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missiles into civilian
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It makes me think that
maybe he doesn't want
to stop the war.

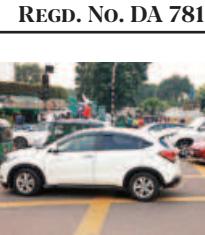
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DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 27, 2025



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economy
of child beggars

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set for PL
title party

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Bangladesh races to expand air cargo capacity

Sylhet airport set to launch dedicated cargo operations today; Chattogram to follow suit

RASHIDUL HASAN and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh is racing to expand its air cargo capacity after India's abrupt suspension of third-country transhipment earlier this month upended a logistics route for garment exporters.

The Indian decision, announced without warning on April 8, cut off a vital land-air corridor that allowed Bangladeshi goods to move overland to Kolkata and Delhi airports and onward to global markets. The disruption has forced Dhaka to fast-track efforts to diversify export channels and reduce dependence on India.

In a first move to address the shortfall, Sylhet's Osmani International Airport is set to launch dedicated cargo operations today and become the country's second airport to handle freighter flights after Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

A chartered Airbus A330-800 freighter of Galistar Aviation is scheduled to depart Sylhet at around 7:05pm, carrying up to 60 tonnes of garments to Spain, said Shakil Merali, director (in-charge) of the Cargo Department of Biman Bangladesh Airlines. The shipment is bound for



A photograph taken from St Peter's Basilica shows a section of the people who gathered for the funeral mass of Pope Francis at the Vatican yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

- Suspension of India's land-air route a wake-up call
- Long-term hopes pinned on Dhaka airport's 3rd terminal
- Exporters want infrastructure improvement, cost competitiveness
- Secretary says govt to cut operational expenses

Inditex, the Spanish clothing company that owns several major fashion brands, including Zara, Biman will provide cargo and ground handling services for the inaugural flight.

Civil Aviation and Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin is expected to attend the inaugural ceremony as chief guest, alongside Bangladesh's Ambassador to Mexico M. Mushfiqul Fazal Ansary and Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Nasreen Jahan, who will be present as special guests.

"This is a significant milestone as Sylhet becomes operational for cargo flights," said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan. He added that explosive detection systems, X-ray scanners, and additional security arrangements had been installed to meet international freight handling standards.

The initiative to open Sylhet is part of a broader strategy to decentralise and expand Bangladesh's cargo-handling capacity. Officials are also moving to activate Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram for dedicated cargo operations, which have remained dormant since 2022.

An emergency meeting was held at Chattogram airport on April 21 to address operational bottlenecks. Group Captain Sheikh Abdullah Alamgir, director of the airport, said preparations were underway to restart cargo services and that initial capacity would allow at least two large

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

POLICE WEEK-2025 Cops to get directives over polls

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ahead of the upcoming Police Week 2025, the police top brass have finalised instructions for field-level officers to ensure stability and deliver a credible national election.

Senior officials will also listen to the challenges and demands of field officers during the week-long discussions to strengthen law and order ahead of the 13th parliamentary polls.

Following the interim government directives, police have decided to act impartially and resist pressure from any quarters during the election period.

These decisions were made during preparatory meetings for Police Week, set to begin on April 29, according to Police Headquarters (PHQ) sources.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

TALKS WITH CONSENSUS COMMISSION Jamaat for two-term cap on PM's tenure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Like the BNP, the Jamaat-e-Islami favours a five-year term for both the parliament and the president, opposing the National Consensus Commission's recommendation for a four-year term.

"We told them that it [four-year term] wouldn't be right. The tenures [of Jatiya Sangsad] should be five years," Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher told reporters after Jamaat's daylong meeting with the National Consensus Commission yesterday.

The party, however, agreed with the commission's recommendation that a person will not be able to become the prime minister for more than two terms -- a proposal opposed by the BNP.

Jamaat also proposed that in the fundamental principles of the constitution, the commission's suggested term "pluralism" be replaced with "absolute trust and faith in Allah".

The party has agreed in principle to

We must tread cautiously and, if necessary, act firmly. We must work to correct the fundamental issues.

Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher

amend article 70 of the constitution, which bars MPs from voting against party decisions in parliament. Apart from constitutional amendments, budget approvals and votes of confidence, the MPs should be allowed to express their independent opinions in the Jatiya Sangsad on any other matters, said Taher, who led the 10-member Jamaat delegation in the discussion.

Jamaat also agreed in principle to the formation of a National Constitutional Council to oversee

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

INDO-PAK TENSIONS

Rivals exchange gunfire for 2nd day Pakistan calls for neutral probe into the Kashmir killings

REUTERS, Srinagar/Islamabad

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged gunfire along the disputed Kashmir region for a second straight day yesterday as Islamabad called for a "neutral" investigation into the killings of tourists in Indian occupied Kashmir.

Pakistan said it is also willing to cooperate in unveiling the truth behind the incident and favoured peace.

New Delhi has blamed Islamabad for the killings. India has identified two of the three suspected militants as Pakistani, though Islamabad has denied any role in the attack on Tuesday that killed 25 Indian and one Nepali tourists.

"Pakistan is fully prepared to cooperate with any neutral investigators to ensure that the truth is uncovered and justice is served," said Pakistan's interior minister, Mohsin Naqvi.

"Pakistan remains committed to peace, stability and the following of international norms but will not compromise on its sovereignty," he told a press conference.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed to pursue the attackers to "the ends of the earth" and said that those who planned and carried it out "will be punished beyond their imagination". Calls have also grown from Indian politicians and others for military retaliation against Pakistan.

After the attack, India and Pakistan unleashed a raft of measures against each other, with Pakistan closing its

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Over 12,700 arrested in eight days

Special drives underway

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Police have arrested more than 12,700 people across the country over the past eight days.

Of them, over 7,900 were arrested in connection with regular cases and warrants, while around 4,700 were held in other cases, according to data provided by the Police Headquarters until yesterday.

Many of the arrestees are leaders and activists of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations. They were picked up following flash processes in different parts of the country, according to police and media reports.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) at the Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star that the number of arrests has increased in recent days as multiple special drives are underway. Arrests are also being made in regular cases and based on warrants, he added.

Asked about the arrests following the AL processions, he said those trying to destabilise the country and violating laws were being brought to book.

This newspaper has obtained a list of



Passengers crowd the Karwan Bazar metro station as operations resumed following a 1.5-hour suspension yesterday evening. Authorities said the halt was caused by a power supply disruption at the Bijoy Sarani substation.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Six killed as autorickshaw, pickup collide

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Six people in a CNG-run autorickshaw were killed after a pickup collided head on with the vehicle on the Rangamati-Chattogram highway in Rangamati's Kawkhali yesterday morning.

The victims are Md Abu Taher, 50, of Raozan upazila in Chattogram; Mahabubur Rahman, 50, of Hathazari upazila; Joynal Abedin, of Rangunia upazila; Nurun Nahar, 40, of Rangamati's Kawkhali upazila; Izadul, 25, of Chattogram's Sitakunda; and Amesi Marma, 30, of Kalampatti union in Kawkhali, said police.

Kawkhali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Saiful Islam Sohag said the incident took place around 10:15am in Chairman Para area when the pickup collided head on with the three-wheeler leaving three people dead and three others injured.

Three others from the auto-rickshaw were taken to a local hospital, where doctors pronounced two of them dead. Amesi Marma was referred to Chattogram in a critical condition. She died at JK Memorial Hospital in Raozan, the OC said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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China wants strong, stable, democratic Bangladesh: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

China wants to see a strong, stable and democratic Bangladesh, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

"They always want to see stability in Bangladesh. They want to see a strong and prosperous Bangladesh and a democratic environment in the country," he said after a meeting with a delegation from the Communist Party of China (CPC) at a hotel in the capital.

Fakhrul said it was a meeting between the two parties -- BNP and CPC -- as they have a longstanding relationship.



In response to a question, Fakhrul said elections are Bangladesh's internal matter and that China usually does not interfere in any country's internal affairs.

He, however, said they briefed the Chinese delegation about the country's election and political situation.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said, "We discussed cooperation between our two parties and also discussed that the Communist Party of China and BNP will work together to enhance cooperation between the two countries."

He also reiterated that elections are Bangladesh's internal matter and that the people of Bangladesh will make the decision on it.

Drops of water, waves of suffering

The daily struggle of women in Rangamati's hills

MD ABBAS, back from Rangamati

In the quiet village of Bottola, nestled in the hills of Rangamati's Naniarchar upazila, each day begins early.

As the sun rises, the village wakes up, and women like Mollika Chakma set out on their daily journey to fetch water -- a task they have carried out for years, despite the pain and challenges it brings.

Stepping out of the house with an empty kolshi (pitcher), 38 year-old Mollika begins her daily walk -- for water, for her family, and survival.

Like many women from nearby hamlets -- Toroni Para, Dharmasrom Para, and Shikolpara -- she walks nearly two kilometres to fetch water from a shrinking kua (well-like water source).

"I've been doing this since 2010. The pain never goes away -- my lower back, knees, and hands hurt all the time. Sometimes we even squabble with neighbours because the kua is drying up," Mollika says.

Hundreds of women across Rangamati's remote hills have a similar story.

Water is collected three times a day -- at dawn, midday, and late afternoon. During the dry season, many wait up to three hours, often returning home with empty kolshis.

Juleka Chakma, 50, has been carrying water since she was eight. "My knees and back feel like they're breaking. I have to take painkillers regularly," she shares.



A woman pours water into her pitcher from a shrinking kua (water source like a well) in Bottola, a small village nestled in the hills of Rangamati's Naniarchar upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

"We've been bitten by snakes, attacked by wild animals, and slipped on the rocky trails," says Ripona Chakma.

"During the monsoon, the paths become dangerously slippery. But what choice do we have?" she asks.

In Paschim Dewanpara of Sabekon union, the crisis is even worse. Villagers must cross rivers by boat to collect water.

Despite battling diabetes and heart disease, 47-year old Champa Chakma still makes the journey. "My body can't

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Reform disability policies for dev, empowerment

Demand rights groups at press conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday criticised the Ministry of Social Welfare for its failure to support the empowerment and development of persons with disabilities, accusing it of being more of an obstacle than an aid.

They argued that the ministry has failed to recognise the rights of persons with disabilities as fundamental human rights, continuing instead to treat them through a charity-based approach.

The speakers also called for a major shift in attitude, proposing that the ministry be

If mindsets, methods, planning, and implementation remain the same, no positive outcomes will follow. Structural and procedural transformation is crucial.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, TIB Executive Director

renamed the Ministry of Social Development and Empowerment to reflect a more rights-based approach to disability issues.

The press conference, titled "Legal Rights, Protection, and Prevention of Neglect, Deprivation, and Human Rights Violations Against Persons with Disabilities," was organised by Disability Rights Watch (DRW) in collaboration with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) at the Midas Centre in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Khandaker Jahanur Alam, member secretary

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Muslim unity platform holds a solidarity assembly
 STAR REPORT

The "Anti-Hegemony Muslim Unity Platform" yesterday held a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka to express solidarity with oppressed Muslim communities in Palestine, India, and Myanmar's Arakan region.

The event featured speeches from key organisers and speakers, including Muhammad Mizanur Rahman, Syed Muhammad Hasan Al-Azhari, Syed Saiful Islam Bari, Shafik Al-Mujaddidi, and Imran Hussain Tushar, according to press release.

Abul Kashem Muhammad Fazlul Haque, vice principal of Dhaka Quaderia Taiyabiya Alia (Kamil) Madrasa, read out a declaration at the rally.

"The core spirit of the July uprising was to stand against the oppressor and to play a vocal role against domination," the declaration said.

The platform pledged to rebuild the future of Bangladesh while "remembering and embodying the spirit of the July uprising."

It also called for the formation of global public opinion in support of oppressed Muslims in Palestine, India, and Arakan (Rakhine), demanding "direct intervention from the UN and the recognition of Palestine as an independent state," and calling for the repeal of the "unconstitutional Waqf Bill passed in the Indian Lok Sabha."

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দেশ বিনির্মাণে

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AA ক্রেডিট রেটিং



'Anti-Hegemony Muslim Unity Platform' held a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

18,000MW power production planned for summer

Load shedding to stay tolerable, says energy adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Load shedding during the summer days will be kept at a tolerable level, Power and Energy Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan said yesterday.

"I won't say there will be no power outage during the summer, but the load shedding will remain within a tolerable level. And there will be no difference between urban and rural areas," he said at a seminar, titled "Energy Crisis: Way Forward," organised by the Forum for Energy Reporters Bangladesh (FERB) at Bidyut Bhawan in the capital.

He said plans are in place to produce

18,000 megawatts (MW) during peak demand in summer, up from the current 16,000 MW. Additional demand will be met through coal and LNG imports.

Kabir added that when the interim government took charge, the power sector was in a disastrous state. "We have paid most overdue and late payments to companies."

The overdue bill, originally around US \$3.2 billion, has been reduced to US \$600 million and is expected to hit zero by the end of the fiscal year in June, he added.

To clear the payments, the government cut allocations from unnecessary projects.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



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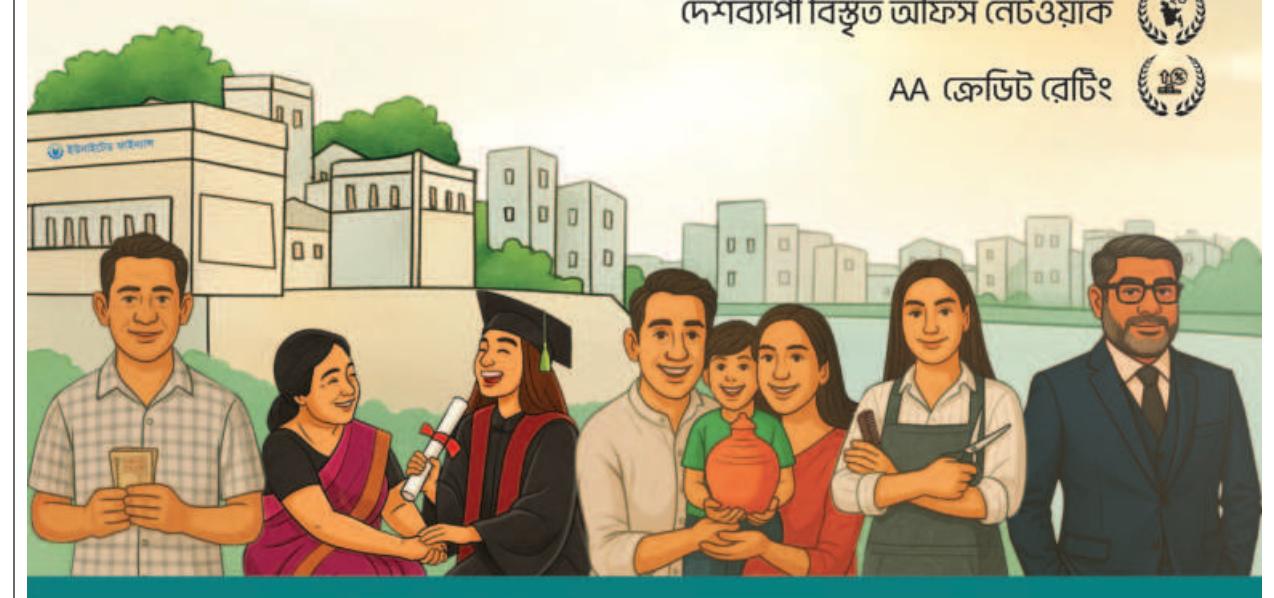
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18,000MW power production

FROM PAGE 3
Kabir noted that late payments had also raised power production costs.

On gas exploration, Kabir said the government only took steps it could complete within its tenure.

Regarding electricity prices, Kabir said negotiations are ongoing with coal-based power plants, setting the Matarbari plant's rate of Tk 8.44 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) as a benchmark. "We are asking them why their prices differ by Tk 3-4 instead of Tk 0.30-0.40," he said. Activities to reduce system loss will be visible by next June, he added.

Addressing the recent gas

price hike for new industries, Kabir said it was set based on the marginal cost.

Energy expert Ifiaz Hossain said Bangladesh's energy crisis began in 2019 when gas production declined and oil replaced gas, increasing the government's energy subsidy burden.

He noted that local production stood at 2,786 million cubic feet of gas a day (mmcfd) in 2019 but has now fallen to 1,800 mmcfd. Future governments should promise to keep production around 2,000 mmcfd by exploring at least 10 wells a year, he said.

Bangladesh will also need to import 2,600 mmcfd of LNG after 2030

and build two new floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs), he added.

Dr Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to Consumers' Association of Bangladesh, said Bangladesh is shifting towards becoming an LNG-importing nation, with domestic gas's share expected to fall from 75 percent to 25 percent by 2030.

Dr Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, called for a new energy policy with a clear transition plan. He said ongoing LNG deals with Qatar and US could impact the country's long-term renewable energy goals.

Reform disability

FROM PAGE 3
of DRW and executive director of the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), slammed the ministry for celebrating the meagre Tk 850 monthly allowance for persons with disabilities as a major achievement.

"The Ministry of Social Welfare is basking in self-satisfaction, believing Tk 850 is sufficient. We have urged them to focus on real empowerment through skills development and employment that could turn Tk 850 into Tk 8,500, but no action has been taken," he said.

