embeds itself through infrastructure megaprojects, military sales (accounting for over 70 percent of Bangladesh's arms imports), and strategic port development—all aimed at securing long-term influence.

The new political party must publicly acknowledge these realities, not as anti-Western, anti-Indian, or anti-Chinese rhetoric, but as pragmatic considerations in formulating a sovereign foreign policy.

A new political cartography for a post-fascist democracy

The geopolitical stakes are high for any new political actor in Bangladesh. The country is at the crossroads of a shifting world order, where traditional alliances are obsolete and soft power is the new currency of diplomacy. The emergence of this new political force must be guided not by ideology alone but by strategic realism, dignified neutrality, and intelligent manoeuvring.

A future-oriented foreign policy, based on equal dignity, regional solidarity, and multilateral engagement, will help Bangladesh insulate itself from undue influence while maximising economic and security dividends. If navigated well, the diamond that is Bangladesh's position in South Asia can refract power in multiple directions, not just absorb it. Ultimately, foreign policy is no longer a peripheral concern of governance. It is central to legitimacy, survival, and progress. The new political party must tread carefully, yes, but it must also tread wisely.

Our universities need to bring in top talent

Dr Mohammad Omar Farooq is professor and head of the Department of Economics at the United International University (UIU).

Dr Syed Saad Andaleeb is distinguished professor emeritus at the Pennsylvania State University in the US, and former vice chancellor of BRAC University.

MOHAMMAD OMAR FAROOQ and SYED SAAD ANDALEEB

The education system in Bangladesh, particularly its tertiary sector, is grappling with severe quality issues. This failure is reflected, among other factors, in global university rankings such as the QS and Times Higher Education (THE), which consistently place Bangladeshi institutions at the lower rungs. While some universities have made modest progress in moving up, the reality remains that their starting position is so low that even incremental advancements appear more significant than they truly are, especially in a country that gained independence more than half a century ago. This indeed reflects the lack of attention to this sector, creating a fundamental and debilitating gap in educational best practices.

Numerous factors—such as inadequate funding, outdated curricula, a weak research culture, limited industry-university collaboration, a shortage of quality faculty, and above all, deficiencies in governance and accountability—contribute to the struggles of the higher education sector in Bangladesh. While a full analysis of these challenges is beyond this presentation, one critical issue deserves attention: faculty recruitment. Effective recruitment ensures a diverse and skilled faculty that fosters innovative thinking and enhances education quality. Faculty shapes curriculum development, mentors students, and drives research initiatives, all of which directly impact a university's growth and reputation. The ability to attract and retain qualified, motivated, world-class faculty is thus a key determinant of educational quality. Unfortunately, Bangladesh continues to lag in addressing this challenge effectively.

Compounding this problem is the persistent brain drain, which both stems from and worsens the weak educational ecosystem. While students from emerging economies commonly pursue higher education in developed nations, many return to help their home country's

development. This has not been the case for Bangladesh, where a significant proportion of highly educated individuals choose to remain abroad rather than support the country's struggling academic institutions. Meanwhile, efforts to attract distinguished scholars—whether from the Bangladeshi diaspora or international academia—have largely failed.

Several factors contribute to this failure, foremost among which is the issue of salary and benefits. Even the best universities in Bangladesh offer remuneration packages that are simply not competitive globally. Faculties in developed nations enjoy much higher salaries, greater research funding, broader professional opportunities, and more flexibility, making it unsurprising that few are willing to relocate to Bangladesh. Some argue that, as a lower-middle-income country, Bangladesh cannot afford globally competitive salaries. However, this presents a classic chicken-and-egg dilemma: the country cannot offer better salaries due to economic constraints, yet remains constrained because it fails to invest in developing a productive, robust, and relevant human capital base. East Asian and Southeast Asian countries have been relatively successful in this regard and deserve closer study.

Beyond salaries, inadequate support for faculties relocating to Bangladesh is another major issue. In developed countries and many emerging economies, universities offer incentives to attract international academics, such as relocation allowances, housing, health insurance, and logistical support. China's "Thousands Talents Plan," for instance, recruits top-tier international scholars by offering prestigious titles, generous financial incentives, research funding, and additional support for travel and visas in return for advancing their universities.

Another overlooked but crucial element is the failure of universities to create meaningful opportunities for visiting faculty. Globally, many distinguished scholars engage in short-term teaching or research positions in foreign institutions through sabbaticals, fellowships, and other exchange programmes. Bangladesh has yet to take full advantage of such arrangements. Unfortunately, rigid bureaucratic structures, cost and revenue-driven thinking, and lack of institutional

support mean that such exchanges remain sporadic at best.

Perhaps the most profound obstacle to effective faculty recruitment is the overall academic environment in Bangladesh. Most universities don't operate in a manner that aligns with international best practices. Even those that claim to follow global standards often pursue accreditation and compliance procedures primarily as formalities rather than out of a genuine commitment to excellence. The quality of academic life is significantly hindered by rigid structures, limited academic freedom, and a system in which administrative control reigns supreme over intellectual autonomy.

