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Democracy can't do without a free press

Political leaders tell Editors' Council discussion marking World Press Freedom Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties have stressed their commitment to ensuring press freedom, recognising it as essential for democracy and good governance, and warning that its absence leads to fascism.

They also emphasised the need for upholding the values of ethical journalism and said the media should not be used for corporate or other vested interests.

The remarks were made at a discussion organised by the Editors' Council to mark the World Press Freedom Day at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

In his speech, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said, "We can assure you that we [the BNP]



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

With golden bales of harvested paddy on their shoulders, farmers head homeward, crossing the canal via a slender bamboo bridge that links one side of the haor to the other. The photo was taken recently from Zilkarkandi Haor in Sylhet.

No deal on humanitarian channel yet

Says Khalilur; 'won't engage in any proxy war in Rakhine'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will not engage in any proxy war, as suggested by a news portal of a neighbouring country, National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman said yesterday.



The news portal falsely claimed that Bangladesh and the US were preparing for a proxy war in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, he added.

"If we were waging a proxy war on behalf of the US, China would be the first to be affected. Why isn't China protesting? Why is the disinformation campaign coming from elsewhere?"

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"We have fought before, we are still fighting, and we will continue the fight. We will never support unjust imposition of one's views on others. We will, of course, firmly uphold the right to freedom of opinion."



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir

have always been, and will continue to be, in favour of press freedom -- whether we are in government or not."

He highlighted his party's history of standing against the oppression faced by the media, as well as the "clearly fascist" laws imposed on the media under the previous regime.

"We have fought before, we are still fighting, and we will continue this fight. We will never support unjust imposition of one's views on others. We will, of course, firmly uphold the right to freedom of opinion.

"If we ever get the chance to govern, we will institutionalise press freedom. If we remain in opposition, we will continue our fight to ensure it."

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Journo protection law at review stage

Adviser Mahfuj says govt embarrassed by false cases against journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is working to introduce a law for the protection of journalists, Information and Broadcasting Adviser Mahfuj Alam has said.

He made the remarks along with several observations while speaking as the chief guest at an event titled "Brave New Bangladesh: Reform Roadmap for Press Freedom" yesterday. The Dhaka office of Unesco, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and Swedish embassy jointly organised the programme at the TIB office in Dhanmondi.

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Some banks hit by capital squeeze

BB data shows a key indicator of financial health stands at 3.08%, while most banks remain strong

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bangladesh's banking sector is struggling with a weakened capital base following years of unchecked irregularities during the Awami League's tenure, with a key measure of financial strength falling to a new low.

Fresh data from Bangladesh Bank shows, capital-to-risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) across the sector dropped to just 3.08 percent at

the end of 2024, below the 10 percent minimum required under the Basel III framework, an international set of reforms. The figure marks a steep decline from 6.86 percent three months earlier and 10.64 percent in June 2023.

While some banks continue to maintain healthy capital buffers, the data reveal a deep divide within the industry. State-owned, Islamic Shariah-based, and specialised banks have seen

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IMMINENT RISK OF SEVERE PRODUCTION DISRUPTION IN THE TEXTILE AND RMG SECTOR DUE TO GAS CRISIS: EXPORT DECLINES, MOUNTING FINANCIAL PRESSURE AND GROWING RISKS TO LOAN SERVICING AND WAGE PAYMENTS

A sudden and severe gas supply crisis has gripped Bangladesh's industrial sector with devastating effects on textile mills and ready-made garment (RMG) factories in particular. Over the past two weeks, the situation has steadily deteriorated causing serious concern among manufacturers and exporters. Acute gas shortages have forced many export-oriented and domestic mills to scale down or entirely halt production operations. Due to a shortage of gas, garment factories are unable to carry out their production activities. As a result, in order to meet delivery deadlines under ongoing purchase orders, they are being forced to ship products to international buyers by air at significantly higher costs. This is causing these garment factories to incur substantial financial losses.

The textile and RMG sectors have long struggled with inconsistent gas supply. Despite repeated government assurances of uninterrupted service, gas prices have risen by more than 300% in recent years. At the same time, mill owners had to pay substantial security deposits. These measures have failed to improve supply conditions.

Amid ongoing global tariff conflicts and shifting geopolitical dynamics, many international manufacturing firms are relocating to countries offering more stable production environments. Bangladesh had the potential to attract significant investment from these relocating industries. However, the persistent gas crisis and growing weaknesses in the financial sector will potentially undermine this opportunity.

Despite numerous appeals, letters and formal petitions submitted to the Honorable Chief Adviser of the Interim Government and other relevant authorities following the movements in July-August last year, no effective resolution to the gas crisis has been achieved. Most recently, gas prices were further increased despite strong objections from industry stakeholders. A key factor behind the current crisis appears to be the diversion of gas from industrial use to increase electricity and fertilizer production. Within the TITAS Gas distribution network

alone, industrial gas supply has dropped by approximately 100 million cubic feet per day. In addition to that, we believe the system loss is close to 20% primarily, because EVC (Electronic Volume Corrector) meters have not been installed in all textile mills and garment factories. As a result, the actual extent of system loss remains unclear.

Textile and RMG factories affiliated with BTMA, BGMEA, BKMEA and BTTLMEA together account for nearly 85% of Bangladesh's total export earnings. Yet, these vital export-oriented sectors are not being prioritized in gas distribution. As a result, major contributors to the country's foreign exchange reserves are now struggling to maintain regular production.

There has been clear evidence of even zero gas pressure at most of the mills and factories. If this crisis continues, an estimated USD 70 billion in investments across the textile and RMG sectors will be at serious risk. The resulting production losses will reduce exports, negatively affect foreign reserves and undermine recent government initiatives aimed at macroeconomic stabilization. The broader economy will face additional strain deepening financial distress and increasing the likelihood of loan defaults and wage payment disruptions. Industry stakeholders are gravely concerned. Present Gas crisis if not addressed adequately will worsen new job creation and will create uncertainty in salary payments for existing workers.

Despite the severity of the crisis, no concrete action plan or strategic roadmap has been issued by the responsible agencies, including the Ministry of Energy, BERG, Petrobangla or TITAS Gas. Given the urgency, the government must immediately prioritize and guarantee uninterrupted gas supply to the textile and RMG sectors. Critical steps must be taken without delay including halting system losses, disconnecting illegal connections, directing BERG, Petrobangla, TITAS and other supply agencies to suspend profit-maximization practices and eliminating VAT at all levels of gas distribution. A recent photo of the gas meter from a textile mill is shown below:



Houthi missile hits Israel airport area

Six hurt, flights halted; Hamas praises 'precision' strike; Israeli defence minister threatens retaliation

AFP, TEL AVIV

A missile landed inside the perimeter of Israel's main airport yesterday, wounding six people, halting flights and gouging a wide crater, in an attack claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

The Israeli military said "several attempts were made to intercept" the missile that was launched from Yemen, a rare Houthi attack that penetrated Israel's air defences.

-  Israeli strikes kill 16, including 3 children in Gaza
-  Israel calls up tens of thousands of reservists for offensive
-  Netanyahu calls on Qatar to 'stop playing both sides' in talks



Palestinians line up for a hot meal at a charity kitchen in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

a kilometre (0.6 miles) away from the closest tarmac. Germany's Lufthansa, Air India suspended flights to and from Tel Aviv until May 6.

The armed wing of Palestinian group Hamas praised the missile attack.

"Yemen... escalates its attacks on the heart of the illegitimate Zionist entity, surpassing the most advanced defence systems in the world and striking its targets with precision," Abu Obeida, spokesman for the Ezzedine al-Qassam

Brigades, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defence agency yesterday said Israeli strikes on the Palestinian territory killed 16 people, including at least three children.

Israel was issuing orders to call up tens of thousands of reservists ahead of an expanded offensive in Gaza, Israeli media reported later on Saturday, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attacked truce mediator Qatar.

Netanyahu accused the gas-rich Gulf

state of "playing both sides with its double talk". Posting on X, he said Qatar had to "decide if it's on the side of civilization or if it's on the side of Hamas barbarism".

Several news outlets reported the military had begun sending the orders for reservists to replace conscripts and active-duty soldiers in Israel and the occupied West Bank so they can be redeployed to Gaza.

A military spokesperson neither confirmed nor denied the reports, but relatives of AFP journalists were among those who received mobilisation orders.

Hamas on Saturday released footage of an apparently wounded Israeli-Russian hostage held in Gaza as 11 Palestinians, including three infants, were killed in a strike on the territory, its civil defence agency said.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said at least 2,396 people had been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza, bringing the overall death toll from the war to 52,495.

Israel halted aid deliveries to Gaza, saying Hamas had diverted supplies. Israel says the blockade is meant to pressure Hamas members into releasing hostages held in the Palestinian territory.

UN agencies have urged Israel to lift restrictions, saying Gazans have been experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe and warning of famine.

The Houthis, who control swathes of Yemen, have launched missiles and drones targeting Israel and Red Sea shipping throughout the Gaza war.

Hasnat attacked in Gazipur; two held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Criminals attacked a vehicle carrying Hasnat Abdullah, chief coordinator (South) of the National Citizen Party, at the Chandana intersection in Gazipur yesterday.

Police detained two people in connection with the attack.

Hasnat's hand was bleeding after the car window was broken in the attack around 7:00pm, said Md Sarjis Alam, chief coordinator (North) of the party, in a Facebook post.

Sarjis also posted photos of Hasnat's hand and the damaged car, urging supporters in the vicinity to help him.

Shaheen Khan, officer-in-charge of Bason Police Station, said unidentified attackers on three to four motorcycles tried to stop the car near the Ulka Cinema Hall when Hasnat was returning to Dhaka after visiting Gazipur Agricultural University.

The attackers threw bricks and stones at the vehicle. The car then rushed to the Boardbazar area near the Islamic University of Technology. Police then escorted Hasnat towards Dhaka, Shaheen added.

The OC identified one of the detainees as Nizam Uddin Tushar without giving further details, but the other person's name was not revealed.

The Gazipur Metropolitan Unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir organised a demonstration at Gazipur Chowrasta at 8:30pm in protest against the attack on Hasnat.

The Gazipur district and metropolitan branches of the National Citizen Party called another protest at 9:00pm.

In Dhaka, leaders and activists of the NCP took off a procession outside their Banglamotor office around 10:00pm and marched to the Shaabagh intersection and then back to Banglamotor.

They demanded the arrest of those responsible, and also called for a ban on the Awami League.



Democracy can't do without a free press

FROM PAGE 1

Fakhrul also pointed out that it was the BNP that first paved the way for press freedom in 1975, when all but four newspapers were shut down under the one-party rule of BAKSAL.

He acknowledged his party's shortcomings but emphasised its contributions to press freedom, noting that numerous media outlets were established during its tenure and that journalists faced considerably less oppression compared to the previous government.

However, Fakhrul expressed concern about how his words might be interpreted by specific outlets, how they would be published, or how social media would portray them. "For those of us in politics, this is a matter of concern, especially with the rising trend of character assassination on social media; it's difficult not to be worried."

Regarding this trend and mob attacks, he noted, "If I assume that only my views are correct, then we will never succeed in democratic practices."

He added that, likewise, if one believes that it is only acceptable when a media outlet says positive things about them and unacceptable when it does not, such mindsets will also hinder democracy.

Refuting the narrative that the BNP rejects reforms and only demands elections, he stated, "The truth is, reforms began with us. We were the ones who transitioned from a one-party system to a multi-party system. We enabled the shift from a presidential to a parliamentary democracy. Despite opposition, we introduced the caretaker government provision in the constitution."

Fakhrul emphasised that the 1971 Liberation War remains central to the BNP's ideology and that the party will never compromise on this issue.

"Through the uprising against 15 years of authoritarian rule, there is now an opportunity to begin a democratic system, but democracy needs to be practised, just like a tree needs regular care to grow," he added.

Nagorik Oikya Chairman Mahmudur Rahman Manna called the interim government "the most media-friendly government" since Bangladesh's independence, but questioned why it had not withdrawn cases against journalists filed by the previous government under the Digital Security Act.

Convener of the National Citizen Party Nahid Islam, in his speech, said Bangladesh had improved its global ranking on press freedom this year, but it still remains in the lower tiers.

He pointed out that during the last 16 years under the Hasina regime, there had been legal and cultural interventions by

the media. "We need to move away from a media environment where the Awami League's ideological influence and authoritarian control have taken hold ... Media institutions themselves should propose and uphold principles of good governance."

Nahid also called for transparency in media ownership and investments, as the media itself has demanded clarity on the income sources of political activists.

He added that his party believes in free press, as the July movement grew from restrictions on freedom of speech.

Nahid said that during his tenure as information adviser there was no government pressure on the media. "There were some social pressures on certain media outlets, but we always supported the media houses. Sometimes we criticised their roles in the previous regime ... but nothing was done to shut down any media houses."

Chief Coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon Zonayed Saki said a free press is the most basic requirement for a democratic state.

"We need to create a situation where people trust the media more than the courts, even when justice is denied," he said, adding that his party is committed to building a society free from fear.

Saki further stated that a democratic system cannot function without media freedom.

"The laws that silence the media must be revoked," he said, while also calling for media accountability to prevent arbitrary practices.

"Some business groups have created media organisations to serve their own or their business interests. Media owners must also be held accountable," he said, suggesting that there should be a clear policy on ownership.

He also highlighted mob attacks as a new phenomenon, where certain individuals achieve their goals by issuing threats. "If these are not stopped, the existence of the state will be under threat."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star and president of the Editors' Council, said it was a matter of disgrace that 266 journalists have been charged in cases related to alleged murder or violence.