Disability development expert Dr Nafeesur Rahman also criticised the ministry for failing to submit periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as mandated under Article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

He said the ministry has submitted only one report since Bangladesh ratified the CRPD in 2007, with the last submission made in 2017.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the necessary changes must go beyond simply renaming the ministry. "If mindsets, methods, planning, and implementation remain the same, no positive outcomes will follow. Structural and procedural transformation is crucial," he said.

Delivering the keynote address, DRW member Md Jahangir Alam pointed to Bangladesh's international commitments, among them the ratification of the CRPD in 2007, the Optional Protocol in 2008,

the adoption of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, its rules in 2015, and the National Action Plan on Disability in 2019 involving 35 ministries across 18 priority areas.

Despite this, persons with disabilities remain excluded from key development agendas, he said.

This stagnation undermines Bangladesh's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the principle of "leaving no one behind," he added.

Md Jahangir Alam urged

the government to urgently revise how ministries work so that disability issues are included in areas like education, youth, health, and women and children's affairs.

He also urged the government to rename the Ministry of Social Welfare, revitalise the national and sub-national Disability Committees under the 2013 Act, and issue clear instructions to ministries for effective action.

Jahangir recommended restructuring the National Foundation for Development of the Disabled Persons (NFDDP) and equipping it with the necessary resources to strengthen its role in promoting disability rights.

Furthermore, DRW proposed the establishment of a dedicated Disability Budget, allocating funds across sectors such as education, healthcare, employment, and accessibility. They urged that the budget be published annually, similar to the Gender, Child, and Climate Budgets.

The speakers also called for the restoration of a full one percent employment quota for persons with disabilities in government services, separate from the quotas for third gender individuals and orphans.

In addition, DRW demanded reforms within the NFDDP, ensuring inclusive governance and meaningful participation from persons with disabilities, and advocated for the integration of disability sports into mainstream sports governance.

Highlighting the political importance of disability inclusion, DRW Convener Monsur Ahmed Choudhuri said that approximately 21.5 million people in Bangladesh live with disabilities.

Many political parties, including new ones, are preparing for the upcoming elections. I urge you to remember that at least half of these individuals have the right to vote. Ignoring their rights will impede the country's progress. Political parties must include disability issues in their election manifestos as a part of their commitment," he said.

This stagnation undermines Bangladesh's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the principle of "leaving no one behind," he added.

Md Jahangir Alam urged

Drops of water, waves of suffering

FROM PAGE 3
time," says Dr Jetendriya Tangchangya, a physician at Rangamati Medical College Hospital.

This invisible labour contributes to what experts call "time poverty" -- the loss of valuable hours, especially for girls.

But the suffering goes beyond the physical.

"Beyond the pain, we often see signs of anxiety, depression, and extreme fatigue," Dr Tangchangya notes.

Doctors say the symptoms these women describe match musculoskeletal strain and long-term postural damage.

"Carrying water on the head, especially across hilly terrain, puts compressive stress on spinal discs and weakens the vertebrae over

a household chore -- it leads to chronic illness, gender-based violence, and missed opportunities," says Mitu Chakma, project coordinator of MJF's PREA initiative in Rangamati.

"We frequently treat women with chronic back pain, knee problems, and early signs of spinal disc herniation," he adds.

But the suffering goes beyond the physical.

"Beyond the pain, we often see signs of anxiety, depression, and extreme fatigue," Dr Tangchangya notes.

Doctors say the symptoms these women describe match musculoskeletal strain and long-term postural damage.

"Carrying water on the head, especially across hilly terrain, puts compressive stress on spinal discs and weakens the vertebrae over

time," says Dr Jetendriya Tangchangya, a physician at Rangamati Medical College Hospital.

"We frequently treat women with chronic back pain, knee problems, and early signs of spinal disc herniation," he adds.

"Our goal is not just to provide water but to restore dignity and time to these women," she says.

MJF is also advocating for sustainable water sources by protecting village common forests (VCF) and natural streams. In partnership with local communities, it has developed management plans for two VCFs.

"To truly address this crisis, we need local-level plans with participation from marginalised communities, which can then be implemented by local authorities," says Mitu.

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NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH

HIGH COURT DIVISION

(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)

COMPANY MATTER NO. 523 OF 2025

1. Premier Cement Mills PLC. (Transferee-Petitioner)

2. Premier Power Generation Limited (Transferor-Petitioner)

3. National Cement Mills Limited (Transferor-Petitioner)

- VERSUS -

Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (Respondent)

Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 228 read with Section 229 of the Companies Act, 1994, being Company Matter No. 523 of 2025, for sanctioning the Scheme of Amalgamation for the amalgamation of Premier Cement Mills PLC (the "Transferee-Petitioner") with Premier Power Generation Limited, and National Cement Mills Limited (collectively the "Transferor-Petitioners"), whereby the entire undertaking of the Transferor-Petitioners as going concern is proposed to be transferred and vested in Transferee-Petitioner, with the Transferee-Petitioner being the surviving entity, was filed and moved before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. After the preliminary hearing, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, the Hon'ble Justice of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh vide Order dated 24th March 2025 was pleased to admit the application and directed the Petitioners to convene separate meetings of all the shareholders and creditors of the Petitioners, for the purpose of placing the Scheme of Amalgamation, proposed to be made between the Petitioners, before the shareholders and creditors and approving the same. The Hon'ble High Court Division was also pleased to direct the Petitioners to file an Affidavit-in-Compliance within 23rd June, 2025.

Under the circumstances, by dint of this Notice pursuant to the Order of the Hon'ble High Court Division, all members and creditors of the Petitioner companies are hereby requested to attend the meetings at City Hall, Agrabad Access Road, Chittagong-4100, Bangladesh, on the following dates and times for the purpose of considering, and if thought fit, approving the Scheme of Amalgamation proposed to be made between the Transferee-Petitioner and Transferor-Petitioners:

Company Name	Type of Meeting	Date	Time
1. Premier Cement Mills PLC	Members	21.05.2025	02:30 p.m.
	Creditors	21.05.2025	10:00 a.m.
1. Premier Power Generation Limited	Members	21.05.2025	04:30 p.m.
	Creditors	21.05.2025	11:30 a.m.
3. National Cement Mills Limited	Members	21.05.2025	03:30 p.m.
	Creditors	21.05.2025	11:00 a.m.

All members and creditors are requested to attend the said meetings either in person or through a duly appointed person by completing the proxy form or by authorization letter.

Anyone interested to contest the application may appear before the Hon'ble High Court Division in person or through an Advocate on the date on which it is heard. A copy of the application may be collected from the registered offices of the Petitioner companies.

Yours faithfully,

Md Anisul Hassan

Barrister-at-Law

Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Mobile No. 01755-606972

Address: Syed Ishaq Ahmed & Associates,

Flat 1C, Concord Ovilash, House No. 62,

Road No. 1/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh

Reform disability

FROM PAGE 3
the government to urgently revise how ministries work so that disability issues are included in areas like education, youth, health, and women and children's affairs as a major achievement.

"The Ministry of Social Welfare is basking in self-satisfaction, believing Tk 850 is sufficient. We have urged them to focus on real empowerment through skills development and employment that could turn Tk 850 into Tk 8,500, but no action has been taken," he said.

Disability development expert Dr Nafeesur Rahman also criticised the ministry for failing to submit periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as mandated under Article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

He said the ministry has submitted only one report since Bangladesh ratified the CRPD in 2007, with the last submission made in 2017.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the necessary changes must go beyond simply renaming the ministry. "If mindsets, methods, planning, and implementation remain the same, no positive outcomes will follow. Structural and procedural transformation is crucial," he said.

Delivering the keynote address, DRW member Md Jahangir Alam pointed to Bangladesh's international commitments, among them the ratification of the CRPD in 2007, the Optional Protocol in 2008,

the adoption of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, its rules in 2015, and the National Action Plan on Disability in 2019 involving 35 ministries across 18 priority areas.

Despite this, persons with disabilities remain excluded from key development agendas, he said.

This stagnation undermines Bangladesh's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the principle of "leaving no one behind," he added.

Ban AL, punish its leaders

Protesters across Bangladesh demand justice for July atrocities

STAR REPORT

Leaders and activists from several political and student organisations staged demonstrations across the country yesterday, demanding a ban on the Awami League and the trial of its leaders for their involvement in the July atrocities.

In Dhaka, the United Peoples of Bangladesh, a newly formed political group, brought out a protest procession from the Bijoynagar Water Tank to the Old Paltan intersection. Led by Chief Coordinator Ali Hasan Junaid, protesters chanted slogans calling for justice.

"Awami League cannot avoid its responsibility for the July killings. Therefore, banning it is our only demand," demonstrators said.

Participants also called for capital punishment for ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and others alleged to have been involved in the incidents.

Meanwhile, in Narayanganj, the National Citizens Party (NCP) held a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar, followed by a procession along Bangabandhu Road. Leaders from the Students Against Discrimination also joined in solidarity.

Addressing the rally, NCP Joint Member Secretary Abdulla Al Amin, Southern Region Organiser Shawkat Ali, Joint Chief Coordinator Tuhin Mahmud, and others reiterated their demand for the trial of AL leaders for their roles in the July violence.

In Gazipur, the NCP Metropolitan unit organised another rally at Chandana Crossroads demanding a ban on AL's political activities. Central leaders Ali

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Two arrested over attempted rape of girl

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Two men were arrested on Friday night in Kishoreganj in a case filed over the attempted rape of an 11-year-old girl.

The arrestees are Hasu Mia, 60, and Moti Mia, 55, said Sakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Pakundia Police Station.

The arrests were made after the victim's mother filed a case with Pakundia Police Station on Friday evening.

According to the case statement, Hasu and Moti tried to rape the girl around 12:30pm on Tuesday.

After the arrest, police initiated an investigation into the matter, said the OC, adding that the arrestees would be produced before the court today.



A child heads to the field with his kite, his face glowing with joy. In the southern winds of Baishakh afternoons, children fill the sky with kites. The photo was taken in Kadamtala village of Shyamnagar upazila, Satkhira yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

TEESTA CHARS

High pumpkin yield, low profit for char farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in char areas are happy with the pumpkin production on the sandy chars of the Teesta riverbed. However, they are disappointed as prices have fallen compared to last year. Due to an urgent need for cash, char farmers are being forced to sell pumpkins at low prices.

Officials from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said pumpkins have been cultivated on 12,500 hectares of land across five districts of the Rangpur region -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha, and Nilphamari -- this year.

The yield of pumpkins per hectare is between 25 and 30 tonnes. Around 80 percent of pumpkins are produced on the sandy chars of the Teesta riverbed.

Abdul Wahed, a farmer from Char Jamirbari area of Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat, said he is growing pumpkins on abandoned sandy char land. Earlier, no crops could be grown on these sandy chars, which would remain barren after the monsoon water receded.

He said it costs Tk 6-7 to produce a kilogramme of pumpkin. Last year, he sold a kilogramme of pumpkin at Tk 17-18. This year, the price has dropped to Tk 11-12. He has produced 3,000



kilogrammes of pumpkins on one bigha of land, which cost him Tk 18,000. Had he received the same price as last year, he would have made a profit.

Nadirul Islam, a farmer from Char Bajra area of Ulipur upazila in Kurigram, said he has produced 12,500 kilogrammes of pumpkins from four bighas of land. He has sold half of the pumpkins as the price is low, and stored the remaining half at home.

Abdus Samad, a farmer from Char Islia area of Gangachara upazila in Rangpur, said 10 farmers have formed a group to grow pumpkins on the abandoned sandy char of the Teesta riverbed. This year, they cultivated pumpkins on three

hectares of land and yielded 73 tonnes. They spent Tk 3.7 lakh and sold 30 tonnes of pumpkins for Tk 3.6 lakh at a rate of Tk 12 per kilogramme.

Nazrul Islam, a vegetable seller from Gangachara area of Rangpur, said the supply of pumpkins in the market is very high, leading to lower prices.

Shafiqul Islam, additional director of the Rangpur Regional DAE, said as all the farmers harvest pumpkins simultaneously, the market supply has increased.

He said pumpkins can be stored at home for six to seven months, but most farmers are unable to store them due to their need for cash.

Rituals, rhythms, and reverence

Manipuri community celebrates ancient 'Lai-Haraoba' festival in Moulvibazar



MINTU DESHWARA

The Manipuri community in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar celebrated the ancient Lai-Haraoba festival, a vibrant cultural event rooted in centuries-old religious tradition.

The three-day festival began on Wednesday afternoon at the Manipuri Cultural Complex in Tentigaon village, with religious rituals and folk performances marking the opening ceremony.

Organised by the Lai Haraoba Steering Committee, the festival concluded early yesterday.

The celebration brought together a diverse group of participants. Apart from the people of the local Manipuri community, many priests, dancers, researchers, and cultural activists from Manipur in India, alongside representatives from the Bangladesh National Museum,

Unesco, and other cultural organisations, joined the festival.

The vibrant festival also attracted a wide range of visitors.

Ibunghal Singh, convenor of the festival committee, said the programme included traditional Maithai religious messages, folk songs, dances, and various rituals.

He added that the festival honours the deities of the Sanamahi/Apkopka religion, reflecting the spiritual and cultural traditions of the Maithai people.

Oinam Lanthai, the committee's member secretary, explained that "Lai-Haraoba" originates from "Lai Haraoba Jagoi," one of the oldest folk dances in Manipuri society.

"Lai means God, Haraoba means joy, and Jagoi means dance -- it's a way of offering joy to the deities through song and dance," he said.

The dance portrays every phase of human and natural life

from creation, household life, and farming to birth and death intertwined with the rhythm of music and movement, he said, adding, "Elements such as Laishem Jagoi (creation dance), Yumsharol Jagoi (household dance), and Laisa Jagoi (maiden dance) are performed as part of this rich folk tradition."

The event was organised in collaboration with several organisations, including the Bangladesh National Museum, Poror Apokpa Marup Religious Cultural Organization, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the Consortium of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bangladesh (CIB), and Sadhana

– A Center for the Advancement of South Asian Culture. The programme was funded by Unesco Bangladesh.

3 children drown in Thakurgaon, Kishoreganj

STAR REPORT

Three children drowned in Thakurgaon and Kishoreganj yesterday.

In Thakurgaon, two girls drowned in a pond in Bhoisa village under Haripur upazila.

The victims are Tazrin Akhtar, 11, daughter of Abdul Hakim, and Jannatun, 10, daughter of Jahirul Islam.

Akbar Ali, a neighbour and relative of Tazrin, said the two girls went to bathe in a pond around 1:30pm and drowned as they did not know how to swim.

Jakaria Mandal, officer-in-charge of Haripur Police Station, said an unnatural death case was filed with the police station in this connection.

In Kishoreganj, a four-year-old drowned in the Daspara area.

The victim is Aditi Rani Das, daughter of Aubikal Das, of Daspara village.

Bikash Das, a resident of the same village, said Aditi went to bathe in the Dhanu river in front of her house alone.

As she did not return home, her relatives started searching for her. Later, they found her body floating in the river.

Itna Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Alamgir Hossain confirmed the incident.

SINHA MURDER

Quick execution of convicts demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ex-Forces Association yesterday demanded the execution of former Teknaf OC Pradeep Kumar Das and Inspector Liaqat Ali within seven days after completion of the legal proceedings in Maj (retd) Sinha murder case.

The platform of retired military and paramilitary personnel also sought conclusion of the death reference and appeal hearings within a month.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, the association's convener, Lieutenant Commander (retd) Mehedi Hasan, said, "We want to send a clear message to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law: no threats, temptations, or political pressure should influence the execution of the verdict. The sentence must be carried out within seven working days after the judgment is delivered."

Member secretary Lt (retd) Saifullah Khan Saif also spoke on the occasion.

Major (retd) Sinha was shot dead at a police checkpoint in Baharchhara, Teknaf, on July 31, 2020, sparking nationwide outrage.

On January 31, 2022, a Cox's Bazar court sentenced Pradeep and Liaqat to death and handed life sentences to six other accused in the case.

5 killed, eight hurt in road accidents in three districts

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and eight others injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday.

In Chattogram, two members of a family were killed and seven persons injured when a pickup skidded off the Dhaka-Chattogram highway near Sitakunda while another van overtook the vehicle.

The deceased are Jakia Islam, 5, and Sakhina Begum, 60.

Jamal Uddin, father of Jakia, is among the injured, said Abdul Mobin, officer-in-charge of Baro Aulia Highway Police Station.

The injured were initially taken to local upazila health complex from where they were transferred to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

In Munshiganj, a man was killed and another injured as a truck hit a motorcycle from behind on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway in Sreenagar.

Alimul, 27, died on the spot, said Abdul Kader Jilani, officer-in-charge of Hasara Highway Police Station.

In another accident, one Farukuzzaman, 59, was killed as when his motorcycle skidded off a road after hitting a roadside railing of the expressway near Nimgala Railway Station in Sirajdikhan, said police.

In Patuakhali, seven-year-old Ibrahim alias Jaber was killed after being hit by a microbus on Kalpara-Kuakata highway in front of the Pakhima Water Museum in Kuakata.

The deceased was the son of Afzal Hawlader from Huichhanpara village near Kuakata.

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Application Deadline
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Admission Test
30 May, 2025

GD-991

Huge blast at key Iran port kills 5, hurts hundreds

AFP, Tehran

A powerful explosion ripped through a key port in southern Iran yesterday, killing five people and injuring more than 500, state media said.

Although the cause of the blast was not immediately clear, the customs office at the port said in a statement carried by state TV that it probably resulted from a fire that broke out at the hazmat and chemical materials storage depot.