Bangladeshi universities—both public and private—impose rigid, ceremonial, and bureaucratic requirements on faculties, limiting their academic potential. Administrative duties often take precedence over teaching and research, burdening faculty with excessive clerical work, compliance procedures, and arbitrary regulations that detract from their core responsibilities. This bureaucratic intrusion stifles creativity and innovation, discourages collaboration, and creates a gap between faculty potential and administrative overload. As a result, talented individuals are less likely to be attracted to or remain in the system.

Moreover, in many developed countries, faculty members have discretion over how they utilise the summer months: research, publishing, global collaborations, personal enrichment, or simply rest. In Bangladesh, many institutions fail to recognise the importance of such flexibility, instead enforcing rigid contracts or service rules that do not align with global academic norms. In fact, many universities operate on a year-round academic calendar, preventing any extended breaks. This not only discourages prospective faculty members from joining Bangladeshi institutions but also stifles research output and academic innovation.

Other challenges facing public and private universities in Bangladesh stem from different but equally detrimental sources. Public universities are heavily influenced by politics, often prioritising partisan interests over academic distinction. Many faculty appointments are dictated by political considerations rather than merit, leading to a serious

decline in educational standards. And continuing political incursions into academia to promote particular ideologies while suppressing others have shredded all vestiges of academic freedom. Instead of serving as arenas for domination, academic institutions must practise freedom, empowering individuals to transform their world rather than passively accepting it.

At the same time, private universities, which should ideally offer a more dynamic alternative, often operate as commercial enterprises rather than genuine centres of learning. Their primary goal is profit maximisation, often at the expense of academic quality, whereas international best practices dictate that private universities be not-for-profit. This does not mean they avoid generating a surplus; rather, any surplus is reinvested to sustain, grow, or enhance education, rather than benefiting shareholders or investors. Due to their current revenue focus, university faculties in Bangladesh are overburdened with teaching loads and administrative duties, leaving little room for meaningful research or professional development.

This dire situation demands urgent reform. Perhaps a soul searching "national dialogue" is needed to reconsider a critical question: what is a university—or what should it be—and how can Bangladesh's aspirations for a brighter future be shaped by reconceptualising higher education. In this context, the country must recognise that without a major overhaul of its faculty recruitment strategy, as part of broader systemic reform, its universities will continue to lag significantly behind global counterparts.

The challenges facing the education sector, especially university education, are part of a larger systemic problem, making broader structural changes essential. To attract and retain high-quality faculty, particularly distinguished international scholars from the Bangladeshi diaspora, universities must offer better research funding, provide appealing relocation benefits, and actively engage visiting scholars. More importantly, academic culture must transform. Bureaucratic interference and ceremonial fanfare should be sharply reduced, granting faculty members the autonomy

to be result-oriented by pursuing research and teaching aligned with international best practices. Ultimately, the future of higher education in Bangladesh depends on its ability to attract and retain talented educators.

Without world-class faculty, no amount of infrastructure development or policy reform will be sufficient to elevate the country's universities to a competitive level. Policymakers, university administrators, and the business community must also collaborate, as outlined in the Triple Helix Model, to cultivate an environment that actively promotes and rewards academic excellence.

As part of systemic reform and transformation, Bangladesh has an opportunity now to set the foundation for long-term academic success and global recognition by nurturing world-class faculty members in its universities. Only then can the country hope to build a tertiary education system that effectively serves its people and contributes meaningfully to national development, paving the way for a world-class future.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Divisional Forest Officer

Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban

Date: 17/04/2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Divisional Forest Officer, Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban for the procurement of:

SL No.	Description of works & Package No.	Tender ID No.	Tender publication date	Last selling date & time	Tender submission deadline & opening time
01	Construction of Road BFD-REV/2024-25/W-15	1095664	20/04/2025 12:00	04/05/2025 16:00	05/05/2025 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and on offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Mohammad Abdur Rahman
Divisional Forest Officer
Bandarban Forest Division, Bandarban
Phone: 02333302090

GD-927

Nighttime habits that help you burn fat and sleep better

Losing weight is not just about what you eat or how much you exercise—it is also about the small habits you follow at night. Your evening routine can have a surprising impact on your weight goals. Here is how to make your nights work in your favour:

1. Keep yourself occupied: Late-night snacking often happens out of boredom. Instead of heading to the kitchen, stay engaged with low-stress activities like reading, journaling, doing crafts, or catching up with a friend. Keeping your mind active can reduce the urge to eat unnecessarily.

2. Get better sleep: Not sleeping well can throw off your hunger hormones and lead to overeating the next day. Aim for 7–9 hours of restful sleep. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, and keep your room dark and quiet to promote deeper sleep.

