

It's possible we'll have to attack because Iran will not have a nuclear weapon... If we don't make a deal, I'll be leading the pack.
Donald Trump
On a possible attack on Iran

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SUPERNUMERARY PROMOTION

Civil bureaucracy burdened with top-tier posts

Around 550 officials were promoted beyond sanctioned posts in last 8 months

BAHARAM KHAN

The civil administration appears to be weighed down by excessive appointments of top-tier officials beyond sanctioned posts, a contentious practice known as supernumerary promotion.

More than 1,300 officials have been promoted to the ranks of deputy secretary, joint secretary, and additional secretary since the interim government assumed office on August 8 last year, according to data from the public administration ministry.

Among them, around 550 were promoted beyond sanctioned posts, and 764 were picked from former officials of the administration cadre -- a move insiders described as unprecedented in the history of Bangladesh's public administration.

These ex-officials were given retrospective promotions with all financial benefits on the grounds that they had been deprived during the tenure of the Awami League government.

Experts and officials argue that the move undermines administrative discipline, contradicts the spirit of the July-August mass uprising, and raises serious concern about administrative efficiency and fairness.

Abdul Awal Mazumder, a former secretary and researcher, said, "This kind of promotion spree is one of the reasons for the decline in the standards of civil service. This is completely unacceptable."

He suggested that a structured promotion system based on merit and competence should be put in place.

Supernumerary posts are temporary positions created outside the regular

structure to facilitate promotions or workforce adjustments.

The ministry's data shows a sharp mismatch between the number of sanctioned posts and that of the appointees. At present, there are 382 additional secretaries against 121 sanctioned posts across ministries. Of them, 142 were promoted between August 25 and December 31 last year.

The contrast is more apparent at the

- 382 officials hold the position of additional secretary against 121 sanctioned posts
- There are 1,035 joint secretaries against 272 posts
- 1,404 officials are serving as deputy secretaries against 350 posts

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Unregistered battery-run rickshaws kept at a field next to Mansurabad Police Lines in Chattogram city after they were seized for plying major roads. Law enforcers have been conducting drives against such vehicles across the port city since the start of this month. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Bangladesh-IMF talks to continue

BB governor hopes for agreement soon as no consensus reached at yesterday's meeting in Washington

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund has no major disagreement with Bangladesh over reforms to the National Board of Revenue, one of the conditions set by the lender for the fourth and fifth installments of the \$4.7 billion loan.

However, consensus on the introduction of a market-based exchange rate, another key issue

in the negotiation, remains unresolved, according to a Bangladesh delegation visiting Washington, DC.

Discussions with the IMF have largely been positive, with only a few minor issues remaining, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, who is leading the Bangladesh delegation, said on Thursday night (Bangladesh time), according to Golam Mortoza, the press minister at the Bangladesh

embassy in the US.

"We are close to reaching a consensus. The final meeting is scheduled for tomorrow [Friday night, Bangladesh time], and we expect the matter to be resolved," Salehuddin added.

After the meeting, Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur told reporters in Washington that no consensus was reached there, SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Govt to set up land-based LNG terminal soon

BSS, Qatar

The interim government has decided to set up a land-based LNG terminal to ensure smooth gas supply to the country's factories.

"Many are saying that they are unable to set up factories due to a lack of gas. So, we want to set up a land-based LNG terminal as quick as possible so that enough gas could be brought (from abroad)," Chief Adviser's Press SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

INDIA-PAKISTAN TENSIONS

UN urges maximum restraint

AFP, New Delhi

The United Nations urged India and Pakistan to show "maximum restraint" as the nuclear-armed rivals imposed tit-for-tat diplomatic measures over a deadly shooting in Kashmir.

Relations have plunged to their lowest level in years, with India accusing Pakistan of supporting "cross-border terrorism" after gunmen carried out the worst attack on civilians in contested Muslim-majority Kashmir for a quarter of a century.

"We very much appeal to both the governments... to exercise maximum restraint, and to ensure that the situation and the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Troops exchange fire along Kashmir border

India intensifies manhunt for militants

AGENCIES

Pakistani and Indian troops exchanged fire overnight across the Line of Control in disputed Kashmir, officials said yesterday, after the nuclear-armed nations unleashed a raft of measures against each other.

Relations have plunged to their lowest level in years, with India accusing Pakistan of supporting "cross-border terrorism" after gunmen killed 26 civilians in Pahalgam, the worst attack on civilians in contested Kashmir for a quarter of a century.

Syed Ashfaq Gilani, a government official in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, told AFP yesterday that troops exchanged fire along the Line of Control (LOC) that separates the two countries.

"There was no firing on the civilian population," he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

AFTERMATH OF KASHMIR TERROR ATTACK

All Indian state chief ministers told to ensure expulsion of Pakistanis by April 27

Pak senate passes resolution against India's bid to link Islamabad to terror attack

New Delhi officially notifies Islamabad on suspension of Indus Water Treaty



BEATING THE HEAT... Looking to cool off after toiling away under the hot sun all day, a weary rickshaw puller splashes water on his face from a roadside faucet near Tikatuli intersection yesterday. According to the weather department, there is a good chance of rain on Monday, which may offer some respite from the unrelenting heatwave sweeping the nation.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TODAY

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MY DHAKA



PHOTO: COURTESY

Brihatta's quiet revolution in Hazaribagh

RBR

Essentially a research-based, artist-run, non-profit organisation, Brihatta Art Foundation has worked in Dhaka for quite some time. With an objective to integrate locals in community development, they have given the people of Hazaribagh greater accessibility to art and culture.

"Literally anyone can walk in to take part in the creative endeavours we offer, from a man who pulls a rickshaw, children of the slums, madrasa children, to a tea vendor," says Bishwajit Goswami, co-founder of Brihatta.

Goswami is a firm believer that art is not for elites to enjoy alone. "Aesthetics," he adds, "have no language or class!"

The Foundation connects diverse voices across borders between artists, craftsmen, local and expat community members, and global practitioners to bring artworks closer to the real world.

"Focused on creating and curating art within the public domain, we offer residencies, exhibitions, and community engagements," Bishwajit Goswami adds.

Currently, the foundation is focused on the exhibition and the book launch

ceremony of their two-year cultural initiative that focuses on the legacy of the Buriganga River.

"Gangaburi: The River Heritage Project" is one of their endeavours that explored the interdependence of the river and this city through artistic interventions, archival research, and community engagement.

Celebrating the relationship between Buriganga and Dhaka, the project has reconnected citizens with the river's ecological, historical, and cultural significance.

With Gangaburi art-based research publication launch on 25 April at Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, and an exhibition -- "Paal: Moving through memories, myths, & motion" at Brihatta Art Space in Hazaribagh, they celebrate an ongoing relationship and experience of the communities living and working along the Buriganga River in Old Dhaka.

The exhibition -- set to run between

April 25 and May 2 -- pins a powerful image of the interconnectedness of communities living along the Buriganga, the people, and the ecology in time. At the same time, it gives one a different look at Hazaribagh!

Meaning "A Thousand Gardens", the locality is notorious for its industrial leather manufacturing units and tanneries that have long suffocated the river and the surrounding environment. The stench, the filth, and the tannery waste have made the community almost unlivable, yet in this ruin stands the sprawling green art space.

Brihatta (which means immensity) has a garden of all white flowers, herbs, and other green plants. They have intentionally planted white summer flowers; the garden is filled with the fragrance of jasmine and frangipani. Their crowd puller is the rare Saraswathi Champa, this sweet-scented flower that is in bloom now, attracting visitors from

afar and near, and once there, they get to behold aesthetic pleasure through art in the space.

"Nurture art, literature, and culture from within yourself," is what Goswami preaches. He stays tied to his roots with six words that influence his artworks -- Ma (Mother), Mati (earth), Manush (people), Bhasha (Language), Swadesh (Motherland), and Prakriti (Nature) -- allowing him to find his fabled garden in the area.

Acclaimed printmaker Julia Lebrao Sendra's words, "...the courage to love a world in decline", left a profound impact on me. I was struck by this half-sentence and was reminded that all is not lost while visiting the Brihatta Art Foundation, housed inside Mukti Tannery 1 at Hazaribagh.

It is true that everywhere you look, Dhaka bleeds decay. My city is a chaotic disaster, an absolute ruin, and shrouded in greed. Then again, within this sinful decadence, I get to witness the finer nuances of Dhaka and the society at large. Some of us still find ways to create beautiful initiatives like Brihatta Art Foundation, and that's a relief!



Civil bureaucracy burdened with top-tier posts

FROM PAGE 1

Defending the government decision, an additional secretary at the public administration ministry said many officials with ranks of deputy secretary, joint secretary and additional secretary are assigned to departments and also given responsibilities of project directors or similar roles outside ministries.

"That is why, in some cases, promotions beyond the approved organogram become necessary," said the official seeking anonymity.

Data shows that several ministries and divisions are currently hosting more officials than sanctioned posts.

For instance, the public administration ministry has eight additional secretaries against just two sanctioned positions.

In the Health Services Division, 11 officials hold the position of additional secretary against only two sanctioned posts. Though the division's administration wing has no sanctioned post of joint secretary, seven officials now hold the position.

FRUSTRATION AMONG OFFICIALS OF OTHER CADRES

Of the 26 cadres in civil service, the administration cadre gets the lion's share of supernumerary promotions. Police, foreign affairs, and tax cadres also get some shares.

Aggrieved officials said the undue favour towards the admin cadre created resentment, prompting officials from 25 cadres to stage protests for fair promotion practices after the July uprising. But the supernumerary promotions in the admin cadre continued.

They alleged that while their demands for regular promotions are being ignored, current and ex-officials of the admin cadre are getting promoted in phases.

Mohammad Omer Faruque, an

UN urges maximum restraint

FROM PAGE 1

developments we've seen do not deteriorate any further," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York on Thursday.

"Any issues between Pakistan and India, we believe, can be and should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement".

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday vowed to hunt down the gunmen responsible for killing 26 civilians at the popular tourist site of Pahalgam, after Indian police identified two of the three fugitive gunmen as Pakistani.

"I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer," Modi said in his first speech since Tuesday's attack in the Himalayan region.

information cadre official, said, "The interim administration, much like a political government, is favouring one cadre over others.

"For the benefit of 6,000 admin cadre officials, the government is discriminating against nearly 60,000 from the rest 25 cadres, ignoring their rightful promotions," said Faruque, a coordinator of the aggrieved officials.

Amid growing discontent among officials from various cadres, 765 officials of education cadre were promoted to associate professors on a supernumerary basis in January. Besides, more than 7,000 doctors are likely to be promoted, say ministry sources.

An official from the agriculture cadre said that following the mass uprising, there has been a change in admin cadre officials' attitude towards other cadres.

"They no longer oppose our promotions. They now say, 'go ahead with yours but don't oppose ours,'" the official said on the condition of anonymity.

Terming the long-standing practice "a glaring example of waste of taxpayers' money", a retired official of the information cadre said, "I'm not aware of any other country where bureaucracy operates like this."

"Such practice must end. There cannot be any promotions for a cadre beyond sanctioned posts," said the ex-official seeking anonymity.

Contacted, Mokhles Ur Rahman, senior secretary to the public administration ministry, said, "Promotions at top tiers are made on the basis of the government's policy decisions. I won't comment further on this matter."

Replying to a query from this newspaper at a recent event, Salehuddin Ahmed, finance adviser

and convener of the Advisory Committee on Public Administration Affairs, said, "It was becoming almost impossible to keep people working without promotions. Some even went on hunger strike. We have to keep the system running."

OVER 500 OFFICIALS MADE OSD

More than 500 officials, including at least 13 secretaries, have been designated as Officers on Special Duty (OSD) -- the highest number in recent times, according to public administration ministry officials with knowledge about the matter.

In civil administration, officials are made OSD for either punitive or administrative reasons such as special assignments or study leave.

The officials, made OSD for punitive reasons, are sidelined and not given any responsibilities. They, however, continue to receive full salaries and benefits.

According to officials at the ministry's Appointment, Promotion, and Deputation Wing, the interim government has so far made 120-130 officials OSD for punitive reasons.

They said the number of such officials was much higher during the tenure of the Awami League government.

The majority of the 500 officials were made OSD for administrative reasons, which is not unusual, they added.

Firoz Mia, a civil service expert and former additional secretary, said the officials, who were made OSD over allegations of irregularities and corruption, should be punished through proper investigation.

But the officials, who are not facing such allegations, should be given postings immediately as the public servants are paid with taxpayers' money, he added.

independence or a merger with Pakistan.

Tuesday's assault occurred as tourists enjoyed tranquil mountain views at the popular site at Pahalgam when gunmen burst out of the forests and raked crowds with automatic weapons.

Survivors told Indian media the gunmen targeted men and spared those who could give the Islamic declaration of faith.

Indian security forces have launched a vast manhunt for the attackers, with large numbers of people detained.

The attack has enraged Hindu nationalist groups, and students from Kashmir at institutions across India have reported experiencing harassment and intimidation.

India's army confirmed there had been limited firing of small arms that it said had been "initiated by Pakistan", adding it had been "effectively responded to".

Indian security forces yesterday intensified a massive manhunt for those responsible for the killings on Tuesday -- with police naming two Pakistani nationals among the fugitive gunmen.

Armed with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and drones, Indian security forces yesterday scoured the dense forests.

The security personnel drawn from army, paramilitary and Jammu and Kashmir police searched the dense jungles of the Pir Panjal range, overlooking Pahalgam and the Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

Indian officials said initial investigations into the attack indicate that the number of terrorists involved could range from five to seven.

At least two local militants aided them, he added.

Meanwhile, authorities in Indian Kashmir demolished the houses of two suspected militants, one a suspect in Tuesday's attack, reported Reuters, quoting an official.

Denying any involvement, Islamabad called attempts to link Pakistan to the Pahalgam attack "frivolous" and vowed to respond to any Indian action.

"Any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and to the security of its people will be met with firm reciprocal measures in all domains," a statement said, after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a rare National Security Committee with top military chiefs.

Pakistan's Senate yesterday passed a resolution condemning a "campaign by the Indian government to malign the Pakistan government".

"I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday.

"We will ensure that not a single drop of the Indus river's water reaches Pakistan," he said in a post on X.

India has formally informed Pakistan of its decision to keep the Indus Waters Treaty of 1961 in abeyance with immediate effect.

"India's Secretary of Jal Shakti

of the Earth."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York that issues between the countries "can be and should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement".

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947, with both claiming the territory in full but governing separate portions of it.

Rebel groups have waged an insurgency in Indian-controlled Kashmir since 1989, demanding independence or a merger with Pakistan.

India's air force and navy both carried out military exercises Thursday.

Indian police say the three gunmen are members of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group, a UN-designated terrorist organisation.

They offered a two-million-ruppee (\$23,500) bounty for information leading to each man's arrest.

A day after the attack, New Delhi suspended a water-sharing treaty, announced the closure of the main land border crossing with Pakistan, downgraded diplomatic ties, and withdrew visas for Pakistanis.

In response, Islamabad on Thursday ordered the expulsion of Indian diplomats and military advisers, cancelling visas for Indian nationals -- with the exception of Sikh pilgrims -- and closing the main border crossing from its side.

Pakistan also warned that any attempt by India to stop the supply of water from the Indus River would be an "act of war."

In reply, India's Water Resources Minister CR Paatil yesterday said New Delhi is working on measures to ensure that "not even a drop" of water goes to Pakistan.

"We will ensure that not a single drop of the Indus river's water reaches Pakistan," he said in a post on X.

India has formally informed Pakistan of its decision to keep the Indus Waters Treaty of 1961 in abeyance with immediate effect.

India's Secretary of Jal Shakti

Make best use of intellectual property, copyrights

Yunus urges countrymen on eve of World Intellectual Property Day

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has urged all to become proactive in ensuring the best use of intellectual property and protecting copyrights so that a prosperous Bangladesh can be built.

"To build a prosperous Bangladesh, everyone must be proactive in making the best use of intellectual property and protecting copyrights," he said in a message yesterday on the eve of World Intellectual Property Day.

"I welcome the initiative to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day 2025 in Bangladesh, like in other countries across the globe."

He added that this year's theme, "IP and Music: Feel the Beat of IP", is very significant for Bangladesh.

Prof Yunus said that the proper implementation of intellectual property laws and policies is necessary to build a strong connection between creativity, innovation, and economic progress in the music industry.

"This will further accelerate the pace of our cultural and economic development through the combination of art and modern technology."

He hoped that everyone would effectively contribute to building a strong innovative culture in the country to strengthen Bangladesh's position in the global creative competition.

2 children drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Two children drowned in a pond in Subarnachar upazila of Noakhali yesterday.

They are Pakhi Akhter, 7, daughter of Manu Mia, and Alisha Akhter, 7, daughter of Saifur Rahman Masud of Dakshin Char Clark village. They were students of Fakir Market Noorani Madrasa.

The incident took place around 2:00pm in the village in Ward 8 of Char Clerk union of the upazila.

Local Union Chairman Abul Basar said the two children were playing in the yard of their house in the afternoon when they fell into the pond near their house and drowned.

Their guardians searched for them and did not find them initially. Later, they searched the pond and found them.

The girls were taken to a local doctor, who declared both of them dead.