State media reported a "massive explosion" at Shahid Rajaee, the country's largest commercial port, located in Hormozgan province on Iran's southern coast.

Footage broadcast on state TV showed thick columns of black smoke billowing from the port area, where many containers are stored, with helicopters deployed to fight the fire.

Citing local emergency services,



state TV reported that at least 516 people were injured and "hundreds have been transferred to nearby medical centres".

It is located 23 kilometres west of Bandar Abbas, the Hormozgan provincial capital, and north of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of world's oil output passes.

The explosion was so powerful that it could be felt and heard about 50 kilometres away, Fars news agency reported, with residents saying they could feel the ground shake even at a distance.

"The shockwave was so strong that most of the port buildings were severely damaged," Tasnim news agency reported.

Yunus pays last respect

FROM PAGE 2
Besides, he also met the Kenyan president, Montenegro president, grand duke and grand duchess of Luxembourg, president of Ecuador, president of East Timor, prime minister of Honduras, president of Iceland, president of Portugal, the king and queen of Belgium, prime minister of Monaco, prince and princess of Norway, prime minister of Tunisia, prince and princess of Liechtenstein, director general of WHO, foreign ministers of Sri Lanka, Bahrain and Syria, and former US secretary of state John Kerry.

Pope Francis was laid to rest yesterday following the funeral Mass at St Peter's Square attended by presidents, princes and as many as a quarter million more.

Late Pope Francis was a

big admirer of Prof Yunus's work for the marginalised people across the globe and his vision for a three zero world where there will be no unemployment, no poverty and zero carbon emissions.

The Vatican also launched a joint Three Zero Initiative in Rome with the 2006 Nobel Peace Laureate.

Earlier, Chief Adviser Prof Yunus visited the Bangladesh House in Rome on Friday and signed the visitors' book.

The chief adviser was received by the Bangladesh ambassador to Italy and the Bangladesh ambassador to the Vatican City.

He will depart the Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport around 8:00am (12:00pm Bangladesh Standard Time) today and is expected to reach home in the early hours tomorrow.

Rivals exchange

FROM PAGE 1
airspace to Indian airlines, and India suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty that regulates water-sharing from the Indus River and its tributaries.

The two sides, who both fully claim Kashmir while partly ruling it, have also exchanged fire across their de facto border after four years of relative calm.

The Indian Army said it had responded to "unprovoked" small arms fire from multiple Pakistan Army posts that started around midnight on Friday along the 740 km (460-mile) de facto border

Raped daughter

FROM PAGE 12
and was taking treatment. But it never crossed our mind that she could take her life."

On March 18, the girl was on her way to her maternal grandparents' house after visiting her father's grave when she was raped near Munshibari area, according to the case document.

Suspect Sakib Munshi, 19, and his associate Sifat Munshi, 20, forcibly took her to a secluded area and raped her in turns. The suspects also allegedly took photos of the victim and threatened to spread them online if she reported the incident, added the case statement.

At that time, Dumki Police Station Officer in Charge



Thick, black smoke rises as rescuers arrive near the source of an explosion at the Shahid Rajaee port dock southwest of Bandar Abbas in the Iranian province of Hormozgan yesterday. Several containers exploded on April 26 at Iran's largest commercial port, authorities said, causing a major blast and fire, and leaving hundreds injured.

PHOTO: AFP

Progress made in nuclear talks

Say US, Iran; agree to meet next week to resolve remaining disputes

AFP, Muscat

The United States and Iran reported progress in their latest round of nuclear talks yesterday and agreed to meet again next week as they pursue a deal that could help ease soaring Middle East tensions.

A US official called the talks "positive and productive", and Iran's top diplomat said the two sides will study how to narrow their differences on a range of subjects before next week's fourth round.

The highest-level contact in years between the long-time foes is targeting a new deal that would stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons -- an objective Tehran denies pursuing -- in return for relief from sanctions.

"There is still much to do, but further progress was made on getting to a deal," the senior US official said on condition of anonymity, adding that the next talks would be in Europe.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi



called yesterday's talks, which included technical-level teams for the first time, "serious and businesslike".

"There are differences both in the major issues and in the details," he told Iranian state TV.

"Until the next meeting, further studies will be conducted in the capitals on how to reduce the differences."

Araghchi added: "I think our progress has been good so far. I am satisfied with the process of the negotiation and its speed. I

think it is proceeding well and satisfactorily." US special envoy Steve Witkoff again led the American delegation while Michael Anton, the State Department's head of policy planning, headed the US expert-level negotiators.

Deputy foreign ministers Kazem Gharibabadi and Majid Takht Ravanchi led Tehran's technical team, according to Iran's Tasnim news agency.

The delegations were in separate rooms and communicated in writing via the hosts, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei and Araghchi said.

Iran's defence and missile capabilities were not discussed, Baqaei told state TV, while an Iranian negotiator said the talks were "uniquely about sanctions and nuclear questions", according to Tasnim.

Araghchi had earlier expressed "cautious optimism", saying this week: "If the sole demand by the US is for Iran to not possess nuclear weapons, this demand is achievable".

Kursk retaken from Ukraine with North Korean help: Russia

AFP, Moscow

The Russian army has fully liberated the border Kursk region from Ukrainian control with the help of North Korean soldiers, Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov said on Saturday, admitting their participation in the conflict for the first time.

Gerasimov especially hailed the "heroism" of the North Korean soldiers taking part in the operation, who "provided significant assistance in defeating the group of Ukrainian armed forces".

But shortly after, the Ukrainian army denied Russia's claim to have driven Kyiv's forces out of Kursk, saying that "statements by the enemy leadership about the 'defeat' of the Ukrainian troops are nothing more than propaganda tricks".

However, the Ukrainian Chief of Staff acknowledged the situation on the battlefield was "difficult", while insisting Ukrainian forces were still holding positions in Kursk.

According to South Korean and Western intelligence agencies, more than 10,000 soldiers from North Korea were sent to Russia last year to help Moscow fight Ukraine's shock offensive in Kursk.

China hits out at 'extreme selfishness' of tariffs

AFP, Beijing

China's foreign minister has hit out at the "extreme selfishness" of tariffs, hinting at the steep levies imposed on Beijing by US President Donald Trump.

"Certain countries" resort to "pressure and coercion, and trigger unjustified trade wars... This extreme selfishness only harms their credibility," top diplomat Wang Yi told his Uzbek counterpart Bakhtiyor Saidov, according to a ministry statement released on Saturday.

This will "only undermine their credibility", added Wang, who was speaking on Friday on the sidelines of a foreign ministers' meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

China and the United States, the world's two biggest economies, are locked in an escalating tit-for-tat trade battle triggered by Trump's levies on Chinese goods, which have reached 145 percent on many products.

Beijing has responded with 125 percent tariffs of its own on US goods.

Premier Cement Mills PLC

T.K Bhaban, 13 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215 (the "Company")

NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

This notice is hereby given to all the shareholders and members of the Company that in accordance with the direction of the of the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, comprising His Lordship, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, Hon'ble Justice of the High Court Division, by an order dated 24.03.2025 passed in the Company Matter No. 523 of 2025, an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting of the shareholders and members of the Company will be held on **Wednesday the 21st May 2025 at 2.30 PM at City Hall, Agrabad Access Road, Chittagong-4100, Bangladesh** to consider the following agenda and accordingly pass a special resolution:

"To consider and approve, with or without modification, the Scheme of Amalgamation for the amalgamation of the National Cement Mills Limited and Premier Power Generation Limited (collectively the "Transferor Companies") with Premier Cement Mills PLC (the "Transferee Company") under Section 228 read with Section 229 of the Companies Act, 1994, whereby the entire undertaking of the Transferor Companies as a going concern is proposed to be transferred and vested in Transferee Company, with the Transferee Company being the surviving entity"



Kazi Md. Shafiqur Rahman, CMA
Company Secretary

Date : April 27, 2025
Issue: Dhaka

Notes:

- Shareholders, whose names appear on the members/Depository Register on the Record Date i.e. on 30 April 2025, shall be eligible to attend the 2nd Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Company.
- A member eligible to attend and vote at the 2nd EGM may appoint a proxy on his/her stead. The proxy form attached with Scheme of Amalgamation, duly filed in, signed and stamped, must be submitted to the Corporate Office of the Company not later than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
- Only shareholders or their validly appointed proxies will be allowed to have access to the registration process to attend the meeting.
- To attend into the 2nd EGM auditorium will be allowed strictly on submission of the attendance slip sent with the Proxy form.
- Shareholders are requested to submit their queries on the Scheme of Amalgamation at the Corporate Office of the Company at least 3 (three) working days before the day of Extra-Ordinary General Meeting.
- As per Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in the Company Matter No. 523 of 2025 the copy of the Scheme will be sent through registered post along with the e-mail address of the Member mentioned in their respective Beneficial Owner (BO) account maintained with the Depository based on the Record Date information.
- The Extra-ordinary General Meeting will be telecast on the link: <https://premiercement2ndegm.hybridegmbd.net>

Special Notes:

No special benefit, refreshment or gift in cash shall be given to the shareholders for attending the 2nd Extra-Ordinary General Meeting as per Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission's circular no. SEC/CMRRD/2009-193/154 dated October 24, 2013.

A copy of the Scheme of Amalgamation may be collected from the undersigned.

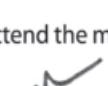
Premier Power Generation Limited

T.K Bhaban, 13 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka 1215 (the "Company")

NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

This notice is hereby given to all the shareholders and members of the Company that in accordance with the direction of the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, comprising His Lordship, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, Hon'ble Justice of the High Court Division, by an order dated 24.03.2025 passed in the Company Matter No. 523 of 2025, an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting of the shareholders and members of the Company will be held on **Wednesday the 21st May 2025 at 4.30 PM at City Hall, Agrabad Access Road, Chittagong-4100, Bangladesh** to consider the following agenda and accordingly pass a special resolution:

"To consider and approve, with or without modification, the Scheme of Amalgamation for the amalgamation of the National Cement Mills Limited and Premier Power Generation Limited (collectively the "Transferor Companies") with Premier Cement Mills PLC (the "Transferee Company") under Section 228 read with Section 229 of the Companies Act, 1994, whereby the entire undertaking of the Transferor Companies as a going concern is proposed to be transferred and vested in Transferee Company, with the Transferee Company being the surviving entity"



Kazi Md. Shafiqur Rahman, CMA
Company Secretary

Date : April 27, 2025
Issue: Dhaka

A copy of the Scheme of Amalgamation may be collected from the undersigned.

National Cement Mills Limited

Seacom Center, 10 Sk Mujib Road, Agrabad CA, Ctg-4100, BD(the "Company")

NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

This notice is hereby given to all the shareholders and members of the Company that in accordance with the direction of the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, comprising His Lordship, Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, Hon'ble Justice of the High Court Division, by an order dated 24.03.2025 passed in the Company Matter No. 523 of 2025, an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting of the shareholders and members of the Company will be held on **Wednesday the 21st May 2025 at 3.30 PM at City Hall, Agrabad Access Road, Chittagong-4100, Bangladesh** to consider the following agenda and accordingly pass a special resolution:

"To consider and approve, with or without modification, the Scheme of Amalgamation for the amalgamation of the National Cement Mills Limited and Premier Power Generation Limited (collectively the "Transferor Companies") with Premier Cement Mills PLC (the "Transferee Company") under Section 228 read with Section 229 of the Companies Act, 1994, whereby the entire undertaking of the Transferor Companies as a going concern is proposed to be transferred and vested in Transferee Company, with the Transferee Company being the surviving entity"

The shareholders and members of the Company are requested to attend the meeting on the date, time and at the place mentioned above.



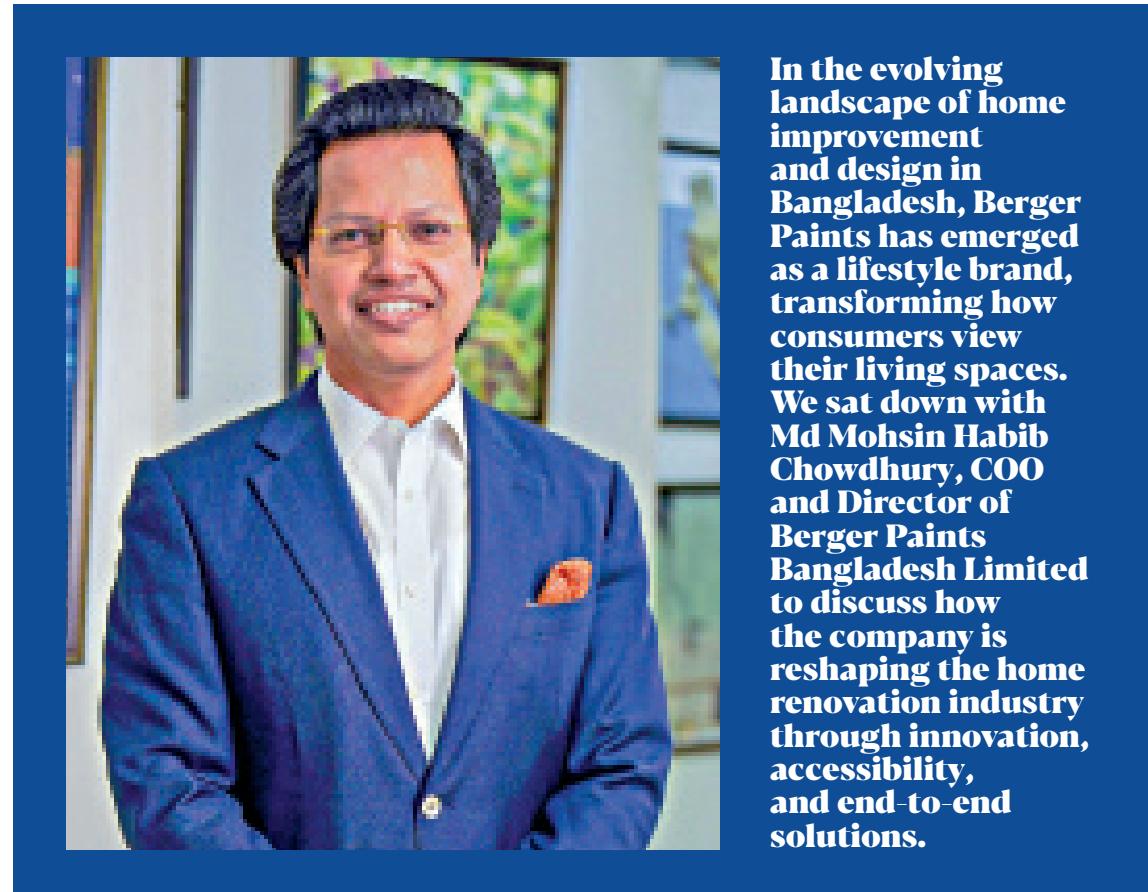
Golam Kibria, FCMA
Chief Financial Officer & Company Secretary

Date : April 27, 2025
Issue: Chittagong

A copy of the Scheme of Amalgamation may be collected from the undersigned.

Redefining Home Aesthetics

Berger to democratise quality interior design



In the evolving landscape of home improvement and design in Bangladesh, Berger Paints has emerged as a lifestyle brand, transforming how consumers view their living spaces. We sat down with Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury, COO and Director of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited to discuss how the company is reshaping the home renovation industry through innovation, accessibility, and end-to-end solutions.

One of our key approaches to ensuring affordability is offering modular and pre-set, budget-based design options that allow customers to renovate their homes in phases—beginning with just one room if necessary—based on their financial capacity.

The Daily Star (TDS): How has the Bangladeshi consumer's perception of paint and home renovation services evolved over the past decade, and what role has Berger played in driving this change?

Md Mohsin Habib Chowdhury (MHC): Over the past decade, the perception of paint and home renovation among Bangladeshi consumers has undergone a significant transformation. What was once viewed as a functional necessity—a protective layer for walls—has evolved into a means of self-expression and enhancing living spaces.

This shift has been fueled by a number of factors: GDP growth along with rising disposable incomes, rapid urbanisation and government-initiated infrastructural developments, increased exposure to global trends through digital platforms, and a growing emphasis on lifestyle—where personalised touches are highly valued.

Though per capita paint consumption in Bangladesh still lags behind regional neighbours—currently at around 1.5 kg per person compared to even lower figures in the past—Berger remains optimistic about growth potential. Now, many consumers are no longer content with basic paint colors; they actively seek personalised design solutions.

Berger Illusions—for textured painting and comprehensive interior design services offered through Berger Design Studio (BDS)—have found strong resonance in meeting this demand for aesthetic and customised home environments.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable move away from relying solely on local, often informal, paint contractors. Consumers now increasingly demand reliable, professional services. Our

Express Painting Service for walls and furniture has effectively carved out its niche by providing professionalism and efficiency with the use of modern painting and surface inspection tools.

TDS: Berger's service businesses emphasise 'end-to-end solutions.' In a market where many consumers still rely on fragmented services from local contractors, how does Berger ensure quality control, consistency, and customer satisfaction across its services?

MHC: Recognising the demands of busy lifestyles and the need for convenient, durable solutions—with a single point of contact covering all home renovation needs—Berger has launched Berger Experience Zone outlets nationwide for seamless service delivery.

Furnifab, Berger's furniture painting service, complements our Express Painting and Design Studio offerings, allowing us to provide comprehensive solutions under one roof. For all our service businesses, we have a dedicated customer service team that keeps communication with the customer throughout the project and provides continuous updates. Consumers are at the heart of our service business. Hence, we periodically take feedback from them and iteratively improve our service delivery.