3. Exercise early in the evening: Physical activity boosts metabolism and helps reduce stress. Try not to do high-intensity workouts right before bed, as they can leave you too energised to fall asleep easily. A light walk or stretching is better late at night.

4. Avoid late meals and snacks: Eating



right before bed can lead to weight gain, especially if the food choices are unhealthy. Try to finish your last meal at least two to three hours before sleeping. Brushing your teeth after dinner can also help you resist the urge to snack.

5. Plan your next day's meals: Packing your lunch the night before helps you avoid high-calorie meals the next day. Include whole grains, lean proteins, vegetables, and healthy fats for a balanced meal.

6. Reduce screen time and stress: Watching TV or using your phone during meals can distract you from how much you are eating. Also, try relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation before bed to lower stress, which can contribute to belly fat.

With a few simple nighttime changes, you can support your weight loss journey and feel better overall.

Emotional first aid: Why we need to treat psychological wounds like physical ones

SRINJOYA JUNAN

If you got a deep cut, you would clean it and apply a bandage. But what do you do when you experience emotional pain—like rejection or failure? We have been taught how to maintain our physical health and practice dental hygiene since childhood. But how much do we really know about maintaining our psychological well-being? Why do we devote more time to caring for our teeth than nurturing our minds?

We experience psychological injuries—such as failure, rejection, or loneliness—even more frequently than physical ones. And just like physical wounds, they can worsen if left untreated, significantly affecting our lives. Yet, despite scientifically proven methods to heal these emotional wounds, we often neglect them. Imagine telling someone with a severe infection, “Just ignore it; your immune system will take care of it.” Yet, when it comes to emotional pain, we dismiss it with, “Oh, you are feeling depressed? Get over it.”

The problem: why we ignore emotional pain - People often prioritise physical health over mental health because emotional wounds are not as visible as physical injuries. Winch (2014) explains that while most people instinctively treat a physical wound, they fail to recognise psychological wounds like rejection or failure, allowing them to worsen over time. Unlike physical injuries, the consequences of emotional pain often appear gradually. Nolen-Hoeksema (1991) found that unresolved emotional pain can lead to rumination and increased risk of depression, but because the impact is not immediate, people tend to dismiss it until it becomes overwhelming.

The consequences of neglecting emotional wounds - Emotional wounds, like rejection, leave a deep psychological impact, distorting our perceptions and clouding our thoughts. They make us believe that others care about us far less than they actually do. This fear holds us back from reaching out—after all, why risk more rejection and heartache when you are already struggling with pain that feels unbearable?

You can be in a sea full of people and still feel lonely because it depends solely on whether you feel emotionally or socially disconnected from those around you. Loneliness does not just make you miserable—it can be life-threatening. Research shows that chronic loneliness increases the risk of early death by 14%. It contributes to high blood pressure and high cholesterol and even weakens the immune system, leaving you more vulnerable to illness.

Like loneliness, failure is also a psychological wound that distorts and misleads us. A lot of people who fail at something start believing, “I am not smart enough, I will never succeed.” By neglecting emotional wounds, we often get stuck in a habit called rumination. It is what happens when you make a mistake, and you can not stop replaying the moment in your mind. Rumination in this way can become a very unhealthy habit, putting you at risk for clinical depression, alcoholism, eating disorders, and cardiovascular disease.

How to practise emotional first aid - Be attentive to emotional pain—recognise it when it happens. Cognitive reframing helps—change “I failed” to “I can learn from this”. Monitor your self-esteem and practice self-compassion. Kristin Neff (2003) found self-compassion reduces anxiety, depression, and rumination. Disrupt negative thoughts with a positive distraction. And just as we see a doctor for physical injuries, seek professional help for emotional distress.

Next time you face emotional pain, will you ignore it or treat it with the care it deserves?

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Global guidelines released for Meningitis diagnosis and care

STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released its first global guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment, and care of meningitis, aiming to accelerate detection, ensure timely treatment, and enhance long-term care. The guidelines bring together evidence-based recommendations to reduce the deaths and disabilities associated with the disease.

Despite the availability of effective treatments and vaccines against certain types of meningitis, the disease remains a major global health threat. Bacterial meningitis, the deadliest form, can become fatal within 24 hours. In 2019, there were an estimated 2.5 million cases globally, including 1.6 million cases of bacterial meningitis, leading to approximately 240,000 deaths.

About 20% of those who contract bacterial meningitis develop long-term complications that affect quality of life. The disease also imposes heavy financial and social burdens on individuals, families, and communities.

“Bacterial meningitis kills one in six of the people it strikes and leaves many others with lasting health challenges,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “Implementing these new guidelines will help save lives, improve long-term care for those affected by meningitis, and strengthen health systems.”

Meningitis can affect people of any age and in any location, but the burden is especially high in low- and middle-income countries and in areas prone to large-scale epidemics. The sub-Saharan African region, known as the ‘meningitis belt’, remains at high risk of recurrent meningococcal meningitis outbreaks.