Despite Bangladesh rising 16 places to rank 149th out of 180 countries in the latest World Press Freedom Index, such mass cases against journalists remain a serious concern and contradict the principles of media freedom, he opined.

"This does not mean that no one has committed any wrongdoing. If someone has done wrong, they should be properly charged and punished, and we [the Editors' Council] will not stand by

them.... But it's been over seven months since some journalists have been caught up in these cases, yet there has been no progress in the investigations. As a result, the accused face reputational harm and live in fear of mob attacks," he added.

"At this moment, 13 journalists are in jail, not getting bail, and no legal process is ongoing. People do have the right to file cases, but the question is whether the government will act when the law is abused by some quarters.

"People hope the current government will reform and strengthen democracy, and reinforce freedom of speech. However, harassing journalists is not only disheartening but also tarnishes Bangladesh's image globally," he said, urging the government to review the cases against journalists.

Manabzamin Editor Matiur Rahman Chowdhury noted how World Press Freedom Day was being celebrated while journalists in Bangladesh are losing their jobs for asking questions.

"The situation, however, has improved compared to last year."

He also highlighted divisions within the media, which are causing significant damage to the industry. "Such divisions must end."

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir stated that a free press does not depend on journalists alone, but largely on lawmakers, politicians, and the state of democracy. "Bangladesh is still in the lowest global position for press freedom, which is shameful for journalists, harmful for the people, and dishonourable for the politicians ... They [politicians] are responsible for the laws that prevent the press from doing its job properly."

Kabir acknowledged the interim government's move to carry out reforms in various sectors, including the media, but said it was unnecessary to wait for the commission's report to eliminate some controversial laws. "I am glad that the government initiated a declaration based on national consensus, but it seems deceptive when it speaks of minimum consensus among political parties.

"It seems the government has no philosophical stance ... There are different political parties with different views."

He added that some parties don't even recognise December 16 as Bangladesh's Victory Day.

Kabir concluded that the consensus should be based on the core values of the proclamation of independence: equality, democracy, and the protection of the rights of all citizens.

Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Hafiz also spoke at the event, which was moderated by Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor of Bonik Barta and general secretary of the Editors' Council.



Information and Broadcasting Adviser Mahfuj Alam addresses an event titled "Brave New Bangladesh: Reform Roadmap for Press Freedom", jointly organised by Unesco Dhaka, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and the Embassy of Sweden at the TIB office in Dhanmondi yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Journo protection law at review stage

FROM PAGE 1

He said that due to politicisation of the media, journalists often suffer within the industry.

"We need a fact-finding investigation into the activities of the media outlets during 15 years of the autocratic regime. Accountability is essential in our media sector."

The adviser added that the Journalist Protection Law, which at the review stage, is feasible and necessary. "We're trying to implement it. We want to adopt every positive approach for the betterment of journalists."

Expressing concern about the financial practices of many outlets, Mahfuj said, "You'll be surprised – one or two media offices at most pay taxes. Many of them operate through political understanding, and there's no policy for them to contribute to the state through taxation."

He also stressed the need for reassessing media licence and advertisement policies.

"We've formed a task force with the Department of Films and Publications to revise newspaper advertisement rates and licences. Government advertisement rates should reflect current inflation," he said.

Regarding the state-run media offices, the adviser supported merging of Bangladesh Betar (radio), BTV (television), and BSS (news agency) into a single National Broadcasting Corporation.

He also emphasised the importance of ensuring independence of broadcast media.

Addressing the challenges faced by journalists based outside Dhaka, Mahfuj said, "We must sit for discussion on what should be standard practices for them. At the same time, we don't need 30 to 40 local newspapers in an area. Protection of local journalists is important."

He further mentioned that the government is evaluating how licences were issued to television and online news outlets and is working to finalise a comprehensive broadcast policy.

Additionally, a proposal for forming an Information Commission is being considered.

He underlined that press freedom cannot be ensured without political consensus.

"We may enact 10 good laws, but if the political leadership doesn't continue or implement them, these will not be effective. We're trying to address issues such as harassment and legal actions

against journalists."

The adviser said the government is in an embarrassing situation over murder and false cases filed against journalists.

Various groups are filing such cases out of personal resentment, Mahfuj said.

He said the government is working to streamline the system by bringing everything from the law ministry to the home ministry under a common framework to stop false cases. Efforts are being made to ensure that no one is arrested or harassed based on such false charges, he added.

The adviser further said anyone can file a case, but there should be discussions on the action the government is taking.

"Cases are often filed against unknown persons. There will be arbitrary arrests under fabricated charges. Not just journalists – you or I could also fall victim to this. We oppose this," he added.

Mahfuj said the government is not restricting people from writing. "People can write freely. The government isn't stopping anyone."

Presenting the keynote paper at the event, Kamal Ahmed, chief of the Media Reform Commission, said journalists in Bangladesh continue to face abuse and even murder charges, an unacceptable reality.

He stressed that fair remuneration and principled institutional support are essential to ensuring press freedom and independent journalism. Both journalists and media houses are experiencing financial insecurity, which is forcing them to make compromises.

"Some have claimed that our commission's proposal to transform media outlets into public limited companies is unrealistic, arguing that most outlets are either non-profitable or failing enterprises. However, financial reports obtained from the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies reveal that over a dozen media companies are making profits. This demonstrates that their proposal is not only realistic but also feasible."

Kamal said, "Too many media outlets are operating haphazardly in the market. Many rely on political patronage or vested groups. Even if they fail to attract audiences, they continue operating by offering unreasonably low advertisement rates, harming the entire sector."

He added that self-censorship among the media houses and threats against journalists are increasingly driven by social media intimidation and so-called "mob violence". Although the

government is expected to control these strictly, little effort is visible in this regard.

Speaking at the programme, Swedish Ambassador Niclas Linus Ragnar Weeks remarked that artificial intelligence (AI) could be used to combat misinformation and propaganda online. "Even today, journalists are saying they have to filter their reporting and cannot work freely."

Acknowledging Bangladesh's slight improvement in global media freedom rankings, the diplomat stressed the need for ensuring safe and equitable workplaces for women in media.

"Human rights cannot be guaranteed without a free press," he said, adding, "When a journalist's freedom of expression is taken away, the general public loses their voice too."

AK Azad, president of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB), criticised the deteriorating state of press freedom in Bangladesh, saying, "The condition of free media and independent journalism is worsening by the day."

Pointing out that Bangladesh's improvement in the World Press Freedom Index was during the interim government, Azad said, "There was hardly any space to speak freely before. We've moved up 16 steps. But who can guarantee that we won't fall 32 steps once a political government comes to power?"

He also criticised the Press Council, calling it a "crippled and paralysed organisation".

Azad, also the managing director of Times Media Ltd, said, "Who will ensure our safety? Why should a journalist who makes an error be imprisoned under the Digital Security Act? Why did Mushtaq Ahmed have to die in jail? What was his crime? Has anyone ever dared to ask these questions? There was no space for such questions."

Azad also alleged that government's "secret agencies" interfere in news reporting and said journalists based outside Dhaka work under constant fear.

He mentioned the killings of two local correspondents of Samakal for their reporting.

Other speakers at the seminar include Susan Vize, head of office and Unesco representative to Bangladesh; Sheikh Sabiha Alam, AFP Bureau chief; Rejoanul Haq Raza, chairman of Broadcast Journalist Centre; and TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, who moderated the event.



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir speaks at a discussion organised by the Editors' Council at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, marking World Press Freedom Day 2025.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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BNP discusses polls, regional stability with Russian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Most foreign countries, including Russia, are waiting for an elected government in Bangladesh through a credible election, said BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

Khasru made the remarks while briefing reporters following a meeting between BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Khozin at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

Khasru and the party's Organising Secretary Shama Obaed also attended the meeting.

"They (Russia) wanted to know how soon the elections could be held," said Khasru.

Foreign countries feel
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The Krishnachura trees, crowned with blazing orange blooms, turn the everyday street into a canvas of fire and beauty. The photo was taken yesterday near Chandrima Udyan.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Khaleda to land at 10:30am tomorrow

BNP plans grand reception with affiliated bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia is set to return to Dhaka at 10:30am tomorrow on a special air ambulance sent by the Emir of Qatar, following four months of medical treatment in London.



BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced the return at a press briefing yesterday at the party's Navapaltan office, outlining extensive preparations to receive her, alongside designated locations for affiliated bodies to line the route from the airport to her Gulshan residence.

According to party sources, the air ambulance, carrying Khaleda, her medical team, and close family members – including Tarique Rahman's wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko's wife Syeda Sharmila Rahman – is scheduled to depart London's Heathrow Airport at 6:15pm (London time) today.

Strict restrictions will be enforced along the route, said Rizvi, adding that walking or motorbike processions accompanying the chairperson's convoy will not be permitted.

Affiliated bodies of the BNP – such as Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, Mahila Dal, etc – will line designated points along the route from Hazrat Shahjalal International

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Barrister Abdur Razzaq no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist Barrister Abdur Razzaq passed away while receiving treatment at a private hospital in Dhaka's Dhanmondi yesterday afternoon. He was 75.

He breathed his last 4:10pm at Ibn Sina Specialized Hospital. He was admitted to the hospital on April 19 as he was suffering from cancer.

Razzaq, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter, and a host of admirers to mourn his death. Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, a junior lawyer to Barrister



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Air purifiers for Dhaka: hope or hype?

DNCC to set up 25-30 such industrial devices in public places to curb pollution; experts skeptical

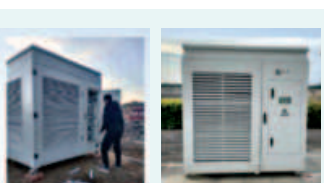
HELEMUL ALAM

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) plans to install industrial-grade air purifiers at around 30 public locations to tackle air pollution in the capital.

However, experts have criticised the initiative, calling it an ineffective approach that avoids addressing the root causes of Dhaka's severe air quality issues.

They argue that such devices will have minimal impact on the city's heavily polluted air.

Talking to The Daily Star earlier, DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz said around 25-30 purifiers will be set up in 25 to 30 public spaces under a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, sponsored by a foreign philanthropist. In return, DNCC



While a purifier may reduce pollution within a small perimeter, it won't have a significant impact in an open environment like Dhaka, where air constantly moves. I have no confidence in this approach. It's not a real environmental solution.

Mostafizur Rahman
Professor at JU's Dept of Environmental Sciences

may allow limited advertising rights on the devices.

The market price of each purifier is around Tk 50 to 60 lakh, said Azaz, adding, "Just like 80 trees purify the air, each device will do the same."

Installation is set to begin soon under a pilot project. "We've already received the proposal. Based on the pilot's outcome, we will consider expanding the project. Even then, costs will be covered through CSR funding, with our only expense being electricity," he said.

"We expect to sign a memorandum of understanding within one or two weeks," he said.

Azaz said many of the proposed sites are under other agencies, but they have agreed to hand over the locations.

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2018 QUOTA PROTESTS

Former DU VC, proctor sued over attack, arson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed yesterday against 13 individuals, including former Dhaka University vice chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman and former proctor Prof Golam Rabbani, over alleged attacks, arson at the VC's residence, and subsequent repression during the 2018 quota reform movement.

Mohammad Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station, naming 13 people and about 500 unnamed leaders and activists of the banned Chhatra League.

Speaking to reporters

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'Four-year term, 2-time cap for PM' Propose 12-party alliance, BASAD at dialogue with consensus commission



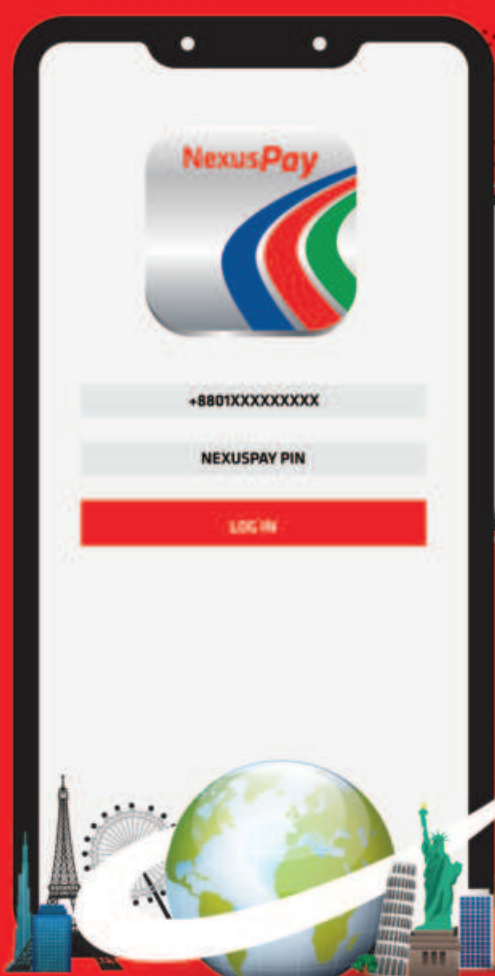
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 12-party alliance has expressed support for the proposed National Constitutional Council and a proportional representation-based upper house, as recommended by the Constitutional Reform Commission.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Party (BASAD) has proposed limiting the terms of both the prime minister and president to four years, with a maximum of two terms for any individual as prime minister.

The National Consensus Commission held separate dialogues with the 12-party alliance and BASAD at the LD Hall of the National Parliament yesterday.