Moreover, Berger Training Institute, in collaboration with the National Skill Development Authority (NSDA), has trained more than 13,000 painters and applicators to create an ecosystem that aids our service business. These applicators have not only received basic paint training but also got acquainted with modern painting tools.

Our Express Painting service team

uses automatic sander machines that not only reduce dust but also ensure fast and smooth paint finishes. All these initiatives combine to form the ecosystem of service delivery that helps us control the quality of our service and stay ahead of our competitors.

TDS: With Bangladesh's burgeoning interior design market, what is Berger's strategy to make quality interior design accessible across the country?

MHC: Bangladesh's interior design market, currently valued at over BDT 20,000 crore and projected to double by 2027, presents a tremendous opportunity. While interior design is still considered a luxury, Berger wants to change the narrative by moving from wall space to the floor space of our customers. Currently, we are operating in Dhaka and Chattogram; however, we have plans to expand across the country in the near future.

Berger has been present in the market for more than 55 years. Over the years, Berger has invested in building a robust network across the country. Our 24/7 call center – 16804 – operates relentlessly to cater to any query from our customers in any corner of the country. That call center is supported by our 38 physical service centers – Berger Experience Zone outlets – established in strategic

TDS: The Bangladeshi market is known for its price sensitivity. How does Berger balance providing premium services with maintaining affordability for a wider range of consumers?

MHC: Berger's answer to affordability lies in its diversified product and service portfolio tailored to different market tiers. For example, Tier 1 (metro markets) receives access to premium products and services, while Tier 2 and Tier 3 (semi-urban and rural) markets benefit from budget-friendly alternatives, including lower-cost paints and flexible application services.

Understanding that "Premium quality doesn't come cheap," Berger still ensures that even entry-level customers have access to quality products and trained applicators. The company also offers referrals to certified applicators for consumers who may not opt for Berger's full-service packages, ensuring quality is not compromised.

One of our key approaches to ensuring affordability is offering modular and pre-set, budget-based design options that allow customers to renovate their homes in phases—beginning with just one room if necessary—based on their financial capacity. The introduction of a 0% EMI facility will further fuel the initiative,

team uses our own product, Berger Power Bond, as an adhesive. Joints on board surfaces are often not sturdy enough, causing nuisance to customers. The use of Power Bond as an adhesive makes the joints of the boards more durable, ensuring impeccable finishes.

Additionally, we have a range of waterproofing products and construction chemicals that ensure the integrated one-stop service we provide not only delivers aesthetics but also functionality with durability. Our smart design approach also incorporates energy-efficient elements, such as maximising daylight and reducing reliance on artificial lighting.

TDS: Looking ahead, what are future plans of BDS for expansion and innovation?

MHC: Our vision for BDS is national impact. The immediate plan involves expanding beyond Dhaka and Chattogram to cover all major divisions, eventually reaching tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Supporting this geographic expansion requires investing significantly in talent development.

We are already collaborating closely with architectural students from renowned institutions like BUET and KUET. Our goal is to create rewarding career paths for these aspiring young architects, which will fuel our growth while contributing to national employment.

BDS plans to champion the integration of indigenous Bangladeshi crafts and materials into contemporary interior design. This serves a dual purpose: celebrating our culture domestically and potentially showcasing it internationally, thereby stimulating local handicraft industries and contributing to economic growth.

Exploring strategic tie-ups with international architects is another potential avenue for future growth. To make our services more accessible and future-ready, Berger is developing **Virtual Consultancy** services, enabling digital-first design assistance regardless of geographic barriers.

The Bangladeshi interior market is dynamic and evolving; our role is to actively develop this market, address unmet consumer needs, and inspire homeowners towards the possibilities of thoughtful interior design. This unwavering client-centricity is pivotal not just for Berger's success, but for the sustained growth and vibrancy of the entire interior design industry in Bangladesh.

"At Berger, we're not just offering a service—we're enabling a lifestyle transformation. By combining our deep understanding of local needs with global design sensibilities, we aim to make quality interior solutions accessible, professional, and affordable for every home in Bangladesh," said Sayed Sharif Russel, Category Head, Marketing at Berger.

With its strong infrastructure, trained teams, and flexible offerings, Berger is not just following trends—it's setting the standard for the future of interior design in Bangladesh.

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Grey Berger 2025

A call for restraint

India-Pakistan tensions must not be allowed to escalate further

We are deeply concerned by the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, as both countries exchanged fire across the Line of Control in disputed Kashmir, following the recent terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam that resulted in the deaths of 26 tourists. As the Indian government has accused its long-standing adversary, Pakistan, of supporting "cross-border terrorism," relations between the two countries have plunged to their lowest level in years. Denying any involvement, Pakistan called the Indian attempts to link Pakistan to the Pahalgam attack "frivolous" and vowed to respond to any Indian action. Both nations have since introduced a series of retaliatory measures against each other. While we strongly condemn this heinous attack in Kashmir—the worst of its kind in a quarter of a century—and expect those responsible to be brought to justice, we also urge both countries to refrain from actions that could escalate the situation.

Reportedly, India has taken some strong measures following the attack. It has formally informed Pakistan of its decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty of 1961, closed the main land border crossing, downgraded diplomatic ties, and revoked visas for Pakistanis. Indian Home Minister Amit Shah also urged state chief ministers to ensure that no Pakistani remains in India beyond April 27. In response, Pakistan has closed its airspace to Indian airlines, expelled Indian diplomats and military advisers, cancelled visas for Indian nationals (except Sikh pilgrims), and shut down its side of the main border crossing.

It goes without saying that any further escalation will have far-reaching consequences for both nations. And it will be particularly disastrous for the economy of Kashmir, which is heavily dependent on tourism.

The UN has emphasised that issues between the two nations should be resolved peacefully through meaningful mutual engagement, a view we strongly support. A proper and thorough investigation is essential to identify and punish those involved in the recent terrorist attacks. However, even before such an investigation is carried out statements from India's water resources minister, pledging that "not even a drop" of water would go to Pakistan, and Pakistan's warning that halting the water supply from the Indus River would be an "act of war," are deeply concerning.

We hope both these nuclear-armed nations will renounce retaliatory actions and resolve their disputes at the negotiating table. With Pakistan reportedly proposing an international investigation and expressing willingness to cooperate, India should consider such an initiative. Finally, we urge both nations to avoid actions that could destabilise the entire region and instead focus on diplomatic solutions for the greater benefit of both sides.

The alarming rise of teen gangs

Authorities must wake up to this crisis

We are extremely concerned by the recent incidents in Cumilla city, where around a hundred members of "kishor (teenage) gangs" were on the streets in three neighbourhoods wielding weapons such as machetes, hockey sticks, rods, etc, while at least 15 motorcycles circled the streets making loud noises, terrifying residents and visitors who watched helplessly, according to a *Prothom Alo* report. This happened on Friday during admission exams of a university, which is why there were many parents and guardians of candidates waiting outside. It is disturbing that these young men felt emboldened enough to openly demonstrate with weapons in broad daylight.

This was not the first time that these gang members have shown their muscle on the streets of Cumilla city. On January 3, more than 50 members of teenage gangs staged a similar demonstration with weapons in various areas, including near Victoria College. Cocktails were also exploded, creating an atmosphere of panic. Later, police arrested some of the members.

But such arrests did not deter these gangs, as is evident from the even bigger demonstration on Friday. In fact, while police have said that they are conducting raids to catch the gang members, a few arrests here and there are not enough to stop this deep-rooted problem that has spread all over the country, including Dhaka. According to the police, there are at least 15 active "kishor gangs" in Cumilla alone. There are hundreds more all over the country, with Dhaka having the highest number. Since 2017, these gangs have been involved in at least 12 murders. They are also involved in other crimes like extortion, drug peddling, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Such gangs have continued to thrive because of the sense of impunity and often political patronage they enjoy. Violence is a way of showing power and a way to earn the "respect" of peers. The lack of role models, financial hardship of the family, and a sense of purposelessness make gang culture all the more appealing to many youths. Youth wings of political parties, such as the Chhatra League, which became notorious for its criminal activities and violence, have been a major catalyst in the rise of teenage gang culture.

Friday's incident should be a wake-up call for us. The government must act swiftly. Police must amplify its vigilance of known hotspots with strict enforcement of juvenile justice laws. At the same time, there must be rehabilitation programmes that address the root causes of gang culture. Educational institutions must teach students basic values of empathy and kindness towards others. Parents, guardians and communities have a responsibility too, to engage with young people, create environments where children and youths are nurtured and where they develop a sense of belonging. Opportunities must be created for skills development so that these young men feel empowered and can dream of a wholesome life that does not involve violence and crime.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



The first PC mouse is introduced

On this day in 1981, Xerox PARC debuted the first personal computer mouse.

EDITORIAL

Naziba Basher
is a journalist at The Daily Star.

NAZIBA BASHER

Do you remember the film *Slumdog Millionaire*?

While the story centres around a teenager from the slums of Mumbai taking part in a game show to win a fortune, it is a part of his backstory that hits the hardest.

As a child, the protagonist, Jamal Malik, played by Dev Patel, and his brother are forced to survive on the streets after their mother is killed during the Bombay riots. The brothers, along with another child, are found by Maman—a gangster who trains and disables children to become more "effective" beggars. The money the children collect rarely belongs to them.

The reality Jamal faced under Maman's control is not fiction for hundreds of thousands of children across this subcontinent. It is their daily existence. A reality we routinely ignore, even as these children reach out for help on our streets.

Just last Friday, a six-year-old boy was found unconscious beside a man at the Rupsha Ferry Ghat in Khulna. The man, later identified as 30-year-old Rafikul Islam Biplob, had been begging with the child by his side. The boy had gone missing from his home six months earlier. During that period, he was starved, tortured, and paraded across cities as a "disabled" child—his fingers broken to elicit pity and money.

How many more children need to be broken—literally broken—before we, as a region and as a people, say "enough"?

Across South Asia, children are trafficked, crippled, and discarded—all so someone can pocket loose change from your car window.

There is no justification for this. No cultural nuance, no economic hardship makes it morally defensible. It is a grotesque violation of every human right, every shred of decency we claim to uphold.

So how does it continue?

The answer lies in a lethal mix of systemic failure and societal apathy. Law enforcement agencies are often ill-equipped, under-resourced, or

simply unwilling to pursue trafficking networks. Some officials turn a blind eye; others are complicit. Traffickers pose as guardians, and without proper documentation or welfare checks, they go unquestioned. It is easier to dismiss a begging child as a sad by-product of poverty than to recognise them as the victim of a brutal, organised enterprise.

Cultural and religious practices are also manipulated. The sacred act of giving alms, deeply ingrained in the spiritual traditions of this region,

every time we choose to turn away from the real situation.

The traffickers? Undeniably monstrous. But what about the governments that know—have known for decades—this is happening and still fail to act with urgency or resolve?

The laws exist. Bangladesh has the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act. India has the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have similar frameworks.

But laws that are not enforced are as good as non-existent. Cases stagnate. Survivors are lost in bureaucratic mazes. Traffickers roam free. The systems are there, but they are deliberately neglected—because corruption is easier than compassion.

Because law enforcement can be bought. Because it is more convenient to celebrate GDP growth than to admit the streets are being lined with the wreckage of children's lives.



FILE VISUAL: STAR

So, what must be done?

We need national task forces with real authority, capable of investigating and prosecuting trafficking networks instead of simply releasing statements to the press. Law enforcement must be retrained, monitored, and held to account. A child found begging should not be ignored—it should trigger an immediate welfare investigation, including medical and forensic checks to determine their true situation and who is responsible for it.

South Asian nations must share intelligence and cooperate across borders. Trafficking is transnational;

Because right now, we are failing our children. Every child left on the streets, every child mutilated for sympathy, is a stain on our collective conscience. We cannot call ourselves civilised, just, or faithful if we allow this to continue.

South Asia must rise, not with more policies, not with more headlines, but with action. With anger. With unshakable resolve. Because this is not just about poverty or crime. This is about who we are.

And if we do not stop this now, we are no better than the monsters who do this. Will we finally choose to be better?

What the educated elite are getting wrong

Bobby Hajaj
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BOBBY HAJAJ

In the months following the end of a long and autocratic rule, Bangladesh has witnessed a fragile but remarkable return to administrative sanity. Under the interim government, led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, the state has achieved a measure of control that seemed impossible under the previous regime.

The management of Eid travel and the stabilisation of food prices during Ramadan stand out as concrete improvements. These are not small feats, especially given the devastating state in which this government inherited its institutions and economy.

As someone who supported the idea of an interim administration led by Prof Yunus long before it materialised, I take personal pride in these early achievements. They reflect not only the credibility of his leadership, but also the seriousness of a government trying, however briefly, to re-establish the idea that public service should serve the public.

However, praise must be accompanied by proportion. Prof Yunus himself would be the first to say that this is a team effort—one enabled by a reform-oriented planning ministry, a finance ministry willing to act against cartels, and state agencies such as the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh given actual authority to intervene in markets. Crucially, none of this would have been possible without a renewed civic energy: a citizenry that,

after the mass uprising of July 2024, has become more aware, more vocal, and far less tolerant of manipulation.

And yet, a new danger is emerging from within the very segment of society that should know better. Among urban, educated, social media savvy citizens, a narrative is spreading with alarming speed—that Prof Yunus should stay on, not for three months, but for three years or more. Some of this sentiment is organic, born of understandable exhaustion. But some of it, clearly, is not. There are unmistakable signs that promotional campaigns are shaping this rhetoric, possibly by groups that are uneasy about elections and accountability.

At the heart of this sentiment is an implicit belief that because this interim government has delivered some basic services better than the last unelected regime, it is therefore more fit to rule long-term. This logic is not only flawed, it is historically dangerous.

There are several reasons why this logic must be challenged. First, no interim government, however competent, has the mandate to govern a democracy. Second, the idea that Bangladesh never experienced good governance until now is plainly untrue. The arc of our national development, with all its contradictions, has included moments of serious reform, dedicated leadership, and meaningful public service. Third, short-term efficiency

should not be mistaken for the long-term work of institution building. Real transformation requires depth, continuity, and accountability. No interim body, however sincere, can deliver that.

But the deeper issue here is a lack of political education. The call for an extended unelected rule, following the fall of an autocrat, is a contradiction that must be named. We cannot claim to support democracy while asking an unelected official to govern indefinitely. We cannot honour the sacrifice of thousands of citizens in the July movement only to discard the principle of popular sovereignty so soon after victory.

This is where the insights of political philosophy remain relevant. European thinkers such as Rousseau, Hegel, and Tocqueville, however culturally distant, understood one core truth: democracy is not natural; it must be learned. Freedom is not merely the absence of tyranny, but the presence of civic responsibility and political maturity.

Rousseau's *Emile* teaches that the good citizen must be educated into self-awareness, not simply granted formal liberty. The teacher must guide the child not only towards freedom, but towards the recognition that freedom is only meaningful within a just society.

Hegel, in his vision of *Bildung*, emphasises the development of the individual through structured encounters with the institutions of state—family, civil society, law. Through this process, the individual becomes capable of true freedom, which is found not in isolation but in participation.

Tocqueville observed that in America, political freedom was sustained not by theory, but by

practice—by the habits of local engagement, voluntary associations, and religious socialisation. A democratic state, in his view, can only function when the citizen has already internalised the ethics of liberty.

All three thinkers, despite their differences, converge on one point: democracy must be underpinned by education—not technical education, but moral and civic education. It is precisely this education that is lacking among many of our best-educated citizens today.

To see people, many of them graduates of elite institutions, calling for a "benevolent extension" of interim rule is to witness how little they understand the hard demands of democratic life. Governance is not a matter of finding the perfect person; it is about building institutions that prevent abuse and ensure continuity regardless of who holds office.

This article is not an attack on Prof Yunus. He has served well and with integrity. But the real test of his leadership lies not in how long he stays, but in whether he can oversee an orderly, timely transition to elections.

The future of our republic depends not on individuals, but on principles. Let us not replace an unelected despot with an unelected reformer, however well-meaning. Let us demand of ourselves the maturity to distinguish temporary competence from lasting legitimacy.

We need not rush into cynicism—but neither should we retreat into comfort. The path forward is difficult. It requires an educated public, a culture of civic participation, and institutions that reflect the people's will. The alternative is clear: a cycle of dependency, however refined, that will eventually bring us back to where we started.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

The first PC mouse is introduced

On this day in 1981, Xerox PARC debuted the first personal computer mouse.

The 'woman question' and the legacy of colonial patriarchy



Symhe Wadud teaches law at the University of Dhaka and is in charge of Law & Our Rights at The Daily Star.

PSYMHE WADUD

Following July-August, the "woman question" was almost about to slip through the cracks and lose to other issues prioritised by those who dominate the logics of politics. Better late than never though, a commission was formed, which has now come up with comprehensive reform proposals. Many of these proposals would require separate analysis. Here, I limit myself to the proposed uniform family code governing family affairs. I will not discuss the pros of having such a code for women and men as such but will venture into a hitherto uncharted area within the public discourse. I will try to trace the roots of the backlash that this proposal is currently facing.