The new guidelines offer comprehensive recommendations for managing acute community-acquired meningitis in children over one month old, adolescents, and adults.



They address all aspects of clinical care, including diagnosis, antibiotic therapy, adjunctive treatment, supportive care, and management of long-term effects. The guidelines cover both bacterial and viral causes, acknowledging the similarities in their clinical presentation and treatment approaches.

Designed for both non-epidemic and epidemic scenarios, the new document replaces the 2014 WHO guidelines focused on outbreak response. Given the disease's disproportionate impact in low-resource settings, these updated guidelines are tailored to be implementable in low- and middle-income countries.

They are intended for healthcare professionals at first- and second-level facilities, including emergency, inpatient, and outpatient services. Policymakers, health planners, academic institutions, and civil society organisations may also use them for education, research, and capacity-building initiatives.

The launch of these guidelines supports the WHO's broader Defeating Meningitis by 2030 Global

Roadmap, adopted in 2020. This roadmap sets ambitious targets: to eliminate bacterial meningitis epidemics, reduce vaccine-preventable cases by 50% and deaths by 70%, and improve life quality for those affected.

Achieving these goals requires coordinated action across five key areas:

• **Diagnosis and treatment:** Enhancing early detection and clinical management.

• **Prevention and epidemic control:** Expanding affordable vaccine access and strengthening outbreak responses.

• **Disease surveillance:** Improving monitoring systems.

• **Care and support:** Ensuring early identification of long-term effects and access to care.

• **Advocacy and engagement:** Raising political commitment and public awareness.

With the release of these guidelines, WHO offers countries a critical tool to close existing gaps in meningitis care, paving the way for faster detection, timely treatment, and better long-term outcomes.

Source: World Health Organisation

RUNNING STRONGER, SAFER: What is behind the drop in cardiac deaths?

Long-distance running continues to attract millions, and while it is known for boosting cardiovascular fitness, rare but serious heart-related emergencies can still occur during races. A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) highlights an important trend: although the risk of sudden cardiac arrest during marathons and half-marathons has remained steady over the years, the likelihood of dying from one has significantly decreased.

This improvement points to better emergency preparedness at race events, increased availability of defibrillators, quicker CPR response, and possibly earlier identification of heart risks among runners. Common underlying causes of cardiac arrest in these settings include coronary artery disease, congenital heart abnormalities, and conditions like hypertrophic cardiomyopathy—many of

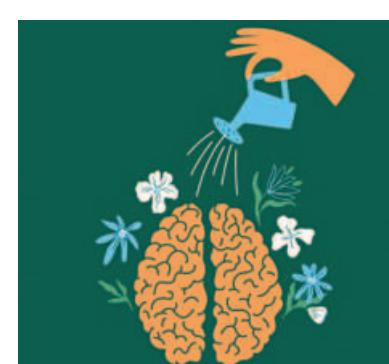


which may be asymptomatic until a crisis occurs.

Unexplained cardiac arrest also remains a notable concern, particularly when standard testing or autopsies do not reveal a clear cause. This highlights the importance of pre-participation screenings, especially for those with a family history of heart disease or symptoms like chest pain or fainting during exercise.

The findings reinforce that while endurance running is generally safe, awareness and preparedness are key. Race organisers, medical teams, and runners themselves all play a role in minimising risks. As long-distance events grow in popularity, ongoing education about heart health and emergency response can help keep runners both motivated and protected.

New guidance calls for urgent transformation of mental health policies



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched new guidance aimed at helping countries strengthen their mental health policies and systems. Mental health services worldwide remain underfunded, with significant gaps in access and quality. In some countries, up to 90% of people with severe mental health conditions receive no care, and many existing services rely on outdated institutional models that fail to meet international human rights standards.

The guidance provides a clear framework to transform mental health services, ensuring quality care is accessible to all. It focuses on five key areas for reform: leadership and governance, service organisation, workforce development, person-centred interventions, and addressing social and structural determinants of mental health. The guidance promotes a holistic approach, addressing not just mental health but also lifestyle, physical health, and the social and economic factors that influence mental well-being.

This guidance is designed to be flexible, allowing countries to tailor their mental health policies based on their national context, needs, and available resources. Developed in consultation with global experts, policymakers, and individuals with lived experience, it builds on the WHO QualityRights initiative, which advocates for a person-centred, recovery-oriented approach to mental health. WHO has committed to supporting countries in implementing these strategies through technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives.

Source: World Health Organisation

Beat the headache: Top treatments and tips for lasting relief

STAR HEALTH DESK

Headaches are a common yet disruptive ailment, ranging from mild discomfort to severe pain. With various types, each with distinct triggers and symptoms, it is essential to understand your condition to manage it effectively. Here is a guide to the most common headache types and their treatments, plus tips for prevention.