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বিদেশে বসেই
ব্যাংকিং করুন দেশে
NexusPay দিয়ে

বিদেশে থেকে বিদেশি মোবাইল নাম্বার দিয়ে
NexusPay রেজিস্ট্রেশন করে অথবা

আগেই রেজিস্ট্রেশনকৃত
বাংলাদেশি নাম্বার ব্যবহার করে দেশের বাহিরে গিয়েও
দেশের প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যাংকিং হবে নিমিষেই

NexusPay
মানেরই সবকিছু

রেজিস্ট্রেশনের জন্য NexusPay ডাউনলোড করুন



থেকে



ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী

WOMEN'S AFFAIRS COMMISSION Writ petition challenges parts of report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a petition with the High Court challenging the legality of some recommendations made in chapters 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, and 12 of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission's report.

The petition submitted by Rowshan Ali says these recommendations are in direct conflict with Islamic Shariah, contrary to people's religious sentiments, and inconsistent with the constitution.

In the petition, Rowshan appealed for forming a committee comprised of constitutional experts, Islamic scholars, and civil society representatives to review and advise on any future reforms relating to religious and family laws.

The lawyer said chapter 11 of the report proposes equal inheritance rights for men and women, which contradicts the provisions of the holy Quran.

The report suggests a ban on polygamy, which is a permitted provision under Islamic law, and as per the constitution's article 41, such restrictions infringe upon the right to practice religion freely, he said.

Rowshan said he would try to move the petition today.

Tk 38cr hospital unit lies idle

Health officials blame red tape for delayed opening

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The newly-constructed building at Chaugachha Upazila Model Hospital in Jashore has remained unused for 18 months, despite being completed at a cost of Tk 38 crore.

The six-storey building, built to upgrade the hospital from 50 to 100 beds, was completed on September 19, 2023. Although construction began on April 29, 2021 under the supervision of the Health Engineering Department, hospital activities have yet to begin due to the lack of administrative approval.

In the absence of use, the building's doors, windows, and furniture are deteriorating. Patients continue to suffer due to overcrowding in the existing facility, with many forced to receive treatment on the floor and verandah of the ward.

Of the total expenditure, Tk 21.46 crore was spent on the main hospital building and Tk 2.32 crore on installing an oxygen plant and supply lines.

Locals expressed frustration, saying the hospital regularly accommodates more patients than its current 50-bed capacity. They believe that opening the new building would greatly alleviate patients' suffering.

Patients such as Kajal Rekha and Lima Khatun said the hospital's environment is unhygienic and congested, and they face difficulties



due to severe shortage of space.

Dr Anwarul Abedin, a medical officer at the hospital, said the crisis is compounded by a shortage of doctors.

He stressed the urgency of opening the new building and filling vacant medical posts.

Nazmul Haque, executive of engineer of Health Engineering Department in Jashore, said the project work has been completed and the building has been handed over to the health department. "Now all the responsibility lies with them," he said.

Dr Ahsanul Mizan Rumi, health and family planning officer in

Chaugachha upazila, said the hospital cannot be officially upgraded without administrative approval, and essential resources like furniture, beds, and manpower are still lacking.

Jashore Civil Surgeon Dr Masud Rana said letters have been sent to the health department multiple times seeking approval.

"Regular communication is ongoing. I think the approval may be given this month," he added.

According to Dr Mustafiqur Rahman, joint secretary to the health ministry, steps are being taken regarding the necessary approval for the hospital.

No cattle market in Aftabnagar HC stays DSCC decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for three months a decision made by the Dhaka South City Corporation to set up a cattle market at Aftabnagar in Dhaka ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

The HC bench of Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque and Justice Aynun Nahar Siddiqua issued the order following a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunus Ali Akond.

Following the HC order, no cattle market can be set up at Aftabnagar, the lawyer said.

Now teachers go on strike at Kuet Boycott classes, demand punishment for those behind Feb 18 unrest

UNB, Khulna

No classes were held at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) yesterday despite its reopening after two and a half months of closure as teachers started class boycott for various demands.

Md Abdullah Elias Akhtar, director of students' welfare at Kuet, said, "Classes could not be held as the teachers' association is boycotting academic activities. The teachers remain firm in their decision. The vice-chancellor is holding a meeting with the teachers."

Md Faruk Hossain, general secretary of the Kuet Teachers' Association, said, "We will not return to classes until justice is served against those responsible for the February 18 unrest and the assault on the vice-chancellor and other faculty members. We have already informed the newly-appointed acting VC of our stance."

The crisis began on February 18 following an attack on students on the campus. In the wake of the attack, students demanded the resignation of the VC, pro-VC, and the director of students' welfare.

দি ইনস্টিটিউট অব ব্যাব্কার্স, বাংলাদেশ (আইবিবি)
ডিআর টাওয়ার (১৩ তলা)
৬৫/২/২, বীর প্রতীক পল্লী গোলাম দস্তগীর সড়ক
(বঙ্গ কালচারাল রোড), পুরানা পল্টন, ঢাকা-১০০০
ফোনঃ ৫৫১২২৫৭-৬৩

পাজেরো গাড়ি বিক্রয় বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সম্পূর্ণ চালু অবস্থায় নিম্নে উল্লিখিত পাজেরো গাড়ি বিক্রয় করা হবে। অর্থাৎ কোনক্রমে নিষ্কট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে। দরপত্রের সাথে প্রস্তাবিত মূল্যের ৫% (পাঁচ শতাংশ) জামানত হিসেবে ইনস্টিটিউটের নামে পেমেন্ট আকারে জমা দিতে হবে। গাড়ির সকল কাগজপত্র হাসানসহ রয়েছে। গাড়িটি আনামী ০৬ মে ২০২৫ থেকে ১৮ মে ২০২৫ পর্যন্ত (১৫টি দিন ব্যতিক্রম) সকাল ১১:৩০টা থেকে বিকাল ৫:৩০টা পর্যন্ত পরিদর্শন করা যাবে।

গাড়ির বিবরণ	গাড়ির মডেল ও রেঞ্জিং
মিতসুবিশি পাজেরো জীপ, রং-কালো, সি-২৩৫০ পেট্রোল ও সি-২৩৫০ ডিগিটাল (বর্তমান গাড়িটি ১৭১৮৮৩ কিঃ মিঃ অতিক্রম করেছে)	ঢাকা মেট্রো-১৩-২৬৮-৭, মডেলের (MITSUBISHI PAJERO JEEP YEAR 2009), রেঞ্জিং ২০০৯

দরপত্র আনামী ১৮-০৫-২০২৫ তারিখ রোজ সোমবার দুপুর ২:৩০টা মধে আইবিবি ডেপার্টমেন্টে টেন্ডার বাক্সে দাখিল করতে হবে এবং ৫ দিন (১৯-০৫-২০২৫) দুপুর ২:৩০টা মধে বোনা হবে। সর্বোচ্চ মূল্যের উল্লিখিত সমস্ত অর্থ পরবর্তী ০৪ কার্যদিবসের মধ্যে পরিশোধকৃত গাড়ি গ্রহণের কাজ সম্পন্ন করতে হবে। উল্লিখিত তারিখের মধ্যে সমস্ত অর্থ পরিশোধে বার্ন হলে দরপত্রের সাথে জামানতকৃত সমস্ত অর্থ বাজেয়াপ্ত বলে গণ্য হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিক্রমে যে কোন অর্থবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
অতিরিক্ত পরিদর্শক

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FAMILY PLANNING
LOGISTICS & SUPPLY UNIT (5TH FLOOR)
6 KARWANBAZAR, DHAKA 1215, BANGLADESH.

e-Tender Notice (OTM, ICT, Goods)

Ref. No: 59.11.0000.302.07.073.2025-1538 Date: 04/05/2025

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP portal for the procurement of following goods:

Tender ID No. & Package No.	Tender Package name	Last Selling/ Downloading Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
1	2	3	4
ID No: 1103690 Package No: CCSDP/GR-23	Procurement of Implant (01 Stick)	17 June 2025, 17.00.	18 June 2025, 12.30 PM

2. This is an online tender where only e-tender (online tender) will be accepted through the national e-GP portal and no off-line/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-tender please register on e-GP portal.

3. The fees for downloading the e-tender documents from the national e-GP portal have to be deposited online through any schedule bank of Bangladesh registered by the CPTU.

4. Further information & guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal & e-GP help desk (Help desk: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Marzia Haque)
Director (Logistics & Supply)
Logistics & Supply Unit
Directorate General of Family Planning.
Phone: 02-55012349
e-mail: dirlogdgp@gmail.com

GD-1067

Felling of Economically Life Cycle Lost Rubber Tree, Reforestation and Modernization of Rubber Processing Project
Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC)
73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.

Memo: 22.03.0000.022.122.07.003.25-07 Date: 04-05-2025

Invitation for Tenders

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change			
2	Agency	Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC)			
3	Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Felling of Economically Life Cycle Lost Rubber Tree, Reforestation and Modernization of Rubber Processing Project			
4	Procuring Entity Code	MOP Code : 224406600			
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka			
6	Invitation for	Procurement of the following services through outsourcing:			
S.L.	Name of Service	Number of service providers	Service provision work place	Service Category/Monthly Total Service Price (Per Firm)	Age limit, qualification and experience
i	Sub-Assistant Engineer (Civil)	01 (one)	Project Office and Site.	Special Service-1 (Tk. 27,013/-) Category-1 (Tk. 19,110/-) Category-2 (Tk. 18,610/-) Category-5 (Tk. 17,610/-)	As per tender documents.
ii	Sub-Assistant Engineer (Mechanical)	01 (one)			
iii	Office Assistant cum Computer Operator	01 (one)			
iv	Pickup Driver	01 (one)			
v	Office Assistant	01 (one)			
7	Invitation Ref No	22.03.0000.022.122.07.003.25-07			
8	Date	04-05-2025			
KEY INFORMATION		22.03.0000.022.122.07.003.25-07			
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Own fund of BFIDC			
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	N/A			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project / Program Code (if applicable)	N/A			
13	Project Name (if applicable)	Felling of Economically Life Cycle Lost Rubber Tree, Reforestation and Modernization of Rubber Processing Project			
14	Tender Package No	PS-02			
15	Tender Package Name	BFIDC/Project/2024-25/Pickup			
16	Tender Publication Date	04-05-2025			
17	Tender Last Selling Date	18-05-2025			
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	Date: 20-05-2025, Time: 12:00 PM			
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	Date: 20-05-2025, Time: 01:00 PM			
20	Name & Address of the office(s)	73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000			
	- Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Accounts Section, 3 rd Floor, 73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000			
	- Selling Tender Document (Others)	BFIDC, Eastern Wood Works, 185/A, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka			
	- Receiving Tender Document	1. Accounts Section, 3 rd Floor, 73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka. 2. BFIDC, Eastern Wood Works, 185/A, Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka.			
	- Opening Tender Document	Accounts Section, 3 rd Floor, 73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
21	Eligibility of Tenderer	(1) Must be a registered, regulated, licensed manpower supply organization with the authority designated by the government. (2) Updated Trade License, VAT Certificate and Income Tax Organization (TIN) along with Income Tax Case Settlement Certificate/Updated Income Tax Return Submission Receipt for the fiscal year 2024-2025; (3) Must have at least 05 (five) years of general experience; (4) Must have 03 (three) years of experience in manpower supply to government/semi-government/autonomous/statutory organizations/state-owned organizations/private and public limited companies. Must have experience in supplying at least 05 (five) manpower continuously under a single contract/contract within the said 03 (three) years and must submit a certified copy of Income Tax and VAT deduction certificate from the service receiving organization/institution. (5) Other qualifications as per tender schedule/documents.			
22	Brief Description of Services	Procurement of a firm for providing different Physical Services (Outsourcing)			
23	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	1,000.00 (One Thousand Only)			
24	Package Identification of Services	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk.)	Completion Time in Weeks / Months	
	No				
	PS-02	Dhaka	1,20,000.00	42 Months or up to June-2028	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS					
25	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Masudul Rahman Bhuiyan			
26	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Project Director (Joint Secretary)			
27	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Banshilpa Bhaban (3 rd Floor), 73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.			
28	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Contact: 02-223382979, 01914-261962, E-mail: bhidcproject@gmail.com			
29	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the tenderings.				

(Md. Masudul Rahman Bhuiyan)
Project Director (Joint Secretary)

GD-1061

INVITATION TO BID

The U.S. Embassy Dhaka is seeking offers for its Gardening, Plant & Lawn Maintenance and Cleaning Services Contract.

The Contractor shall provide Gardening, Plant & Lawn Maintenance and Cleaning services to the U.S. Embassy Dhaka located at Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In order to obtain the solicitation package, please download the solicitation package from the Embassy website:
<https://bd.usembassy.gov/grants-and-procurement-opportunities/#embassy> or <https://sam.gov/> and search for **19BG3025R0001** in all award data field.

You can also forward a request for the solicitation package to the following e-mail:
DhakaProc@state.gov

The completed offers to be submitted to **DhakaProc@state.gov** by addressing Contracting Officer, U. S. Embassy Annex (GSO Compound), U.S. Embassy, Plot- 1, J- Block, Progoti Sharoni, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212 on or before **June 19, 2025**.

Only Electronically submitted offers would be considered for further consideration.

'Pay our arrears'

Tea workers issue 3-day ultimatum

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Nearly 2,500 tea garden workers and their family members in Sylhet yesterday blocked Sylhet-Companiganj-Bholaganj regional highway for three hours to press home their 11-point demands, including payment of their 20 weeks' arrears.