Char Jabbar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Shahin Mia also confirmed the matter.

(Water Resources) Ministry

Debashree Mukherjee wrote a letter dated April 24 addressed to her Pakistani counterpart, Syed Ali Murtaza, conveying New Delhi's decision, reports our New Delhi Correspondent.

Meanwhile, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday called up the chief ministers of all Indian states and asked them to ensure that no Pakistani stays in India beyond the April 27 deadline, sources said.

Meanwhile, Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha, yesterday met Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar to discuss the fallout of the Pahalgam terror attack on tourists. Rahul earlier interacted with the injured tourists at a hospital.

Pahalgam marks a dramatic shift in recent Kashmiri rebel attacks, which typically target Indian security forces.

Experts say that a military response may still be in the pipeline.

In 2019, a suicide attack killed 41 Indian troops in Kashmir and triggered Indian air strikes inside Pakistan, bringing the countries to the brink of all-out war.

Whatever little land these terrorists have, it's time to reduce it to dust," Modi said on Thursday, after holding two minutes of silence in memory of those killed, all but one of whom was Indian.

DHAKA

Yunus in Rome to attend Pope Francis' funeral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus reached Rome yesterday to attend the funeral of Pope Francis.

He arrived in Rome at 2:15pm local time, where he was received by Bangladesh Ambassador to Italy ATM Rokeybul Haque, Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder told BSS.

He left Qatar for the Vatican around 9:25am local (12:25pm BST), where the Chief of Protocol of the State of Qatar, Ibrahim bin Yousif Abdullah Fakhrro, saw him off at Hamad International Airport in Doha.

An hour after his arrival, Yunus visited St Peter's Square to pay homage to the mortal remains of the head of the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, vicar general of His Holiness for Vatican City, greeted Yunus and the Bangladesh delegation at the St Peter's Square.

On Saturday, around 9:30am, the CA will again visit St Peter's Square to attend the funeral mass of Pope Francis, who died on Monday aged 88.

After joining the funeral, the chief adviser will depart the Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport around 8:00am (12:00pm Bangladesh Standard Time) on Sunday and is expected to reach home in the early hours of Monday.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the St Peter's Square in the Vatican City yesterday. The chief adviser is in Rome to attend the funeral of Pope Francis today.

PHOTO: PID

'Nightmares don't let me sleep' Lokman recounts horror in Libyan captivity



Lokman Hossain with his family members at his home in Pirojpur.

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

The slightest noise now wakes Lokman Hossain from his sleep, bringing back the horrors of his ordeal in Libya.

"Even as I try to close my eyes, the nightmares don't let me sleep. So, I stay awake every night, but the memories keep swarming in my mind, leaving me traumatised," said the 37-year-old.

Lokman recently returned home after his family paid Tk 12 lakh in ransom to a criminal gang in Libya on March 27.

Lured by the hope of changing his fortune abroad, Lokman had earlier paid Tk 3.5 lakh to go to Libya, followed by another Tk 10 lakh to move to Italy from there.

To arrange the total amount, his wife Rimi Akter had to sell everything they owned, including their residential land at Noly Joynagar village in Mathbaria upazila, Pirojpur.

Lokman first travelled to Libya via Dubai through one Shah Alam and his brother-in-law Mannan of Barguna's Patharghata upazila to work as a salesman in August 2023.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Why veggies cost less at Karwan Bazar

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Every other day, trader Babul Miah boards a crowded bus from West Shewrapara and heads to Karwan Bazar to buy vegetables for his family.

"It's not convenient to carry seven or eight kilogrammes of vegetables back home by bus," he said.

"But I do it out of necessity. My business hasn't been doing well, and I save around Tk 100 on every Tk 300 purchase by shopping here instead of my neighbourhood market," he added.

Like Babul, many Dhaka residents are turning to Karwan Bazar to stretch their household budgets.

While the market is best known as the city's largest wholesale hub for kitchen essentials, a makeshift retail section springs up along its roads and footpaths every morning, offering vegetables at noticeably lower prices than other kitchen markets across the capital.

The secret behind the affordability lies in timing and proximity. Wholesale trading at Karwan Bazar takes place from midnight to 7:00am. As the wholesale rush winds down, leftover produce, still fresh but unsold, is quickly snapped up by local vendors who set up temporary stalls to serve the early morning crowd.

"Just before the wholesale market closes, traders are eager to offload unsold stock," explained Ashraful Islam, a regular seller in the retail section. "We buy at

reduced prices and pass the savings on to our customers."

This practice, combined with zero transport costs and minimal spoilage from storage, enables Karwan Bazar vendors to offer significantly lower prices.

THE PRICE GAP

Recent visits to at least eight kitchen markets, including Mirpur II, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Farmgate, Ibrahimpur, Kachukhet, and Korail Beltoli Slum, revealed that vegetables at Karwan Bazar's



sold for Tk 70–80 per kg—Tk 10–40 less than prices in other areas.

Despite sourcing their produce from the same wholesale markets -- Karwan Bazar or Mirpur I -- vendors in neighbourhood markets say they are compelled to charge more.

"Vegetables are perishable. Around 3 to 5 percent are damaged during storage and transport," said Mohammad Rakib, a seller at Ibrahimpur Market.

"We also pay for staff, rent, and

transport. Altogether, that adds about 5 to 15 percent to our costs."

This results in a price difference that's leading more cost-conscious buyers like Babul to bypass local vendors and make the journey to Karwan Bazar.

TRADE-OFF BETWEEN COST, CONVENIENCE

While the journey to Karwan Bazar may be inconvenient, many shoppers consider it a worthwhile trade-off. For families navigating

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Dhaka selection round of Star-bKash Newspaper Olympiad held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aiming to inspire the youth to read newspapers, the selection round of The Daily Star-bKash Newspaper Olympiad Season-4 was held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

Over 1,000 enthusiastic participants took part in the competition across five different shifts throughout the day.

Launched in 2018, the Newspaper Olympiad has grown into a nationwide movement, driven by the commitment of more than 3,000 volunteers across the country.

In the Season-4 of the Olympiad, bKash joined as the title partner.

This season has already seen over 15,000 participants from across the country, with the selection rounds still ongoing in different divisions. The Dhaka round commenced at 7:00am and concluded at 7:00pm.

The programme began with an inaugural speech from Labby Ahsan, president of Newspaper Olympiad and Youth Coordinator at The Daily Star.

The closing ceremony was attended by Tajdin Hassan, chief business officer of The Daily Star, who joined as the chief guest.



A group of participants of the Dhaka selection round of The Daily Star-bKash Newspaper Olympiad at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 26, 2025
BAISHAKH 13, 1432 BS
The Daily Star 3

Suspected mugger stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected mugger was stabbed to death in the capital's Karwan Bazar area on Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Rafiq, 20, who had multiple stab wounds, according to police and morgue sources.

Police arrested a youth named Asif, also known as Ashik or Ibrahim Khalil, 22, in connection with the incident.

Mobarak Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, told The Daily Star that initial investigation suggests Asif stabbed Rafiq in front of a restaurant in Karwan Bazar around 11:30am on Thursday.

Rafiq's grandmother later arrived and tried to take him home, but he succumbed to his injuries near the railway tracks due to excessive bleeding, the OC added.

Acting on a call made through the national emergency helpline 999, police from Tejgaon Industrial Area recovered the body from the eastern side of the railway tracks around noon, said OC Gazi Shamimur Rahman of the police station.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for autopsy.

OC Mobarak said Rafiq, a resident of Dewanganj upazila in Jamalpur, was involved in mugging in the Karwan Bazar area.

"Both the victim and the arrestee had eight cases each against them for theft and mugging," he said, adding that the murder stemmed from a dispute over sharing money from their criminal activities.

Polls shouldn't be delayed to complete reforms: Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka



BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday questioned why the interim government has not taken action against those who helped Sheikh Hasina establish fascism.

"Why are those responsible for establishing fascism still at large? Why haven't those who destroyed institutions and used their entrusted positions to serve Sheikh Hasina and entrench fascism been arrested yet?" he said.

He made the remarks while speaking at an event organised by "Amra BNP Poribar" at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office. The programme was

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PARVEZ KILLING Prime accused on five-day remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed the prime accused, Meheraj Islam, on a five-day remand in the case filed over the murder of Primeasia University student Jahidul Islam Parvez.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Meheraj Mahbub passed the order after police produced him before the court with a 10-day remand prayer, said a sub-inspector working in the court.

Law enforcers have so far arrested six accused, three FIR-named ones, in connection with the case.

Of the six arrestees, Mahathir Hasan and Al Kamal Sheikh earlier gave their confessional statements to the magistrates in connection with the killing.

On April 19, 24-year-old Parvez, a third-year student of the university, was stabbed to death in front of the campus in Banani.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Six AL activists held in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have arrested six leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associate bodies in Dhaka, including one accused in a case filed over the torching of an army vehicle in Gopalganj.

The arrestees are -- Abed Ali Sheikh, 52, former chairman of Shuktial Union and former member of Gopalganj Zila Parishad; Momtaz Parvin Shimu, 42, president of the Mohila Awami League's Ramma and Hatirjheel units; Zakir Hossain Sagar, 43, former vice-president of the banned Chhatra League and a member of the Jubo League's Dhaka North unit; MR Badol, 50, acting general secretary of Mirpur thana Chhatra League; and Monirul Islam, 38, an activist of Uttara thana AL.

Quoting detectives, Talebir Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of DMP, said Abed Ali, a named accused in the arson case, was detained from Dhanmondi around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

MOSQUITO CONTROL

DSCC launches drives to combat dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As dengue-related deaths and infections continue to climb, the Dhaka South City Corporation conducted a special mosquito control and cleanliness drive yesterday in the capital's Dhanmondi area.

The drive, which began at 7:30am and continued until the afternoon, involved 700 participants -- including 450 sanitation workers from the Waste Management Department, 50 mosquito control workers from the Health Department, 100 volunteers from the Red Crescent Society, 50 members of BD Clean, and 50 volunteers from the Dhanmondi Society.

Md Rezaul Maksud Jahedi, Secretary of the Local Government Division, attended the programme as chief guest.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least one dengue patient died and nine others were hospitalised in the 24 hours leading up to yesterday morning. With the latest figures, the death toll for the year has risen to 19, while confirmed cases stand at 2,429.

Speaking at the event, DSCC Administrator Md Shahjahan Mia announced that similar mosquito control and cleanliness campaigns would be rolled out across all DSCC zones to combat the dengue outbreak ahead of the monsoon season. The campaign officially began in Dhanmondi.

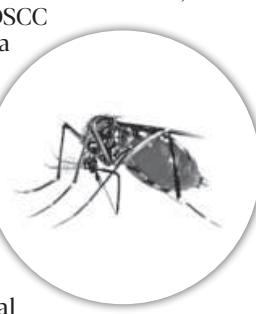
DSCC's Chief Executive Officer Dr Zillur Rahman, departmental heads, and leaders of the Dhanmondi Society were also present.

As part of the initiative, Dhanmondi was divided into seven zones. Major roads, lakes, parks, mosques, and the Eidgah area were cleaned and sprayed with mosquito repellent.

During a press briefing, Secretary Rezaul Maksud Jahedi highlighted the collaborative nature of the campaign, saying that efforts by DSCC and local community groups aim to make Dhaka cleaner and more liveable.

In a separate programme, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Mohammad Azaz urged city residents to take personal responsibility in the fight against dengue by keeping their homes and surroundings clean.

"We've received numerous complaints regarding improper spraying of mosquito repellents," he said.



Trader stabbed to death in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A fish trader was stabbed to death allegedly by muggers in Tangail's Delduar upazila early yesterday.

The incident took place on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Dubail bus stand area, said police.

The deceased -- Saiful Alam, 50 -- was from Sakrail Paschimpara in Sadar upazila.

Victim's family said Saiful left for Mirzapur with a fish farmer around 4:00am to bring fish fry from a hatchery. When they reached the Dubail area, three muggers on motorcycles stopped their auto-rickshaw. They tried to snatch money and cellphone from him. When Saiful refused, the criminals stabbed him and fled.

Saiful died at Tangail General Hospital.

Delduar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shoyeb Khan said, "Police are trying to identify and arrest the criminals."

Why veggies

FROM PAGE 3

rising living costs, those extra savings can make a difference.

"I don't enjoy the crowd or the hassle," Babul added, "but at the end of the day, the money I save helps keep my household running," he said.

The blockade programme will continue until our demands are met," he said.

Almonirhat Divisional Railway Commercial Officer Abdullah Al Mamun said that preparations are

11th

Blockade disrupts

FROM PAGE 5

Patgram Sangram Unnayan Parishad's President AJI Siddiqui said the railway authorities earlier promised to start the service from Burimari to Dhaka several times, but it has not been implemented.

"The blockade programme will continue until our demands are met," he said.

"We have informed the higher authorities of the matter. Next steps will be taken accordingly once they make the decision," he added.

He praised Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin for his commitment that the

underway to resume direct train service from Burimari to Dhaka.

"For this, many arrangements have to be made. Work is ongoing. But the locals are continuously blocking the railway route without giving time to the railway authorities," he said.

"The institute's activity began in the palace in 1957. At present, the institute runs in a new building on the compound, while the palace lies unused but

Polls shouldn't be

FROM PAGE 3

Election Commission will not wait for reform suggestions from the National Consensus Commission, but will proceed with election preparations using the powers currently available to it.

The BNP leader said elections should not be delayed for the completion of reforms. "So, the CEC's remarks are positive... we are reassured about the election from his statement," he said.

The irregularities came to light through a UGC investigation conducted in 2023. Based on their findings, the ACC filed a case against the accused on April 1, 2024, at its Sylhet Integrated District Office.

The accused list includes administrative staff and faculty members such as Fahima Khanam Chowdhury, Anjan Debnath, Maidul Islam Chowdhury, and others.

The ACC alleged that the recruitment practices were not only unlawful but also resulted in significant misuse of public funds and positions of authority.

Moreover, the university created 141 unauthorised posts beyond the 112

approved by the UGC, and salaries were paid using funds from the Health Ministry's development budget without necessary approvals.

In many cases, appointments were renewed multiple times, violating the 2018 University Act, which allows only a six-month extension.

The ACC found that 46 appointees lacked age eligibility, 18 had no relevant work experience, and several had academic deficiencies -- including four with third-division results and two without required degrees. Despite being hired temporarily, some were illegally promoted to higher salary grades.

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GOHALA RIVER

Farmers struggle to transport crops without bridge

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Hundreds of people from 30 villages under Ullapara and Shahzadpur upazilas of Sirajganj and Faridpur upazila of Pabna have long been suffering due to absence of a bridge over Gohala river.

Farmers are the worst sufferers.

They said they face a lot of hurdles to transport their crops to local markets after harvest.

"As a sharecropper, I get 55 percent of the harvest and sell it in market. Of the money generated, around half is spent for transportation cost due to absence of a bridge on the river," said farmer Abdul Mazid of Nada village under Ullapara upazila.

"The cost of crop production is already high as we have to pay a considerable amount to water pump operators for irrigation. After that, hardly much is left to sustain for the rest of the year," he said.

The situation is same for hundreds of farmers from Nada, Bri Angura, Potazia, Raoutara, Bil Chandak, Kenai, Chithulia, Borabil, Boyrapara, Dutta Pungoli, and

Pach Pungoli villages in Chalan Beel area under the three upazilas.

Md Abdul Alim of Pungoli village said he cultivates mustard and paddy in the vast low laying land in Chalan Beel but faces difficulty to carry the crops to his houses due to lack of a bridge.

"Gohala river remains dry for months until monsoon comes. During this time, we have to bear high cost of transporting our harvest since there is no easy route from the croplands to our homes. A bridge on the river would have mitigated our sufferings significantly," he said.

According to the district agriculture offices, there are more than 17,000 acres of agricultural land in the three upazilas surrounding Gohala river, used for cultivating paddy, mustard, vegetables and other seasonal crops.

Contacted, Ullapara upazila engineer Md Shahidullah said there has been no plan to construct a bridge in the area. "As the matter of the farmers' sufferings came to light, we have begun working on a plan in this regard," he added.



Rare slow lorises rescued in Sreemangal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A rare slow loris was rescued from a dog attack in Sreemangal, Moulvibazar yesterday.

The animal was initially handed over to Swapan Dev Sajal, director of the Bangladesh Wildlife Service Foundation.

A pedestrian named Junu Mia rescued the primate from the Gar Para area of Shankarsena village in Nimai Shiv Bari.

Swapan Dev said, "This rare slow loris was walking slowly when it entered the village. At that time, a dog suddenly attacked it, and it got scared. Passerby Junu Mia came forward and rescued it after hearing the dog's barking."

He added that the slow loris was later handed over to the authorities concerned.

Md Kazi Nazmul Haque, Sreemangal range officer of the Wildlife Conservation Department, said the animal is currently being kept at the Lawachara Rescue Centre.

It is unwell and will be released into the Lawachara forest once it has recovered.

Mother, son killed in road crash

BSS, Sylhet

Another and her three-year-old son were killed, while two others injured, in a road accident in the Kumira area in Satkhira's Patkelghata upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Rita Sadhu, 28, wife of Apurba Sadhu, 34, and their four-year-old daughter Shova Sadhu sustained injuries and are currently undergoing treatment. The accident occurred at the Kumira Kadamtala intersection on the Satkhira Khulna highway around 12:30pm.