The proposal for an explicitly "optional" uniform family code is being perceived as a "threat" by the religious elites as interference with religion and with the "home." The roots of this perception certainly lie in patriarchal dominance. But as we dig more carefully, the roots will lead us to hegemonic colonial masculinity

Why did the rulers leave the "private spheres?"
Because, by doing so, they could appropriate the colonised people's "faith" and "religion" and thereby grant the native males (both Muslim and Hindu) a sense of "pseudo-autonomy" within the so-called "private spheres." This pseudo-autonomy implied that the "home" is "governed" by religion (or how the native men wanted to interpret it), and not by the British. However, while the native men were content with the "home" being imagined as an autonomous institution, free from the excesses of alien governance and interference, British rule pervaded the entire public spheres.

only to their own laws." Thus, the British showed commitment towards personal law systems and, in turn, towards "protecting" the private spheres.

Why did the rulers leave the "private spheres?" Because, by doing so, they could appropriate the colonised people's "faith" and "religion" and thereby grant

stop at ideating the scheme of public-private dichotomy; rather, they solidified it through laws. Scholars explain how a positivist edifice of personal laws was created by the British. In an arbitrary manner, the British categorised the pre-colonial customs and laws governing personal affairs (such as marriage, inheritance, and maintenance) as

faith. Similarly, Islamic criminal laws were disentangled from the so-called "religion" by the colonial lawmakers at their whims and convenience. Likewise, all aspects of Hindu life fashioned as civil and criminal matters that could find their origin in "Manu's classification of eighteen heads of law" were interfered with.

Thus, the rules of personal

generations and ended up forging a strong alliance with the crude logics of patriarchy.

One can say that a top-down decision for a uniform family code will remain fragile—always susceptible to majoritarian backlash and prone to backsliding—and that it is crucial such policy-legal reform decisions are made incrementally, as part of a wider societal debate, in order to sustainably secure and protect what little progress we make. However, this is exactly why the proposal has been made for an "optional" code (i.e., as a short-term policy-legal goal) where people will have the *option* to subscribe either to the uniform civil laws or to religious laws.

Equal marriage, inheritance, and maintenance laws can certainly translate into substantive equality for women and men. Such laws will not go alone, of course, as we will need adequate tools to secure financial independence for women and their safety from harassment and violence in both private and public life. We also require reasonable accommodations in the labour market and within built infrastructures so that women can exercise their rights and contribute to the economy.

With secure variables, equal marriage and family laws can eventually lead to healthy shouldering of financial responsibilities too, as the brunt of otherwise is often disproportionately borne by men. Notably, reforms in Muslim personal laws have been brought in Tunisia, Turkey, and Egypt, among others (reforms to Hindu personal laws have been brought in India and Nepal too). These comparative experiences do not garner much support from our kins. They perhaps do not realise it, but when factions of our religious elites perceive crucial reform proposals in favour of gender-based equality as a threat, they in fact reproduce and perpetuate the colonial logics and end up ruling their and others' homes as proxy colonial masters.



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

the native males (both Muslim and Hindu) a sense of "pseudo-autonomy" within the so-called "private spheres." This pseudo-autonomy implied that the "home" is "governed" by religion (or how the native men wanted to interpret it), and not by the British. However, while the native men were content with the "home" being imagined as an autonomous institution, free from the excesses of alien governance and interference, British rule pervaded the entire public spheres.

Furthermore, the British did not

"religious" and all other aspects as "secular" and hence capable of being legislated on (i.e., interfered with). This categorisation was not rigid but flexible, as per administrative needs and requirements. In the beginning, laws of contract were listed as religious or personal law issues. However, as Flavia Agnes shows, since contractual relationships were key to a capitalist colonial economy, they were weeded out of the domain of "religion" and transformed into territorial laws, applicable uniformly to all British subjects regardless of

laws based upon centuries-old interpretations (and mis- or convenient interpretations) became the rigid letters of law, and over time, turned into almost an unchangeable monolithic entity. The natives sought comfort in their so-called autonomy and self-governance within the "home"—unknowingly, under the authority of laws written by the British. I think the alien rulers, and especially the British, should be hailed for how their colonial logics made their way into the cognitive framing of the natives across

India's transshipment revocation should be a wake-up call



Wing Commander ATM Nazrul Islam (ret'd) is serving as an adviser to the United College of Aviation Science and Management and Aviet Hansa Aircraft Services.

ATM NAZRUL ISLAM

On April 8, 2025, India revoked the transshipment facility that allowed Bangladeshi exporters to use Indian land routes and airports—especially Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport—for exporting goods to third countries. The facility had been extended to Bangladesh on June 29, 2020, enabling Bangladeshi exporters to move goods via Indian Territory for faster and more cost-effective international shipment. It is speculated that this was done to send a political message, but according to the Indian government, they withdrew the facility based on Indian exporters' demand.

The sudden revocation came as a blow to many Bangladeshi exporters who had become increasingly reliant on the Indian routes due to persistent inefficiencies and high costs at home, especially at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA). Despite all the hue and cry over this issue, it should be noted that only 18-20 percent of Bangladesh's air exports were routed through India. Approximately, 20-30 trucks used to travel from Bangladesh to Delhi each day via the Benapole-Petrapole land route but many exporters did not mind transporting goods almost 1,900 km overland through India for several reasons.

Among the key reasons were the higher cost and congestion at HSIA. While it costs \$3 per kilogramme (kg) to ship garments from HSIA to European destinations, the same costs only \$1.2 via Delhi. There are some additional charges as well such as handling charges, scanning charges, daily warehouse charges, etc. Besides, HSIA's cargo handling capacity has already been exceeded causing tremendous congestion. Operational inefficiencies also occurred due to

delays from the frequent breakdown of explosive detection scanners (EDS), lack of ground handling proficiency, frequent congestion at cargo terminals and Biman's monopolistic attitude among other factors. Goods were often stuck for days, jeopardising shipment deadlines and causing huge losses for exporters.

India's decision must serve as a turning point for Bangladesh's export logistics strategy. The dependence on a foreign nation for transshipment or the reliance on foreign carriers for cargo export exposes a structural vulnerability in the country's trade infrastructure. As a part of the solution, the third terminal must be immediately made fully operational. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, once operational, the third terminal will increase handling capacity from the existing 200,000 metric tonnes to over 500,000 metric tonnes annually. This should be considered as the most immediate fix and must be expedited with urgency.

Besides, Shah Amanat and Osmani international airports should also be equipped with modern cargo terminals, customs clearance systems, and scanners to decentralise cargo movement and reduce pressure on Dhaka. Establishing digital customs clearance system, automating documentation, and introducing AI-based cargo routing can cut delays and enhance traceability. The rates of cargo transporting and other handling charges should be brought down to reasonable amounts.

Globally, cargo movement by air transport has been significantly increasing over the past few decades.

Transportation by air has been marked for its speedy and reliable

movement of time-sensitive and

high-value goods. Therefore, it is preferred to sea transportation despite its higher cost. This led many countries to increase their cargo transport capacity by air to capture the international market.

However, Bangladeshi airlines

have yet to add any dedicated cargo

aircraft to their fleets. Neither is

there any Bangladeshi cargo airline

the aviation sector has never been given priority or importance, resulting in a long-standing failure to build air cargo infrastructure in the country. Over the past two decades, multiple private Bangladeshi airlines were launched and later shut down showing various causes. The reality is

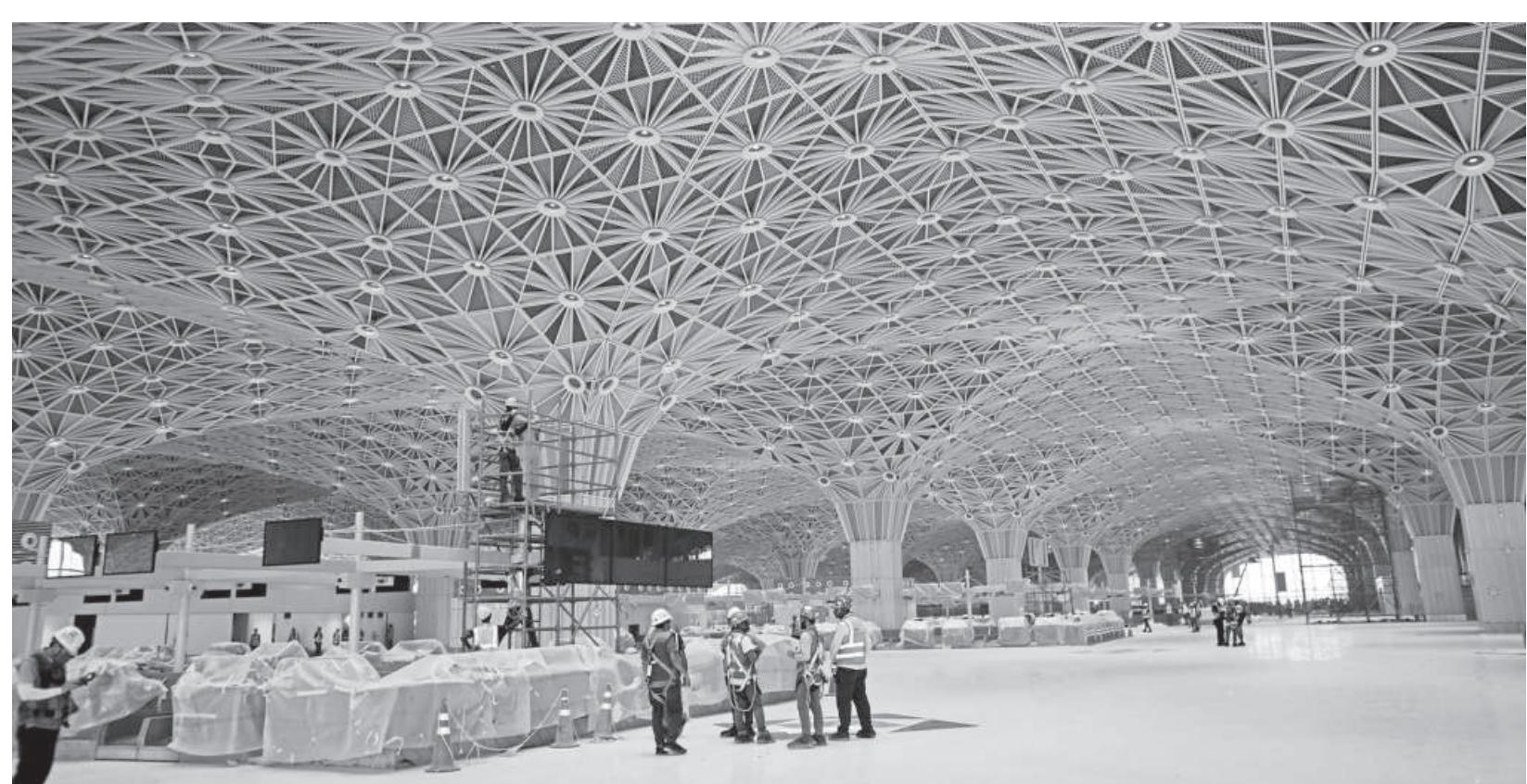
the authorities never addressed issues

such as the high airport and landing

business. Policymakers should create incentives for the emergence of homegrown dedicated cargo and passenger carriers. This includes providing access to funding, tax holidays, reduced aviation fuel prices, streamlining licensing procedures, and reducing surcharges and non-aeronautical charges. Increasing the capacity of the country's air

may launch another airline under public and private partnership and bestow its management to aviation professionals.

India's revocation of the transshipment facility should not be viewed merely as a diplomatic inconvenience or a short-term challenge. It highlights a glaring weakness in Bangladesh's export



The third terminal must be immediately made fully operational to increase Bangladesh's cargo handling capacity.

FILE PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

in operation to take the opportunity. As such the country's exporters had to rely heavily on foreign carriers. Biman carried only 43,044 tonnes of cargo in FY2023-2024 out of a total 343,643 tonnes. This means over 85 percent of air cargo transport to and from Bangladesh is being carried out by foreign carriers, reflecting that the country's logistics sovereignty is not only under threat but also drains a huge amount of foreign currency from Bangladesh.

Since the inception of Bangladesh,

burdensome surcharge rates (as high as 72 percent yearly on arrears), unpredictable fuel pricing, delays in customs handling, economic recessions, etc. as the reasons behind the airlines' failure. As a result, the entire airline market of the country has gone on to the hands of foreign carriers.

The government must find out why the airlines have or are failing, not to blame any particular actor/actors but to create a sustainable environment for the airline

transportation will help retain huge sums of foreign exchange both in the international passenger and cargo sectors.

Bangladesh Biman and US Bangla should be supported so that they can include dedicated cargo aircraft in their fleets. The government may offer incentives to interested entrepreneurs for launching dedicated cargo airlines to enhance cargo air transportation capacity in the country. Beside Bangladesh Biman, the government

infrastructure and calls for immediate, systemic reforms. Investing in airport modernisation, creating local air transport capacity for cargo, easing regulatory bottlenecks, lowering operational costs for local airlines, and offering competitive cargo handling prices must be given the utmost priority.

In fact, Bangladesh should develop a target as to where it wants to see itself in the aviation business and what share of the market it wants to retain.



Adnan Al Rajeev's 'risktaking' pays off, lands him in Cannes

SHARMIN JOYA

Set against the rugged, untamed beauty of Sylhet, filming for *Ali* was far from easy. "We set out to capture images that reflected the raw, scenic beauty of nature, but reaching those places was a battle on its own," he recalls.

When *Ali* was selected for the Cannes Film Festival, it wasn't just a personal triumph, but a historic moment for Bangladeshi cinema. For Adnan Al Rajeev, the filmmaker behind it, the road to this milestone was anything but straightforward. It was a journey shaped by doubt, discovery, and the quiet courage it takes to start again.

He never set out to make short films. "I was never really interested in making short films," laughs the director. "I used to believe they weren't necessary for me — I was already working prominently in the industry with a tone of voice of my own. But filmmaking is a never-ending journey of discovery."

Last year, while attending Cannes as part of the producing team for the Filipino short film *Radikals*, he found himself drawn into a world he hadn't paid much attention to before. Watching short films on the big screen, he saw something different — pure, fearless storytelling. "They weren't just 'shorts'; they were powerful artistic expressions," he says. "That experience sparked something in me — a desire to explore new forms of visual narrative. I returned home with a different perspective and began studying short films, realising how they challenge and refine a filmmaker's vision. As they say, short films shape how you truly see yourself as a storyteller."

The result was *Ali* — a film born not just from ambition, but from a genuine hunger to tell stories differently, and to challenge himself in ways he hadn't before.

Set against the rugged, untamed beauty of Sylhet, *Ali* features Al Amin and Susoma Ranjan Indrani in the lead roles. Filming, however, was far from easy. "We set out to

capture images that reflected the raw, scenic beauty of nature, but reaching those places was a battle on its own," he recalls.

With little tourism infrastructure, Sylhet's hidden treasures remained just that — hidden. Bikes, boats, and long, exhausting walks became their daily routine. The team endured bad roads, blistering heat, and countless setbacks. Yet, even as exhaustion set in, there was a fierce kind of joy that came from pushing through. "Sometimes," he says simply, "the toughest journeys lead to the most beautiful frames."



The news that *Ali* had been selected for the Official Competition section in the Palme d'Or segment in the 78th Cannes Film Festival — arrived in a way that still feels almost cinematic. At first, they missed the call — an unknown French number flashing on their phones. "We honestly had no idea why anyone from France would be calling," he laughs. It was only later, during a video call with his producers Kristine De Leon and Tanveer Hossain, that the truth began to sink in. Even then, he found himself frozen, blank, struggling to believe it.

He was watching *Black Mirror* on Netflix

at the time — a show about alternate realities and strange, parallel worlds. "For a moment, I genuinely thought I'd slipped into one," he jokes. Tears came soon after.

The first person he wanted to tell was his wife, Mehzabien Chowdhury. "She was in a shoot and couldn't pick up the phone, so I sent her a video message instead. When she finally called back, she screamed so loudly that everyone on set thought something terrible had happened."

But even as this chapter opens, Adnan is already thinking ahead. His new production house, 'katalog', has started its journey.

"katalog" is more than just a company — it's our shared dream. For me, the ultimate goal is to develop my feature film under this banner. I also look forward to being part of Arvin Belarmino's feature projects — not only an incredible filmmaker but also my partner in 'katalog' — and supporting Kyla Romero, a brilliant director and screenwriter, in her feature journey."

Risk-taking has always been part of Adnan's nature. From directing *@18* to producing stories like *Mohanagar* and films like *Priyo Matoli*, and most recently *Chokkor 302*, he has never shied away from telling bold, sometimes uncomfortable stories. But it's not recklessness — it's something much deeper.

"It takes a lot of courage to try, to fail, and to keep trying until you get where you truly want to be," he says. "Taking risks is essential. I trust in my craft. If I fall, I'll rise again."

There's no arrogance in his voice when he says it — just the quiet certainty of someone who knows that the real magic lies not in the destination, but in the journey itself. "And right now, for me, that journey is just beginning," he concludes.

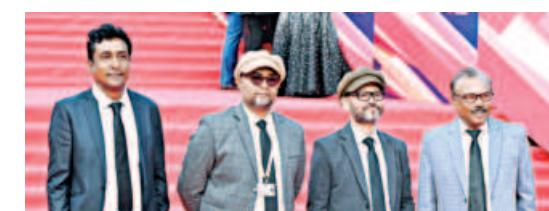
PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Court orders AR Rahman to deposit Rs 2 crore in copyright case



The Delhi High Court has issued an interim order directing renowned music composer AR Rahman and production houses Madras Talkies and Lyca Productions to deposit Rs 2 crore in a copyright infringement case filed by Padma Shri awardee and Dhrupad vocalist Ustad Faiyaz Wasifuddin Dagar.