The protest began around 12:30pm in Lakkatura area and brought traffic to a standstill.

They later withdrew the blockade at around 3:30pm following assurances from the local administration, and issued a three-day ultimatum, warning of tougher movement if their demands are not met within the deadline.

The workers demanded the government to cancel the lease of Burjan Tea Company, take over operations of the garden, and ensure immediate disbursement of unpaid wages and rations.

Suhag Chatri, a tea workers' leader, said workers have become frustrated over repeated promises of payment that

have yet to be fulfilled. Sanjay Kanta Das, adviser to the Bangladesh Tea Workers' Federation, said the workers have also not received their ration and bonuses for several months.

The blockade led to severe traffic congestion and sufferings to commuters.

Army personnel managed to create passage for emergency vehicles, including an ambulance caught in the gridlock.

Contacted, Md Kamruzzaman, manager of Burjan Tea Garden, said, "We are facing this problem because the Krishi Bank has not allocated us loans due our previous default loans. Last year we could not make any profit due to high production costs."

Khushnour Rubaiyath, upazila nirbahi officer of Sylhet Sadar, said she spoke with both the workers' representative and the tea garden's manager. "Cooperation of the higher authorities is needed to take a decision that benefits the tea workers," the UNO added.



CONSULTANCY OPPORTUNITIES

International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka is inviting applications from interested consultants to conduct an analysis of the implications of the early termination of the PROSHAR project that shared a common result framework with similar other projects.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for detail information can be downloaded from the **United Nations Global Market Place (UNGM)** at <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/265832>

The deadline for submission of proposal is **Sunday, May 18, 2025**, by 04:30 PM (BST time).

Khaleda to land

FROM PAGE 3
Airport to Khaleda's Gulshan residence.

Access to both the airport and Khaleda's residence will be restricted, even for party leaders, said Rizvi.

On Saturday night, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said Khaleda is feeling better after receiving advanced treatment in London. He urged supporters and

journalists not to crowd the roads and requested the public to use the elevated expressway to avoid traffic congestion.

Khaleda flew to London on January 8. She was admitted to the London Clinic for 17 days under the care of Professor Patrick Kennedy and Professor Jennifer Cross, and since January 25, has been staying at Tarique Rahman's residence for continued care.

ZUBAIDA RETURNS AFTER 17 YEARS
Zubaida is also returning to Dhaka after 17 years. She plans to stay at her father's Dhanmondi residence, Mahub Bhaban, with her ailing mother.

Zubaida left Dhaka with Tarique and daughter Zaima on September 11, 2008. BNP leaders said preparations are underway at the house, which belonged to her father, former Navy chief Rear Admiral Mahub Ali Khan.

"We're making all necessary arrangements, including decoration, CCTV installation, and utility checks," said a BNP official.

AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208
Phone: 02 8870422 (Ext.-201) Web: www.aust.edu
Ref. No. AUST/MPE/OTM/Tender-11/2024-25

TENDER INVITATION

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) is inviting sealed bids from bona fide/reputed organizations/ distributors/ business partners/agents for:

1. **Supply of Lab Equipment (Concentric Tube Heat Exchangers) for the Department of MPE (Re-Tender)**

The bidders must submit earnest money @ 2.5% of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of "Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology" along with their offer. Interested bidders may collect schedule of tender from Procurement Officer of AUST on all working days till May 13, 2025. The sealed offer must be submitted on **May 15, 2025** by 1.30pm at the Treasurer's office and the tenders will be opened at 02:00pm on the same day (May 15, 2025). Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the tenders.

The AUST authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason what-so-ever and is not bound to award the work order to the lowest bidder.

INNOVATION:: CREATION:: LEADERSHIP

'Don't see a major war with India'

Says Pakistan ex-NSA after deadly Kashmir attack

AGENCIES

Eleven days after gunmen shot 26 people dead in the scenic valley of Baisaran in Indian-administered Kashmir's Pahalgam, India and Pakistan stand on the brink of a military standoff.

The nuclear-armed neighbours have each announced a series of tit-for-tat steps against the other since the attack on April 22, which India has implicitly blamed Pakistan for, even as Islamabad has denied any role in the killings.

To understand how Pakistani strategists who have worked on ties with India view what might happen next, Al Jazeera spoke with Moeed Yusuf, who served as Pakistan's national security adviser (NSA) between May 2021 and April 2022 under former prime minister Imran Khan.

Yusuf said India and Pakistan have for long struggled in terms of crisis management. They don't have a bilateral crisis management mechanism, which is the fundamental concern, reports Al Jazeera online.

"This time, I feel the problem India has run into is that they followed the old playbook, but the leader of the most important third party, the United States, didn't show up to support India," Yusuf said.

"It appears that they have so far taken a neutral and a hands-off position, as indicated by President Donald Trump few days ago. (Trump said that he knew the leaders of both India and Pakistan, and believed that they could resolve the crisis on their own.)"

Pakistan's response is directly linked to the Indian response, and that is historically how it has been, with both countries going tit-for-tat with each other. This time too, a number of punitive steps have been announced, he said.

"Pakistan naturally has to show commitment to prepare for any eventuality. You don't know what will come next, so you have to be ready. Having said that, I don't think we are going to see a major war, but in these circumstances, you can never predict, and one little misunderstanding or miscalculation can lead to something major."



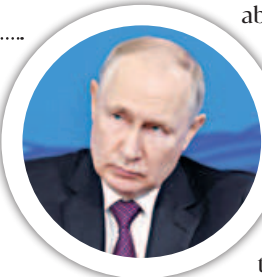
People gather to inspect the damage to a shopping mall, standing near a crater filled with fresh sand, following a night-time Russian drone attack on Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday. A Russian overnight drone attack on Kyiv injured at least 11 people, including two children. PHOTO: AFP

Russia has the strength to finish Ukraine ops: Putin

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said in remarks published yesterday that Russia had sufficient strength and resources to take the war in Ukraine to its logical conclusion, though he hoped that there would be no need to use nuclear weapons.

In a film by state television about Putin's quarter of a century as Russia's paramount leader entitled "Russia, Kremlin, Putin, 25 years", Putin was asked by a reporter



about the risk of nuclear escalation from the Ukraine war.

"They wanted to provoke us so that we made mistakes," Putin said, speaking beside a portrait of Tsar Alexander III, a 19th century conservative who suppressed dissent. "There has been no need to use those weapons ... and I hope they will not be required."

"We have enough strength and means to bring what was started in 2022 to a logical conclusion with the outcome Russia requires," Putin said.

US-China tussle a top priority

Says Australia's re-elected government

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's Labor government will prioritise dealing with the "dark shadow" of the US-China trade war following its resounding re-election victory, Treasurer Jim Chalmers said yesterday, after a campaign that highlighted concerns over US trade policy and the global economy.

Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese, Australia's first prime minister to win a second consecutive term in two decades, promised in remarks yesterday that he would run a disciplined and orderly government, stressing that Australians had voted for unity.

The centre-left Labor Party appeared likely to expand its majority in parliament to at least 86 seats from 77, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation projected.

S'pore ruling party wins polls in landslide

AFP, Singapore

Voters have handed Singapore's long-time ruling party a landslide election victory, offering Prime Minister Lawrence Wong a clear mandate to navigate the trade-orientated Southeast Asian nation through economic upheaval sparked by looming US tariffs.

Wong's People's Action Party took all but 10 seats in the 97-seat unicameral legislature with a total of 65.57 percent of more than 2.4 million votes cast in the island state in Saturday's polls.

Some banks hit by capital squeeze

FROM PAGE 1

deeper deterioration in their financial positions, whereas private commercial banks and foreign banks remain on firmer ground.

At the end of December, state-run banks posted a CRAR of negative 8.42 percent, Islamic banks stood at negative 4.95 percent, and specialised banks at negative 41.02 percent.

In contrast, private commercial banks recorded a CRAR of 10.98 percent, and foreign banks posted a strong 42.09 percent, far above the minimum requirement under the Basel III framework, central bank data shows.

CRAR measures the ratio of a bank's capital to its risk-weighted assets, which are assets that have been weighted based on their riskiness.

Industry insiders said that the capital shortfall of banks can threaten the stability of the entire financial sector.

They also noted that investors and depositors lose trust in the affected banks, and the credit ratings of those banks can be downgraded, making it harder and more expensive for them to raise funds.

A senior official at the central bank said the scale of bad loans came to light after the August 2024 political transition, exposing the scale of losses that had been accumulating beneath the surface. This revelation, he added, pushed many

banks into deeper capital shortfalls.

By the end of the year, 19 banks, including six state-owned lenders, faced a combined capital shortfall of Tk 1,71,700 crore, the highest on record. The surge was largely driven by an unprecedented rise in non-performing loans, which climbed to Tk 3,45,765 crore.

The central bank official warned that many of the affected banks are now operating at a loss and may struggle to continue lending. "They often cut back on lending to preserve capital," he said.

In the wake of the political transition, several banks have been newly added to the list of undercapitalised institutions. These include Islamic Bank Bangladesh, First Security Islamic Bank, Social Islamic Bank, IFIC Bank, Union Bank, Global Islamic Bank and Al-Arafah Islamic Bank, most of them exposed to politically connected groups that flourished under the previous government.

Contacted, Arief Hossain Khan, executive director and spokesperson of Bangladesh Bank, said that provision shortfalls spiked as defaulted loans surged, worsened by factory closures whose owners fled or were jailed. As a result, the capital shortfall increased several times.

Banks are mandated to allocate a certain

percentage of their operating profits as provisions against loan losses, and if these provisions are insufficient, it can lead to a shortfall.

Janata Bank saw its capital shortfall swell to Tk 52,890 crore by end-2024, driven by Tk 67,148 crore in bad loans—72 percent of its disbursed portfolio. Major defaulters include Anontex, Crescent, Beximco, Thermax, and S Alam Group, who collectively owe over Tk 45,000 crore, according to BB data.

Among other state-run banks, Bangladesh Krishi Bank faced a Tk 18,188 crore capital shortfall at the end of 2024; Rupali Tk 5,100 crore; Agrani Tk 4,685 crore; BASIC Tk 3,150 crore; and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank Tk 2,400 crore.

The state-run lenders have now become unable to provide large loans under the existing single borrower exposure limit rules due to their high capital shortfalls.

Among private commercial banks, Union Bank's capital shortfall stood at Tk 15,689 crore; First Security Islamic Bank Tk 13,991 crore; Islamic Bank Tk 12,885 crore; Social Islamic Bank Tk 11,708 crore; IFIC Bank Tk 9,000 crore; and National Bank Tk 7,700 crore.

In addition, Padma Bank had a Tk 4,900 crore shortfall; Global Islamic Bank Tk 2,900

crore; ICB Islamic Bank Tk 1,900 crore; Bangladesh Commerce Bank Tk 1,600 crore; Standard Bank Tk 1,500 crore; AB Bank Tk 500 crore; and Al-Arafah Islamic Bank Tk 250 crore.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shaifuzzaman, managing director of Social Islamic Bank, proposed easing provisioning rules, selling frozen S Alam-related shares, and issuing rights shares once conditions stabilise.

A chief executive of a private commercial bank, seeking anonymity, also said the capital shortfall will decrease if the central bank allows a deferral facility for maintaining provisions. However, weak and problematic banks used such regulatory forbearance to hide capital shortfalls during the previous government's tenure, he added.

Zahid Hussain, a banking reform task force member and former World Bank lead economist in Dhaka, told The Daily Star that recapitalisation is the easiest fix, and it can proceed under reform initiatives, including the passage of the Bank Resolution Ordinance.

He, however, warned against pouring funds into mismanaged banks. "M i s m a n a g e m e n t, irregularities, and corruption must be rooted out from troubled banks before the government considers recapitalising them."