According to locals, the family was travelling to Rita's father's house in the Sagardari area under Keshabpur upazila on a motorcycle. While passing through the Kumira Kadamtala intersection, a Satkhira-bound passenger bus coming from the opposite direction hit the motorbike, leaving Rita and Sourav dead on the spot.

Police Inspector (Investigation) of Patkelghata Police Station Sanjay Kumar Das confirmed the matter. "The bodies have been sent to the Sadar Hospital morgue," he said.

ANWARUL HAIDER, Noakhali

Residents of Noakhali municipality have long been suffering due to the town's poor sewage system.

A grim scenario persists across the 150-year-old municipality. The sewage drains have not been maintained and cleaned since those were constructed. There is no valve or cover on the drains. The sewage water from houses, hospitals, and other establishments seeps in and accumulates in the open drains, creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes while polluting the environment with bad odour.

Most of the drains are occupied by shops. Even a slight drizzle causes waterlogging, causing sewage waste to scatter throughout the city.

Residents complained that the municipality has been delivering a poor service with sewage disposal. The sewage



system has become extremely fragile due to a lack of maintenance and cleaning up of drains for years.

The municipality, established in 1876, has an area of 17.2 square kilometres, and 13,2185 residents in 17,761 holdings under its nine wards. It has a 63km drainage network, including around 17km of natural and man-made canals and around 46km of sewers.

Visiting different residential areas in the city, including Hajiing, New Housing (Sand Field), Hospital Road, and the Main Road, this correspondent observed that the drains and canals have been illegally occupied by land grabbers and squatters for years under political umbrella.

Shops, businesses, and establishments have been mushrooming across the entire

ANWARUL HAIDER, Noakhali

Noakhali

Photo:

Sylhet

Ilias Kanchan

FROM PAGE 12
to be shaped by the spirit of 1971 and 2024, the rise of new parties becomes inevitable."

At this crucial juncture of the nation, he said, "We are announcing the formation of this new party with a commitment to ensuring justice, people's welfare, democracy, and sovereignty by eliminating inequality, fascism, and all forms of dominance."

Shaukat said the party is rooted in the ideals of the Liberation War, the November 7 National Revolution, the 1990s mass uprising, and the spirit of the 2024 July uprising.

"Our aim is to build a new Bangladesh based on equality, dignity, and social justice," said Shaukat while presenting the party's 18-point charter.

Shaukat was expelled from the BNP in March 2023 for "violating party discipline." He was also a former Jatiya Press Club president.

He added that the party's constitution, logo, electoral symbol, and flag will soon be submitted to the Election Commission.

Explaining his decision to enter politics at the inaugural event, Ilias Kanchan said, "I have been working to promote road safety for 32 years, but did not get support from any government. I have come to learn that it is not possible without a political will."

"I hope you will support me, inspire me, and look at my mistakes with forgiveness."

In 1993, after losing his wife in a road crash, National Film Award-winning actor Ilias Kanchan took to the streets to lead a road safety movement, founding his organisation "Nirapad Sarak Chai".

In Ilias Kanchan's new political party, Rafiqul Haque Hafiz, ABM Walir Rahman Khan, Rehana Salam, Md Abdullah, MA Yusuf, and Nirmal Chakraborty have become vice-chairmen of the ad hoc committee.

M Asaduzzaman Khan has been made senior joint secretary general while ABM Rafiqul Haque Talukder Raja, Al Amin Raju, and Nazmul Ahsan have become joint secretaries general.

Hasibur Reza Kallol will serve as publicity affairs secretary.

Car bomb kills

FROM PAGE 12
and understand the nature of this regime."

Ukraine's SBU intelligence service did not respond to a request for comment on the killing of Moskalik, who was deputy head of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.

That position would have given him an important role in planning Russian military operations, including in Ukraine. State media said he held the rank of lieutenant general.

The body of a man, partially covered in a white sheet, lay on the pavement outside the entrance to an apartment building in the town of Balashikha, east of Moscow, near a burnt-out car.

The explosion occurred as a result of the detonation of a homemade explosive device filled with destructive elements," investigators said in a statement.

Ukraine's SBU killed Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov in a similar manner last December. Trump's Ukraine envoy, General Keith Kellogg, said that the attack violated the rules of warfare.

Russian war bloggers described Moskalik as a rising star. He had participated in several high-level Russian delegations that had met Western officials to try to negotiate a settlement to the conflict in Ukraine.

Bangladesh-IMF talks to continue

FROM PAGE 1
the talks would continue. "We hope to reach a consensus soon."

Before the Bangladesh delegation's Washington visit, an IMF team concluded a two-week mission to Dhaka on April 17 without a staff-level agreement as disagreements persisted over the flexibility of the exchange rate and measures to improve the revenue-to-GDP ratio.

To restructure the country's tax system, the government has drafted the State Policy and Revenue Management Ordinance, 2025, proposing the dissolution of the NBR and establishment of two new bodies -- one focused on revenue management and the other on revenue policy.

The IMF raised reservations on some sections of the ordinance, said a top official of the finance ministry.

Speaking about the ordinance, Salehuddin said, "However, they [IMF] did not raise any question when the final draft, approved by the cabinet, was sent."

The finance ministry official said the NBR also submitted a plan to the IMF during ongoing talks on raising Bangladesh's chronically low revenue-to-GDP ratio. The IMF primarily agreed on the revenue issues, but it will be finalised in another meeting in Washington.

The Bangladesh delegation left for Washington on April 19 to attend the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings, with the goal of securing a deal. On the sidelines of Spring Meetings, they

held a series of meetings with IMF officials, including Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke.

During its April 6-17 Dhaka visit, the IMF team led by Chris Papageorgiou discussed economic and financial policies in the context of the combined third and fourth reviews of the IMF programme.

Speaking to reporters during the visit, Papageorgiou had said, "From the IMF's perspective, and looking at the reform and its history, we have been discussing this crawling peg for at least one or two years."

"This is, in fact, the right time to move towards this flexibility," he said.

The crawling peg is a system of exchange rate adjustments in which a currency with a fixed exchange rate is allowed to fluctuate within a band of rates.

During the meetings in Washington, the IMF asked the Bangladesh delegation to maintain the crawling peg, adding that if the exchange rate fluctuates beyond 8 or 10 percent, the Bangladeshi Bank would intervene to prevent volatility in the currency market.

However, the central bank argued that it needs to retain control over the market due to persisting manipulation. Given the persistently high inflation, it maintained that this is not the right time to make the exchange rate more flexible.

A senior official from the delegation said both sides are likely to soften their positions in the final meeting to reach a consensus on the exchange rate issue.

Trump poised to offer Saudi Arabia

FROM PAGE 12

Lockheed Martin Corp could supply a range of advanced weapons systems including C-130 transport aircraft, two of the sources said. One source said Lockheed would also supply missiles and radars.

RTX Corp, formerly known as Raytheon Technologies, is also expected to play a significant role in the package, which will include supplies from other major US defence contractors such as Boeing Co, Northrop Grumman Corp, and General Atomics, said four of the sources.

All the sources declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

RTX, Northrop and General Atomics declined to comment. Boeing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In 2021, under Biden, Congress imposed a ban on sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia over the Khashoggi killing and to pressure the kingdom to wind down its Yemen war, which had inflicted heavy civilian casualties.

Under US law, major international weapons deals must be reviewed by members of Congress before they are finalised.

The Biden administration began to soften its stance on Saudi Arabia in 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine impacted global oil supplies. The ban on offensive weapons sales was lifted in 2024, as Washington worked more closely with Riyadh in the aftermath of Hamas' October 7 attack to devise a plan for post-war Gaza.

A potential deal for Lockheed's F-35 jets, which the kingdom has been reportedly interested in for years, is expected to be discussed, three of the sources said, while downplaying the chances for an F-35 deal being signed during the trip.

The United States guarantees that its close ally Israel receives more advanced American weapons than Arab states, giving it what is labeled a "Qualitative Military Edge" (QME) over its neighbours.

Israel has now owned F-35s for nine years, building multiple squadrons.

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Phone+8802479930127

Memo No. 35.01.0428.402.16.415.25-598

Dated: 24.04.2025

e-Tender Notice

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Barguna Road Division for the procurement of:

e-Tender details can be downloaded e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> for pursue.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Tender Reference No.	Name of works	Procurement Method	Invitation Date & Time	Last Selling / Downloading Date & Time	Tender Closing/Opening Date & Time
01	1099591	egp-44/2024-2025/BRD Sign Signal Supply	Supplying of Reflecting Road studs, Traffic Signs, Signs Post at Barguna RHD Stackyard for Different Road under Barguna Road Division during the year 2024-2025.	OTM	24-Apr-2025 13:00	07-May-2025 16:00	08-May-2025 14:00
02	1099592	egp-45/2024-2025/BRD Sign Signal Supply	Supplying of Reflecting Road studs at Bakergonj-Padirshibpur-Kathalton-Subidkhali-Barguna Road (R-872) at Ch: 12+14 to Ch: 55+013 = 42.869 KM Road under Barguna Road Division during the year 2024-2025	OTM	24-Apr-2025 13:00	07-May-2025 16:00	08-May-2025 14:00

28/04/2025
(Kumares Biswas)
ID No-602343
Executive Engineer (C.C), RHD
Road Division, Barguna.

GD- 989

Hold local polls before national election

FROM PAGE 12 Tk 28 trillion from the country – four to five times the national budget, he said.

He urged the European Union and other foreign representatives to help recover the stolen money and return it to the public fund.

"We want a Bangladesh where there is no discrimination based on political belief or religion. Everyone must enjoy equal rights."

He reiterated Jamaat's vision of a humane, corruption-free, and just Bangladesh based on Islamic principles and the Holy Quran, where people of all faiths can practice their religions freely.

Heatwave to persist till tomorrow

FROM PAGE 12 city dwellers closer to 37°C to 38°C.

Rajshahi recorded the country's highest temperature at 39°C for two consecutive days. Other districts experiencing mild heatwave conditions include Jashore at 38.3°C, Ishwardi in Pabna at 38°C, Sirajganj at 37.2°C, Chuadanga at 36.8°C, Bogura at 36.5°C, and Baghabari in Sirajganj at 36.2°C.

According to the Met Office, temperature ranges define heatwave categories: 36°C to 37.9°C is considered mild, 38°C to 39.9°C is moderate, 40°C to 41.9°C

is severe, while anything above 42°C is categorised as very severe heatwave.

April is typically the hottest month in Bangladesh. Last year saw an unusually prolonged heatwave period, with almost the entire month experiencing high temperatures, resulting in 35 days of heatwave conditions combined in April and May – the highest in 76 years. Although this year has not followed the same pattern overall, the heat has intensified significantly in the final week of the month.

তারিখ	চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়	চট্টগ্রাম	তারিখ
শারক নং-এ-১(৮)/৪৮৮৬ (১৫০)/সা:	চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়	চট্টগ্রাম	তারিখ: ২৪-০৪-২০২৫
	এ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিভিন্ন বিভাগ/ইনসিটিউট/দপ্তর/অনুষদ/হলে নিম্নোক্ত শূন্য পদসমূহ রাখী ভিত্তিতে পূরণের লক্ষ্যে আবেদন করা যাচ্ছে:		
তারিখ	পদের নাম	পদের সংখ্যা	প্রকাশিত যোগ্যতা
১	জীব বিজ্ঞান অনুষদ	০২ টি	৮ম জ্যেষ্ঠি
২	আরবী বিভাগ	০১টি	৮ম জ্যেষ্ঠি
৩	চ. বি. টিকিবসা কেন্দ্র	০১টি	৮ম জ্যেষ্ঠি
৪	চাকমা কেন্দ্র	০২ টি	৮ম জ্যেষ্ঠি
৫	পদার্থবিদ্যা বিভাগ	০১টি	৮ম জ্যেষ্ঠি
৬	মাছাগার দপ্তর	০১টি	৮৮০০-২১৩০/-
৭	বেঙ্গলুরু অফিস	০১টি	৮৮০০-২১৩০/-
৮	হিসাব নিয়ন্ত্রক অফিস	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
৯	নিরাপত্তা দপ্তর	০৩টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১০	লোক প্রশাসন বিভাগ	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১১	মেজিস্ট্রার অফিস (কেন্দ্রীয় প্রেস শাখা)	০১টি	৮৮০০-২১৩০/-
১২	মেজিস্ট্রার অফিস (চ.বি. কর্মসূচী সমিতি)	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৩	অফিস পিয়াল	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৪	পরিবহন দপ্তর	০৩টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৫	অঙ্গীকৃত প্রক্ষেপ শীঘ্রান হল	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৬	শহীদ মো. ফরাহাদ হোসেন হল	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৭	নবাব ফজলুজ্জামের হল	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৮	ইনসিটিউট অব ফরেনসিক এন্ড এন্ডোক্যাল মেটেল সার্কেলেস	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
১৯	নাটোরো বিভাগ	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-
২০	মুকিয়ান বিভাগ	০১টি	৮৮০০-২০০১০/-

*মুকিয়ানের সম্মানের জন্য নিম্নোক্ত অন্যান্য শর্তাদি পূরণ সাপেক্ষে সরকারি সিকাতানুস

INTERNATIONAL

Pope Francis's funeral today

AFP, Vatican City

Tens of thousands of people flocked to the Vatican yesterday for a last glimpse of Pope Francis's open coffin, as world leaders and other guests began arriving for his funeral.

Around 150,000 people had paid their last respects to the Argentine pontiff by midday, seven hours before the end of three days of lying in state at St Peter's Basilica, the Vatican said.

More than 50 heads of state and 10 monarchs are expected to attend today's funeral, alongside around 200,000 mourners.

Italian and Vatican authorities have placed the area around St Peter's under tight security with drones blocked, snipers on roofs and fighter jets on standby.

Further checkpoints will be activated on Friday night, police said.

The Catholic Church's first Latin American pope died on Monday aged 88, less than a month after spending weeks in hospital fighting severe pneumonia.

The Argentine pontiff, who had long suffered failing health, defied doctors' orders by making a public appearance on Easter Sunday, the most important moment in the Catholic calendar.

Condolences have flooded in from around the world for the Jesuit, an energetic reformer who championed those on the fringes of society in his 12 years as head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.



Faithful queue to enter St Peter's Basilica to pay respects as Pope Francis lies in state, as seen from Rome, Italy, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

River excavation must be done right

The plight of Mayur River shows where the problem lies

The deterioration of Mayur River, once a lifeline for Khulna residents, has happened right in front of our eyes, as has the repeated failure to revive it. Over the years, we have published a number of reports on how it is being choked by structures and encroachments of all sorts, unregulated fish farming, and unchecked pollution, with about 26 drains pouring most of Khulna city's waste into it. Against this backdrop, the excavation projects undertaken over the decade were meant to breathe new life into the river. But instead, they have further contributed to its decline.

According to a recent report by this daily, two excavation projects taken up by the city corporation—one in 2014 and another in 2023—have failed to deliver any meaningful improvement. During a recent visit by our Khulna correspondent, the river was seen occupied by a makeshift bamboo dam, with sand being dumped at several points. Meanwhile, old problems persist as the river remains choked with silt, hyacinths, and waste, with no visible improvement in its water flow or quality. This raises serious questions about the planning and execution of such projects.

Over the years, failed or harmful excavation efforts have been reported across the country. Unfortunately, despite river dredging being routine work, the relevant authorities often do it wrong, and in isolation, without linking it up with other interventions—such as eviction, de-cluttering, and stopping other harmful and invasive activities on rivers—necessary to make its impact lasting. In Khulna alone, such cases abound. For example, in 2022, we reported an initiative by the Mongla port authorities to dump the debris excavated from Pashur River on vast swathes of farmland, threatening soil fertility and the livelihoods of thousands. That same year, we also wrote about the Bhadra River, which, despite being excavated only two years ago, silted up again as dug up earth fell back into it. This has been more or less the running theme of our dredging or de-siltation initiatives, with excavated debris invariably making it back to the river.

The irony here is inescapable. River excavation is supposed to solve problems like navigability, pollution, and waterlogging. Instead, it is causing them anew. If we truly want to revive our dying rivers, dredging must be treated as a means, not the goal. Excavation should be preceded by proper ecological assessments, involve local communities, and include clear plans for water sourcing, encroachment removal, pollution control, and maintenance. And the relevant authorities must coordinate better and be held accountable. Otherwise, we risk repeating the same failure until our rivers are beyond saving. The Mayur River stands as a grim reminder of what such failure looks like.

Neonatal deaths must be prevented

Focus on equipping existing infrastructure properly

Despite Bangladesh's significant progress in reducing the under-five child mortality rate over the years, our success in saving the lives of newborns is dismal. Neonatal deaths—or deaths within 28 days of birth—stand at 20 per 1,000 live births, which is far higher than the Sustainable Development Goal's 2030 target of 12 per 1,000 live births. A recent UN report on Bangladesh estimated that nearly two-thirds of over 100,000 children who died before their fifth birthday in 2023 passed away within 28 days of delivery.