The case pertains to Rahman's track *Veera Raja Veera* from the film *Ponniyin Selvan: II*, which the court noted was musically "identical" to *Shiva Stuti*, a devotional composition by the late Dhrupad maestros Ustad Nasir Faiyazuddin and Ustad Nasir Zahiruddin Dagar, collectively known as the Junior Dagar Brothers.



'Mastul' secures Special Mention at Moscow Int'l Film Festival

Bangladeshi film *Mastul* has received the Special Mention Award (Jury) from the Federation of Film Societies at the 47th Moscow International Film Festival.

Director Mohammad Nuruzzaman was presented with the certificate on Thursday, April 24, local time, for the film's "humane perspective on everyday life."

Speaking from Moscow, Nuruzzaman shared that the film's premiere was met with strong appreciation from audiences, critics, and journalists. *Mastul*, which explores the lives of seafarers, features performances by Fazlur Rahman Babu, Deepak Suman, Aminur Rahman, Arif Hasan, and Sifat Bannya, among others.

NEWS

Allegations of corruption

FROM PAGE 12
in taking money for transfers?" he asked.

"I know that most advisers are not involved in corruption, but some allegations are being raised, and the scale of that corruption is serious," he said.

He said his party has deep respect for the students' movement and their pivotal role in the mass uprising against Sheikh Hasina's regime.

Mentioning graft allegations against student leaders, he added that the students should have exercised greater caution upon becoming part of the government.

Some leaders of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), which spearheaded the 2024 uprising, are reportedly exploiting their influence in various ministries for personal gains, the BNP leader said.

Over 12,700 arrested in eight days

FROM PAGE 1
arrests made during special drives on April 23, sent by Rangpur Metropolitan Police to the Police Headquarters. The first column on the list is titled "arrest of instigators/planners/associates of destabilisation", while the other columns pertain to drives against illegal arms, smuggling, robbery and mugging, and extortion.

The law enforcers have stepped up their drives after Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury last week ordered them to prevent the AL from bringing out processions, warning that officers who would fail to stop such gatherings would face disciplinary action.

Recently, the AL and its affiliated bodies, including the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), held flash processions in various parts of the country, including Dhaka, Khulna, Kishoreganj, Jashore, Sharaiapur, Narayanganj, Cumilla, and Barishal, according to media reports.

In Dhaka, processions were reported in Jatrabari, Shabagh, Rampura, Demra, and Mirpur. Photos and videos of the processions have also been circulating on social media.

In response, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) recently issued a statement assuring city dwellers not to panic over the processions.

The DMP said the banned BCL and like-minded groups watch police movements and march for a minute or two before dispersing. They would then post photos and videos of the

processions on social media. "Law enforcers were analysing photos and videos to identify the participants," the DMP said.

In the last nine days, the DMP and its Detective Branch arrested at least 74 leaders and activists of the AL and its associate bodies, according to the DMP.

The DB yesterday arrested eight members of the AL and its affiliated organisations, including BCL, from different areas of the capital for their alleged involvement in organising flash processions.

DMP spokesperson Talebur Rahman said the arrestees are accused in several cases filed with different police stations. "They were involved in attempts to destabilise the country. By organising flash processions in various parts of the city, they aimed to spread panic among the public," he said.

Chattogram Jail's Senior Jail Superintendent Iqbal Hossain also said the number of inmates had slightly increased, though he could not provide specific figures.

Chapainawabganj District Jail Superintendent Amzad Hossain said there were 620 inmates at the jail yesterday, up from 580 on April 7.

On February 8, the government launched Operation Devil Hunt, in which around 12,500 people were arrested till March 1, according to official data. Most detainees were AL leaders and activists, media reports said.

Apart from Dhaka, the drives against AL leaders and activists are also underway in other parts of the country.

Following criticism over the operation's name, alleged arbitrary arrests, and rising crimes, police stopped releasing information about the operation, and the crackdown on AL activists slowed down.

voices are needed to root out myriad injustices and misdeeds that have infiltrated the state," the BNP leader said.

The event he was speaking at was on the cases filed against BNP leaders and activists on false charges during the Awami League regime.

Rizvi alleged that Hasina's regime implicated around 60 lakh BNP leaders and activists in these cases to suppress the dissent and continue her authoritarian rule and plundering.

He asked why these cases have not been withdrawn even eight months after the interim government assumed power, while the cases against Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus were dismissed.

"Why should students play the role of a watchdog in a department like the railways? They are supposed to be on campus, where they will speak out against injustice, corruption, and irregularities in the state, politics, society and bureaucracy. Their strong

groups and political pressure, the interim government's commitment to reforms remains questionable.

Ans Muhammed, who presided over the event, also said that several longstanding cases, including the murder cases of Taqi, Tonu, and Sagor-Runi, have seen no visible progress over the past eight months.

He added that although many cases have been withdrawn, the false case filed by the previous government against protesters at the capital's Courtbari during the July uprising has yet to be withdrawn, despite the interim government's commitment to doing so.

The former Jahangirnagar University teacher said there is a specific group that is frightened by the individuality of women, adding that most of the reactions are directed at recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.

He said that whenever the issue of equal rights to inheritance and women's rights is raised, sharp reactions come from those who uphold discriminatory political ideologies under the guise of religion or nationalism.

According to him, these individuals tend to invoke religion in matters of women's rights, despite practising their own faith selectively.

"When women rise up, speak out, and assert their identity, this group feels like everything is falling apart.

Cops to get directives over polls

FROM PAGE 1

of the PHQ, told The Daily Star that issues including law and order will be discussed, and steps will be taken to address field officers' demands, adding that officials are aiming for a more focused event this year, without the usual grand celebrations.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate Police Week-2025 at the Rajarbagh Police Lines Auditorium. He will deliver election-related directives and present Bangladesh Police Medals and President Police Medals to 62 officers selected by the PHQ.

Awardees include former IGP Moinul Islam, RAB DG AKM Shahidur Rahman, several acting additional IGPs, DIGs, commissioners, SPs, and other officers. A letter has been issued asking them to be in Dhaka from today (April 27).

Following the inauguration, sets of demands prepared by the PHQ will be presented before Yunus and among police officials. Priority will be given to the formation of an independent police commission, which would include a public complaint cell and a Grievance Redressal Committee for police members.

A senior PHQ official, requesting anonymity, said, "Only an independent commission could bring the police force back on the right track and make it service-oriented."

Other demands include a compensation allowance, more police vehicles, financial support for burial or cremation of personnel, infrastructural development, establishment of an independent cyber unit, enhancement of manpower, medical upgrades for divisional police hospitals, founding

a police medical college, creating a women friendly work environment, and policies to manage overtime from land disputes and environmental enforcement.

Older demands, such as repealing the Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, expanding DIG posts, and launching an aviation unit, are expected to be raised again at meetings with advisers and secretaries on April 30.

For the first time, a meeting will also be held with religious leaders, journalists, and community leaders on May 1, the final day of Police Week, to discuss public expectations from the police.

Unlike previous years, there will be no parade at the Rajarbagh Police Lines, no meeting with the president, and no competitive events, as the celebrations have been scaled down.

What's stopping the govt from reforms?

FROM PAGE 12

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According to him, these individuals tend to invoke religion in matters of women's rights, despite practising their own faith selectively.

"When women rise up, speak out, and assert their identity, this group feels like everything is falling apart.

"If the government protects people with such discriminatory mindsets, fails to take action against them, and instead the repressed are sued — if such incidents continue, then how can we trust it?"

He also said that when a state is secular, it must not show any bias towards any religion. "If the government wants to promote pluralism — meaning bringing everyone together — then the state must remain unbiased. How can pluralism be endorsed while eliminating secularism?"

Ans Muhammed also said, "We often hear many people say, 'We don't accept India's dominance'... But when it comes to demanding the cancellation of the Rampal power plant — which is clearly causing great harm to Bangladesh — why don't the allies of the government raise their voices?... Dominance will not vanish into thin air. The agreements, projects, and arrangements — whether transparent or not — through which dominance has been established must be dismantled."

He further said that there has been an unnecessary controversy over whether elections or reforms should come first, adding that many reforms could be carried out by the interim government, while others would be mandated to the elected government.

The interim government has many responsibilities for which it does not need to rely on the reform commission, he said.

He also stated that he is unsure of what obstacles are preventing the interim government from carrying out the reforms that fall within its jurisdiction.

The Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee assessed the interim government's performance over the past eight months in areas including the economy, power and energy, workers and farmers, education and health, indigenous communities, culture, democratic rights, and the treatment and compensation of the July martyrs and injured.

The committee will submit a report, including recommendations, to the interim government for consideration.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua; Dhaka University teachers Dr Moshahida Sultana and Samina Lutfia; researcher and writer Dr Maha Mirza; political activist Baki Billah were among the discussants.

India cracks down

FROM PAGE 12

The high commission has assured full cooperation with the Indian government in their deportation provided their nationality and overstaying status are conclusively established, he said.

In recent months, more than 50 Bangladeshi nationals were also detained in Delhi. However, none have been deported yet as verification is still underway, Mahmud added.

Nasum heroics set up Mohammedan-Abahani 'final'

SPORTS REPORTER

On the backdrop of all the chaos of the previous day over Towhid Hridoy's suspension, Mohammedan Sporting Club yesterday got across the line against Gazi Group Cricketers in a last-ball thriller with Nasum Ahmed emerging as the unlikely hero with the bat to set up a virtual final between Mohammedan-Abahani Limited to decide who will lift the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) title this season.

Coming to bat at number eight, Nasum hit an unbeaten 13-ball 21 to help Mohammedan clinch a thrilling four-wicket win at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

Mohammedan, who are in second position with 24 points, now stand with a chance of winning their first DPL title since 2009-10, as they will face table-toppers Abahani, who have 26 points, in a title-deciding match in the last round of the Super League at the same venue on Tuesday.

If Mohammedan win, they would



PHOTO: STAR

equal Abahani in points and edge them on head-to-head to lift the title. Meanwhile, if the match gets washed out, Abahani will lift the trophy.

Abahani, meanwhile, beat Legends of Rupganj by seven wickets at the BKSP-4 on the same day.

Chasing 237, Mohammedan were

reduced to 204 6 inside 47 overs when Nasum entered the fray. Mohammedan captain Hridoy, after all the fuss surrounding his suspension, made 37 off 54 balls.

Mohammedan needed 23 runs in the last two overs, of which Nasum and Mohammad Saifuddin shaved off 11 in

the penultimate over from Abdul Gaffar, leaving 12 to get in the last over.

Saifuddin, the bowling all-rounder, played a dot first up against Sheikh Parvez Jibon and then took a single to turn over the strike to Nasum.

The tail-ender then hit a four, which was followed by dot and then a six to level the scores. Nasum then took the remaining run in the last ball to complete a memorable win.

Saifuddin, who claimed 3-42 with the ball, remained not out on 30 off 55 balls.

"When Saifuddin didn't take a single [in the first ball of last over], I was upset. Then I got the strike and hit a four and a six," Nasum told the broadcasters after the match.

"I was looking above all the time and praying to Allah to make me the hero. I was trying my best and all I required was His help. And it happened in the end," he added. Meanwhile, in the day's other match, Agrani Bank Cricket Club registered a massive 137-run win over Gulshan Cricket Club at BKSP-3.

BCB's new era, same old rot

Under Faruque Ahmed, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) continues to face the same issues as the previous regime -- team struggles, match-fixing allegations, and administrative chaos. The Towhid Hridoy suspension saga and player protests highlight the board's lack of professionalism and discipline. With elections nearing, unless Faruque brings genuine reform, his tenure risks being seen as a missed opportunity.

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Hridoy faces fresh ban

SPORTS REPORTER

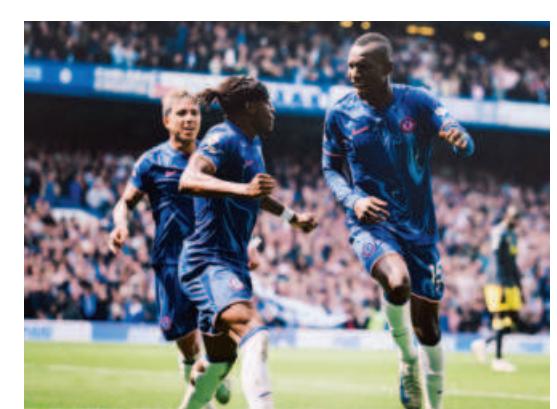


Mohammedan Sporting Club captain Towhid Hridoy's suspension saga took a new turn yesterday after he was handed one demerit point for showing dissent after being given out during their Dhaka Premier League (DPL) match against Gazi Group Cricketers in Mirpur. The fresh demerit

point took his total to eight, which means he will be suspended for four matches, which includes Mohammedan's upcoming title-deciding clash against Abahani Limited on Tuesday and will also miss three matches next season.

"If you see it in slow-motion, you can see how seamlessly it went. If you are caught out and then say you are not out, what is there to do? This is at the very least a Level 1 breach which imposes one demerit point," Iftekhar Rahman Mithu, chairman of BCB umpires' committee, told The Daily Star.

"If this adds on, then he has eight demerit points. Eight demerit points means a four-match suspension. He will not be able to play the next four matches, including Mohammedan's next match against Abahani."



Chelsea climbed back into contention for next season's Champions League with a 1-0 home win over Everton in the Premier League yesterday thanks to a fine first-half strike by Nicolas Jackson. The result lifted Chelsea to fourth in the table with 60 points, one behind Man City, as the battle for the top five nears its climax, with just four points separating third and seventh-placed teams.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Jaker urges batting rethink after Sylhet setback

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's old batting frailties resurfaced in Sylhet, where they slumped to a three-wicket defeat against Zimbabwe inside four days last week.

Bundled out for 191 and 255 in their two innings, Bangladesh extended their miserable run at home, where improved pitches have done little to mask their lack of application. The hosts have now lost their last six home Tests.

Amid the gloom, wicketkeeper-batter Jaker Ali has been a rare bright spot. Batting lower down the order, the 27-year-old has been Bangladesh's most reliable presence, hitting four fifties in as many Tests.

Despite often running out of partners, Jaker has already played crucial innings, including a fighting 91 against West Indies in St Kitts that helped end Bangladesh's 15 year Test drought in the Caribbean.

Jaker, who scored 28 and 58 in Sylhet, believes the team's struggles stem from a lack of collective effort with the bat.

"The first match didn't go in our favour... After the first match, there was a good discussion. In our



PHOTO: STAR

maximum matches, we struggle due to our batting. So batting will be our primary focus," Jaker told reporters in Chattogram yesterday as the side began preparing for the second and final Test, starting Monday.

"Whoever we play against, I think we need to maintain our process. Especially about the batting in which we didn't do well. We talked about the shot selection, and how we can improve that. Not every day will bowlers win you matches. We want all batters to showcase their best performance and win the match for the team," he added, stressing the importance of batting smartly with the tail.

"I have to bat according to the situation... I try to score as many runs as I can along with the tail-enders," he said.

However, it is worth noting that in his second innings in Sylhet, Jaker appeared to shirk responsibility while batting with the tail. During his partnership with No.9 batter Hasan Mahmud -- a 35-run stand where Jaker faced only 33 of 91 balls -- premature strike rotation early in overs had exposed Hasan to the bowlers.

Asked why Bangladesh often falter against lower-ranked sides, Jaker did not sugarcoat his response.

"We make mistakes and that's why we lose. It's as simple as that," he said, backing Mushfiqur Rahim to bounce back soon.

Mushfiqur's form remains a worry for Bangladesh. The veteran has failed to score a fifty in his last 13 Test innings and managed just eight runs across both innings in Sylhet, with his dismissals sparking concern.

"Mushfiq bhai always works really hard and he is still doing well. He hasn't stopped trying, looking for ways to score runs. Hopefully, he will get back to form very soon," Jaker said.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe got down to business under scorching conditions in Chattogram. Opener Ben Curran said they are ready for a backlash.

"We are expecting Bangladesh to come really hard at us. We are not expecting this to be an easy game. We have to work hard for every moment. We can hopefully put in a similar performance to last game," Curran said.

PHOTO: STAR

'A big blow to our hockey'

SPORTS REPORTER

Terming Bangladesh's failure to qualify for the Asia Cup for the first time as a 'big blow' to the country's hockey, general secretary of Bangladesh Hockey Federation's (BHF) ad-hoc committee, Lt Col (retd) Riazul Hasan, has cited lack of finances as a cause for the team's disastrous performance in the ongoing AHF Cup.

Four-time defending champions Bangladesh lost to Oman 5-4 in the semifinals of Asia's second-tier competition on Friday, in the process missing out on a place in the upcoming eight-team Asia Cup -- the first time Bangladesh will not be a part of the tournament in its 43-year history.

Mamunur Rashid's charges went to Jakarta with almost two month's training but did not get to play any practice matches. In fact the last time Bangladesh had played a competitive match was in the Asian Games in September-October of 2023.

Oman, on the other hand, have just played a tournament at home and practice matches in Pakistan in the build-up to the tournament.

The BHF general secretary said they need to move ahead with long-term plans and with support from all quarters, including the government and sponsors.

"We didn't have fund to arrange practice matches. We even had to borrow money for participating in this tournament," Riazul told The Daily Star.

"The other teams have improved a lot," the BHF GS said. "If we have to keep pace with them, our tactical and technical game sense will need to be increased a lot. And for that we need three year or five year plans and resources to implement those plans."