1. **Tension headaches:** Tension headaches are the most frequent type. They feel like a dull, constant ache, often around the forehead or temples, and may result from stress, poor posture, or muscle strain. Symptoms include mild to moderate pain without nausea. Over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers like ibuprofen or acetaminophen often provide relief. For chronic cases, doctors may recommend antidepressants or muscle relaxants.

2. **Migraines:** Migraines are intense, throbbing headaches, usually affecting one side of the head, often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound. They can last from 4 to 72 hours and may be preceded by visual disturbances known as an aura. Treating migraines involves NSAIDs, triptans, and preventive measures like beta-blockers or anti-seizure medications. Identifying triggers—such as hormonal changes or specific foods—can help reduce frequency.

3. **Cluster headaches:** Cluster headaches are rare but extremely

painful, often occurring in cycles. The pain is sharp and usually felt around one eye or temple, with accompanying symptoms like redness or watering of the eye. Oxygen therapy provides quick relief, and triptans or corticosteroids can reduce the frequency of attacks. Verapamil is commonly used for long-term prevention.

4. **Sinus headaches:** Sinus headaches are caused by sinus infections or inflammation. Pain is felt in the forehead, cheeks, or around the nose, worsening when bending over. Treating the underlying sinus infection with antibiotics or decongestants can relieve the headache. If the sinus headache persists, stronger medications may be necessary.

5. **Rebound headaches:** Overusing pain medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can lead to rebound headaches, causing daily or frequent headaches. The pain is typically dull and constant, often accompanied by irritability. The best solution is to stop using pain-relieving medications under the guidance of a doctor.

6. **Hypnic headaches:** Hypnic headaches, also called “alarm clock headaches”, wake people from sleep, typically in the older population. The pain is dull or throbbing and may occur at the same time each night. Treatment options include caffeine or medications like lithium.

7. **Cervicogenic headaches:** Cervicogenic headaches are caused by neck issues like muscle tension or

poor posture. The pain starts at the base of the skull and spreads upward. Treatments often include physical therapy, neck exercises, and pain-relief medications.

Preventing headaches: Understanding your headache triggers is key to prevention. Common triggers include stress, certain foods, alcohol, bright lights, and weather changes. Keeping a headache diary can help identify patterns, allowing you to avoid or manage these triggers effectively. Lifestyle habits, such as regular exercise, staying hydrated, and maintaining a regular sleep schedule, are also important in reducing headache frequency.

Alternative treatments: In addition to conventional treatments, some alternative therapies, including osteopathy, acupuncture, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), can help manage headache pain, particularly for tension headaches. These treatments focus on the mind-body connection and stress reduction.

Headaches, though common, can be managed effectively with the right treatment. Whether through medications, lifestyle changes, or alternative therapies, it is possible to reduce the frequency and intensity of headaches. Working with your healthcare provider to develop a personalised plan can ensure long-term relief, allowing you to regain control over your life and minimise the impact of headaches.

Simple mindfulness techniques for stress relief and better well-being

DR NUR-A-SAFRINA RAHMAN

Mindfulness is a powerful practice that can enhance mental and physical health. It involves focusing on the present moment and cultivating awareness without judgement. Several techniques can help you incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine for better well-being.

• **Deep breathing:** One of the simplest ways to practise mindfulness is through deep breathing. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, and take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, letting your belly rise. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Focus entirely on your breath, letting go of any thoughts or distractions. This technique helps to calm the nervous system and reduce stress.

• **Body scan:** The body scan is a technique where you mentally “scan” your body from head to toe, paying attention to each part without judgement. Start at the top of your head and slowly move down, noticing any areas of tension or discomfort. Breathe into these areas to release tension. This practice can increase body awareness and promote relaxation.

• **Mindful walking:** This technique involves paying full attention to each step as you walk. Focus on the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the movement of your legs, and your breathing. Whether you are walking indoors or outside, let go of all distractions and immerse yourself in the present moment. Mindful walking promotes both physical and mental

well-being.

• **Guided meditation:** In guided meditation, an instructor or an app leads you through a series of exercises designed to help you focus and relax. These can include visualisation techniques, breathing exercises, or mindful awareness practices. Guided sessions are especially useful for beginners who need structure in their practice.

Regularly practising mindfulness techniques can reduce stress, improve emotional health, and enhance overall well-being. Each practice fosters mindfulness, helping you stay present and calm in daily life.

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Tigers eye bringing away form in home Tests

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," for Bangladesh in Test cricket last year, as simultaneously they had their best ever year in Tests in abroad and the worse possible one at home.

While touring, Bangladesh played six Tests, won three – most ever in a calendar year for them – and lost three. For the first time ever, the Tigers beat Pakistan 2-0 in a Test series, and also ended their 15-year wait to clinch a Test victory against the West Indies in the Caribbean.

"In the match, when Nahid [Rana] bowls and the opponents bat against him, you will see it in their body language, how fast Nahid bowls and how extraordinary he is."

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto issued a warning to the Zimbabwean batters during a pre-match press conference yesterday.

But at home, the Najmul Hossain Shanto-led side lost all four Tests they played, getting clean-swept 2-0 by both Sri Lanka and South Africa.

Due to the poor returns at home, even after a record-setting year in abroad, Bangladesh finished seventh in the 2023-25 cycle of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) with overall four wins in 12 matches.

Even though it was their most successful cycle till date and for the first time they avoided finishing at the bottom since the tournament's inception in 2019, they could've finished even higher had they not performed so poorly at home.

As Bangladesh begins the two-match Test series against Zimbabwe in Sylhet today, which isn't part of the next Test WTC cycle, Shanto was questioned about their recent poor record at home and if they have figured out any remedy.

"What I felt was that we didn't play good cricket in those Test matches we played at home last year. We definitely had some plans but as players we couldn't execute them," Shanto said during a pre-match press conference at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

"We are working on overcoming the shortcomings which kept us from getting favourable results in home Tests last year," said Shanto.

Rain threat is looming large over the first day's action and there was some rain at the venue on the eve of the Test as well.

Attendance at the venue is also expected to be low as ticket sales have been abysmal even on the day before the first Test.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Bangladesh women's team ended their ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier 2025 campaign with a seven-wicket defeat to Pakistan but qualified for the main event as tournament runners-up after a dramatic end to the West Indies-Thailand match. The Nigar Sultana-led side could only muster 178-9 which hosts and undefeated champions Pakistan chased down with 62 balls in hand, leaving Bangladesh's fate dependent on the West Indies-Thailand tie. Thailand's Natthakan Chantam made 66 as West Indies were set a 167-run target, which they either needed to chase by 10.1 overs or level the scores and then hit a six to reach 172 by 11 overs to trump Bangladesh in net run-rate. West Indies were on track to accomplish the second scenario before Stephanie Taylor hit a six in the penultimate ball of the 11th over, taking the score to 168-4 as West Indies won by six wickets but finished 0.013 behind Bangladesh on net run-rate.

Zimbabwe out to redeem Test record

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

For many years, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe have possessed a great rivalry in cricket. The African side had a big edge over Bangladesh across formats during the early phase of the rivalry. However, in the last 12 years, the scenario has taken a complete U-turn with the rise of Bangladesh on the cricketing world map, along with the downfall of the African side due to various reasons.

The glamour of a Bangladesh-Zimbabwe series started to lose its colour since the Tigers began dominating the African side across formats. In the last eight Tests between these two sides, the Tigers have won seven of them, with their last defeat coming nearly seven years ago.

Interestingly, Zimbabwe's only Test victory over Bangladesh in more than a decade came at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, which will host the opening Test of a two-match series, starting today.

Although Zimbabwe have a relatively inexperienced side compared to Bangladesh, they have some exciting names in Brian Bennett, Ben Curran, Johnathan Campbell, Richard Ngarava and Blessing Muzarabani, with whom their skipper Craig Ervine hopes to turn things around.

"There was always rivalry between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. It is slightly tougher for Zimbabwe playing in Bangladesh but we always feel that we have a chance (against Bangladesh). This group of players can pose a decent threat," Ervine, the most experienced Test campaigner in the side, told reporters in Sylhet yesterday.

"I think it is a great opportunity for the young players to stamp their authority in Test



cricket," said the 39-year-old, adding that they want to play without fear and aim to utilise the seam friendly surface in Sylhet.

"We want to bring a no-fear attitude. The guys are not familiar with Bangladesh conditions but long preparations give you confidence to go out and express yourself."

"We can probably expect the wicket to be seam-friendly. There's grass on the wicket. We trained for a couple of days. We are confident of our preparations, so we are looking forward to it."

Ervine believes that with the growing number of Test matches they will play this year, they can actually end their 10-match winless streak in this format very soon.

Zimbabwe, who have not had the chance to play against top-ranked Test sides often in the last decade, will be facing England, South Africa and New Zealand in red-ball cricket in the coming months.

"I understand we haven't had a great run in Test cricket. I think it's really exciting with the amount of Test cricket that we will play [this year]," he said.

SHORT CORNER

BCB facing 'tough time', says Faruque after media rights go unsold

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Faruque Ahmed thanked Bangladesh Television (BTV) for stepping in to telecast the first Test in Sylhet, starting today.

"I think there is a financial lull in both domestic and international cricket... We are going through a bit of a tough time, it's taking some time after the change in government," Faruque told reporters at an event in Dhaka yesterday, adding that the board is still trying to telecast the match on a private channel.

Neymar out for 4-6 weeks after latest injury: Reports

Brazilian superstar Neymar will be reportedly out for four to six weeks to recover from the latest injury he suffered while playing for Santos against Atletico Mineiro on Thursday, in a match was set up to be a day of celebration for Neymar as it was his 100th appearance for his boyhood club Santos.

Neymar, who has a long history of injuries, had earlier suffered an ACL injury in October 2023 while playing for Al-Hilal in Saudi Arabia.