One reason we fail to save our newborns is the lack of well-equipped Special Care Newborn Units (SCANUs) and Newborn Stabilisation Units (NSUs). These units have played a crucial role in saving many infants born with complications. However, a lack of maintenance and delays in replacing old and outdated machinery are limiting their effectiveness. Although the government is planning expansion by establishing more SCANUs and NSUs, the focus should be more on upgrading the existing ones and ensuring proper maintenance. Unfortunately, because of corruption in our healthcare system, obvious problems are often overlooked while resources get invested in less important areas. We can only hope that such practices will be avoided in the future.

Also, we should aspire to reduce the number of premature births, or births that lead to complications, in line with the adage "Prevention is better than cure." Among the leading causes of neonatal deaths are birth asphyxia and prematurity/low birthweight. These can be prevented if mothers can deliver in well-equipped primary healthcare centres that have on-duty, experienced birth attendants, or if the delivery is conducted by trained, certified, and skilled midwives. Unfortunately, we have not been able to ensure these services evenly across the country. Home deliveries still account for 30 percent of all births in Bangladesh. Additionally, malnutrition among mothers and shorter intervals between pregnancies—often the consequences of child marriage—can, and does, lead to neonatal deaths.

Therefore, the government must invest more in these areas to make primary healthcare more accessible, ensure proper nourishment of adolescent girls, prevent early marriages, and raise awareness about the importance of properly spaced pregnancies. Preventing neonatal deaths is crucial for the country's future, as every child saved today may be an asset for tomorrow.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Chernobyl explosion

On this day in 1986, a devastating environmental catastrophe occurred early in the morning when an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine released large amounts of radioactive material into the atmosphere.



EDITORIAL

KUET protests and the evolving student-university relations



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

A university is more than an academic institution; it is a site where young adults experience their transformative rites of passage into adulthood, their next phase of life. As educators, we want students to have a deep sense of curiosity that makes them question everything, including the power structure. We want them to be creative in their expressions while mindful of the boundaries of others. The youthful idealism of our students' dissent is not only tolerated but nurtured within the norms of academia. Questioning authority while maintaining order is a lifelong learning tool. The sanctity of any academic institution lies in the social contract between youthful idealism and vigilant guardianship of academic integrity.

In July, our students made us proud through their fight to reclaim democratic space from the clutches of an authoritarian regime. The activism of our students ignited hope in this generation's ability to ensure justice and accountability. We were optimistic when they proclaimed to reset systems. Seldom, however, did we realise that we were up for perpetual rebellion. Every grievance, be it personal or collective, now triggers agitation. Every administrative intervention is suspected and overruled. Protests are not the final option—they are pitched as first responses. The system has started corroding from within. Our universities and colleges are slowly dying.

There is an emerging trend in which the administration is consistently being forced to yield to student demands. None of the institutions can stick to their disciplinary actions, whether for misconduct, academic dishonesty, or breaches of code. The aggrieved party does not resort to legal or systemic recourse. They initiate a protest and subsequently support it with a social media campaign. Hashtags and emotional appeals amplify the outrage without a proper analysis of the context. The focus soon shifts from the ground zero of the cause to a media trial of the consequence.

I wish the situation were hypothetical. It is not. It has become the lived reality of our universities. The situation at the Khulna University of

Engineering and Technology (KUET) serves as an example. The flow of events suggests the deep-seated issues within our higher education governance, student politics, and administrative response mechanisms.

It started on February 18, when two groups of students, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Students Against Discrimination (SAD), clashed over demands to ban student politics. The violence left nearly 50 students injured and marked the beginning of a prolonged crisis. The following day,



Students of the Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET) protest against all political student organisations and the university administration on February 20, 2025.

FILE PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

students locked down all academic and administrative buildings. The KUET syndicate suspended political activities on campus and initiated a formal investigation while filing a police case against 400-500 unidentified individuals. The decision irked the activists, as they felt that the vice chancellor (VC) was acting at the behest of the parent organisation of JCD. They symbolically "red-carded" political organisations and demanded the VC's resignation. They also sent a memorandum to the chief adviser to draw attention to their cause. To calm the situation, the university authority ordered the students to vacate the halls on February 25. The containment measure, however, was perceived as punitive. For nearly two months, students kept on demanding

the reopening of their campus.

On April 13, students staged a sit-in demonstration. KUET syndicate met on April 14 and suspended 37 students linked to earlier clashes, with a plan to reopen halls in May. Soon after, the focus shifted to the sole demand of the VC's resignation. Students broke into the halls and continued symbolic protests, including burning an effigy of the VC's chair. A section of the students started a hunger strike with a banner that reads, "Is the Interim Blind?" The chief adviser and a three-member, high-powered team from the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the education ministry intervened. Both the VC and the pro-VC were removed, with the administrative authority given to a senior faculty member.

Now that we clearly understand the timeline, let's examine how the initial demand to ban student politics politicised the campus environment.

from the authority under which they operate. The decision to suspend students before rebuilding trust smells of authoritarianism. It is not clear whether the suspended students were called to defend themselves in the presence of a professional counsellor.

KUET is not alone in making these misjudgements. These misjudgements are a common flaw in our university governance. We need to give credit to the students for conjuring their symbolic and performative protests. They employed symbolic red cards, burnt the effigy of the VC's chair, and launched hunger strikes to open the eyes of the interim administration to both galvanise social media support and control the narrative. Student activism today is indeed different from that of the previous generation. I don't think our university administration is well equipped to deal with this kind of performative resistance amplified by social media and public sentiment. Consequently, procedural resolution mechanisms of the universities are threatened. What is required right now is a credible, neutral mediation framework to stop conflict from spiralling. The KUET teachers' association have already expressed their dissatisfaction over the removal of their senior colleagues. Teachers realise that they are becoming hostages to students. Both faculty bodies and external stakeholders, such as the alumni, have failed to intervene to stem the rot.

KUET has thus exposed a systemic weakness in conflict resolution within academic institutions. One solution can be to engage institutional ombudsmen or third-party mediators to de-escalate tensions without compromising authority. The time has come for universities to sit together to create a system that fosters continuous dialogue with students and understands their needs before they morph into crises. Before banning student politics, universities must redesign their student unions as an alternative site for student representation and leadership. The public relations offices of the universities need to reorient themselves to learn how to proactively pitch the position of the administration. We need to realise that in this image-driven post-truth world, optics can outweigh facts. Controlling narrative needs to be part of a university's overall objective. For the greater sake of the nation, we must uphold the autonomy of the universities. Siding with the loudest voices can be popular, but may not always be beneficial. It will kill the universities slowly—and painfully.

How remittances shape labour market dynamics



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AFIA MUBASHIRA TIASHA

There have been many studies that show how remittances affect labour supply decisions and other labour market outcomes. By supporting consumption-led growth, remittances impact macroeconomic stability as well, but if productive investments don't keep pace with the rising demand, they may potentially exacerbate inflationary pressures. Therefore, it can be said that remittances might have a mixed effect on the labour force.

In recent years, remittances have also contributed to substantial capital transfers in various developing countries. According to the recent estimates of the World Bank, with around \$23 billion of inflow, Bangladesh is among the world's top recipients of remittances. Moreover, in 2023, personal remittances received in Bangladesh were estimated to be five percent of the GDP. These inflows help to lower poverty, boost household spending, and fund healthcare and education.

Empirical research illustrates that remittances reduce the likelihood of domestic labour market participation, indicating a disincentive impact (engaging in non-market activities) among those who don't participate. Therefore, although remittances can raise living standards, they can also discourage domestic labour supply and

lead to reliance on external income. Because the recipient households view the inflows as non-work money, it is anticipated that remittance payments will have a detrimental impact on labour force participation, highlighting the issue of moral hazard. In addition, remittances can lower labour supply and foster a culture of dependency, which limits economic expansion and increases inequality.

However, another study found that remittances do not significantly influence the labour force participation of men. Yet another study found that self-employment is increased by remittances. The increase in self-employment can be attributed to remittances directed towards entrepreneurial investment activity. Thus, it can be said that there might be a mixed effect of remittances.

Even though a lot of research has been done on the macroeconomic implications of remittances, few studies have used advanced econometric techniques like Vector Error Correction Models (VECM) to examine their direct effects on labour force participation in Bangladesh.

Previous studies primarily focused on micro-level household survey data or cross-country analyses, which might overlook the short-term and long-term linkages between remittance

inflows, labour force participation, and exchange rates. In the study titled "Analysing the Impact of Remittance on the Labour Force Participation Rate: Evidence from Bangladesh," we identified this gap and looked into the short- and long-term relationships. Data for Bangladesh was taken from the World Development Indicators (WDI) database, which spans from 1991 to 2022.

The study revealed various key insights. Remittances had no substantial short-run impact on the labour force participation rate (LFPR). However, there was a positive and statistically significant effect of remittances on the LFPR in the long run. Specifically, every one-unit increase in remittances is associated with an increase of 0.00267 units in LFPR, implying that increased remittance inflows promote labour market participation over time. A possible explanation for this long-term positive effect is that remittances are channelled into productive investments that enhance employability and entrepreneurship.

Households receiving remittances may use them to finance education, vocational training, and skill development, which in turn improves their ability to participate in the labour market. Additionally, remittances may serve as startup capital for small businesses, generating employment opportunities and encouraging labour force engagement.

Moreover, in the short run, the exchange rate has a significant impact on LFPR, meaning the fluctuations influence labour force participation. It also has a substantial effect over the long term. Labour force participation rises when the exchange rate

depreciates, which occurs when the value of the domestic currency declines relative to other currencies. The result showed that a one-unit depreciation is specifically linked to an LFPR increase of roughly 0.06890 units. The findings demonstrated the presence of a long-run relationship between the LFPR and its determinants, indicating that currency depreciation significantly boosts labour force participation, possibly due to enhanced export competitiveness, increased employment opportunities, or pressures on households to maintain real income levels amid rising prices.

Policymakers should take initiatives to establish supportive environments to facilitate the transformation of remittance inflows towards productive investments and human capital development to maximise the positive impact on labour market participation. These inflows may contribute to the creation of additional jobs through financial literacy initiatives, focused incentives for entrepreneurship supported by remittances, and easy access to financial services for households who receive remittances. Moreover, considering the vulnerability of the LFPR to changes in currencies, especially in the short run, the macroeconomic focus should be on guaranteeing exchange rate stability. Maintaining currency stabilisation could help to alleviate volatility-induced labour market distortions, especially in sectors that are highly responsive to trade and migration-related financial flows. Incorporating remittance and exchange rate management into wider labour market and development activities may result in more resilient and inclusive labour market outcomes in Bangladesh.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Chernobyl explosion

On this day in 1986, a devastating environmental catastrophe occurred early in the morning when an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine released large amounts of radioactive material into the atmosphere.



'Israel's main mission is not combating terrorism, but destroying Gaza'

As the genocide in Gaza continues, **Antony Loewenstein**, an independent journalist, film-maker, and best-selling author of *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation around the World*, speaks to **Priyam Paul** of **The Daily Star** debunking how Israel's surveillance technology, the military-industrial complex, and global dynamics perpetuate the suffering of Palestinians.

What experiences shaped your interest in writing your book?

I am a Jewish Australian-German. I was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1974, and brought up in a relatively liberal Jewish home. However, believing and supporting Israel was pretty much a part of the regular, daily discourse. It was not rammed down my throat, but it was pretty standard for many Jewish people to support Israel, because of our own history. For instance, my own family came from Germany and Austria. Majority of my family members were killed in the Holocaust; the ones who escaped, mostly in 1939, were spread around the world, including Australia. Therefore, the idea of a so-called safe-haven for Jews—as we were told—was Israel, which made sense to me when I was a child.

Of course, what I was not told while growing up was that there were millions of Palestinians who have been under occupation for decades, and they are suffering because of that safe haven and supposed Jewish liberation. When I discovered the truth myself, it really made me deeply uncomfortable since I was a teenager and it continues to unnerve me to this day.

Why and how have the military-industrial complexes of both Israel and the US become so deeply intertwined, and in what ways have they operated similarly over the years, particularly to perpetuate the occupation and systemic erasure of the Palestinian people?

The US is Israel's biggest funder, armour, political supporter, diplomatic backer, and ally. This has been the reality since 1948, when Israel was established. It massively accelerated after 1967 when Israel took control of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and it has been the case long before Donald Trump became president again earlier this year.

Huge amounts of weapons that Israel uses are often tested and trialled in the US first. When the US is giving billions of dollars of so-called aid and military support every year to Israel, a significant amount of that money goes to certain districts in the US to back specific weapons or defence programmes. It is also worth mentioning that although the US-Israel relationship is very close, it is dysfunctional. Both nations massively spy on each other. We are not aware of the exact number of spies that both nations use on

the other, but there is a desire on both sides to get the most accurate insider information about each other. So, the two nations are supposedly best of friends, but they also don't completely trust each other.

In your book, you wrote, "Israeli history can be split into two eras: before and after 1967." Could you elaborate on the implications of the Six Day War for Israeli policy and explain what led to such a drastic historical and political shift?

After 1967, Israel took control of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, and there was a perceived need within Israel to justify and defend those military actions and what became a brutal military occupation against the occupied Palestinians who lived there. Although Israel, for years before 1967, had used Palestine as a laboratory, it massively expanded after that.

It is also worth mentioning that although the US-Israel relationship is very close, it is dysfunctional. Both nations massively spy on each other. We are not aware of the exact number of spies that both nations use on the other, but there is a desire on both sides to get the most accurate insider information about each other.

From the late 1960s, but certainly into the 1970s and pretty much to this day, roughly 50 or so years later, Israel often uses the occupied Palestinian territories as a way to prove to other countries how effective they are at suppressing Palestinian dissent or their self-determination.

A large number of other countries, military figures, police forces from the US, along with parts of Europe and Asia, often travel to Israel to observe firsthand the reality of what the occupation means for Palestinians and then back that experience and knowledge, often to develop defence relationships and contracts relevant to their own conflicts. The previous repressive administration in Bangladesh also sought Israeli tech to spy on



Antony Loewenstein

dissidents of the state.

To what extent has the world changed with Israel's global reach in surveillance—through arms sales, mobile tracking technologies, and its influence over social media platforms where Palestinian content is often censored?

Israeli technology has massively influenced surveillance around the world, although there are obviously other countries that produce surveillance technology, including the US, China, and many countries in Europe. Israel is a global leader in surveillance technology and possibly among the top one or two biggest providers of surveillance worldwide.

The most prominent of these technologies often comes from the software company NSO Group and its tool, Pegasus. However, there are others, such as Paragon. They are sold to various governments, dictatorships, democracies, police forces, and intelligence services.

We are told that they are used to fight "terrorism and crime," but actually they are often used by those states with clearly the knowledge of both NSO Group and the Israeli government, to go after dissidents, critics, and human rights activists. And one of the ways that Israel—particularly since Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister many years ago—has been using these weapons and surveillance technologies is as

a diplomatic tool.

It is a way for Israel to make so-called friends. Israel says to a country, that we will sell this incredibly powerful spyware that will enable you to monitor your dissidents and people you don't like, but in return, we would like you to do certain things for us. For example, voting in a certain way in the United Nations or supporting Israel in some other way.

How do you evaluate the events of the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel's ongoing large-scale assault on Gaza?

The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, in many ways, should have revealed to the world that Israel's surveillance and military tech has failed miserably. From the Israeli perspective, more than 1,200 Israelis were killed and all their defences disappeared.



Hamas was able to overwhelm Israel's defences.

However, the reality is that many of the same companies that had been used by Israel before October 7, 2023 to provide apparent defence to Israel from Gaza and Hamas are now some of the key players in Israel's genocide in Gaza. I am talking about Elbert, Israel's biggest defence company, and others. They are using, leveraging, and testing

massive amounts of weapons in Gaza. One of the most prominent examples of this testing includes killer drones, so-called quadcopters, artificial intelligence (AI), which did exist and was used before October 7 as well.

However, Israel has massively increased the use of this AI warfare in Gaza after the Hamas attack. So, a huge number of Palestinian civilians who have been killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023 have been chosen by the so-called AI warfare tech with barely, if any, human oversight. This is because Israel's main mission in Gaza has never been about destroying Hamas or going after terrorism. Rather, it has been about destroying Gaza and making it uninhabitable.

What role can the global public opinion play in addressing the long-term Palestinian cause, especially when international pressure often fails to bring about meaningful change?

The two-state solution for Israel and Palestine is over and dead, and arguably was never going to happen. Because for decades, the Israeli politicians—and I would say many, if not most, of the Israeli Jewish public—have shown little interest in giving up the occupied territories that they control. The Israeli settler movement, which is not the majority of the Israeli public but certainly the most politically powerful, has essentially taken over the state. There is no political pressure within Israel for a two-state solution, and there is frankly no international pressure either.

The US, even before Donald Trump, essentially was allowing and supporting Israeli actions in the West Bank, Gaza, and beyond. The Europeans are mostly distracted with their own issues, with Ukraine and now Trump. The Arab countries talk about a two-state solution, but they are mostly keen on maintaining good relations outrageously and shamefully with Israel and the US. So, what I fear is that, in the short to medium terms, we are going to see what kind of already exists, which is a one-state apartheid system, where Israelis have full rights, while Palestinians remain second class citizens.

Antony Loewenstein's book The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation around the World is set to be re-published in Bangla soon.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Will Trump's tariffs shake up world leadership?



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IMTIAZ A HUSSAIN

Tariffs have an intimate relationship with world leadership among countries. The argument's premise is simple: low/no tariffs depict market competitiveness, raising tariffs implies a sinking ship. Wise leaders learn that lesson, the foolhardy punishes—not rivals, but the masses.

The US's world leadership from the 1940s would have been impossible had President Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR) not adopted the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (RTAA) in 1934. He did that to reprise global trade from the darkest 20th century depression from 1929 to 1939. Caused in part by the US, the Smoot-Hawley legislation imposing 40-60 percent tariffs on over 900 agricultural and manufactured items in June 1930, an angry UK reversed its own free trade accesses from 80 percent to 20 percent through the 1932 Ottawa Agreements, also known as the "Imperial Preference" system, based on "home producers first, empire producers second, and foreign producers last."

Two tectonic changes fed the atmosphere: a leaderless world (which hastened the slide towards World War II), and industrial revolutions destabilising society. Leadership requires followers. In the 1930s, no major country tiptoed another. Anarchy was unavoidable. On the other hand, manual production and farming suddenly faced machines and mechanisation. Just as steel-based factories encroached the RMG industry (with automobiles, tractors, and assembly lines), no-skilled manual workers felt threatened, and evicted farmers crowded towns. Above all, with countries retreating from trade, economic suffocation stared one and all.

The UK reversed the magic it used in 1846 when it eliminated tariffs on corn. Factory workers were new, paid abysmally, and could not buy food. The UK's decision bailed the



US President Richard Nixon in a meeting with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1991.

PHOTO: RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION

country out, consolidated its RMG industry's world leadership, encouraged innovations, and made it the global steel leader by the century's end. World War I punctured the British economy, but the Ottawa Agreements closed its world leadership claim. Hitherto nonchalant about world leadership, the US grabbed the opportunity. It had the critical instrument: open the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act.

In the process, it abandoned its closest 20th century ally, the UK. Doesn't that sound familiar to 2025? So, what can we learn from that?

Germany was the common enemy then,

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were born in 1944. Keynes's flamboyance mirrored the UK's imperial approach, one completely antithetical to multilateralism. Having seized the leadership baton, the US freed global trade from 1947 (through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) for a decimated world, offered Marshall Plan funding that same year to help post-war reconstruction, and built the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 to protect them. All were a tad too costly for any one country to handle.

Trade resumed, based on gold, with the US dollar displacing the British sterling (another

leadership feature), with the price fixed at \$35 for an ounce of gold. Displayed here is another leadership feature: egotism. If the price was not fixed to one currency, competition would threaten leadership. Particularly amid the Cold War in a crippled world, the US did not want that.

Yet, it paid the price in 1971. Too much free-riding on US security and money and open-ended US, bribing abroad (for military agreements), allowed several "allies" to fully recover. The more they hoarded US dollars, the more the US had to print them, the result being diminishing dollar value. President Richard Nixon had no choice but to devalue the currency for the first time in the century, even face the first trade deficit in the century (of just under half a billion dollars, a far cry from the near trillion-dollar annual deficits today). It was debilitating.

As one of two US instruments of world leadership (military being the other), the dollar survived the 1971 shift to a floating exchange rate system because countries preferred to free-ride the US than compete with it against the haunting Soviet threat. Even on the military front, the US faced a speedbump: it signed the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT)-1 with the Soviet Union because its enemy had caught up with intercontinental ballistic missiles, then it overtook the US by the 1980s. None other than a Hollywood president could steer a fantasy *Star Wars* into reality during the 1980s. The Soviet Union could not afford to follow suit. Mikhail Gorbachev sued for peace, and Glasnost from 1986 ended the Cold War while it was still "cold," meaning no battlefield exchanges pitted the two superpowers against each other.

Like the UK in the 1920s, the US, after the Cold War, did not notice how other countries were catching up economically. One soon launched its own US challenge: China. Interesting how US ping-pong diplomacy thinking in 1971 enamoured China excessively for defeating the Soviet camp.

Two issues crop up here: is there any "exit" from Trump's tariffs? And what can other countries do, especially Bangladesh?

Printing too much money and tailoring too many wars demand a less punitive US response: too much is at stake for the US to not flow with, rather than against, other

countries. Targeting China and its own closest friends (from Canada and Mexico next door to Cold War transatlantic partners, and those countries it gave a "second chance" to, like Japan, South Korea, perhaps Taiwan, and so forth), merely beckons the 1930s atmosphere and places the blame squarely upon the country that ended the depression then. Even if deals are made, spillovers will change the ballgame. Tourism is already plunging, with US destinations drastically hit, as two million Canadians will seek other destinations than Florida or Texas. According to Economic Tourism's mid-March projections, expected US visitors would reverse from an 8.8 percent growth this year to a 5.1 percent fall, just as US income from them would fall 11.1 percent, or by \$19 billion. New US partners might isolate the country globally, and students globally have begun to find a Plan B to enrolling in US universities. By elevating two persons, the International Criminal Court has put on its "wanted" list Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Russia's Vladimir Putin. The trademark US phrase, "In God we trust," might not find any global buyers anymore. Stable partnerships may be gone for a long time. Long-term consequences thereafter only look bleaker.

Bangladesh's cardinal lesson is to do what the US did in 1934: build reciprocal trade agreements as a step towards forging new partnerships.

Opening Southeast Asian countries and resuscitating the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) cannot be delayed further. Since neither region prioritises RMG importers, fortunately for Bangladesh, it must (finally) rev up other industrial sectors: pharmaceuticals, motorcycles, bicycles, automobiles, and hi-tech services/products. This does not mean abandoning RMG factories; relocating them across Africa or selective Latin countries, while also emphasising hi-fashion more than fast fashion may be Bangladesh's pathway to ensure that the LDC graduation next year goes smoothly. Partnerships are Bangladesh's only "be all and end all" option. Fortunately, because of Trump's policies, many countries will be looking for partners. In international relations, figures like Donald Trump will come and go, but their country will remain. Keeping that card up our sleeve, we shouldn't fail.

BASAR PERSEVERES through setbacks

SHARMIN JOYA

Even after Eid, the festive spirit hasn't faded. While the excitement around film releases continues, small-screen projects are still making their way to audiences.

Among the most featured actors, Khairul Basar stands out, starring in 15 projects that are being released one after another. So far, seven have premiered, including *Golper Naam Maya* directed by Shetu Arif, *Shohore Joto Rong* by Syed Shakil, *Manush Ki Bolbe* by Ashikur Rahman, *Payel* by Sayful Hafiz Khan, and *Jodi Amar How* by Serniabat Shawon, among others, while others are on the line.

In the productions mentioned above, Tanjin Tisha, Tanjim Saiera Totini, Keya Payel, Orchita Sporshia, and Safa Kabir have respectively starred opposite Basar.

"Among those released, *Golper Naam Maya*, *Shohore Joto Rong*, and *Manush Ki Bolbe* have received a strong response. *Payel*, on the other hand, stands out visually – it has impressive cinematography," shared the actor.

Reflecting on his favourite projects this Eid,

Upon asking when he would return to the silver screen, he shared that the production company would better know when his films will appear. Some of his projects lined up are—*Bonolota Sen*, *Sharey Tin Haat Bhumi*, and a short film *Moutali Pithar Ghran*.

Basar said, "*Manush Ki Bolbe* is special to me as its plot feels particularly relevant today. We often worry too much about what others think or say about our actions. In doing so, we tend to lose sight of what's right and what truly matters. This is a serious concern, and we must act according to our conscience rather than public opinion."

Basar returned in front of the camera immediately after the Eid break, joining a shoot in Sreemangal for yet another project. His schedule is already booked until the third week of May for Eid-ul-Azha projects. "I will be working with Vicky *bhai* (Vicky Zahed), Pothi Shadhon, Serniabat Shawon, and Ishfaq Ahmed Rumel—so far, we've locked in the dates."

The actor has been equally appreciated on both OTT platforms and the silver screen, notably for *Mohanagar* and *Kajol Rekha*, respectively. However, in recent times, he has been focusing more on small-screen projects. "It's not about the medium, it's the work that truly matters," he said. "People

recognise me wherever I go, and that's largely thanks to my appearances on television. I feel truly blessed. Once, an elderly lady told me she was never a fan of dramas until she saw one of mine. Since then, she's followed my work regularly. What more could I possibly ask for?"

As a matter of fact, the actor revealed that he had been dropped from several OTT projects, as the platforms opted for other artistes. "I was tied up with the shoot for Masud Hasan Ujjal's *Bonolota Sen* for nearly 18 months, and during that period, I couldn't take on any additional work. Later, I was confirmed for a couple of projects, but, regrettably, at the eleventh hour, I was informed that—despite the director's preference—I had been replaced due to the platform's demands. Such decisions are truly disheartening."

Upon asking when he would return to the silver screen, he shared that the production company would better know when his films will appear. Some of his projects lined up are—*Bonolota Sen*, *Sharey Tin Haat Bhumi*, and a short film *Moutali Pithar Ghran*.

Basar believes the market for commercial films is steadily expanding, and this Eid, films like *Daagi*, *Borbaad*, *Jongli*, and *Chokkor 302* truly resonated with audiences. "Although I usually take on—or am offered—projects with more archival value, I recognise the importance of a thriving commercial film industry for its overall growth. Moreover, I think we need to focus more on stories of resilience, narratives rooted in humanity—not merely those driven by violence, but ones that appeal to the conscience and speak to our sense of discernment."

Meanwhile, the actor is set to begin work on Tanvir Mokammel's upcoming project, which is based on a popular piece of lyrical poetry by the beloved rural poet, Palli Kabi Jasim Uddin. Filming is scheduled to commence in October.

As our phone conversation neared its end, Basar briefly asked to hold the line. Returning moments later, he shared that a young man had approached him during the call, patiently waiting to take a selfie with his favourite actor. "It's these gestures from people that give me a reason to smile. As an artiste, I feel fulfilled."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA

Bangladesh Press Photo Contest 2025
EXHIBITION
April 19-30 | 3pm-8pm
DrikPath Bhabon, Panthapath

Save the Environment
MD ABU SALIM
EXHIBITION
April 25-May 6 | 3pm-9pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi

Where The Spirit Meets The Bone
April 25-May 8 | 4:30pm-8pm
Satori Academy of Arts, Banani

1-MINUTE REVIEW

'Test' spins a gripping tale beyond the match



Test, the directorial debut of S Sashikanth, is a deeply human sports thriller that rises above plot gimmicks to focus on emotionally charged character journeys.

Set against the backdrop of a high-stakes India-Pakistan test match, it follows a struggling inventor, a grieving teacher, a legendary cricketer, and a corrupt

tycoon—all interconnected by fate and ambition.

R Madhavan, Nayanthara, and Siddharth shine in layered roles that explore love, loss, resilience, and redemption. The film's brilliance lies not in twists, but in its honest portrayal of how life's "tests" often arrive unannounced.

Beautiful transitions, thoughtful storytelling, and a stirring score make *Test* an immersive watch. While the final act falters with a few rushed resolutions, the heartfelt core remains intact.

Inspired by real-life grit, *Test* is a moving reminder that our biggest battles often unfold off the field. With heart, craft, and soul, Sashikanth delivers a memorable debut that puts humanity at the heart of it all.

WHAT'S PLAYING

'CRY FOR ME'

by The Weeknd

The Weeknd returns to heartbreak territory with *Cry for Me*, a soul-baring ballad from his latest album *Hurry Up Tomorrow*. Floating on melancholic synths and a steady, mournful beat, the track captures the raw ache of post-breakup solitude, with the singer confronting the emotional fallout of a lost love.

The chorus—"And I hope you cry for me like I cry for you"—finds The Weeknd at his most vulnerable, pleading for reciprocity from someone he once envisioned a lifetime with.

Echoes of his past relationship with model Bella Hadid surface subtly in the lyric "In this penthouse prison, I'm alone,"

referencing the LA apartment he bought shortly after their 2019 split.

Cry for Me has already struck a chord with fans, emerging as a standout on the album and making its way onto heartbreak-themed playlists across streaming platforms. With its atmospheric production and confessional tone, the song continues The Weeknd's legacy of blending emotional depth with sleek alt R&B stylings.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
You



Apple TV+
Your Friends & Neighbors



Disney+
Andor



Prime Video
The Bondsman



Chorki
Testimony of A Thread



STYLE STATEMENT

LALISA MANOBAL

Blackpink's Lisa captivated Coachella for the second consecutive weekend last week, commanding the Sahara Tent with a fierce solo performance from her new album *Alter Ego*. Making a bold style declaration, she donned custom Asher Levine creations—designs that echoed the theatrical flair of Levine's work with icons like Lil Nas X, Doja Cat, and Nicki Minaj.

Lisa's opening ensemble was a sculpted, skintight bodysuit accented with reptilian shoulder spikes—an embodiment of her "villain alter ego." Her half-updo with intricate braids, smoky eyed makeup with rhinestones, and a dark pink lip colour completed the striking transformation.

Standing tall on the stage, she cemented her status as a pop star and fashion trailblazer.



Bangladesh miss out on hockey's Asia Cup spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have failed to qualify for the Asia Cup hockey tournament for the first time following a 5-4 defeat against Oman in the semifinals of the AHF Cup – a second-tier continental competition which serves as a qualifying platform in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday.

The men in red and green, who came into the semifinals with an all-win record in the group stage despite often not being very convincing, paid the price for a poor defensive display against the high-pressing and speedy Omani forwards.

The four-time defending champions Bangladesh had taken a 2-1 lead in the second quarter after conceding an eighth-minute lead but three goals in the span of five minutes all but sent Mamunur Rashid's charges out of the contest.

While Bangladesh will miss out on the 12th edition of the Asia Cup, Oman and Chinese Taipei will be there as the last two teams and will also fight for the AHF Cup title.

» **April 12:** Mohammedan skipper Towhid Hridoy was suspended for one game after a heated exchange with on-field umpires Tanvir Ahmed and Sharuddoula Ibne Shahid Saikat during a Dhaka Premier League fixture against Abahani in Mirpur. Hridoy exacerbated the situation after the match by telling the media, "He [Saikat] is an international umpire and we respect him. But we are also international players."

» **April 13:** Following Hridoy's comments to the media, he was handed three more demerit points, making it seven in total. The match referee then handed him a two-match ban along with a fine of Tk 80,000.

» **April 17:** Hridoy didn't play in Mohammedan's first DPL Super League game against Legends of Rupganj. Mohammedan lost by nine wickets.

» **April 20:** Hridoy was named in Mohammedan's playing XI against Agrani Bank Cricket Club in their second Super League match at BKSP-3. When both BCB and CCDM were asked about the ban reduction, none could offer a clear answer. Mohammedan officials claimed that they appealed for reduction of the ban and the CCDM responded by reducing the ban. Technical committee member Enamul Haque Moni said he was unsure how the suspension was reduced and also resigned from his position.

» **April 22:** Saikat threatened to quit domestic umpiring over alleged inconsistencies in the handling of Hridoy's ban.

» **April 23:** BCB director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim was appointed as convener of the technical committee in place of Moni.

» **April 24:** Fahim said in the media that Hridoy will be suspended for his team's upcoming DPL match against Gazi Group.

» **April 25:** Several national team and domestic cricketers led by Tamim Iqbal gathered at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the morning. After a meeting among themselves, they met BCB president Faruque Ahmed. Later, BCB deferred the suspension to next season.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Bagha Sharif (L) tries to outmuscle Rashed Boli in the final of the 116th edition of Abdul Jabbarer Boli Khela, a traditional wrestling event, at the Laldighi Maidan in Chattogram on Friday. Sharif, from Homna in Cumilla, won the 45-minute fight to retain the title of the traditional wrestling event, beating the same man he had beaten to claim his maiden title last year.

BCB's failure highlighted in Hridoy saga

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The circus surrounding the way the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) handled the suspension episode of Mohammedan captain Towhid Hridoy gathered further wind on Friday.

In the end, according to a BCB press release on Friday, the enforcement of Hridoy's suspension was deferred over a 12-month period as the DPL technical Committee nullified the memo from the umpire's committee which had revised the sanction table whereby seven demerit points equate to one match suspension.

This reversal happened following protests from cricketers, only a day after Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis' (CCDM) technical committee convener and BCB director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim had informed the media that Hridoy was set to be suspended for Mohammedan's crucial Dhaka Premier League (DPL) Super League match against Gazi Group in Mirpur today.

On Friday morning, cricketers arrived at the Mirpur Academy Ground premises, and following talks between themselves, the players met with BCB president Faruque Ahmed. Hridoy's suspension, which was handed down due to his altercation with on-field umpires in a DPL game against Abahani earlier this month, was the biggest issue in that meeting, alongside other issues that Tamim Iqbal later mentioned in his press

brief. Cricketers claimed to have felt disrespected by the way Hridoy's suspension was reduced and then reinstated. However, disrespect of umpires was not mentioned in the press brief.

"After he [Hridoy] played two matches, we heard yesterday [Thursday] that he has been suspended again. I don't know which rule was followed in this case. We



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

were concerned. It's very funny. How can you suspend a guy again after he had already served his suspension and was allowed to play two games by the BCB? How can you suspend him again?" Tamim said.

Tamim was right when he said what had already transpired in Hridoy's suspension saga, even before yesterday, had been "funny". And to make it even funnier, the latest episode saw Hridoy's suspension deferred to next season.

Hridoy had been handed four demerit points and suspended for a match for an altercation with the

umpires during the match against Abahani. Later, the technical committee handed him another three demerit points for the comments he made in the media afterwards. Since it was a level 2 offence under the BCB Code of Conduct, he was to be suspended for two matches. But this is where the toxic culture of club cricket came into play as several departments were pressured into reducing Hridoy's suspension.

This led to the resignation of the then technical committee convener Enamul Haque Moni. Bangladesh's only umpire in the ICC Elite Panel, Sharuddoula Ibne Shahid Saikat, also made an ultimatum to quit domestic cricket over the way the issue was handled.

It is apparent that the umpiring committee or relevant structures of CCDM were not able to work according to their decorum.

While Mohammedan had initially stated that they received a letter from CCDM which confirmed that Hridoy's suspension was reduced, later they claimed the suspension was deferred.

However, CCDM chairman Mohammad Salahuddin later revealed they had sent no such letter either about the sentence being reduced or being deferred to next season.

It is clear that no proper process was followed in this entire saga. As it seems, the Hridoy fiasco ultimately happened because the BCB allowed it to happen.

Mohammedan face Abahani in high-stakes clash today

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club can take a massive step today in their bid to claim a first-ever professional league title when they play archrivals Abahani in the 12th round game of the Bangladesh Premier League in Cumilla on Saturday.

A win for the Black and Whites will see them forge a seven-point lead over the six-time professional league winners, with only six round of matches remaining after this fixture.

Mohammedan, who lost the one-off Challenge Cup against Bashundhara Kings at the start of the season and failed to qualify for the playoff rounds of the Federation Cup, will be eager to bring home their first-ever Bangladesh Premier League trophy.

Abahani, meanwhile, are locked in a battle with Bashundhara Kings in the postponed Federation Cup final which will be completed next Tuesday. A win for the Sky Blues, meanwhile, would definitely turn the BPL into a two-horse racing, with only one point separating the two sides.

The two sides met each other twice this season – Mohammedan winning the first meeting on December 14 last year in the first leg of the league, thanks to a decisive goal from Soleymane Diabate. Abahani had a quick revenge, winning their Federation Cup group stage fixture on January 7 by the same margin, this time Mohammad Ibrahim was the goalscorer. Both those matches were held in Cumilla.

Meanwhile Bangladesh Police moved into fourth position on the 10-team table following a 1-0 win over Dhaka Wanderers Club in Mymensingh, with Jakhongir Qurbanboyev scoring the all-important goal in the 84th minute. The win took Police to 19 points from 12 matches, one ahead of Rahmatganj, while Wanderers remained in ninth position with only four points.

In the other match of the day at the Bashundhara Kings Arena, 10-man Fortis FC were held to a 1-1 draw by Fakirpool Young Men's Club.

Ojukwu David gave Fortis, who are now in sixth position with 18 points, a 33rd-minute lead before they were reduced to 10 men following a straight red card to Sarowar Jahan in the second half. Ben Ibrahim Ouattara equalised for Fakirpool in the 65th minute to snatch a point.



Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz speak with each other as Bangladesh and Zimbabwe teams head inside the team hotel in Chattogram on Friday for the second and final Test. Having suffered a three-wicket defeat in the first Test in Sylhet last week, Bangladesh will hope to bounce back at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium, with the match slated to begin on Monday.

COPA DEL REY

Clasico final offers Real Madrid redemption

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's European failure this season stung, in particular for striker Kylian Mbappe and coach Carlo Ancelotti, but a Copa del Rey final victory over Barcelona on Saturday would rapidly ease the pain.

Los Blancos crashed out of the Champions League 5-1 on aggregate against Arsenal earlier in April, while their arch rivals Barca progressed to the semifinals for the first time since 2019.

The Catalans are dreaming of a potential quadruple, and Madrid may take as much satisfaction in ending that possibility by lifting the Copa del Rey themselves.

Barcelona's thrilling attacking football has also powered them to first place in LaLiga, four points ahead of defending champions Madrid, with five matches remaining.

When he appeared on big screens at the Santiago Bernabeu last weekend, some fans whistled him -- although at Madrid, the occasional barracking is a rite of passage for the biggest stars. Even their all-time top goalscorer, Cristiano Ronaldo, suffered a similar fate.

If Ancelotti can find the formula to throw off Barcelona's rhythm, it would



This will be the 37th meeting between Barcelona and Real Madrid in the Copa del Rey; Barca currently lead the head-to-head 16 to 13 (eight draws).

Barcelona are the competition's most decorated side, lifting the trophy 31 times, while Madrid rank third with 20 wins.



prove doubly useful as the teams meet again on May 11 in a huge clash in the title race.

Despite netting 33 goals this season across all competitions, Madrid's top scorer, to some, Mbappe has become the face of a disappointing and potentially disastrous season.

When he appeared on big screens at the Santiago Bernabeu last weekend, some fans whistled him -- although at Madrid, the occasional barracking is a rite of passage for the biggest stars. Even their all-time top goalscorer, Cristiano Ronaldo, suffered a similar fate.

Real coach Ancelotti is widely expected

to be sacked at the end of the season, even though he has one more year on his deal, but ending his time at Madrid with one, or possibly two more trophies would be a fitting conclusion to a largely successful second spell.

Mbappe's recent ankle injury may offer the coach a reason to start the match without the French forward and keep him as a dynamic option for the second half.

However, Mbappe struck both of Madrid's goals in the January defeat in Saudi Arabia and, despite the recent whistles, has been the team's best player in 2025 -- not deploying him from the off may be too risky.

Female athletes ecstatic after 'unique' Qatar visit

SPORTS REPORTER

The four female athletes who accompanied Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus during his visit in Qatar returned home yesterday and expressed gratitude for the unique honour they received and shared their amazement at the state-of-the-art sports facility in the gulf nation.

The Chief Adviser recently made a four-day visit to Qatar to attend The Earthna Summit 2025 with a group of delegates. Four female athletes – footballers Afeda Khandakar and Shaheda Akter Ripa and cricketers Sumaiya Akter and Sharmin Sultana – were invited by the Qatar Foundation and accompanied him in the visit.

"We are very happy to be a part of the Chief Adviser's team and it has been a big achievement for all four of us from the sports arena because we represented the entire Bangladeshi sporting fraternity in Qatar," said Bangladeshi women's football team captain Afeda at the official press conference at the Foreign Service Academy in Doha.

It was the first time Bangladeshi athletes accompanied the head of the state in an official visit to another country.

"It was the first time that we travelled with the head of the government in Qatar as his companions and we are happy to be a part of it," cricketer



Sharmi said. "We had a unique experience there as we met with CEO of Qatar Foundation Sheikha Hind [bint Hamad Al Thani] and spoke about different things with her and visited some places like Education Stadium, Lusail Stadium, Aspiration Academy and indoor facilities which are very different to Bangladesh."

The four players also visited a Paris Saint Germain (PSG) academy in Qatar where two footballers played some 10 minutes with the academy players and visited Al Thumama Stadium which hosted the World Cup quarterfinal match between Portugal and Morocco.

Footballer Ripa said that they had a detailed discussion on what types of facilities they need with the chief of Qatar Foundation who also promised them to provide as

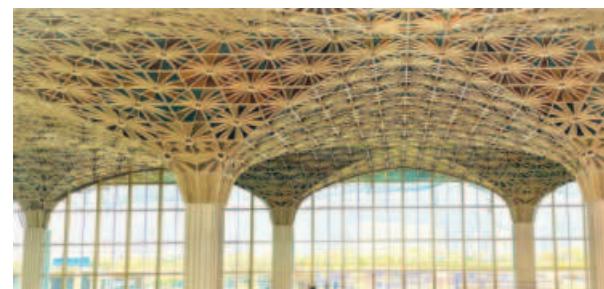
"We hardly have any facilities for injury-recovery in Bangladesh but Qatar has world class facilities where players like Naymar, [Cristiano] Ronaldo came for treatment. She [Sheikha Hind] told us that she would try to provide such facilities."

Terming the visit of four female athletes with the Chief Adviser as a new start, deputy press secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder said, "Though Qatar hasn't specifically promised anything but they told us that they would build a dormitory and a gymnasium for female athletes and provide injury rehabilitation facility."

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Hold local polls before national election Jamaat urges EC

UNB, Mymensingh

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday urged the authorities to hold local government polls before the national election in order to demonstrate the Election Commission's sincerity and capability.

"The Election Commission claims it will deliver the best election in the country's history. We want an acid test. Hold local elections first and let us see your sincerity and capability," he said at a party event in Mymensingh.

People are suffering due to the absence of elected local government representatives, he said. "Hold the local polls first... If people are satisfied, they will support you fully in the future. But if irregularities are found, people will show you a red card."

He then criticised
SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Ilias Kanchan forms new political party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pledging to build a land of justice, a new political party -- "Janata Party Bangladesh" (People's Party Bangladesh) -- was launched yesterday under the leadership of noted actor and road safety activist Ilias Kanchan.

Journalist Shaukat Mahmood, a former BNP vice-chairman, has been named the party's secretary general and former state minister for education Golam Sarwar Milon as its spokesperson.



The party brings together politicians, journalists, lawyers, retired army officers, and former bureaucrats.

With the slogan "Gorbo Mora Insafer Desh", the party's formation was announced at an event in the InterContinental Dhaka. There, Ilias Kanchan announced the names of the 27-member ad hoc committee, while Shaukat revealed the party's name and read out its manifesto.

Reading from a statement, Shaukat said, "Bangladesh's history bears witness to the emergence of new political parties following every mass uprising, revolution, and movement, inspired by the spirit of those struggles. As the state is going

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Bites on gladiator bones first evidence of combat with lion

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A Roman gladiator's skeleton has provided the first piece of physical evidence of combat between a human and a large cat, archaeologists said.

The skeleton, likely of a man who died between the ages of 26 and 35, shows bite marks on the pelvis from a big cat, which could have been a lion, archaeologists said in a new study published in the journal PLOS ONE.

The remains were discovered in the Driffield Terrace cemetery outside the city of York, UK. It was one of over 80 skeletons excavated there in 2004.

The burials at the site ranged from the early second century AD to the late fourth century AD, meaning the man was buried between 1,825 and 1,725 years ago.

A forensic examination of the skeleton found "unusual" deep holes and bite marks on the pelvis in what the study described as a "hugely exciting find".

"We believe this to be the first example that a bite mark has been identified on such remains," Prof Tim Thompson, the new study's lead author from Maynooth University in Ireland, said.



Relatives mourn near the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes (not pictured), at Nasser Hospital, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

WFP runs out of food stocks in Gaza

Israeli airstrikes kill 78 more as ceasefire talks stall

REUTERS, Geneva/Cairo

The World Food Programme yesterday said it had run out of food stocks in Gaza due to the sustained closure of crossings into the enclave, while Gaza authorities said Israeli airstrikes had killed at least 78 people in the past 24 hours.

"The WFP has depleted all its food stocks for families in Gaza," a WFP statement said, adding the UN agency yesterday delivered its last remaining food stocks to hot meals kitchens in Gaza.

"These kitchens are expected to fully run out of food in the coming days," it added.

The agency said no humanitarian or commercial supplies had entered Gaza for more than seven weeks as all main border crossing points remained closed, resulting in the longest closure the Gaza Strip had ever faced.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump yesterday said that he pushed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow food and medicine into the devastated Gaza Strip.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump was asked whether concerns about humanitarian aid access came up in his phone call with Netanyahu earlier this week.

Israel has previously denied that Gaza is facing a hunger crisis. The military accuses the Hamas militants who have run Gaza of exploiting aid - which Hamas denies - and says it must keep all supplies out to prevent the fighters from getting it.

Since March 2, Israel completely cut off all supplies to the 2.3 million residents of the Gaza Strip, and food stockpiled during a ceasefire at

the start of the year has all but run out.

WFP warned that if the aid blockage was not lifted it might be forced to end its critical assistance.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office yesterday said that famine is no longer a looming threat and is becoming a reality.

Yesterday, the Gaza health ministry said Israeli airstrikes killed at least 78 people in different areas of the enclave in the past 24 hours.

Residents said Israeli forces operating in

Shejaiya and Rafah in northern and southern Gaza blew up clusters of homes overnight.

Citing attacks initiated from those areas, the Israeli military ordered residents of Beit Hanoun and the Beit Lahiya towns to leave their homes in a post published on X by an army spokesperson late on Thursday.

The new orders caused a new wave of displacement as many families began leaving their homes in the early hours on Friday, according to witnesses.

The release said a search committee would soon be formed to appoint new officials.

In the interim, a senior professor would be temporarily assigned to discharge the duties of the vice-chancellor.

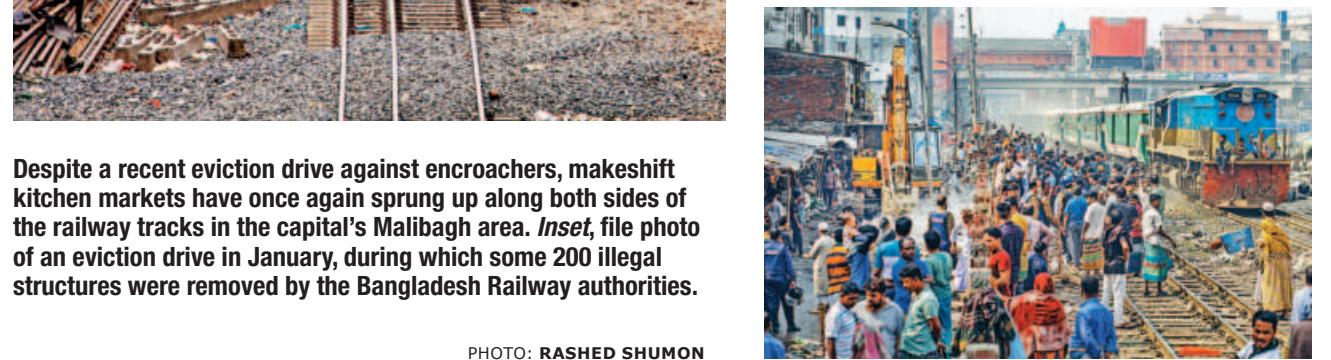
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Despite a recent eviction drive against encroachers, makeshift kitchen markets have once again sprung up along both sides of the railway tracks in the capital's Malibagh area. Inset, file photo of an eviction drive in January, during which some 200 illegal structures were removed by the Bangladesh Railway authorities.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Heatwave to persist till tomorrow

Rain expected Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A persistent heatwave continued its sweep across the nation for the fifth consecutive day yesterday, with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) forecasting the intense conditions lasting till tomorrow.

Relief is expected to begin from Monday as increased rainfall is predicted across the country.

The discomfort has been worsened by a lack of rainfall. Out of 51 BMD stations, only Sylhet recorded precipitation, receiving just 27mm of rainfall in 24 hours till 6.00am yesterday. This absence of rainfall is causing people to experience a "felt" temperature significantly higher than the actual mercury readings.

Dr Abdul Kalam Mallik, a senior meteorologist at the BMD, told The Daily Star that relief is on the horizon. "Temperature will start to fall from Monday as rainfall may increase in different places, and it will continue till the first week of May."

Rain or thunder showers accompanied by lightning flashes and temporary gusty winds are likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, and Sylhet divisions in the coming days.

While Dhaka's temperature saw a slight drop to 34.6°C yesterday from the day before's 35.6°C, Dr Mallik noted that high humidity levels made the felt temperature for

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Trump poised to offer Saudi Arabia over \$100b arms package: sources

REUTERS, Washington/Riyadh

The United States is poised to offer Saudi Arabia an arms package worth well over \$100 billion, six sources with direct knowledge of the issue told Reuters, saying the proposal was being lined up for announcement during US President Donald Trump's visit to the kingdom in May.



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kuet VC, pro-VC removed from posts
Gazette issued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has officially relieved Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Masud and Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Sheikh Shariful Alam of their duties following student protests.

The decision was confirmed through two separate notifications signed by ASM Kashem, senior assistant secretary of the ministry's Secondary and Higher Education Division.

According to the notifications issued yesterday, the two officials will now return to their respective academic departments.

On Wednesday, the information ministry said the government had initiated steps to relieve the two officials to resolve the ensuing crisis and resume academic activities promptly.

The release said a search committee would soon be formed to appoint new officials.

In the interim, a senior professor would be temporarily assigned to discharge the duties of the vice-chancellor.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A US defence official said, "Our defence relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is stronger than ever under President Trump's leadership. Maintaining our security cooperation remains an important component of this partnership and we will continue to work with Saudi Arabia to address their defense needs."

In his first term, Trump celebrated weapons sales to Saudi Arabia as good for US jobs.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Car bomb kills senior Russian military officer near MOSCOW Kremlin blames Ukraine

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin blamed Ukraine for a car bomb that killed a senior Russian military officer near Moscow yesterday, hours before US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff was due to meet President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

There was no official comment from Kyiv on the death of 59-year-old Yaroslav Moskalik, the latest in a series of Russian military officers and pro-war figures to be assassinated since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Witkoff met Putin to discuss US proposals for ending the war, now well into its fourth year.

"The Kyiv regime once again simply shows its true nature. The Kyiv regime continues to be involved in terrorist activity on the territory of our country," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a state TV reporter.

"It shows once again that, despite the peace talks, we must be on guard

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Akbar Khalifa engrossed in his work.



Abdur Rob repairing a luggage at New Market.

PHOTOS: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

THE ART OF THE FIX

How luggage repairers save your travel companion



Repairing luggage is simple work, but good service is always a challenge. Cobblers can fix a suitcase, yes, but their repairs rarely last. Our expertise is in making it last for years. Abdur Rob

A luggage repairer

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

There is something comforting about that familiar zip, the reassuring click of a sturdy wheel rolling across a polished airport floor, the reassuring heft of your suitcase as you navigate new cities and distant horizons. For many of us, luggage is more than a box on wheels; it is a trusted companion on every journey, bearing witness to the last-minute changes we make before chasing sunsets in Cox's Bazar or the steep terrains of Sajek or the confusing dwelling we make after landing abroad.

But what happens when that trusty companion is damaged? When its wheel chews up pavement or its shell cracks under airline baggage handling? The telescopic handle buckles under the weight of last-minute souvenirs. The seam

and modern entrepreneurship.

THE SELF TAUGHT MAESTRO OF LUGGAGE REPAIRING

On any given day at New Market in Dhaka, among the cacophony of chatter and calls from street vendors, you might spot small, open-fronted workshops with no glossy signage, no air-conditioning but these are where the magic of luggage repair unfolds day after day.

One such stall belongs to Md Joynal Abedin, a self-taught maestro of the mended suitcase. Joynal is quick to show you his toolkit which includes various types of zippers, replacement wheels in neat rows, sturdy handles waiting to be refitted. But his story did not begin here.

"I worked at President, the luggage company, for more than 20 years," Joynal recalled, carefully replacing a broken wheel. "At first, I did repairs part-time alongside

quality and effort, Joynal said. Such prices, he argued, are small in comparison to the cost of a new suitcase and far kinder to our planet as repairs make luggage sustainable instead of ending up in landfills.

Nearby, in a quieter corner of the market, sat Akbar Khalifa also known as Farid Khalifa, a veteran in the craft. His weathered hands, traced with lines like vines of memory, moved with precision as he fixed a zipper on a bag. His eyes lit up as he spoke of distant Karachi, the place where his journey began.

Recalling about his past life, Farid said, "I came to Bangladesh from Karachi, Pakistan a long time ago. I used to work in a factory which used to manufacture suitcases made of leather. After the closure of that factory, I ended up working alone to support my family."

Regarding his family, Farid mentioned that his eldest son is a teacher at a local school. "I am just counting my last few days," said the 72-year-old with a smile on a wrinkled face full of white beard.

WHERE TRADITION MERGES WITH TECH

If Joynal and Farid represent the enduring heart of the trade, then Tusher, founder of "A to Z Bag Repair", embodies its modern evolution. Tusher, a second-generation repairer who has stitched tradition to technology, runs not one but four workshops in Dhaka's New Market, Lalbagh, New Super Market and Farmgate area. He is currently planning to build a new shop in Mirpur.

Tusher has embraced social media to transform the old-fashioned trade into a modern SME (Small and Medium Enterprise). Unlike

A luggage is not just a luggage. It is a friend that carries hopes, dreams and footprints across the world alongside you. And like any true friend, it deserves a second chance. So, instead of delivering them to the landfill, bring it to one of the repairers, and let the art of the fix keep your memories on the move.



"I have a home service where my team goes to the houses of clients and fix their luggage. I get around 20 orders per day with a surge before the time of Hajj. Almost 80 percent of my clients currently come from online."

a suitcase, yes, but their repairs rarely last. Our expertise is in making it last for years."

"A lock might cost Tk 150, or it could be over a thousand," he said. "A cheap suitcase needs cheap parts, but premium bags deserve the best materials if you want them to last."

MORE THAN JUST REPAIRS

Luggage repair is an art that marries metalwork, leathercraft, engineering and empathy. It requires knowing how to splice a broken handle without weakening the frame alongside how to extract a torn zip without stressing the fabric, and how to rebalance a pair of wheels to glide even over lumps of cobble and airport tiles alike.

Walking through these alleys, watching Joynal oiling a revolving wheel or Farid threading a new zipper or Abdur Rob making a swift full chain change, is to glimpse the beating heart of Bangladesh's small business spirit. These artisans do more than fix cases as they sustain livelihoods, preserve memories and challenge the throw away culture that seems to sweep so effortlessly across our globe.

Consider the young traveller who set off for a weekend in Cox's Bazar only to find a wheel shattered on arrival, their beachside photos still on micro-SD, but their suitcase compromised. A visit to the repairer's workshop restored both their case and heart, reminding the individual that we do not always need to discard what is broken. Sometimes, we merely need a skilled hand to set it right.

So, next time your trolley wheel shudders, your handle jams or your zip gives way, pause and consider these artisans and their patient hands, waiting in their modest workstations to repair what you treasure. For a few hundred takas, you can reclaim not only an object but a vessel of nostalgia, ready to roll onwards into your next adventure.

After all, a luggage is not just a luggage. It is a friend that carries hopes, dreams and footprints across the world alongside you. And like any true friend, it deserves a second chance. So, instead of delivering them to the landfill, bring it to one of the repairers, and let the art of the fix keep your memories on the move.



gives way after one too many hasty zip-ups. Often, our first instinct is to discard the damaged luggage and buy a new one which is an impulse that, beyond the expense, sits uncomfortably against the pleasures of nostalgia, thrift and sustainability.

Thankfully, across Dhaka and in many corners of the world, there exists a small army of skilled artisans who specialise in breathing new life into battered suitcases and weary backpacks. These are the luggage repairers, custodians of travel memories, who can restore your damaged case within hours, often for a fraction of the cost of replacement.

Their small dusty workshops are lifelines for travellers. Every workstation has a human tale behind it, one of self-taught expertise, intergenerational craftsmanship

my job there. About ten years ago, I decided to make it my full-time work," he added.

Joynal's decision was not one born of luxury but of love for the craft, and for his family. His eldest son now works for the very same President company where Joynal began, while another studies at the Dhaka University and the youngest attends primary school. His income of around Tk 70,000 per month supports their education and daily needs.

"Travellers bring their suitcases, sometimes broken in three places," Joynal said with a smile. "Fixing a crack might cost Tk 200 to over Tk 500. Wheels range from Tk 600 to over Tk 1,000. A wash is about Tk 500 to Tk 600. And if you need the zip chain repaired, it's Tk 50 to Tk 110 but for a full chain replacement it's around Tk 300 to over Tk 500," he added.

However, the price of fixing luggage may vary depending on

traditional luggage repairing businesses, which are mostly in-person, he has made a strong social media presence through which he markets most of his services online.



FICTION

THE THIEF

ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

While waiting for Abha, Farid Shaheb picks up the Bangla and English newspapers on his table. Reading through the Bangla paper, even for a few moments, puts him in a foul mood. Filled with news of theft, robbery, and rape, it's as if the country is being overrun by criminals.

MD RIZWANUL ISLAM

Farid Shaheb earned a fair bit at the office today. These days, because of the Anti Corruption Commission and newspaper journalists' incessant pestering, he can no longer directly take the money offered to him. But it isn't as if Farid Shaheb forces anyone to give him this money—people who come to the office hand it over rather gladly, as a token of appreciation for his work. Still, he refrains from accepting any money himself anymore; Kuddus Mia, the office clerk, takes care of whatever needs to be done. There's no predicting when some scoundrel might record one of his transactions on a phone or hidden camera and leak it on Facebook or YouTube. Although he would much prefer handling these dealings himself—there would be no risk of theft that way—he doesn't mind having his clerk deal with the money either. He keeps a record of the work he does throughout the day, so the clerk would not be able to pocket anything from the day's earnings even if he wanted to—Farid Shaheb would catch him immediately.

If people are so willing to give him the money, he doesn't understand why he would be wrong to take it. The newspaper lot are content with simply writing their reports and moving on; what would they know about the torment he had to suffer through to get this job? They didn't give him this job for nothing. He had to compete with thousands and thousands of candidates to earn his position. And it's because of such an excellent job that his relatives turn to him for every occasion—be it at weddings or other celebrations, he can never take small presents; even when it comes to donating to schools and colleges or mosques in the vicinity, his name is put forth first. Only the other day, Boro Chacha sent him a letter about how the mosque in their village was falling to pieces and in need of immediate repair. How could he turn Chacha down, especially when

he was working such a great job? Of course he would have to send the man some money. And where was this money supposed to come from? The two-paisa salary he earns pays for nothing.

Farid Shaheb asks his wife to take the bag from him and carefully keep it in the almirah. His wife, Abha, has always been a clever woman, and meticulous too. Farid Shaheb brings home bags like these on most days, so Abha knows that they must be set aside with care. There are never any oversights in such matters. Abha is busy cooking teriyaki chicken for her husband when he calls, but comes along swiftly to take the bag from him with a smile, and puts it away in the almirah.

Abha says, "Listen, Boro Apa's daughter is turning seven on the fifth of next month. Apa's arranging a grand celebration, so we have to get them something just as lovely. You can't say no."

He responds, returning her smile, "Of course. Shoma Apa's daughter's birthday means it's our daughter's birthday—we'll certainly get her something nice. Have I ever given your relatives something that embarrassed you?" Assured, Abha cheerfully heads back to the kitchen.

Farid Shaheb changes out of his clothes and heads to the shower. Being particularly susceptible to colds, he switches the geyser on even in November. He had had a new geyser installed only a few days ago. What would the point of such hard-earned money be if he didn't reap the benefits? After the shower, he turns the TV on and retires with a leisurely cup of coffee. He doesn't like watching TV unless it's on a big screen, so he bought a stunning 48-inch digital Samsung LED TV. As a film enthusiast, he made sure to get himself a Netflix plan, too. Farid Shaheb detests Bangladeshi channels—there are nothing but ads. As he relaxes and starts his movie, he calls out to his wife, "Abha, Abha, how far along are you with cooking? You know

I can't watch movies without you." Abha tells him she is nearly done.

Not only does Farid Shaheb not watch Bangla channels, he dislikes Bangla cinema, too. Dull, bland storylines and the same tired flip flop. Even renowned, award-winning films are strangely static, with plots that don't seem to want to move forward. It's as if the audience is made to do a thesis, being forced to dig deep to understand the movie in its entirety. He can't seem to comprehend how insipid films like Ashani Sanket and Heerak Rajar Deshe are so widely celebrated. When it comes to Hollywood, it feels like every film is a brand new spectacle. Brilliant stories, and such breakneck pacing! Although, even with some Hollywood movies, he can't get himself to watch to the end, especially when the plot doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Either way, Netflix is a lifesaver. He can flip from one movie to the other whenever he wants.

While waiting for Abha, Farid Shaheb picks up the Bangla and English newspapers on his table. Reading through the Bangla paper, even for a few moments, puts him in a foul mood. Filled with news of theft, robbery, and rape, it's as if the country is being overrun by criminals. The engineers are stealing, the politicians are stealing, the contractors are stealing, and even the teachers are stealing—everyone's a thief. If everyone goes on looting, how is the country supposed to function? And if these innumerable murders and rapes continue, where can anyone be safe? With crime running rampant, there is no rule of law in place, and no police force either. How are good, honest men like him supposed to keep living in a country like this?

He puts the papers down and picks up a copy of Reader's Digest. He recalls how, as a university student, he would often walk to Purana Paltan to look for old Reader's Digest issues in second-hand bookstores. Having bought them for next to nothing, he would go back to the

hall and all but devour each issue. These days, Reader's Digest, The Economist, and other magazines all lie around his house, but he can't even find the time to flip through them. When he occasionally has the time, laziness gets the better of him. Soon, Abha arrives with a plate full of teriyaki chicken and the two sit down to watch a movie together.

Abha is more of an admirer of romantic films, while Farid Shaheb enjoys action or thrillers. With Netflix's endless options, quite a bit of time is wasted every day watching previews of this movie and that. And if it's not too late, they have their kindergartener to think about, too. Who knows when she'll barge into the room and start watching the movie with them? You can't always use a tab to keep children occupied. Just the other day, she asked, "Ma, why are their clothes so tiny? Do they feel really hot?"

As they switch from one film to the other, the Isha azaan drifts in from a nearby mosque. Abha drapes her orna over her head. Finally, the two of them decide on an action flick. The film progresses, its protagonist a detective of sorts. A serial killer is on the rampage in his vicinity, but no one can find any leads—just one flawless murder after the other. Abha isn't enjoying the film as much as her husband, but says nothing so as to not douse his excitement. She tries to watch more attentively. Now and then, she smiles at the screen so that her husband doesn't realize that she isn't really enjoying it. When Abha smiles, her supple cheeks dip into dimples. The sight melts Farid Shaheb's heart, and he believes himself to be a happy, contented man.

Suddenly, they hear someone shouting, "Thief, thief!" It's their watchman. Farid Shaheb flings the door open and runs downstairs immediately. He arrives to find a young boy who had been trying to make off with a few clothes from the garage. The watchman had spotted him just as he was coming

downstairs from the landlord's flat, and restrained him before calling out to alert the other residents. A few university students living on the ground floor were the first to show, with Farid Shaheb following close behind. Soon after, men from the other flats gather at the scene. It is agreed, unanimously, that such a thief can't simply be set free. They take him to the watchman's room and tie him up with rope. Then begins the assault. As the thrashing continues, someone from the crowd sneers, "This was bound to happen. How many times had I told the landlord, 'Bhai, if you can't afford proper security guards, at least get a CCTV camera.' In this day and age, that too in the city, is it even possible for one watchman to guard a building this big? The front gates are never locked either. What if some menace slips in? What then? I find it more surprising that something like this hasn't already happened."

Having heard the commotion, their daughter Eva whines to her mother, "Ma, I want to see the thief." Abha is reluctant to take her downstairs, not wanting to frighten her daughter or expose her to a sight that might affect her poorly. But her daughter is insistent, and she eventually gives in. She takes her daughter down the staircase to find the thief with his shirt torn to shreds, blood dripping down his cheek. Still, blows from the crowd remain unrelenting. Eva asks her mother, "Ma, where's the thief? He's just a person—why are they hurting him?"

Translation of Md Rizwanul Islam's Bangla short story "Chor" (originally appeared on *Rahasya Potrika* in 2022), by Amreeta Lethe.

Md Rizwanul Islam is Professor & Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, North South University.

Amreeta Lethe is a writer and translator, and sub-editor at Star Books and Literature.

POETRY

Defeat

SHUCHI BINTE SHAHJALAL

standing at the bus stop with my shoes full of water this sense of guilt is leaving my gut in a knot i knew everything when i left screamed at the sky and mocked this is a wasteland, this is a wasteland no local newspaper will have any headlines everything in this town with open arms calling me it's okay, it's okay to come back brushed and defeated

Shuchi Binte Shahjalal is an English Literature student with a passion for storytelling.

POETRY

POETRY

Mother, why is our sky so different?

MD. SAJID HOSSAIN

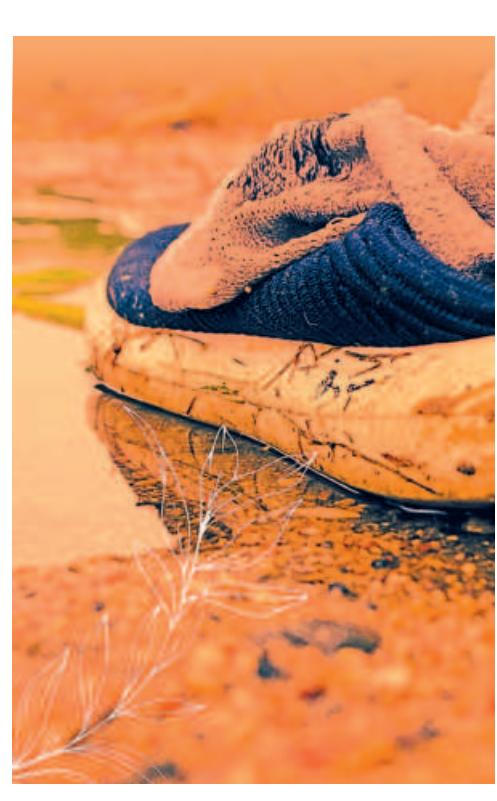
Mother, why is our sky so different?
A sky blooming with a dark makeup, not rainbows,
nor those winged beings that herald the onset of peace.
Everywhere we look now,
Ashes cradle the fathers who paid the debt of fatherhood with over-sympathies.
O my heavy-eyed mother!
The pale pink sky no longer brings me the joy,
As it does to the sunbirds to fill the air with blissful melodies.
As it does to the seasoned foragers to take pen and papers and
write certificates of vain treaties that declare our gullible fate.
Morning, evening, night—
A daily ritual of trembling and burning
And withering with those tremors from a hopeless belief—
That one day, our sky might adorn again,
With no gloomy flames.
I wonder if the bodies that lie,
Still have those puny sensations as they had in

their mother's womb.
Did they die with having usual dreams,
Usual desires that could be left unburied?
Mother, having heard my borderless words,
Hold my thumb as you used to,
When I bargained over four-wheelers with
you beneath
The unprotected roofs,



Before the anonymous neighbors,
We never hesitated to know.
Or, wait a while, let me come to you,
Trailing the breath of long sighs.

Md. Sajid Hossain is studying in the Department of English at the University of Asia Pacific.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

NORDIC SUMMER BLISS

A pilgrimage of peace through nature, culture & never-ending light



This summer, I joined the Pilgrim for Peace programme, part of the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme (BiP), walking the pilgrimage trail from Östersund, Sweden, to Trondheim, Norway.

ASHIFUL ISLAM
The Nordic summer stretches time -- golden evenings linger, and under the glow of the Midnight Sun, every moment feels both eternal and fleeting. Nature speaks here: birch trees whisper in the breeze, and glacier-fed rivers carve silver paths through the land. With endless daylight, life feels boundless.

This summer, I joined the Pilgrim for Peace programme, part of the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme (BiP), walking the pilgrimage trail from Östersund, Sweden, to Trondheim, Norway.

It is a blended programme for students from different universities in the Nordic region. The concept was unique -- learning through movement, reflection, and dialogue, while immersed in nature.

Though I've travelled across Europe, this felt different. It was raw, real, and deeply human. Our course coordinator, Jack Shephar, shared a detailed schedule, packing list, and weather expectations. As I packed my hiking shoes, waterproof jacket, and a heart full of curiosity, I sensed this 580-kilometre hike through forests, fjords, and cultural sites would explore more than landscapes; it would explore peace itself.

We connected via a WhatsApp group, sharing travel updates, tips, and excitement. Our meeting point was Östersund, a charming lakeside town. After arriving on the night train, I checked into our hostel and later joined the group at Mid Sweden University. We were 17 students from 9 countries. Introductions turned into friendships over a welcome dinner that set the tone for the journey ahead.

On Day 1, we walked 18km through forests, rivers, and historic battlefields. We had our first group discussion beside 6,000-year-old rock carvings that whispered tales of early Nordic civilisations. The quiet countryside helped us rediscover forgotten sounds -- the rustle of trees, flowing water, and bird chirpings -- and how deeply they can soothe the mind.

We had lunch at a riverside home hosted by a couple passionate about history. We spent the night at a horse ranch, dining on a balcony with a postcard perfect view.

Our days followed a rhythm: breakfast at hostels, packed lunches, and evening dinners at new stays.

On Day 2, a 25 km stretch took us through forests once walked by Swedish and Norwegian troops. In Bleckäsen, we paused at a monument built to mark a rare event -- two warring sides choosing peace over bloodshed. It reminded us that peace is always a choice.

We stopped in a handmade chocolate factory for lunch and toured it to learn how this small factory

contributed to the community. Soon, the hike became a walking conversation. Our conversations covered everything from protest movements and democratic interference to trade embargoes and conflict resolution.

As we neared Åre, the terrain changed. Mountains came into view, the air got crisper. Jack led a discussion on limits and possibilities of hospitality -- a fitting topic for a town known for its warm welcome.

We spent a free evening exploring restaurants and watching the European Cup in a sports bar, bonding over football and mocktails.

Saturday brought our final major hike -- 18 km to Norway via Tännforsen, Sweden's largest waterfall. Crossing the border felt surreal -- an invisible line dividing two countries with deep historical roots. Coordinator Dimitri guided a discussion on borders and their implications around the world. A small lake marked the division between countries, crossed by a simple bridge. In the peaceful Nordic region, there are no border checks or tension.

In Sul, nestled by the lake that separates Sweden and Norway, we had lunch before a short bus ride to Stiklestad, the site of King Olaf II's fall in 1030. We reflected on WWII memorials and modern conflicts. A quiet moment gripped us as we discussed the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The final 11 km to Trondheim felt symbolic -- each step a connection to history, nature, and each other. As

Nidaros Cathedral's spires appeared, emotion welled up. This was the northernmost pilgrimage destination on Earth. Inside, we received our diplomas, but the true reward was the transformation within.

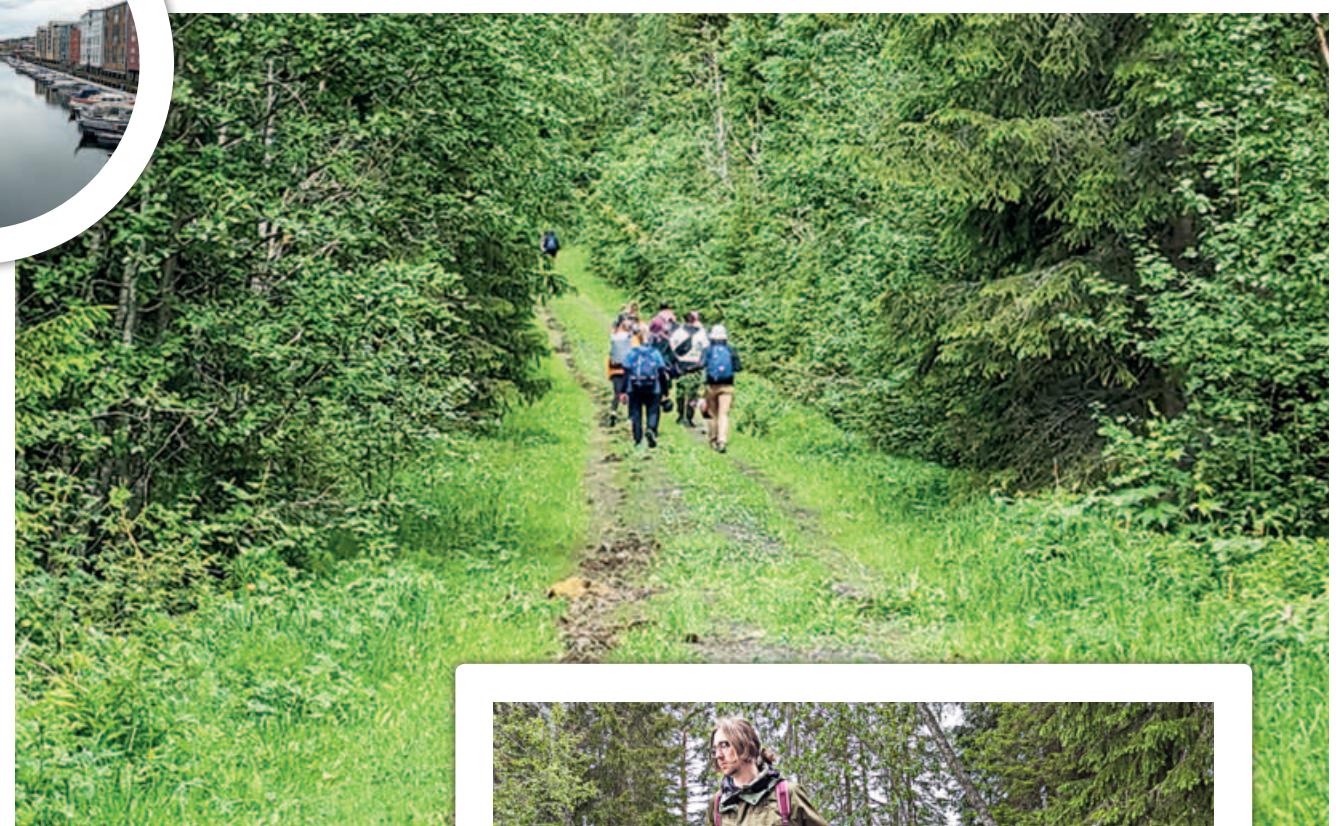
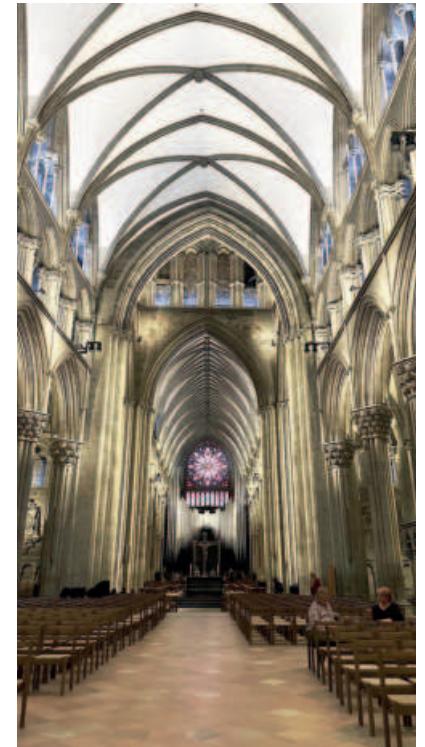
Trondheim's coastal beauty was breathtaking -- sea, mountains, and lush greenery everywhere. An instructor, Suniva, sang a Viking song as we crossed the coast, and a museum visit deepened our understanding of Nordic heritage. That evening, we celebrated with a cultural night filled with songs, dances, and food.

Leaving Trondheim felt like waking from a dream. The trail had brought peace of mind, and now, after the end of it, we were returning to life's daily chaos. Yet, something had shifted within us. I'll never forget the views from the windows -- adorned with pottery and family photos -- of the houses we passed during the trail.

In a world full of noise, walking in silence, having honest conversations, and syncing with nature feels transforming. This journey taught me that peace isn't just a destination -- it's a daily choice, created step by step.

If you're longing for a transformative experience blending history, nature, and inner peace, consider a Nordic summer walk. With the right documents and a solid plan, getting a Schengen visa isn't too difficult. A week-long trip typically costs between BDT 120,000-150,000, excluding flights and visa fees.

Let your steps lead you to peace -- one footfall at a time.



Stuck in red, shipbreaking slow to turn green



Taslim Uddin, owner of KR Ship Recycling, a green yard, said that the slow transition is due mainly to a lack of financial incentives

SIFAYET ULLAH

Transitioning from dangerous and polluting shipbreaking yards to green ship recycling facilities remains a priority, particularly as key deadlines loom, but the sluggish pace of progress continues to delay the shift in Bangladesh.

This lack of impetus is not only causing environmental harm but also creating serious business challenges, especially as Bangladesh must shift to green ship recycling by June 2025 in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention or run the risk of others refusing to send vessels to the country.

Bangladesh began the green transition in 2017, when PHP Ship Recycling Yard became the first entity in the country to receive international green certification.

Yet, only seven shipbreaking yards in the country have received similar certification as of March this year, according to the Bangladesh Ship Breakers and Recyclers Association (BSBRA).

CONDITIONS FOR A GREEN SHIPYARD

AUTHORISATION & CERTIFICATION



Facilities must hold valid permits and an approved 'Ship Recycling Facility Plan'

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT



Ships must carry an 'Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM)', with strict handling protocols

SAFE DISMANTLING PRACTICES



Preference for mechanised cutting and dry-dock recycling (no beaching)

WORKER PROTECTION



Mandatory PPE, safety training, medical support, and secure worksite access

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS



Pollution controls for air, soil, and water; spill containment systems

WASTE TRACKING



Documented waste segregation, disposal, and recycling records

EMERGENCY RESPONSE



On-site firefighting, spill kits, and evacuation plans

AUDITS & COMPLIANCE



Regular third-party and regulatory inspections

SOURCE: HONG KONG CONVENTION

To put things in perspective, the country has 248 shipbreaking yards, as per data from the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments. However, only 30 to 35 of these shipbreaking yards are operational due to various reasons, according to the BSBRA.

Taslim Uddin, owner of KR Ship Recycling, a green yard, told The Daily Star that the slow transition is due mainly to a lack of financial incentives.

For example, he mentioned that converting a small yard into a green shipyard currently requires an investment of Tk 30 to Tk 40 crore.

"In return, it may take at least 10 to 12 years or more to recover this amount through profits, which reflects the slow return and uncertainty on investment in this sector," he said.

Moreover, he added, due to the long time needed to break even and low profitability thereafter, financial institutions are often reluctant to provide loans to businesses in the shipbreaking industry.

Besides, uncertainty over the business continuity due to sudden government actions is another major factor hindering progress, he said.

After the deadline in June this year, recycling facilities located in countries that do not adhere to the HKC will

PHOTOS: RAJIB RAHMAN



be unable to receive ships for recycling.

This would jeopardise the people that are employed in the sector, totalling around 8,000 to 9,000 direct employees, according to the BSBRA and those indirectly dependent on it.

Labour rights activists say that yard owners have little incentive to convert their facilities into green shipyards as traditional methods are faster, cheaper, and require significantly less investment.

Fazlul Kabir Mintu, a long-time labour rights activist working in the shipbreaking sector, told The Daily Star, "The cost of dismantling ships in green yards is significantly higher than in traditional ones."

Since profit margins would shrink as a result, many yard owners are hesitant about the transition, he added.

Mohammed Zahirul Islam, president of the BSBRA, told The Daily Star, "The Ministry of Environment has listed our sector as high risk, placing it on the red list. As a result, we are not eligible for green financing facilities from the Bangladesh Bank."

"Banks only provide short-term loans for purchasing ships, but they are not willing to finance the development of shipbreaking yards. This lack of financial support makes it difficult for shipbreakers to invest in green infrastructure," he added.

Bangladesh urgently needs to transition to green shipbreaking to address the serious environmental and economic challenges caused by traditional methods, which involve beaching large ships and manually breaking them apart without proper safety or environmental controls.

As a result, the surrounding environment – land, air, and sea – is subjected to intense pollution.

A 2010 World Bank study identified the presence of hazardous materials such as lead, chromium, cadmium, mercury, asbestos, and heavy metals in the soil of the Sitakunda coastal belt, an area known for shipbreaking.

The study estimated that from 2010 to 2030, a total of 79,000 tonnes of asbestos, 240,000 tonnes of PCB, 1,978,000 tonnes of organic liquid waste, 775 tonnes of inorganic waste, and 210,000 tonnes of ozone-depleting substances would be deposited into the soil and water of the area.

Prabal Barua, a researcher who has worked on the environmental impact of shipbreaking for years, told The Daily Star, "Waste from shipbreaking yards often seeps into the Bay of Bengal, contaminating marine ecosystems and affecting biodiversity."

Soil and groundwater contamination are particularly alarming, he added. Moreover, the air quality in surrounding regions is deteriorating due to the burning of cables, oil residues, and insulation materials, releasing carcinogenic substances.

Barua added, "Marine life is under threat as oil spills and paint residues



"Otherwise, this industry will face significant challenges and may come to a standstill."

Bangladesh remained the global shipping industry's first choice for scrapping vessels in 2024, with NGO Shipbreaking Platform stating that of the 409 ships dismantled globally in 2024, 130 were taken apart in Bangladesh.



Traditional yards keep hurting workers

SIFAYET ULLAH

Traditional shipbreaking yards in Sitakunda continue to operate in unsafe conditions, causing serious concerns about both worker safety and hazardous waste management.

Many of these yards continue to skirt existing regulations, putting labourers at daily risk.

On February 15, Nazim, a 33-year-old worker, suffered a serious head injury after being struck by a falling object. He was not wearing a helmet, meaning the depth of the injury left him unable to work for nearly a month.

Workers reported that the yard had no designated safety officer to enforce protective protocols, and most labourers operated without adequate safety gear.

Elias, a co-worker, told The Daily Star, "Our yard still follows old methods of shipbreaking, unlike green yards, where work begins only after safety checks and full protective gear."

He also noted that even when gear is provided, workers often neglect to use it due to discomfort or a lack of awareness.

Another incident occurred on March 15 last year when 36-year-old cutterman Mizanur Rahman fell from a ship. Mizan, a native of Sitakunda in Chattogram, was working without any safety gear at the time and sustained a spinal injury along with crushed toes.

He said the shipyard had not provided him with a safety belt and boots. "This accident could have been prevented if I had proper safety gear," he added.

Accidents like these are common in old shipbreaking yards, where explosions, falls, burns, and falling objects continue to injure workers.

A total of 257 people were killed and over 300 were seriously injured in accidents at these shipbreaking yards between 2005 and 2024.

Of them, 140 workers were killed between 2014 and 2024, according to data compiled by NGO Shipbreaking Platform, an international campaigning for clean and safe ship recycling.

Kabir Mintu highlighted a lack of accountability, saying, "These yards are not under any effective monitoring. Government agencies appear helpless in enforcing regulations."

In contrast, he pointed out, green yards follow international safety standards with proper oversight, making them safer.

Environmental risks add another layer of concern.

A 2021 study by two faculty members from the University of Chittagong revealed dangerously high levels of heavy metals, such as cadmium, chromium, lead, and zinc, in agricultural lands near shipbreaking yards.

These pollutants, originating from ship dismantling activities, pose long-term threats to the environment and local communities.

In response to these risks, the Bangladesh Ship Recycling Act of 2018 mandated that shipbreaking be conducted only in government-approved yards that comply with strict environmental and safety standards.

However, enforcement remains weak as many traditional yards lack effective waste management systems and continue to violate the law, prompting fines from the Department of Environment.