A former captain of the national team said he felt the players didn't play with freedom and spirit, which, according to him, Oman did.

"I felt Oman players were very spirited, and they played with a lot of spirit and enjoyed the game. On the other hand, our players looked like they lacked confidence. If

you don't get to play competitive matches, how can you compete at his level?" the former captain said The Daily Star, requesting not to be named.

"I don't want to blame the players. We need to have the league first, without that how will players get match temperament? When we used to play, we had so much of hockey that we didn't have time to rest. We played in all over Europe. Now our players' only target is to graduate from BKSP and then get into a services team," the former player lamented.

The ad-hoc committee in hockey was formed five months ago following last August's political changeover, but the new committee has yet to start either the club cup or the premier league. All it has done so far is arrange a Victory Day competition for the senior men and a Women's Development Cup apart from sending men's and women's youth teams to Junior Asia Cup events. But there has been no serious competitive hockey for the senior players for the last one year. BHF GS Riazul, though, could not offer much optimism in regards to starting the league or the club cup.

"Our biggest challenge now is organising the league. We have asked the clubs so far indirectly to play in the league. Now we will tell them directly. Unfortunately none of the clubs have come forward and told us to arrange the league," Riazul claimed.



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Mohammedan, Abahani play out a dull draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani missed out on a great opportunity to cut Mohammedan's four-point lead in the Bangladesh Premier League after being held to a goalless draw by their archrivals in their 12th round match in Cumilla on Saturday.

The Sky Blues played with a numerical advantage for more than half of the match after Mohammedan full back Mahbub Alam had ruthlessly brought down Abahani forward Sumon Reza in the 42nd minute of this otherwise dull encounter.

Abahani, however, failed to make that numerical advantage count, courtesy of some wayward finishing and a few excellent saves from Mohammedan goalkeeper Sujon Hossain.

The draw means Mohammedan stay four clear of Abahani with 31 points from 12 matches with only six games remaining.

Sumon had the first chance to break the deadlock in the ninth minute of the game when he had a free header in front of goal, but his effort went across the face of goal.

Mohammedan tried a few long range attempts in the first half, but nothing worth testing Abahani keeper Mitul Marma as the game, which

saw a number of disruptions due to crowd trouble, meandered into the second half.

The best chance of the match came to Abahani in the 66th minute when Mohammedan centre-back Mehdi Hasan Mithu was dispossessed right in front of the box by Abahani captain Raphael Augusto. Mohammedan goalkeeper Sujon saw the danger early and hared out of the box to clear the ball, only as far as Mohammad Ibrahim, who however blasted the ball over the target.

Sujon then made a string of fine saves as Abahani stepped up the attack in search of a winning goal while Muzaffarov, at the other end, failed to hit the target despite having the Abahani goalkeeper out of his position.

Meanwhile, five-time defending champions Bashundhara Kings failed to take advantage of this result as they, too, were held to a goalless draw

by Rahmatganj in Munshiganj. The outcome means Kings remained in third position with 21 points, followed by Rahmatganj on 19.

There were goals, though, in the other match of the day between Brothers Union and Chittagong Abahani, which the former won 2-0 at the Mymensingh venue.



Liverpool prepare for Premier League title party

Liverpool have one hand on the Premier League trophy as they seek the solitary point they need against struggling Tottenham on Sunday that would guarantee a record-equaling 20th English title. Already leading by 12 points, a draw at an expectant Anfield would take Arne Slot's men 13 points clear of Arsenal with just four games remaining, meaning their tally cannot be matched by the Gunners.

*Slot is set to become the first Dutchman to win the Premier League. He will be just the fifth boss to win the competition in his debut season, after Jose Mourinho (2004-05), Carlo Ancelotti (2009-10), Manuel Pellegrini (2013-14) and Antonio Conte (2016-17). *Mohamed Salah has scored 15 goals against Spurs in all competitions, only netting more against Manchester United (16) in his European club career. Eleven of those 15 goals have come in the Premier League, with Alan Shearer (14) netting more against Spurs in the competition.

*Liverpool are unbeaten in their last 15 home games against Spurs in all competitions (W11 D4), winning the last three while scoring four goals each time.

*Spurs have won just two of their last 24 Premier League games against Liverpool (D6 L16), with both victories coming at home.



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

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BANGLADESH'S
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What's stopping the govt from reforms?

Asks Anu Muhammad about 8 months of interim admin

DU CORRESPONDENT



Noted economist Prof Anu Muhammad has suggested that the interim government prioritise improving law and order, the justice system, and the treatment and compensation of those injured during the July uprising, along with the families of the martyrs.

These areas remain deadlocked, he said, questioning why the interim government has not resolved them in the eight months since it assumed office.

He was speaking at an event titled "Eight Months of the Interim Government: Observation, Review, and Exchange of Views on Its Role and Reform Proposals", organised by the Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee at the Economic Reporters' Forum in the capital yesterday.

"During the last regime, we used to know in advance what the verdict of any case filed in court would be. Even now, we can anticipate the outcome of court rulings – this is very problematic," said Anu Muhammad, a member of the committee.

"Then what has actually changed?" he asked, adding that if the courts function under the influence of external

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Raped weeks ago, daughter of July martyr found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 18-year-old daughter of a July uprising martyr was found dead at her house in Dhaka's Adabor last night.

The college student was allegedly gang-raped while returning from a visit to her father's grave in Patuakhali's Dumki upazila on March 18 evening. A case was filed in this regard with the local police station the following day.

She used to live with her grandmother in Dumki and was preparing for her HSC examinations.

The girl had come to her parents' house in Shekhertek area of Adabor for treatment two days ago, her uncle told this newspaper early today.

She was taken to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital after she was found hanging, he said, adding that doctors declared her dead there around 10:30pm yesterday.

Adabor Police Station Assistant Sub-Inspector Hasnain Ahmed said it is primarily suspected that the girl died by suicide.

The victim's mother said she and her son went out to pick her another daughter from a nearby madrasa as the family was planning to go to their village home today.

Upon return, she found the door of the victim's room locked. As she did not respond to their calls, they broke in and found her hanging from the ceiling fan.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

India cracks down on undocumented immigrants

Over 1,000 'Bangladeshis' held: Gujarat home minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

More than 1,000 allegedly undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants, including women and children, were detained in a crackdown in Ahmedabad and Surat, said Harsh Sanghavi, home minister of the western Indian state of Gujarat.

"This is the biggest operation of the Gujarat police against people living illegally in the state," Sanghavi was quoted by PTI as having told reporters in Surat yesterday.

The detainees are being questioned and their nationality is being determined based on documentary and other evidence, Vikas Sahay, director general of police, told the media in Ahmedabad.

"Once the police establish that they are Bangladeshi nationals, the process of their deportation will be carried out at the earliest in coordination with the central government and Border Security Force," he said.

However, the Indian authorities have informed the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi that some 550 individuals apprehended in Ahmedabad and Surat for residing illegally were identified as Bangladeshi nationals, Faisal Mahmud, the press minister of the high commission, told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



In this handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Service yesterday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky meets with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral at St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

PHOTO: AFP



ADVISERS' AIDES
Allegations of corruption against some 'concerning' Says Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday expressed concerns over corruption allegations against the aides to certain advisers of the interim government.

The allegations were levelled against the health adviser's personal assistant and another adviser's assistant private secretary, Rizvi said at a programme organised by the Nationalist Research Forum (NRF) at the Jatiya Press Club.

"Why should a Tk 100 crore corruption allegation be brought against their APS? Why should they be accused of being involved

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Trump, Zelensky meet on sidelines of Pope's funeral

Trump questions Putin's seriousness over peace deal; Kremlin says ready for talks without 'preconditions'

AGENCIES

Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky met briefly in the hush of St Peter's Basilica on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral yesterday in their first encounter since a noisy White House clash, as the US president pushes the Ukrainian leader to make a peace deal with Russia.

Zelensky said they discussed a possible unconditional ceasefire with Russia and were "hoping for results" from a "very symbolic meeting that has the potential to become historic".

The war cast a shadow over preparations for Francis's funeral, and even as it took place, Russia claimed its forces had "fully liberated" the border Kursk region.

Ukraine, however, insisted that its army was still fighting in Kursk, Russian territory, which it hopes to use as a bargaining chip in any future peace talks.

The Ukrainian presidency released photos of the Trump and Zelensky sitting face to face, leaning forward in deep discussion in a corner of the basilica, as the pope's simple wooden coffin lay in front of the altar before the funeral began.

"We discussed a lot one-on-one. Hoping for results on everything we covered. Protecting the lives of our people. Full and unconditional

"Good meeting. One-on-one, we managed to discuss a lot... It was a very symbolic meeting that has the potential to become historic if we achieve joint results. Thank you, President Donald Trump!"

PRESIDENT ZELENSKY

"maybe he doesn't want to stop the war."

In a post on Truth Social after his talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Rome, Trump also said maybe Putin "has to be dealt with differently," possibly through additional sanctions targeting Moscow.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a conflict not seen in Europe for decades.

ceasefire. Reliable and lasting peace that will prevent another war from breaking out," Zelensky wrote on X.

An aide to Zelensky described the meeting as "constructive", and the White House called it "a very productive discussion".

However, the US president flew out of Rome as scheduled, immediately after the funeral mass, and there were no further talks.

But the two leaders also briefly huddled inside the basilica with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Emmanuel Macron, the French president's hand on Zelensky's shoulder.

Trump, while calling on President Vladimir Putin to stop Russia's attacks on Ukraine, has recently blamed Zelensky for the war and the continuing bloodshed.

However, Trump yesterday criticised Putin for attacks on civilian areas of Ukraine in recent days, and said,

"maybe he doesn't want to stop the war."

In a post on Truth Social after his talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Rome, Trump also said maybe Putin "has to be dealt with differently," possibly through additional sanctions targeting Moscow.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a conflict not seen in Europe for decades.

Death anniv. of Sher-e-Bangla today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 63rd death anniversary of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq.

Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq, popularly known as Sher-e-Bangla or Huq Saheb, was born on October 26, 1873, at his maternal uncle's house at Saturia, a village in Barishal.

He passed away in 1962.

Huq was an eminent public leader who had held many high political posts, including the mayor of Calcutta (1935), chief minister of undivided Bengal (1937-1943) and East Bengal (1954), home minister of Pakistan (1955) and governor of East Pakistan (1956-58).

Marking the day, different political parties, alongside socio-cultural and professional bodies, have chalked out various programmes to observe the day.

Scientists mulling to dim the Sun to fight global warming

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

British scientists could experiment with techniques to block sunlight as part of a £50 million government-funded scheme to combat global warming.

The geo-engineering project is set to be given the go-ahead within weeks and could see scientists explore techniques including launching clouds of reflective particles into the atmosphere or using seawater sprays to make clouds brighter.

A n o t h e r method involves thinning natural cirrus clouds, which act as heat-trapping blankets.

If successful, less sunlight will reach the earth's surface and, in turn, temporarily cool the surface of the earth.

It's thought to be a relatively cheap way to cool the planet, but critics have warned it could cause catastrophic disruption to weather patterns and even shift rain from areas that are vital for food production.

Other scientists say geo-engineering could reduce the drive to stop burning fossil fuels, which is the root cause of climate change.

The project will be funded by the Advanced Research and Invention Agency, known as ARIA.

The government has set aside £50 million for the controversial experiment, but in total it has been given £800 million of taxpayers' money to use over the next four years.



Farmers from various upazilas selling onions at Baneshwar Hat in Rajshahi's Puthia upazila at a cost of Tk 800-1,900 per maund (37.3242kg) yesterday. They claim traders are stockpiling onions to sell at higher prices ahead of Eid-ul-Adha, with many buyers sending them to districts, including Dhaka, where they fetch nearly triple the price. In Dhaka markets yesterday, local onions sold for Tk 40-65 per kg, unchanged over the past week but up 40 percent from a month ago, when prices ranged between Tk 30 and Tk 45 per kg.

Newlyweds crushed to death by train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recently married couple from Mymensingh was killed after being hit by a train near the Courtbari area of the capital's Uttara yesterday evening.

The victims were Masum, 25, and his wife, Iti Khatun, 19, according to Inspector Faruk Hossain, in-charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

Citing witnesses, Joynul Abedin, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station, said Masum and Iti were walking along the railway lines and attempted to take a selfie when the Gazipur-bound Jamuna Express train ran over them at 6:05pm.

Iti was killed instantly, while Masum was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead around 8:00pm, the police officer said.

Al Islam Shuvo, a witness, said, "They were taking selfies and suddenly the train hit them. The woman died on the spot, and the man was taken to the hospital in critical condition."

OC Joynul confirmed that the couple got married recently, adding that police would further investigate the incident after talking to the relatives.



PHOTO: STAR

CELEBRATING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

2,375 stellar students receive 24th Star-HSBC O & A Level Awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The atmosphere in and around the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center in Purbachal was buzzing with youthful energy, proud smiles, and a palpable sense of accomplishment yesterday as 2,375 O- and A-level students received well-earned recognition for their academic excellence.

Hearts swelled with pride as each name echoed through the hall, met by thunderous applause. One by one, the students rose, faces radiant with joy, as they made their way to the podium to receive their awards, marking a proud moment in their academic journey.

These students were honoured at the 24th The Daily Star HSBC O & A Level Awards, themed "Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow", a celebration of hard work, perseverance, and success.

They were recognised in the presence of the true but often overlooked heroes—parents who poured their hearts into their journey and teachers and mentors who stood by them through times of uncertainty.

Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul and Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, the joint chief guests of the programme, along with Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, handed over the awards.

The esteemed guests congratulated the students, saying they had made the

country proud with their outstanding results.

Addressing the students, Asif Nazrul said, "Dream big and strive to achieve those dreams. Always ask yourself: will I live only for myself or for others as well? And if you choose to live for others, let it be for the people of your country."

Meanwhile, Rizwana Hasan said, "You can go to any developed country and secure a good career for yourselves, but if you do, the new Bangladesh we all dream of will never become a reality. We must all recognise our role in nation-building, and my primary request to all of you is to serve the country."

"If you are truly going to be the nation-builders of tomorrow, then you must first love your country," said Mahfuz Anam.

He expected many of the students present to go to some of the best universities in the world. "Through your global exposure and education abroad, strengthen your commitment to returning and serving this country."

Tanmi Haque, head of International Wealth and Premier Banking of HSBC

Bangladesh; Razib Mahbubul, country director, IDP Education Bangladesh Ltd; Abdullah Al Mamun Liton, regional development manager for Pearson Edexcel Bangladesh and Nepal, also spoke at the programme.

Meanwhile, Rahat Ahmed, founder and managing partner of Anchoreless

Bangladesh; Ayman Sadiq, founder and CEO of 10 Minute School; Shahir Chowdhury, founder and CEO of Shikho, held three separate

inspirational sessions.

Priyonti Tabassum

Haque of SFX Greenherald

International School, one of the

highest A* grade achievers in A levels,

and Zilani Haque of ABC International School, one of the highest A grade achievers in O levels, spoke on behalf of the students.

Zunaid Rabbani moderated the six-hour-long event that started around 9:50am, where principals of 57 schools also received crests.

This year, 1,824 O-level and 551 A-level students from Edexcel and Cambridge curricula, of academic sessions October/November 2023, January 2024, May/June 2024, and

October/November 2024 were awarded.

The awardees included 67 students who topped the world and 62 who topped the country in O levels, alongside 15 global toppers and 32 country toppers in A-levels.

From 112 English-medium schools across the country, these students stood out by achieving at least six A grades in two consecutive O-level sittings and three A grades in their A-levels under the Cambridge board.

Additionally, students who attained a grading of 7 or higher in six subjects in one or two consecutive sessions in their IGCSE exams, along with three A's or above in IAL exams within one or two consecutive sessions, were recognised.

The programme began with a one-minute silence to commemorate the victims of the July uprising, followed by the rendition of the national anthem.

Later, recitations from the Quran, Bhagavad Gita, Bible, and Tripitak were delivered by Abdur Rahman Labib of Philosophy, Binoy Biswas of Lords, Raina Julia Gomes of SFX Greenherald International School and Akanksha Tathoi Barua of AG Church School, respectively.

Between segments, cultural performances were put on by students of BAF Shaheen English Medium College, Mastermind English Medium School, Bangladesh International Tutorial, Heritage School, Narayanganj, and Summerfield International School.

Maple Leaf International School Principal Ali Karam Reza's eyes welled up with tears as he spoke about the success of his students.

"We work hard so that our students achieve good results and accomplish something meaningful. I cannot find the right words to express this emotion."

Farzana Akhtar was overjoyed that her son, Naiful Hakim Khan Alangir, achieved the country's highest score in A-level Accounting.

"Seeing such a grand celebration fills me with happiness. Those who will lead this country in the future should be taught moral values from an early age. Academic education alone is not enough."

HSBC Bangladesh was the title sponsor of the programme, while Pearson Edexcel was the academic partner, and IDP was the education partner.

The Daily Star started this unique annual event in 1999, which, over the years, has turned into a source of inspiration for many.

SCAN
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VIDEO



Distinguished guests and students observe a minute of silence in honour of the victims of the July uprising at the 24th The Daily Star-HSBC O & A Level Awards at Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

KEEP SHINING, SERVE YOUR NATION



PROF ASIF NAZRUL
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser

This is a unique opportunity for me; in fact, it is a special occasion because my daughter is also among you.