Ancelotti to discuss Real Madrid future at 'end of season'

Carlo Ancelotti will discuss his future with Real Madrid at the end of the season, the coach said Saturday, following the Champions League holders' elimination by Arsenal.

Ancelotti, whose contract is due to end in 2026, told reporters: "At the end of the season we will speak about (my future) with the club."

Read full stories on *The Daily Star* website

Liverpool poised for Premier League coronation

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool could seal the Premier League on Sunday should the runaway leaders condemn Leicester to relegation and Arsenal suffer a Champions League hangover by losing at Ipswich.

Victory for the Gunners at Portman Road could also see Ipswich mathematically relegated should West Ham and Wolves win.

Unlike the battles for the league

title and to avoid the drop, the race for a place in next season's Champions League is set to go down to the wire.

Thirteen points clear at the top of the table with six games to go, it is only a question of when not if Liverpool will move level with Manchester United on a record 20 English top-flight titles.

Two more wins will finish the job for Arne Slot's men and they could not ask for more obliging fixtures

➡ Mohamed Salah is on the verge of breaking the record for most away goals in a single Premier League season. He currently shares the mark of 16 with Kevin Phillips (1999–2000) and Harry Kane (2022–23). One more assist on the road would also see him surpass Cesc Fàbregas' record of 11 away assists set in 2014–15.

➡ Liverpool are on a four-match winning streak against Leicester in the Premier League. Leicester, meanwhile, have managed just two wins in their last 13 league meetings with Liverpool -- both coming in back-to-back home games in 2021.

➡ It's good to have some new energy in and around the place with one or two new players, but it isn't really a necessity if you look at the quality we have and the quality of the season we have had.

Liverpool manager Arne Slot



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Sarjis, Hasnat take flak at NCP meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party leaders Sarjis Alam and Hasnat Abdullah came under intense scrutiny at a key party meeting on Friday over allegations of breaching party discipline, said sources.

Allegations of financial irregularities were also raised against another top leader, Gazi Salahuddin Tanvir, during the closed-door general meeting held at the NCP's temporary central office in Rupayan Trade Center in the capital's Banglamotor area.

In response, the less-than-two-month old party decided to form a "discipline and investigation" committee to address the allegations and uphold internal discipline.

Requesting anonymity, at least three leaders of NCP, who know the developments, confirmed to The Daily Star that, during the nine-hour-long meeting, the allegations against Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis, Chief Organiser (South) Hasnat, and Joint Member Secretary Tanvir dominated the discussions.

They said, referring to various allegations swirling against the three leaders on social media, participants



SEE PAGE 7 COL 3

Ensure youth-led inclusive development

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh must shift from an economy and polity controlled by vested interest groups to a system that ensures active participation of the youth and equal access to opportunities and state benefits for all citizens, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

Government advisers, political leaders, diplomats, teachers, and economists, who attended the discussion, also emphasised inclusive growth, good governance, and amplification of marginalised voices to navigate the current political and developmental challenges.

In his keynote, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said a concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few oligarchs led to persistent problems in the financial sector.

"The visible development hasn't reached the poor and marginalised," he noted.

The discussion, titled "Empowering Bangladesh: Pathways to Leadership, Unity, and Growth," was organised by the Bangladesh Empowered Foundation and North South University's Department of History and Philosophy.

Salehuddin said the past 15 years saw widespread irregularities, corruption, and money laundering, driven by vested business interests.

"The banking sector is in a mess. Bank chairmen and directors looted vast sums, while similar issues plagued the capital market, non-bank institutions, and trade," he said.

The interim government, he added, inherited serious challenges on political, economic, administrative, and law-and-order fronts. To stabilise the financial sector, reforms have begun in banking, capital markets, the NBR, taxation, and non-bank development institutes.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Tigresses qualify for WC by barest of margins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh qualified for the Women's ODI World Cup for the second consecutive time by the barest of margins despite a seven-wicket defeat against Pakistan in their last match of the qualifying campaign in Lahore on Saturday.

The Tigresses needed a victory to seal their second-ever World Cup spot, but a poor batting display saw concede a seven-wicket defeat against the already-qualified Pakistan, and in the process, suffering a bit of a blow to their net run-rate.

The result kept the Tigresses waiting for the last match of the qualifying competition, with West Indies taking on Thailand and hoping to overtake Bangladesh on net run-rate.

Winning the toss, West Indies put Thailand in to bat, and bowled them out for 166 runs in 46.1 overs, despite a defiant 66-run knock from Nathakan Chantham.



People mourn near the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, at Nasser hospital of the southern Gaza Strip's Khan Younis yesterday. Israeli air strikes killed at least 92 people in Gaza in the last 48 hours, said the Palestinian territory's health ministry.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Carrying a pitcher and a large container, Bhaktiata Mandal and her husband set off with his bicycle in search of fresh drinking water. Another woman is seen returning with a pitcher full of water. This everyday ritual is all too familiar for communities living in coastal regions highly affected by salinity. The struggle for freshwater sources is particularly immense in summer when rain is sparse. Residents must hike several kilometres daily to fetch drinking water. The photo was taken recently from Dakshin Kadamtala village in Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira.

Bhabesh's death Dhaka terms Delhi's claim 'baseless'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has rejected the claim made by India's Ministry of External Affairs regarding the death of Bhabesh Chandra Roy, saying Bangladesh is not a country where one will find government-sponsored systematic discrimination against minorities.

Responding to a question on the comments of Indian MEA on the death of Bhabesh of Dinajpur, Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, yesterday in a statement said, "It is unfortunate that the death of Mr Bhabesh Chandra Roy has been described as part of a 'pattern of systematic persecution of Hindu minorities under the interim government'.

"We reject this baseless claim. This government protects the rights of all of its citizens irrespective of religious denominations.

"In this particular case, we have ascertained that the victim went out with some individuals previously known to him. Nobody from the victim's family reported his going out

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Putin declares Easter ceasefire in Ukraine

Trump warns of ditching Ukraine talks if no progress is made soon

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a unilateral Easter ceasefire in Ukraine, ordering his forces to end hostilities at 6:00pm Moscow time (15:00 GMT) on Saturday until the end of Sunday.

There was no immediate reaction from Ukraine.

"Based on humanitarian considerations... the Russian side announces an Easter truce. I order a stop to all military activities for this period," Putin told his military chief, Valery Gerasimov, at a meeting in the Kremlin.

"We assume that Ukraine will follow our example. At the same time, our troops should be prepared to repel possible violations of the truce and provocations by the enemy, any aggressive actions," Putin added.

The development came after the United States said it will walk away from efforts to broker a Russia-Ukraine peace deal unless there are clear signs of progress soon.

"Quickly, we want to get it done," Trump told reporters at the White House. "Now, if for some reason one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say, 'you're foolish, you're fools, you're terrible people, and we're going to just take a pass. But hopefully we won't have to do that."

Trump's comments followed remarks by Rubio, his top diplomat, who said the sides had just days to show progress or Washington would walk.

► Rubio says US needs to decide on Ukraine talks 'in a matter of days'

► Russia says retook penultimate village in Kursk seized by Ukraine

► Moscow launches 8 missiles, 87 drones on Ukraine: Kyiv

"We're not going to continue with this endeavour for weeks and months on end. So we need to determine very quickly now, and I'm talking about a matter of days, whether or not this is doable in the next few weeks," Rubio said in Paris after meeting European and Ukrainian leaders.

"If it's not possible, if we're so far apart that this is not going to happen, then I think the president is probably at a point where he's going to say, 'well, we're done'."

Trump, when asked, declined to set a specific deadline for how long he was willing to wait.

"Marco's right in saying... we want to see it end," Trump said. Asked if Russian President Vladimir Putin was stalling, Trump replied: "I hope not."

Over the past few weeks, Trump officials have acknowledged privately that the chances of a quick peace deal in Ukraine have grown elusive. Rubio's comments, three European diplomats said, reflected growing frustration in the White House over Russian intransigence to end the war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said some progress on a peace settlement had already been made but that contacts with Washington were difficult. He said Russia was striving to resolve the conflict while ensuring its own interests. Moscow remained open to dialogue with the United States, he added.

Pvt univ student stabbed to death hours after brawl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Primeasia University student was stabbed to death allegedly by another student in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Jahidul Islam Parvez, 24, was a student of textile engineering. He was from Bhaluka, Mymensingh.



Jahidul was having snacks in front of the university campus in Banani area around 4:00pm when two students of the English department came to the scene and attacked him, said Russel Sarwar, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, quoting witnesses.

Al Mamun Apu, a student of the university, told this correspondent that Jahidul and several others were hanging out on campus around 10:00am when another group confronted them, saying that they were making fun of female classmates.

As the groups quarreled, university authorities intervened and resolved the matter.

Jahidul was stabbed hours later.

His body was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the OC, adding that there was a stab wound on his chest.

As of last night, no arrests had been made in connection with the incident.

Law enforcers ordered to stop AL processions

Says home adviser; DMP to take action by analysing photos, video footage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said police had been ordered to make sure that the Awami League cannot organise any more processions.

Officers who fail to prevent the AL from marching will face disciplinary action, he said when reporters asked him about allegations that police personnel had not done anything when AL activists marched in the capital's Uttara on Friday.

Earlier on April 15, Dhaka North AL Organising Secretary Mazhar Anam led another procession in Rampura.

The home adviser spoke to journalists after visiting the Airport Police Station in the capital. He also visited Uttara West, Turag, and Uttara East police stations.

He said the government was trying to further improve law and order.

About allegations that some police officers were not complying with transfer orders, he said the authorities would take action if they got "specific information".

The government was considering whether low-ranking police personnel could be posted within the divisions

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4