In my childhood, I did not live a life of comfort. But I had the opportunity to read a lot of books, and I felt that I had to go far and see more. Allah has given me that opportunity.

The learning from my life that I want to share with you is that if you have focus, if you have strong willpower, if you work hard, then you can reach any goal, you can fulfil any dream.

Ability to think for others, the ability to have an attitude where one is willing to sacrifice for others, to sacrifice one's life for the country – that makes a person truly great.

Such events create history. New nations are born. Monarchs and tyranny fall. Civilisations advance.

You get the opportunity to dream new dreams. Dream big and strive to achieve those dreams. Always ask yourself: will I live only for myself or for others as well? And if you choose to live for others, let it be for the people of your country.



RAZIB MAHBUBUL
Country director, IDP Education Bangladesh Ltd

Some of you may want to become entrepreneurs, some engineers, and some may simply choose whatever your parents advise. But whatever you do and whatever you achieve in life, the most important thing is that it must bring out the best in you and the best in your life.

The achievements you have made today can help you reach the top ranks in the future.

If we look into the profiles of many renowned individuals, we will see that, at some point in their careers, they pursued higher studies abroad. They later returned and continued contributing to building the foundation of the nation.

Since 1969, our organisation has been working to support students. We have never stopped. We are still helping students achieve their dreams, whatever they wish to study, whatever ambitions they have.

You need to be prepared from a global perspective. It is not only about earning an international degree but also about gaining a broader vision that will help us build the nations we want for tomorrow.



ABDULLAH AL MAMUN LITON
Regional development manager for Pearson Edexcel Bangladesh and Nepal

The message is that the way of learning has changed. When I was a student, we used to learn in a way; now you are learning in a different way. At the same time, at Pearson, we have also made some changes.

One of the biggest changes is that the day we publish A and O level results, we give access to all students to their actual marked scripts. This way, they get to see what mistakes they made, and their teachers get to see what is the difference between an A and an A*.

Remember that success is not just about grades. It's about being fine, heartfelt, and curious. You are extremely lucky to receive British education. But with the privilege comes some responsibility.

You'll be successful in your life one day. But please try to give something back to your country. We need people like you. Keep shining. Let's work to be the better Bangladesh.



MAHFUZ ANAM
Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star

Young learners are the nation-builders of tomorrow. If you are truly going to be the nation-builders of tomorrow, then you must first love your nation.

We salute you for your performance, and we also urge you to be patriotic. Many of you will surely go to the best universities in the world to gather more knowledge and experience. Through your global experience and education abroad, strengthen your commitment to returning and serving this country.

Remember, as a great scientist, as a great biologist or a chemist or a mathematician, you can perhaps serve the world, but most importantly, you can serve your country, and we need you more than other countries.

I plead to the parents—please continue to guide your children, and you must teach your children to be tolerant. Another thing is that there is no substitute for hard work. With all the love and patriotism in your heart, your effort, your brain must be focused on learning more, gaining more knowledge, and seeking knowledge in every part of the world.



TANMI HAQUE
Head of International Wealth and Premier Banking, HSBC Bangladesh

Over the next few years, you — the students — will take some important decisions regarding your higher studies, professional pursuits, and even your place of stay. It is natural at this stage to look into the future and consider what skill sets you will need for your onward journey.

Like every generation, you will face your own unique set of circumstances that will shape your way forward. So what might those circumstances be? Standing here today, if you were to quickly survey one of the major change agents globally, artificial intelligence (AI) would probably top the list.

As I stand before the promising talents gathered in this room, I feel certain that some of you will go on to become influential members of society. The role of AI in society will actually be shaped by you, our future generation, our nation.

I can say that AI will undoubtedly be a force for change, and you will serve as our moral guides on this journey. Choose well, choose wisely. I wish you success in all your noble pursuits and hope you always serve our country and keep our flag flying high.



PRIYONTI TABASSUM HAQUE
SFX Greenherald International School
One of the highest A* grade achievers in A levels

Let us look back and congratulate ourselves for the years of hard work that we put into achieving this success and admire the people we have grown into through those challenges.

I stand here feeling incredibly proud of every single person who made it through this journey.

First and foremost, we owe our deepest thanks to our parents, the quiet strength behind everything we've achieved, always guiding and shielding us. No one in the world is prouder of our achievements than our parents.

To our teachers... Thank you. You weren't just teaching subjects. You were shaping lives.

We are standing at the edge of the future. Maybe we don't have it all figured out yet, but that's okay. The unknown is just another chance to take the road less travelled.

We've made it this far because we believe in ourselves. Whatever comes next, let's remember that we're not just moving forward, we're evolving, growing, and becoming the people we were always meant to be.

Today, the entire nation has witnessed our generation, we are ready to take on any challenges. Because where the others saw obstacles, we saw opportunities. And where the others hesitated, we marched ahead.

I'd like to get back to thanking my people because, in this journey of both gains and losses, they were unchanged. People like my parents, whose assurance and support were more than just staying up the nights with us, and my teachers, whose unmatched passion for teaching full of time, sweat and hard work acted as a blessing.

And by no means can I forget the ever-supporting peers who made this journey more beautiful. You were the ones that always had my back.

Finally, I'd like to end by saying that we should continue to face challenges, we should continue to find problems, and we should continue to solve them. Because if a single seed can turn out to be the shade for the rest, we, the warriors of tomorrow, can be something far bigger.

A milestone to treasure

AHMED DEEPTO and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Miftahul Jannat Ashra travelled all the way from Chattogram with her parents to claim the reward of years of hard work.

As she stepped onto the stage yesterday at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center in Purbachal, her face lit up with pride.

"This award was a long awaited one for me, and it means a lot," said the Presidency International School student, who achieved notable results in her A-level examinations.

"In future, I wish to become a doctor. This award is such an appreciation for me to push myself to make my dream come true," she added.

Miftahul plans to study abroad, acquire knowledge and learn new technologies, and eventually return home.

The venue was vibrant with similar stories of ambition and perseverance, as The Daily Star and HSBC honoured 2,375 students — 1,824 O-level and 551 A-level achievers — for their outstanding performances.

Every name announced from the stage sparked cheers, with students lining up eagerly, their faces glowing with excitement.

Kazi Abu Baqr Khalil, Arbeen, and Shakran — students of Playpen School — shared their excitement after scoring 99 out of 100 in A-level Mathematics.

"For instance, the three of us narrowly

missed achieving the country's highest mark by just one point. But we have no regrets, we still achieved excellent results," said Khalil, who earned three A* grades and secured a scholarship to study Mechanical Engineering in Hong Kong.

Teachers and parents, the silent architects of these young achievers' journeys, stood proudly.

"This year, 41 students from our institution, across both A-level and O-level, came to the event to receive awards," said Farzana Hossain, a Bangla teacher at BAF Shaheen College (English Medium). "Even if someone doesn't win an award, they must not break down or lose hope."

"These young people will push Bangladesh forward," she added.

Tasnia Kabir, academic coordinator (senior section) of Summerfield International School, echoed her.

"I visit this event every year. When I see my students receive the awards, I feel that it is also my achievement."

She said, "Be yourself. Whatever you love, do that — it is the best way to serve the country and the world."

Farhadul Islam, celebrating his son Zain Ibtida Islam's O-level success, said, "This recognition will not only boost their confidence but also encourage them to aim even higher."

The Daily Star started this unique annual event in 1999, which, over the years, has turned into a source of inspiration for many.



Four topers on stage with The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul and Head of Markets and Security Services, HSBC Bangladesh Bashar M Tareq. Bottom, headteachers of the high achievers pose for a photo. The photos were taken during the 24th The Daily Star-HSBC O & A Level Awards yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

SHAPING A GENERATION

Speakers inspire students at O & A level award ceremony

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

The Daily Star and HSBC Bank honoured high-achieving students of the O and A Level examinations yesterday at the Bangladesh China Friendship Exhibition Center. The event celebrated the success of 2,375 students -- 1,824 from O-level and 551 from A-level -- across the Edexcel and Cambridge curricula, representing the academic sessions of October/November 2023, January 2024, May/June 2024 and October/November 2024.

of success. Urging students not to be constrained by conventional notions such as wealth, fame, or status, he advised them to develop their own definitions aligned with personal goals and values.

"Write your own definition of success. It's very important," he said.

Ayman, who began his career as an educator by posting short academic videos online, recounted his early excitement at achieving initial recognition. "When I was of your age, I really wanted to make a lot of money. Then I uploaded my first video and I

experiences. "In a world chasing greats, money and fame, I really want you to pause and ask yourselves what success looks like for me. For some of you it might be creating your own company, for some it might be going abroad and starting a fresh new chapter, for others it might be becoming a great teacher, doctor or engineer. Whatever that be, own it. Because that's very important."

"There's never a 'one size fits all' version of success," he added.

In addition to defining success individually, Ayman Sadiq spoke about the importance of maintaining ties to

Sadiq's contributions to education have been recognised internationally, including receiving the Queen's Young Leader Award and being named in Forbes' 30 Under 30 Asia list.

RAHAT AHMED: IT'S TIME TO BUILD A BANGLADESH BY BANGLADESHIS FOR BANGLADESHIS

Rahat Ahmed, founder and managing partner of Anchorless Bangladesh, spoke about the necessity of building a self-reliant Bangladesh, led and developed by its own citizens rather than directed by external influences.

Rahat began by reflecting on his professional journey, which started in New York, where he worked for an investment firm specialising in emerging and frontier markets. "My job was to look at potential investments in developing countries or in this case what we call in Wall Street: emerging markets and frontier markets," he said.

In 2004, while attending a conference in Hong Kong, Rahat requested permission from his employer to visit Bangladesh. "I remember back in September of 2004, I asked my boss, David, can I go to Bangladesh? I want to see what's going on there. I was going to a conference in Hong Kong and I wanted to check out the country to see if I can somehow contribute. And it just so happens that over the next few years, my investment firm in New York that I was at became one of the largest investors at the Dhaka Stock Exchange."

Rahat explained that his commitment to Bangladesh was rooted not only in professional opportunity but also in a personal sense of identity. He discussed his investment in Pathao, one of Bangladesh's first major ride-sharing companies, which provided a new model for urban mobility in Dhaka.

"March 6, 2016, Fahim Saleh sent me an email about a company named Pathao. That night, I forwarded the email to my ex-boss David and he was interested. A couple of months later, we flew down to Dhaka, we met with Adnan and Elius and we invested in the seed round," Rahat said.

He reflected on the broader impact of this investment on urban life: "One simple investment changed the way somebody from Khilgaon goes to Mirpur. We take for granted this now. But can you imagine what we did to move around the cities before 2015/2016? It also made me realise one thing -- when you put the best Bangladeshi together, give them access to each other -- we get to build the Bangladesh we want for our people."

Rahat noted that a significant portion of Bangladesh's infrastructure and development projects remain heavily influenced by international interests. "Right now, too much of Bangladesh is still being built at the direction of outsiders who are not gonna be here. People who look at us if we need their help rather than empowering us. This has to change,"

he said.

He concluded by encouraging the students to view themselves as active participants in the nation's progress: "The future of this country again should not be outsourced. It must be built by Bangladeshis, for Bangladeshis."

Anchorless Bangladesh, the firm founded by Rahat Ahmed, focuses on investing in early-stage startups led by Bangladeshi entrepreneurs and aims to create an ecosystem that supports local innovation and enterprise.

SHAHIR CHOWDHURY: BELIEVE IN HAVING A BIG DREAM AND A BIG GOAL

The final speaker, Shahir Chowdhury, founder and CEO of Shikho, addressed the students on the importance of maintaining long-term ambition and perseverance in pursuit of their goals. Shahir himself had been an awardee at the same event in 2003, receiving recognition for academic excellence during his time at Sunbeams School in Dhaka.

"Believe in yourself. Believe in having a big dream and a big goal. And things like this -- milestones like today's award -- should fuel that fire further. But this is only a milestone, this is only one step of a long journey," he said.

Shahir recounted how, after completing his schooling in Bangladesh, he pursued higher education in the United Kingdom, earning a BSc (Hons) in Business Management from Cardiff University. He subsequently worked for over a decade in financial services in the UK, including serving as a Director at HSBC UK's Private Bank.

Reflecting on his career, Shahir discussed the concept of life as an "infinite game" -- a continuous journey of learning, evolving, and overcoming challenges. "If you keep on going, you will find there are many goals that you will achieve that unlock the next evolution of you. But to do that, you must first know how to dream big and fail forward," he said.

He also highlighted the importance of collective responsibility towards Bangladesh. "All of you together, if you have a shared vision and a shared responsibility to Bangladesh, regardless of where you are -- in the country or outside the country, you will always be working for Bangladesh."

Quoting The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Shahir reiterated the value of maintaining a connection to one's homeland. "Ultimately what we should be thinking about is how do we build a better Bangladesh together. All of that diversity needs to become collaboration."

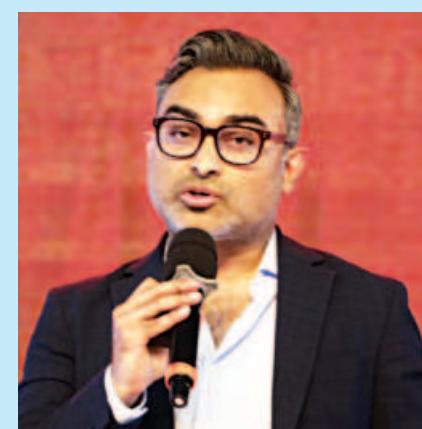
Currently, Shahir leads Shikho, an edtech company that aims to make high-quality education accessible to students across Bangladesh through digital platforms. Shikho's focus on technological innovation reflects broader efforts to modernise the country's education system and expand learning opportunities.

Today you guys have proved that you are capable, now it's time for you to prove you are unstoppable. For that, move fast, adapt, build new things, stay curious, stay humble, stay a student for life and yes go make an amazing history guys.

Ayman Sadiq,
Founder and CEO of 10 Minute School

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Rahat Ahmed
Founder and managing partner of Anchorless Bangladesh



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Shahir Chowdhury
Founder and CEO of Shikho

Awardees were accompanied by their parents, families, teachers, friends and special guests, reflecting the significance of the occasion not just for the students but also for their wider communities.

The event featured a series of motivational sessions aimed at providing guidance and inspiration for the next stages of the students' academic and professional lives.

Speakers included Ayman Sadiq, Rahat Ahmed and Shahir Chowdhury, each of whom shared personal reflections centred on success, responsibility and future ambition.

AYMAN SADIQ: WRITE YOUR OWN DEFINITION OF SUCCESS
Ayman Sadiq, founder and CEO of 10 Minute School, addressed the audience with a focus on the evolving meaning

tasted fame. I felt like Shah Rukh Khan when my first video got 100 shares. And then I saw a lot of people around me building stuff. And then I wanted to get my business a lot bigger. This is how your purpose of life or definition of success changes."

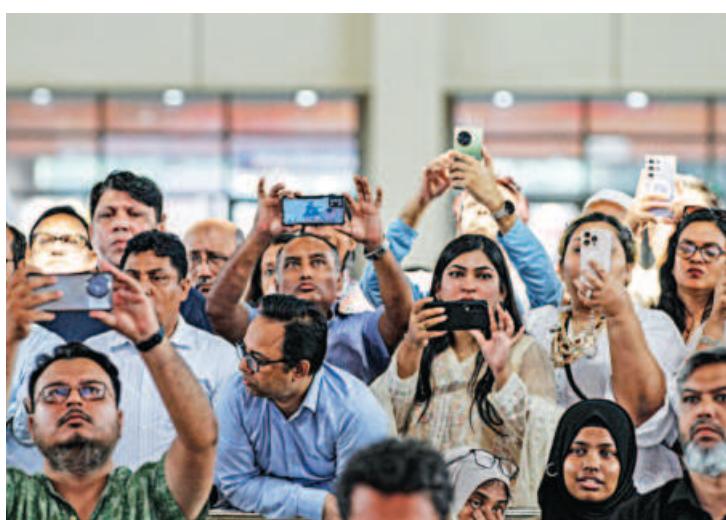
Over time, his experiences shaped a different understanding of achievement, particularly after sustaining three torn ligaments. He shared that his present ambition is to maintain his health and mobility. "Now with three torn ligaments, my only hope is not to get into another injury so that I can keep on playing and running till my very last day and that would be my biggest success."

Ayman's message highlighted the personal and shifting nature of ambition, encouraging students to remain open to new priorities and life

Bangladesh. Referencing the national flag, he said, "As Mahfuz Anam sir said: doesn't matter wherever you go, go to the best universities. Go to any country you want. But never ever forget the red and green and to come back to Bangladesh. And whenever you get an opportunity -- never ever forget to hold the red and green higher."

Concluding his address, Ayman told the students, "Today you guys have proved that you are capable, now it's time for you to prove you are unstoppable. For that, move fast, adapt, build new things, stay curious, stay humble, stay a student for life and yes go make an amazing history guys."

Founded in 2015, 10 Minute School is one of Bangladesh's largest and most popular online learning platforms, providing accessible education to millions of students across the country.



BASKING IN THE GLORY

It was a day of inspiration and hope, as families, educators, and achievers came together to celebrate perseverance, dreams, and new beginnings at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Center yesterday. Moments from 24th The Daily Star-HSBC O & A Level Awards show students embracing, laughing, and posing for photos. Parents stood nearby, their faces glowing with pride, while guests discussed the promising future of this young generation. Cultural performances added colour and energy to the event.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN