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES DIRECTOR OF WORKS & CHIEF ENGINEER (ARMY)

INVITATION00 FOR TENDERS

Ref No 25 of 2024-2025/E-6

Dated 28 April 2025

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence			
2.	Agency	Military Engineer Services			
3.	Procuring Entity Name	DW & CE (Army) Dhaka Cantt			
4.	Tender Name	Different B & R Works of Bangladesh Army for the financial year 2024-2025 (As per Ser No. 15)			
5.	Invitation for Tender No	25 of 2024-2025/E-6 Dated 28 April 2025			
6.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)			
7.	Source of Funds	GOB			
8.	Tender Publication Date	07 May 2025			
9.	Tender Last Selling Date	20 May 2025 upto 1430 hours.			
10.	Tender Submission Date & Time	21 May 2025, 1200 hours.			
11.	Tender Opening Date & Time	21 May 2025, 1230 hours.			
12.	Name & Address of the office (s)	Selling Tender Documents a. Tender Selling & Information Centre of DW&CE (A) at GE (A) Central, Dhaka Cantt. b. DW & CE (Army), Dhaka Cantt. Receiving Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre of DW&CE(A) at GE (A) Central, Dhaka Cantt. Opening Tender Document Tender Selling & Information Centre of DW&CE (A) at GE (A) Central, Dhaka Cantt.			
13.	Place/Date/Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	20 May 2025, 1000-1100 hours.			
14.	Eligibility of Tenderer	For Serial No.15 (a to j): Contractors enlisted in MES Class 'C' & 'D' For Serial No.15 (m): Contractors enlisted in MES Class 'D' & 'E' in other Govt/Semi-Govt/autonomous organizations in similar capacity having necessary security clearance from DGFI.			
15.	Description of works	Location	Price of Tender Document (Non refundable)	Amount of Tender Security (Taka) (In the shape of Bank Draft/ Pay order/Bank Guarantee in favor of DW & CE (Army))	Time of Completion of Wks
a	Renewal/Modification/alteration of existing pre-mix carpeting road & Barbed wire fencing through abnormal repair at Bogura Cantt (Majira).	Bogura Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,90,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
b	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to RCC Road at Mortar Ground Area through abnormal repair at Jalalabad Cantt.	Jalalabad Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,90,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
c	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to RCC Road at Sniper Ground Area through abnormal repair at Jalalabad Cantt.	Jalalabad Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,90,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
d	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to existing Bldg No. PT-6 (SM BK 2nd & 3rd floor), H-40 (Ground floor of main office), PT-01 (E.C.G. E.T.T Department 1st floor) & PT-07 Officers' Family Ward 1st & 2nd floor) through abnormal repair at Chattogram Cantt.	Chattogram Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,90,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
e	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to existing Bldg No.PT-41, PT-17 (JCO's Qtr) through abnormal repair at Khagrachari Cantt.	Khagrachari Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,75,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
f	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to existing Bldg No.D-1,2,3,4 & TY-07 at Officers' Residential Area through abnormal repair at Jashore Cantt.	Jashore Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.2,00,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
g	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to Bldg No. PT-02 (Record Office) & PT-76 (OR's Qtr) through abnormal repair at Jahanabad Cantt.	Jahanabad Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,80,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
h	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to Brick Bottoming Road from Butchery to Assault Course Ground Area through abnormal repair at Shahid Bir Uttom Mahub Cantt.	Shahid Bir Uttom Mahub Cantt, Parbatipur	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,80,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
j	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to Brick Bottoming Road/Hardstading at Station Officers' Mess-'C' Area under GE (Army) North) through abnormal repair at Dhaka Cantt.	Dhaka Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,80,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
k	Renewal/Renovation/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to existing Bldg No. 68 (Major General M Shamsul Haque Auditorium) at AFM Area under GE (Army) CMH through abnormal repair at Dhaka Cantt.	Dhaka Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,55,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
l	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to Boundary wall at BIPSHOT Area through abnormal repair at Rajendrapur Cantt.	Rajendrapur Cantt	Tk.2,000.00	Tk.1,50,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
m	Renewal/Modification/alteration including ancillary works to existing Bldg No.38 (Cook House & Dinning Hall of CMH) through abnormal repair at Alikadom Cantt under AGE (Army) Bandarban.	Alikadom Cantt, Bandarban	Tk.1,000.00	Tk.1,00,000.00	08 (Eight) Months
16.	Contact details	Phone : 9832678, Mili: 2678, Fax : (02) 9833284 Web Site : www.army.mil.bd			
17.	Special Instructions	a. Tenderer shall submit copy of letter of valid enlistment & security clearance with application when purchasing tender. b. Detailed requirements are mentioned in Tender Data sheet of Tender documents. c. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.			

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DW & CE (Army)
Dhaka Cantt

S-W PAKISTAN Five cops kidnapped

AFP, Quetta

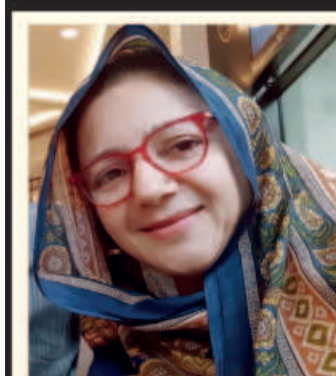
A separatist militant group in southwestern Pakistan yesterday claimed an attack on a prison van in which five police officers were taken hostage.

Between 30 and 40 gunmen blocked a major highway that cuts across Balochistan province overnight on Friday, intercepting a prison van being transported by a police team, a police official said.

"The prisoners were released later but five policemen have been kidnapped," a senior police official said.

In Loving Memory of Syeda Ghazala Mohsin

Teacher, Sister, Wife, Mother, Daughter, Aunt, Friend, Guide



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Syeda Ghazala Mohsin, who left this world peacefully on the evening of May 2nd at her home.

A teacher not just by profession but in spirit, Syeda Ghazala Mohsin dedicated her life to nurturing young minds. Her unwavering commitment to her students' growth was matched only by her quiet pride in their successes, no matter how small.

To her family, she was the heart and the head — a pillar of strength who led with grace, and determination, becoming the father figure in the absence of one. She was a beloved wife, an admired mother, a treasured sister, a respected aunt, and an endeared daughter whose presence was a constant source of security.

Though she could be quick to temper, it was never without cause — her convictions were rooted in care and principle. She found joy in the ordinary and never sought the spotlight. Averse to grandeur, she was happiest with the humble blessings of daily life, finding solace in — a loved one's smile, a student's progress, a quiet moment shared with family, in classic movies, novels, daily soaps, quiet charity, and in her prayers.

To all who knew her and those reading this, please keep her in your prayers. And to her students, colleagues, and friends: remember her when you see a child learning, when you witness someone teaching, when someone lends a hand to uplift others, or when someone gives all to support her family through life. In those quiet, beautiful moments, say a prayer for her. MAY ALLAH GRANT HER EASE IN HER AFTERLIFE AND THE HIGHEST REWARD OF JANNATUL FERDAUS. AMEEN!

Are we ready for the upcoming floods?

Reports of slow, sloppy embankment works worrying

We are concerned about the lack of, or slow pace in, preparation for the upcoming floods as seen in a number of haor and other vulnerable regions even though the monsoon season is approaching fast. According to media reports, one key problem relates to the vulnerability of existing flood protection embankments or those under construction, where a large part of the work either remains unfinished or is being hastily executed without adequate quality control—inviting the risk of being overflowed or washed away once the monsoon sets in. The threat this situation poses to crops, homes, and life in general cannot be stressed enough.

A recent report by *Prothom Alo* highlights the risks facing Sunamganj, where the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) is implementing a Tk 308 crore project to construct permanent embankments in 14 haors across seven upazilas. But so far, less than 60 percent of the work has been completed, making it unlikely that those will be ready in time. Sloppy work has also been seen during field visits to multiple sites. For example, in some cases, soil work remains incomplete but concrete blocks are already being placed there; in others, construction appears rushed and poorly planned, with some sections already eroding due to early rains. BWDB officials have denied allegations of negligence or irregularities and attributed the slow progress to various constraints. But the fact is, things would have turned out differently had they planned better and started earlier.

A similar trend of neglect has also been observed in Shariatpur's Jajira end of the Padma Bridge project area, where, according to this daily, a two-kilometre-long embankment has been facing erosion for months. Reportedly, BWDB delayed repair work for over four months after a 100-metre section collapsed last November. Only on April 24 did they finally begin repairs with geo-bags and CC blocks. If the embankment is not reinforced properly and fast, several critical infrastructures within 500 metres of the bridge's Jajira end and four surrounding villages could come under severe threat from erosion. In another alarming development, there was a severe breach in the BWDB embankment along the Kapotaksha River in Assuni upazila of Satkhira on Friday, triggering fears that saline river water could inundate at least five nearby villages.

These are not isolated incidents. Embankments built by the BWDB routinely give way due to natural calamities, tidal pressure, and poorly planned or weak construction, affecting communities time and again. These failings reveal a wider problem of bureaucratic inefficiency, poor planning, contractor negligence, and inadequate local engagement, all of which must be addressed. We urge the government to undertake a critical review of the state of flood preparedness across the country. It must mobilise resources to properly complete all embankment works in haor and erosion-prone areas, empower community-led flood protection schemes wherever feasible, and strengthen rapid-response mechanisms in vulnerable regions so that any damage from flooding or erosion can be minimised.

Prioritise well-being of our protectors

Firefighters must have proper compensation, insurance, safety gear

Despite the critical role played by firefighters who put their lives at risk to rescue victims from catastrophes, it is quite disappointing that the state has failed not only to provide them with due compensation and benefits, but also to equip them properly with safety gear while at work. According to a report in this daily, since independence, at least 47 firefighters have lost their lives in the line of duty, with the highest number of deaths taking place at the BM Container Depot in Chattogram's Sitakunda in 2022, which killed 13 firefighters.

Over the years, our increasingly dense urban spaces, the general lack of fire safety measures, and a failure to enforce building rules and regulations have contributed to a surge in fire incidents in the country. Unfortunately, the capacity of the Department of Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) has not increased at the same pace. Currently, the FSCD has 14,570 members, meaning there's less than one firefighter per 1,000 people in Bangladesh. Sadly, we are not even ensuring proper compensation for them. The compensation they receive from the government and their departmental welfare fund in case of death or injury is inadequate, according to an official quoted by this daily. What's worse is that firefighters do not even have insurance coverage for death, disability, or injury caused while at work. As a result, their families are often left to fend for themselves when a firefighter dies or is maimed.

Besides, not all members have safety gear, including fire suits and breathing equipment. In many countries, trained volunteers often work alongside career firefighters in fire departments. But if we fail to provide proper equipment even to career firefighters, how can anyone feel encouraged to volunteer for such a risky job? Furthermore, there is the issue of inadequate training, which came into discussion particularly after the 2022 chemical-induced Sitakunda fire.

Reportedly, the new director general of the fire service has promised to take steps to meet some of the challenges the department faces. We hope that the interim government will consider increasing the department's budget to enhance its capacity and manpower, as well as create specialised units equipped to handle catastrophes such as earthquakes. For both man-made and natural disaster preparedness, there is no alternative to fairly compensating and ensuring the safety and training of our first responders, among whom firefighters play a major role.

2025 WORLD BANK-IMF SPRING MEETINGS

What it means for the Global South



MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

The Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG) on April 21-26, 2025 were held at a time of deep uncertainty in the global economy. The catchy theme of the meetings, "Jobs: The Path to Prosperity," was an attempt to project optimism behind such difficulty. But the world is currently grappling with intensifying trade protectionism, surging debt burdens, slowing economic growth, and a growing climate emergency. For the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS), the meetings fell short of offering concrete and transformative solutions for several reasons.

A world in flux

The global economic context preceding the meetings was bleak. The IMF downgraded the global GDP growth for 2025 to 2.8 percent from the 3.3 percent forecast earlier. This downward revision was prompted by heightened trade tensions, particularly following the sweeping tariffs introduced by the US. The resultant retaliatory tariffs from China have strained global supply chains and added inflationary pressure, further dampening growth prospects.

At the same time, the world is also experiencing "aid shock" as donor countries announced deep cuts in official development assistance (ODA). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in 2024, international aid from official donors fell by 7.1 percent in real terms compared to 2023. This was the first drop after five years of consecutive growth. Net bilateral aid flows from OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members to LDCs fell by three percent in real terms compared to 2023. This came at a time when fragile economies are more dependent on concessional financing than ever before.

The aid crisis has emerged as a silent emergency for these countries. With the shuttering of USAID funds and other traditional donors slashing aid budgets, grant-based financing is drying up. In response, both the IMF and World Bank have doubled down on mobilising private capital. However, without equity, affordability, and accountability, the effectiveness of such private funds will be under scrutiny.

Jobs as a silver bullet?

WBG President Ajay Banga highlighted job creation as the linchpin of poverty eradication since a large number of youth in

developing and poor countries enter the workforce every year. The World Bank's new strategy stands on three pillars: foundational infrastructure, business-enabling governance, and private capital mobilisation. However, concerns remain as business-enabling governance and private capital could fall short in their efforts to bring the large informal workforce to the formal sector, ensure job security, and improve job quality.

Debt distress and the mirage of reform

Debt featured prominently in this year's meetings. The IMF warned that global public debt is projected to reach nearly 100 percent of global GDP by 2030. For developing



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

The 2025 Spring Meetings highlighted the growing disconnect between the Bretton Woods Institutions and the realities of their borrowers.

economies, debt servicing costs are becoming unsustainable, which often exceeds spending on education and health. In sub-Saharan Africa, debt service already outpaces social sector expenditures. More worryingly, climate risk is still not fully embedded in debt sustainability analyses. It is now clear that climate change is a macro-critical issue and should be integral to future debt frameworks. Yet, no decisive move was made by the Bretton Woods Institutions to adopt climate-contingent debt clauses or ensure meaningful creditor participation in future restructurings.

Climate change: A side act, not centre stage

Despite earlier commitments, climate issues were conspicuously sidelined during the 2025 Spring Meetings.

Under pressure from its largest shareholder, the US, the World Bank seems to have shifted its focus back to "core mandates." This has effectively marginalised climate adaptation financing. Although the World Bank committed to allocating 45 percent of its financing towards climate-related projects by FY2025 at the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28), the lion's share of these funds still targets mitigation rather than adaptation. For climate-vulnerable countries like Bangladesh, adaptation finance is essential, especially in the face of rising sea levels, erratic monsoons, and flooding. Moreover, the continued preference for loans over grants exacerbates debt vulnerabilities and undermines the countries' long-term resilience. Worse still, the World Bank's energy strategy, which includes nuclear power and natural gas, poses risks to low-income countries as it could lead to a high-carbon trajectory. The needs of energy-insecure communities of these countries should be fulfilled through community-based, decentralised renewable systems.

Is Bangladesh falling through the cracks?

For Bangladesh, the outcome of the 2025 Spring Meetings is not encouraging. While the rhetoric of job creation may align with its vision of harnessing its demographic dividend, the IMF and World Bank frameworks do little to address the structural hurdles the country faces, including declining export competitiveness due to tariffs, a mounting subsidy bill, and climate-induced displacement. The issue of informality in the labour market is also acute, with more than 80 percent being engaged in the informal sector for employment.

Bangladesh, as a lower-middle-income country, would benefit significantly from multilateral reforms in the financial architecture. Its access to concessional finance is shrinking as it prepares for graduation from the LDC category in 2026, even though it still faces climate vulnerabilities and foreign exchange constraints. Hence, the inability to reach a consensus on reform is a setback for countries requiring international finance.

Bangladesh is also a candidate for energy and infrastructure investments under the World Bank's private capital mobilisation model. However, without guarantees on fair pricing, social safeguards, and climate alignment, these investments may deepen rather than mitigate risk. The country also stands to lose from the continued emphasis on fiscal consolidation—a core plank of IMF conditionality—at a time when it needs fiscal space to invest in resilience, health, and education.

Moreover, Bangladesh's debt-GDP ratio, while manageable compared to peers, is inching upwards. The combination of tighter global financing conditions and rising interest rates poses serious challenges. Yet, the World Bank and IMF meetings offered little in terms of concessional refinancing or structured debt relief mechanisms that Bangladesh and other vulnerable emerging markets and developing economies could benefit from.

Hence, while the 2025 Spring Meetings emphasised stability and continuity, they also highlighted the growing disconnect between the Bretton Woods Institutions and the realities of their borrowers. The Spring Meetings indicate that the IMF and World Bank are at a crossroads. They can either continue to operate within the confines of outdated paradigms or embrace a new vision of multilateralism that prioritises climate justice, debt sustainability, and inclusive development.

The coming months offer an opportunity to continue the momentum of such demands. With the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) approaching, the world must demand that international financial institutions truly deliver on the promises of sustainability, resilience, and equity.

The critical role of midwives in ensuring maternal health



Masaki Watabe is representative ad interim for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bangladesh.

MASAKI WATABE

When a pregnant woman arrived at a Rohingya refugee healthcare facility in Cox's Bazar, bleeding profusely and nearing death, it was midwife Rokhsana, trained with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who helped save her life. Rokhsana and her team stabilised the patient's condition and arranged a hospital referral for a life-saving blood transfusion. "My journey is fuelled by a simple but powerful belief," Rokhsana says. "No mother should ever have to fear childbirth. I am committed to ensuring that every birth is a moment of joy and not a moment of sorrow."

Each year, on May 5, we celebrate the International Day of the Midwife, a moment to honour midwives around the world who provide critical care across communities. Midwives are specialised healthcare professionals who can deliver around 90 percent of essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and adolescent healthcare services, including services for survivors of gender-based violence

(GBV). Their role is indispensable.

In Bangladesh, midwifery care has played a key role in achieving a 79 percent reduction in maternal mortality since 2000, as recently reported by UN agencies. Since 2010, the Bangladesh government has made significant strides in integrating midwives into the national healthcare system. Today, the country is recognised as one of six champion countries in the global Midwifery Accelerator initiative. Yet, it still faces a considerable gap: while an estimated 25,000 midwives are required to meet the needs of women and girls, fewer than 3,000 have been deployed to date.

A recent study shows that further scaling up midwifery services in Bangladesh could save over 31,000 additional maternal and newborn lives by 2035. The evidence is clear: midwives save lives. But their impact goes far beyond delivery rooms.

Midwives frequently serve on the front lines during crises, as seen in

Bangladesh, one of the world's most climate- and disaster-vulnerable countries. The rising frequency of emergencies disproportionately affects women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals, limiting access to sexual and reproductive health services. Midwives ensure continued access to safe delivery, family planning, and response to GBV in even the most challenging settings.

In May 2024, Cyclone Remal devastated parts of the Mongla upazila, including Sonakhali village. There, nine-month pregnant Swapna, 29, faced a precarious situation. Fortunately, midwife Nazmin, stationed at a nearby UNFPA-supported facility, quickly assessed her high-risk condition, arranged a referral, and provided a cash voucher to cover transport. "When I came to this facility, I just prayed to Allah that I could serve the women and girls for whom I was appointed," Nazmin recalled. "Without the midwife's support, our story could have ended tragically," said Swapna's husband. "Thanks to her, our baby is safe and healthy."

Nazmin's working conditions were far from easy. Upon arrival, she found the healthcare facility damaged, with spalling cement, no water supply, and a community unsure of her role. "At first, the local community didn't accept the facility as a place to safely give birth," she explained. But she didn't give up. Nazmin worked with

local health workers and volunteers to build trust. With support from health service managers, she began offering delivery services, eventually conducting 27 normal births in just three months. Her story is a testament to the resilience, trust, and professional dedication that midwives bring to communities across Bangladesh.

Midwifery is also a sector for sound economic investment. Every \$1 invested in midwives delivers \$16 in economic and social returns. However, the deployment of midwives in Bangladesh remains painstakingly slow. Shrinking international resources and recent cuts in official development assistance threaten the progress already made.

We know what works. Midwives are at the heart of the solution. But training midwives is not enough. They must be deployed, equipped, supported, and protected. Without investing in midwives, we cannot improve the quality of maternity care or end preventable maternal deaths.

Now is the time for the government and donors to step up and accelerate the midwifery gains already made. Every delay puts lives at risk—investing in midwives is investing in the health and future of women and newborns. With strategic investment, stronger policies, and community engagement, Bangladesh can ensure that every woman, regardless of location or circumstance, has access to life-saving midwifery care.



VISUAL: MONOROM POLOK

KASHMIR'S BLOODSTAINED MEADOWS

Can the SCO show a road to reconciliation?



Zakir Kibria is a writer and policy analyst. He can be reached at zk@krishikaaj.com.

ZAKIR KIBRIA

On April 22, 2025, the idyllic meadows of Pahalgam in Kashmir turned into a killing field. Twenty-six tourists—fathers, sons, dreamers—were gunned down by militants claiming allegiance to the Resistance Front, a shadowy group India links to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. India retaliated by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, a lifeline for Pakistan's agriculture, while Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian flights and expelled diplomats. Nuclear arsenals loom; rhetoric hardens. Yet, amid this storm, a fragile olive branch emerges: Iran, reeling from its own tragedy—a port explosion in Hormozgan that killed at least 28 and injured 800—still urges dialogue, quoting 13th-century Persian poet Saadi, "Human beings are limbs of one body / Created from the same essence."

Iran's dual crucible: Grief and mediation

Even as Iran mourns its dead in Shahid Rajaei Port, its leaders insist on peace. President Masoud Pezeshkian's calls to Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif were not mere diplomacy but a testament to Tehran's belief in *Tadamun* (solidarity), a philosophy rooted in Persian Sufism and the shared trauma of terrorism. Iran's offer to mediate is strategic: it shares a 909-km border with Pakistan, supplies 10 percent of India's oil, and understands the cost of isolation after decades of sanctions. This duality—grief at home, hope abroad—reveals a truth: South Asia's survival hinges on transcending the zero-sum logic of power politics.

The SCO: A stage for reluctant partners

For Bangladeshi readers unfamiliar with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), this 10-nation bloc—China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asian states—is no ordinary alliance. Born in 2001 to combat terrorism and foster economic ties, the SCO today represents 40 percent of humanity. Its "Shanghai Spirit" prioritises mutual trust, equality, and non-interference—principles starkly absent in South Asia's zero-sum rivalries. Unlike SAARC, paralysed by India-Pakistan feuds, the SCO has quietly hosted leaders from both nations at summits where dialogue persists even as bombs threaten to fall.

Among its quiet successes is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), a Tashkent-based hub where Indian and Pakistani officials share intelligence on extremist groups,

even as their governments trade accusations. Equally significant is the SCO's role in fostering economic pragmatism. Despite bilateral trade collapsing to near zero in 2019, India and Pakistan collaborate on SCO-backed projects like the TAPI gas pipeline, a \$10 billion initiative to connect Turkmenistan's energy fields to South Asia. At the 2024 SCO summit in Islamabad, India's external affairs minister met Pakistani leaders informally—a thaw unthinkable in SAARC's gridlocked halls.

The SCO is no utopia. It lacks NATO's binding commitments or the EU's economic integration. Yet, its flexibility allows rivals to engage without losing face—a vital feature for South Asia's fractured geopolitics.

Araghchi's gambit: Iran as mediator, SCO as stage

Abbas Araghchi's offer is no diplomatic platitude. A veteran of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), he understands the cost of isolation—having weathered Western sanctions—and champions the SCO's vision of a multipolar world free from unilateral coercion.

Culturally, Araghchi's invocation of Saadi resonates deeply in a region where Persian poetry and Sufi shrines bind Iran to both nations. This shared heritage, overshadowed by modern animosity, offers a foundation for dialogue. The SCO amplifies this outreach. At the 2024 Astana Summit, members condemned unilateral sanctions and pushed for trade in local currencies—a direct challenge to US financial hegemony. For India and Pakistan, this shared interest in strategic autonomy could incentivise compromise. Imagine SCO-led talks restoring the Indus Waters Treaty, with China and Russia guaranteeing compliance—a win for regional stability and the bloc's credibility.

Bangladesh's stake: Why peace in Kashmir matters here

Bangladesh, though not an SCO member, has a profound stake in this détente. Our rivers, remittances, and regional trade are entwined with India and Pakistan's stability. The Ganges and Brahmaputra, fed by Himalayan glaciers, bind our fate to India and Pakistan's water wars. A conflict between the two would disrupt regional supply chains, spiking inflation in Dhaka's markets. The World Bank estimates that South Asia loses \$80 billion annually due to trade barriers—funds that could uplift 500 million people from poverty.

The climate crisis further binds

our fates. Himalayan glaciers feed the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Indus. Their accelerated melting—a crisis demanding joint action—is drowned out by gunfire. Bangladesh's own liberation in 1971, forged through bloodshed, compels us to champion dialogue over destruction. As *The Daily Star* editorialises, "Restraint is not weakness—it is the courage to choose humanity over hubris."

Beyond realism: A blueprint for SCO-driven peace

To escape Mearsheimer's "tragedy," South Asia must redefine security through the SCO's lens. First, reviving the Indus Waters Treaty with SCO guarantees could turn water from a weapon into a shared resource. China, as an upstream power and SCO heavyweight, could broker a new agreement monitored by RATS. Second, expanding the SCO's "Peace Mission" exercises to include joint India-Pakistan counterterrorism drills could build trust, mirroring ASEAN's maritime cooperation in the South China Sea.

Third, Bangladesh could advocate extending China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to include cross-border energy grids, easing regional disputes over resources. Fourth, amplifying Track-II diplomacy through the SCO's proposed Civil Society Forum could host Bangladeshi NGOs, artists, and peace activists, bypassing state hostility to foster grassroots dialogue. Finally, the climate crisis—a common enemy threatening 75 percent of South Asians—demands a joint adaptation fund under SCO auspices, a survival imperative transcending borders.

Writing a new destiny, together

South Asia holds the pen to rewrite its destiny. As Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz implored, "Bol, ke lab azaad hai tere..." ("Speak, for your lips are free"). The Kashmir attack is a tragedy, but not an inevitability. History whispers alternatives: France and Germany, once archenemies, now anchor the EU. ASEAN turned Southeast Asia from a war zone into an economic bloc. South Asia, with its youthful vigour and civilisational depth, can do the same—if we let the SCO guide us.

Bangladesh must add its voice to this chorus. Let us urge Delhi and Islamabad to embrace Araghchi's offer, to meet in SCO halls where poetry outweighs posturing. Let us demand that rivers flow not with blood, but with shared resolve.

The audacity of hope

As Iran mourned in Hormozgan, its leaders echoed Rumi, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." South Asia stands at that field. Let Delhi and Islamabad meet there—not with tanks, but with the SCO as witness. The hour is late, but the path is clear. Peace is not a distant dream—it is a choice.

Trump's Xanadu: Power, spectacle, and the mirage of control



Dr Faridul Alam, a retired academic, writes from New York.

FARIDUL ALAM

In *Kubla Khan*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge crafts—and perhaps even curates with an eerie instinct—the image of a wayward ruler bent not merely on governing his empire, but on mastering the very fabric of existence itself. This act of curation, drawn from a dream and infused with the opium haze of the unconscious, epitomises the Romantic imagination as a site of sublime excess and visionary power. Coleridge's Xanadu is not merely a political domain but a projection of the inner psyche, where reason and reverie collapse. The emperor's pleasure dome, encircled by tumultuous forces, becomes a haunting image of ambition undone by the chaos it attempts to subdue.

This tension finds its uncanny echo in the political spectacle fashioned by US President Donald Trump, across the first chaotic 100 days of his second term, marked by an extravagant display of control ultimately unravelled by the contradictions that sustained it. This tension reverberates on the modern political stage—the "Theatre of the Absurd," to borrow Martin Esslin's phrase—where Trump's administration, like Kubla Khan's empire, operates as a spectacle: a performance designed to project invincibility. Yet, just as the emperor's dome was surrounded by chaotic forces beyond his command, Trump's vision of an impervious America falters when confronted with the imbroglia of a global trade war, the dismantling of the global economic order, the retreat from globalisation, and mass deportations. His imagery is less an articulation of governance than a performance of control. This fleeting illusion lays bare the vagaries of perception and the vaingloriousness of power draped in the garb of permanence.

The spectacle of power: Reality and illusion

At the heart of Coleridge's poem lies the decreed pleasure dome, a manifestation of power and wealth, designed to dominate both land and imagination. Yet, it is a world "where Alph, the sacred river, meanders with a mazy motion through caverns measureless to man," teetering with unpredictable forces that elude imperial control. This duality between vision and uncontrollable forces reveals the instability and vacuity in the assertion of absolute control. Trump's promises—of "making America great again" (for the second, discontinued term-time), bringing jobs back (insourcing), pivoting away from China, renaming the Gulf of Mexico, annexing Canada, acquiring Greenland through Machiavellian coaxing, and retaking the Panama Canal—amount to more spectacle than substance. These

assertions of control unravel not merely into fragile illusions, but into a fully fledged fiasco.

Take, for instance, the border wall, an enduring emblem of Trump's rhetoric. It was never merely about steel and concrete, but a declaration of will, a performance of sovereignty. Yet, it remained largely unfulfilled, thwarted by legal entanglements, logistical quagmires, and political resistance. Like a modern day pleasure dome, the wall was more mirage than monument—a spectacle that crumbled against bureaucracy, shifting public sentiment, and the inconvenient truth that the neighbouring country was neither beholden nor inclined to finance it.

Trump's illusion of control: Spectacle and strategy

Trump's foreign policy mirrors this illusory control. His relationship with Russia, framed as a triumph of negotiation, is riddled with contradictions and failures. His interactions with Putin expose the limits of his manoeuvring. Trump's transactional diplomacy mirrors his domestic policies: power as spectacle, not substance. Nowhere is this more evident than in his dealings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. At times, Trump isn't the master but the pawn—most clearly in his failure to broker a lasting peace or a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel. Trump's acquiescence to Netanyahu's ploy highlights his inability to navigate entrenched conflicts, revealing the fragility of his posturing. Yet, many observers see him outmanoeuvring adversaries intent on undermining him, as in the renewed momentum around a potential US-Iran nuclear deal, nearly a decade after he jettisoned the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at Netanyahu's insistence. This ambiguity underscores the challenge of discerning substance beneath the performance.

This view of politics mirrors the emperor's delusion of shaping the world through sheer will. But just as Kubla Khan's empire was surrounded by nature's "savagery place," Trump's approach ignores global complexities. His policies assert dominance but fail to grasp the cascading complexities of diplomacy. The emperor's world collapses not from ambition but from hubris, blinded by arrogance and crippled by a failure of imagination.

The power of the poet: Imagination versus assertion

In contrast to the emperor, Coleridge places the poet as one who creates not through assertion, but imagination. Having "drunk the milk of Paradise," the poet opens power's territoriality and transcends its limits. The poet does not impose a vision; he allows the world to unfold. This is true power, rooted not in control but in

the freedom of imagination.

In this lies the critical difference between *fancy* and *imagination* in Coleridge's terms. The poet's imagination is dynamic and organic, resonating deeply with the world's moral and metaphysical textures. The emperor's dome is the product of fancy, a surface-level construction mimicking power while hollow at its core. Trump, much like Kubla Khan, emerges as a ruler of fancy: his dominion is an assertion built on spectacle, lacking the coherence and transformative potential of genuine imagination. His rhetoric is loud—"more bark than bite," as Fareed Zakaria puts it—and void of the visionary substance that might engender transformative change.

It is crucial to note that Coleridge's dream fragment captures far more leaps of imagination than Trump's elusive presidency—fragmented and fanciful—could ever fathom: a phantom MAGAdu, a mirage of spectacle and delusion, cobbled from MAGA and Xanadu. In a world where poetic vision might offer transcendence, Trump's politics remained mired in reactive spectacle. Where Coleridge gestures toward sublimity, Trump settles for simulacra. His politics lacks the poetic resonance that might offer enduring meaning—it is all surface, no depth.

The collapse of the spectacle: Power and reality

Trump's administration serves as a reminder of the fragility of power when built on illusion. His narrative of strength and victory is increasingly exposed as hollow. Just as Kubla Khan's dome was surrounded by chaos, Trump's spectacle-driven empire is undermined by governance realities. His vision of America's dominance is not matched by the complexities of a changing world.

In the end, Trump's political vision, much like the emperor's, is vulnerable to collapse not from its ambition, but from ignoring deeper forces of complexity and resistance. Power rooted in fancy cannot withstand the forces it seeks to control. Both Trump's and Kubla Khan's empires embody the same truth: power, when divorced from imagination and understanding, is bound to fail.

There is a fundamental difference between Kubla Khan's decree to build a pleasure dome in Xanadu and Coleridge's imaginative vision that unfolds after "drinking the milk of Paradise," epitomising Plato's portrayal of the poet in *Ion*. Khan's "decree"—an imperial assertion—springs from fancy, grounded in reason and taste, gone haywire. His vision remains architectural and territorial, marred by ambition.

In contrast, Coleridge's visionary journey—induced by the "milk of Paradise"—belongs to imagination: not willed but received, not constructed but revealed. His dome is not a monument of dominion, but an echo of lost wholeness, a beauty glimpsed and then interrupted. The poem dramatises the contrast between imperial fantasy and poetic imagination, between power that commands and vision that transcends.

এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

৩৯৫-৩৯৭, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা

ঢাকা - ১২০৮

সূত্র নং: ইউসিএল(কেইএলপি)/ক্রয়/জ্যাপ/স্থানীয় দরপত্র/২০২৫/১৭২

তাং ০৪/০৫/২০২৫

পুরাতন / অকেজো জ্যাপ মালামাল বিক্রয় ঠিকাদার নিয়োগ-এর পুন: বিজ্ঞপ্তি

খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রাক্টের অব্যবহৃত পুরাতন/অকেজো মালামাল তালিকা অনুযায়ী বিক্রয়ের জন্য "পুরাতন/অকেজো জ্যাপ মালামাল বিক্রয়" ঠিকাদার ০২ (দুই) বছরের জন্য নিয়োগ দেয়া হবে। বিস্তারিত নিয়মাবলীসহ পুরাতন/অকেজো মালামালের তালিকা সম্বলিত দরপত্র সিডিউল হিসাব বিভাগ, ইউসিএল, ঢাকা এবং কেইএলপি, খুলনা এর ক্যাশ শাখা হতে নগদ টাকা ২,০০০.০০ (টাকা দুই হাজার)মাত্র মূল্যে আগামী ২৫.০৫.২০২৫ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে অগ্রাধী প্রাচীনা সমূহ ক্রয় এবং ২৬.০৫.২০২৫ইউ উক্ত দরপত্র সমূহ বেলা ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে ইউসিএল ঢাকা এবং খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রাক্টের ক্রয় বিভাগে রক্ষিত বস্ত্রে দাখিল করতে হবে। প্রাপ্ত দরপত্র সমূহ আগামী ২৯.০৫.২০২৫ই তারিখে বেলা ৩:৩০ ঘটিকায় ক্রয় বিভাগ, প্রধান কার্যালয় ইউসিএল ঢাকায় (কেইএলপি হতে দরপত্র প্রাপ্যতা সাপেক্ষে) খোলা হবে। ইউসিএল কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারন দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অথবা সকল সিডিউল গ্রহন অথবা বাতিল করার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। উল্লেখ যে, দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন কোন দরপত্র /সিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হবে না।

মহাব্যবস্থাপক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সিসি)
পক্ষে ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক।

Bangladeshi celebs living abroad WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED

I market Bangladeshi products here. It feels great when I see young people proudly wear clothes made in Bangladesh. I also teach theatre at an English school. It keeps me connected to my roots.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Once, they were some of the most popular stars in the country's showbiz scene—some in films, some in television dramas, others in music. Eventually, they left the country and settled abroad. Among the stars who have moved overseas, most now live in the United States. A few are in Canada, Australia, or London. How are these cultural icons doing in their adopted countries, years after leaving the limelight?

Shabana, hailed as the "Beauty Queen" of her era, was a powerhouse on the silver screen, with a filmography that touched audiences from bustling cities to villages and towns nationwide. Her movies still grace TV screens, reminding fans of her cinematic legacy. Years ago, Shabana relocated to the United States with her family. Though she makes occasional visits back to Bangladesh, sources say she's doing well and enjoying a peaceful life abroad.

Singer Kaderi Kibria, famed for his rendition of the song *Boro Asha Kore Esechi*, has been living in the United States for more than two decades. The Ekushey Padak-winning artiste came to Bangladesh to accept the award. After

returning to the country on several occasions, he spoke to The Daily Star. He had mentioned that he is doing well, stating, "I am doing well because of everyone's love. However, I do miss my country."

Former actor Tony Dias and his wife, dancer Priya Dias, have been living in the US for over 15 years. Tony now teaches theatre and is involved in business. He shared, "I market Bangladeshi products here. It feels great when I see young people proudly wear clothes made in Bangladesh. I also teach theatre at an English school. It keeps me connected to my roots." Priya continues to promote classical dance there. Their daughter, Ahona, is involved in both academics and performance arts.

Veteran actor Shamim Shahed, known for his work with Nagorik Natya Sampradaya and Humayun Ahmed's dramas, is also based in the US, where he is involved with radio while preparing to direct three English-language films.

Moreover, actor and filmmaker Tauquir Ahmed and his wife, actress Bipasha Hayat, are also based in the US with their children.

While Tauquir continues working in theatre and film, Bipasha has earned recognition as a painter abroad.

Singer-songwriter Ashiquzzaman Tulu, renowned for the song *Ore Amar Pagol Mon*, now resides in Canada. Veteran actors Ariful Haque and Kazi Utpal have also settled there.

The ever-beloved film actress Shabnur, known for her blockbuster hits, resides in Australia and makes occasional visits to Bangladesh.

Former theatre activist Shamsul Alam Bokul, once a pillar of Desh Natok, continues his work in stage theatre from the US. TV personalities Nawsheen Nahreen Mou and Adnan Faruque Hillol have settled in the US, where Nawsheen runs a migration support agency. She frequently reunites with fellow expats like Nadia Ahmed, Romana, and Tamalika Karmakar.

Tamalika, who earned acclaim for her role in *Kothao Keu Nei*, frequently hosts intimate gatherings for Bangladeshi artistes in her US home.

Actress-model Monalisa, singer Biplob of Prometheus band, and musicians like SI Tutul and Sonia (of Close-Up fame) are all thriving abroad. Monalisa shared, "I've built a new life here, but I miss my country and especially my mother every single day."

Notable names like Sabina Bari Lucky, Majnun Mizan, Khairul Islam Pakhi, Anisur Rahman Milton, Bindu, Riya, Romana, and Tamanna have also settled overseas—some continuing cultural engagement, others focusing on family life.

Former actress Nova Firoze, now in the US, balances business with cultural hosting, while Agnila lives in Canada.

Stars like Richi Solaiman, who once dominated television productions, is now settled in the US.

Esteemed actor Jamal Uddin Hossain spent many years living in the US. Sadly, he passed away while visiting his son's home in Canada. His wife, fellow actress Roshan Ara Hossain, continues to live in the United States. Another familiar face from television, Lutfun Nahar Lata, has also made her home in America.

Despite being far from home, these stars continue to carry Bangladesh in their hearts—some keeping cultural traditions alive abroad, others finding new identities while cherishing their roots.

'Fyakra' set to premiere on Bongo this week



Director Asif Chowdhury's web series *Fyakra* will premiere on Bongo on May 8. Shot during last August's nationwide unrest, the seven-episode series follows Samad, who, desperate for money to win his love, Golapi, becomes entangled in a botched robbery that turns deadly.

Written by Neyamoth Ullah Masum and Ahmamad Saad, the series explores consequence of a crime. Partho Sheikh and Nidra Dey Neha lead the cast, alongside Shamol Mawla, Mir Rabby, Nishat Priom, and others.

URDU-DUBBED 'Jongli' set for release in Pakistan

Bangladeshi cinema is gaining ground in Pakistan, with *Jongli* set to become the first film to be dubbed in Urdu for its release there.

Jongli's Pakistani distribution is being handled by a Lahore-based company, Cine Entertainment, which confirmed the release plans to The Daily Star.

Zahid Hasan Abhi, one of the producers of the film, said they're aiming to release the film there for the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

"*Jongli* will be released in Urdu in Pakistan. We've already sent over the film, and local voice actors are currently working on the dubbing. We're optimistic that the movie will do well there," he shared.

He also noted that this follows their previous release *Deyaler Desh*, though that film was not dubbed in Urdu.

Jongli, directed by M Raahim, features a cast that includes Siam Ahmed, Shobnom Bubby, Dighi, and child actress Nairita among others.



NEWS

ACC probing 3 aides to 2 advisers

FROM PAGE 12
The ACC's intelligence unit conducted a preliminary inquiry, following which the commission decided to initiate a full investigation.

Moazzem, APS to Asif Mahmud, was officially dismissed through a government notification on April 22, although the adviser had instructed his removal earlier on April 8.

In a recent interview with Prothom Alo, Asif called for a thorough ACC investigation into the allegations against his former APS.

Similarly, the health adviser's OP Tuhin Farabi was relieved of his duties following complaints of corruption, although the ACC has not disclosed further details of the allegations.

In a separate development, the NCP

temporarily suspended Tanvir from his post on April 21 following allegations of interfering in the appointment of deputy commissioners and taking a commission from the procurement of paper for textbooks under the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

Case against Bengal Group chairman, 2 others

The ACC has filed a case against former lawmaker Morshed Alam, chairman of Bengal Group and National Life Insurance Company Limited, along with two others from Bengal group.

ACC Deputy Director Sheikh Golam Mawla filed the case yesterday, alleging the accused embezzled a large sum of money under the guise of purchasing land.

Confirming the development, ACC

DG Akhter Hossain said the other accused are Morshed's son Saiful Alam, managing director of Bengal Concept and Holdings Limited; and Morshed's brother Md Jasim Uddin, chairman of Bengal Commercial Bank.

He said Morshed and Jasim concealed a conflict of interest in selling land they personally owned to the company for the establishment of a regional office. "By hiding this conflict and selling the land at an unusually high price, they embezzled Tk 2.86 crore," the case statement read.

Akhter added that Morshed is accused of embezzling over Tk 400 crore. "A preliminary inquiry found evidence of the embezzlement of Tk 2.86 crore. If further proof emerges during the investigation, it will be included in the charge sheet."

Unconstitutional

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including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The forum emphasised that any effort to eliminate gender-based inequality must include equal participation and consideration of both women and men.

HRFB expressed concern that certain political and ideological groups have revived hostile rhetoric following the submission of the commission's report, echoing previous attempts to obstruct women's rights and freedoms.

These actions, HRFB argued, not only harm women but also impede the nation's overall development.

The forum called on the government to clarify its stance and take a firm position on these matters.

HRFB further urged all democratic and equality driven political forces in Bangladesh to unite against these regressive demands and to resist any attempts to exploit religion for narrow political purposes.

The statement was endorsed by 23 prominent human rights activists and organisational leaders, including Dr Hameeda Hossain, human rights expert and HRFB member; Adv Sultana Kamal, human rights expert and HRFB member; Raja Devasish Roy, chief of Chakma Circle and human rights expert; Adv ZI Khan Panna, chairperson of Ain o Salish Kendra and acting convener of HRFB; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation and HRFB Steering Committee member; Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog and HRFB Steering Committee member; Sara

Hossain, honorary executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and HRFB Steering Committee member; Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps Towards Development and HRFB Steering Committee member; Shale Ahmed, executive director of Bandhu Social Welfare Society and HRFB Steering Committee member; Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and HRFB Steering Committee member; Dr Iltekharruzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh and HRFB member; Dr Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and HRFB member; Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development and HRFB member; Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori and HRFB member; Sarder Jahangir Hossain, executive director of Acid Survivors Foundation and HRFB member; Shipon Kumar Robidas, general secretary of Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement and HRFB member; Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies and HRFB member; Devan Akhtaruzzaman, director of FAIR and HRFB member; Pallab Chakma, executive director of Kapaeeng Foundation and HRFB member; Rokeya Rafique, executive director of Karmojibi Nari and HRFB member; Geeta Das, president of Naripokkho and HRFB member; Abdus Sattar Dulal, founder and CEO of Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity and HRFB member; and Ashrafun Nahar Misti, executive director of Women with Disabilities Development Foundation and HRFB member.

Meeting with IMF

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meet an additional revenue target of Tk 12,000 crore for the current fiscal year. However, many of those increases were rolled back after facing widespread public concern.

Achieving an additional 0.7 percent of GDP through new tax measures would be challenging given that the NBR had previously failed to meet a 0.5 percent target, said Nasiruddin Ahmed, a former NBR chairman.

However, he expressed confidence that more than Tk 10,000 crore could be raised through administrative measures.

"This would require significant strengthening of the NBR's reform initiatives and enforcement mechanisms," he said.

Despite failing to meet revenue collection targets for the December and March quarters — and with the June target also appearing out of reach — the IMF has agreed to waive the revenue ceiling requirement for the fourth and fifth tranches of its \$4.7 billion loan programme.

Meanwhile, the Asian Development Bank has enquired about Bangladesh's negotiations with the IMF, Salehuddin told journalists after his meeting with the Manila-based multilateral lender's Vice-President Yungming Yang.

The government is also trying to get budget support from the ADB by June.

To get budget support from other multilateral lenders, a "comfort letter" is required as the IMF conducts the economic due diligence, Salehuddin said after the meeting on the sidelines of the ADB's annual meeting in Milan.

No deal on humanitarian channel India cuts water flow

FROM PAGE 1
He went on to say that China itself has supported Bangladesh in engaging with the Myanmar government and other stakeholders.

Khalilur, also the chief adviser's high representative for the Rohingya issue, made the remarks at a seminar titled "Repatriation of Rohingyas in Bangladesh: Strategic Implications on Regional Security and Ways Ahead".

The event was hosted jointly by the Armed Forces Division (AFD) and Bangladesh University of Professionals at BUP.

Khalilur said Bangladesh respects Myanmar's territorial integrity and is not supporting any separatist agenda. "We made it very clear to Myanmar that we do not support the dismemberment of the country. We respect its sovereignty."

Recently, various political parties have expressed concerns over the humanitarian channel to Rakhine after Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain last week told media that the government agrees in principle to provide "humanitarian passage" to Rakhine, but with certain conditions.

He said stability in Rakhine could help Rohingya repatriation, but foreign policy analysts said a guarantee of secure Rohingya repatriation must be the precondition for any such move. Some even expressed concerns over the possible intervention of foreign powers in the region in case any such humanitarian corridor is established.

Khalilur said that Bangladesh has not discussed anything about the "humanitarian corridor", nor has there been any agreement with any parties, and added that the very phrase "corridor" carries specific implications.

"The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, previously used the term 'humanitarian channel', which is completely different from a humanitarian corridor."

Earlier, Khalilur told The Daily Star that a "humanitarian corridor" may mean that people can travel using it. He also said Bangladesh was in contact with the Myanmar government directly and with the Arakan Army via the UN.

While noting that the current pause in fighting in Rakhine, if sustained, could pave the way for peace and repatriation, he warned, however, that peace would not be sustainable unless Rohingyas were included in the evolving administration in Rakhine.

"Bangladesh, through the UN, has conveyed its demand for the inclusion of Rohingyas in the leadership

positions of Rakhine and is awaiting a response."

Also speaking at the event, Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain said the prospect of Rohingya repatriation remains grim due to Myanmar's ongoing civil war, fragmented authority, and the continued absence of security and citizenship guarantees.

There are some 1.4 million Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh, and the repeated repatriation attempts have failed since 2017.

"We cannot abandon diplomacy, but we must stop hoping that bilateral talks alone will succeed."

He stressed that any lasting resolution must involve all three entities — the Myanmar government, the National Unity Government and the Arakan Army.

Addressing the seminar as the keynote speaker, Professor Shahab Enam Khan of International Relations at Jahangirnagar University said the protracted Rohingya crisis has become a major national security concern for Bangladesh, with ramifications far beyond humanitarian aid.

"The Rohingya issue is no longer confined to humanitarian assistance—it is now deeply entwined with our national security architecture," he said.

Prof Shahab cautioned that while Bangladesh has made notable progress in counter-terrorism, these achievements could be undermined if root causes such as inequality, marginalisation, and protracted displacement remain unaddressed.

Speaking as the special guest, AFD Principal Staff Officer Lt Gen SM Kamrul Hassan stressed that the Rohingya crisis is no longer a bilateral issue but a tangible threat to regional stability, contributing to border stress, instability within refugee camps, and diplomatic tensions with neighbouring countries.

Despite official confirmation from Myanmar authorities that 180,000 Rohingyas are eligible to return, the ground reality tells a different story, he said, pointing to the absence of Myanmar government officials in border areas, and the Arakan Army's ambiguous stance on the Rohingyas raises serious concerns.

He called for strong regional cooperation and sustained international support to ensure a safe, dignified, and sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas.

FROM PAGE 12
maritime sovereignty, economic interest and national security enforces following measures with immediate effect: Indian flag carriers shall not be allowed to visit any Pakistani port, Pakistani flag carriers shall not visit any Indian port (and) any exemption or dispensation shall be examined and decided on case to case basis," the Dawn reported, quoting an order by Pakistan's Ministry of Maritime Affairs' Ports and Shipping Wing.

Meanwhile, Chief of Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal A P Singh yesterday met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is understood to have discussed the security situation arising out of the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

Singh's meeting came a day after Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi met the Prime Minister on Saturday and briefed him on the overall situation in the critical sea lanes in the Arabian Sea.

India's Border Security Force (BSF) has taken into custody a Pakistani Ranger from along the international border in Rajasthan on Saturday. The development follows the detention of BSF constable Purnam Kumar Sahu by the Pakistan Rangers. Sahu was apprehended on April 23 after he inadvertently crossed the international border while escorting farmers along the Ferozepur sector in Punjab.

The apprehended Pakistani Ranger, whose identity is yet to be disclosed, is currently in the custody of the BSF's Rajasthan Frontier.

Maldives president

FROM PAGE 12
During the lengthy session, Muizzu also responded to questions submitted by members of the public via journalists.

The statement said Muizzu, who came to power in 2023, was also marking his island nation's rise by two places to 104th out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

During Saturday's session, he answered a wide range of questions, the statement said.

Around two dozen reporters attended and were served food.

A predecessor of Muizzu set another world record by holding the first ever underwater cabinet meeting in 2009, to highlight the threat of rising sea levels that could swamp the low-lying nation.

Air purifiers for Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3
When asked about action against polluters, Azaz admitted that government contractors are among the main contributors, particularly for failing to cover construction sites. "We are now taking this issue seriously and will take action," he said.

DHAKA'S ALARMING AIR QUALITY

The average concentration of PM2.5 – the most harmful air pollutants – in Dhaka is about 18 times higher than the global standard.

The World Health Organization recommends a limit of five microgrammes per cubic metre of PM2.5, particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres in diameter.

However, in 2023, the average concentration in the greater Dhaka area was 92 mcg/m³.

A World Bank presentation revealed that two-thirds of these pollutants are generated locally, while the rest come from outside Bangladesh. The findings were shared at a stakeholders' meeting titled "Air Quality in Bangladesh: Challenges and Solutions" at its office on January 26.

Sources include households, power plants, brick kilns, open waste burning, road dust, and vehicle emissions.

Household emissions from burning solid fuels account for 28 percent of pollution, posing a huge threat to rural women.

Other sources include power plants (24%), brick kilns (12%), waste burning (11%), road dust (8%), and transport (4%).

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Prof Mostafizur Rahman of Jahangirnagar University's Department of Environmental Sciences said the air purifier initiative is not a practical solution. "This is just an attempt to bypass the real problem," he said.

"A few purifiers cannot reduce Dhaka's pollution. Their effectiveness, cost, and lifespan must be carefully evaluated before installation."

He noted that while a purifier may reduce pollution within a small perimeter, it won't have a significant impact in an open environment like Dhaka, where air constantly moves. "I have no confidence

in this approach. It's not a real environmental solution," he said.

Rahman added that recent studies show high levels of silicon particles in Dhaka's air, pointing to dust from construction sites as a major contributor. Other sources include vehicle emissions, industrial activity, and tire friction.

"The layout of Dhaka – with its mix of high-rises and low buildings – also restricts airflow, further worsening air quality," he said.

Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, echoed similar concerns. "With the level of pollution in Dhaka, these purifiers won't work and will just waste money," he said.

"India tried this in Delhi with no effective results, as air moves from one place to another. The government should focus on long-term solutions," he said.

Asked, the DNCC administrator said the city corporation is not spending any money for the project. If the pilot project fails, they will not proceed with the initiative any further, he added.

BNP discusses

FROM PAGE 3
comfortable working with an elected government, as it is easier to make decisions with such a government on mid-term, long term and crucial issues, added the BNP leader.

He also said they discussed several issues related to mutual interests between the two countries.

Russia is keen to enhance ties with Bangladesh that date back to the country's Liberation War in 1971, he added.

"They (Russia) have interests in several areas to advance this relationship, such as investment in Bangladesh and increasing trade," said Khasru.

The BNP leader said the issue of "humanitarian corridor" to Myanmar's Rakhine also came up during the meeting.

"We discussed it, as everyone has concerns over the matter. All want to see stability in the region. No one wants to see geopolitical instability, because if this region is unstable, it will not benefit anyone. Not only will Bangladesh suffer from insecurity, but the entire region will also be insecure, and no one will benefit from it," Khasru said.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Rows of shops line both sides of the highway in the Madam Bibir Hat area of Sitakunda, Chattogram, selling furniture, electronic items, ladders, ropes, and various other goods collected from old ships. Buyers from different parts of the country come here to purchase what they need.

Four-year term, 2-time cap for PM

FROM PAGE 3
The 12-party delegation was led by Mostafa Jamal Haider, chairman of the Jatiyo Party (Kazi Zafar faction) and chief coordinator of the alliance. The alliance's spokesperson Shahadat Hossain Selim and 11 other leaders also attended.

The alliance opposed the commission's proposal to lower the minimum voting age to 17 and the candidacy age for MPs to 21.

"We insisted the voting age remain at 18 and the minimum age for MP candidates at 25. We are ready to launch a movement over this if necessary," said Selim.

He added, "We told the commission not to undermine politics by inviting mushrooming political groups. Some parties slept through the past 15 years and are now

being called into meetings – this is an insult to those of us who actively protested. The commission appears overly ambitious, as if trying to change the country overnight. We asked them to be more realistic – these changes will take time."

The BASAD delegation was led by Executive President Abdul Ali and included General Secretary Babul Mollah and five others.

Babul Mollah said the party agreed to limit both the prime minister and president to four-year terms, with the prime minister restricted to two terms.

BASAD also proposed that all 300 parliamentary seats be elected through proportional representation and that the Election Commission should bear the cost of elections.

Asked if they proposed an election date, Mollah

said they did not do so but emphasised the importance of timely elections.

He also said, "There is no comparison between July uprising and 1971. Without the Liberation War, there would be no July."

The session with the 12-party alliance was presided over by Prof Ali Riaz, vice president of the National Consensus Commission, and moderated by Monir Hayder, special assistant to the Chief Adviser.

In his opening remarks, Prof Riaz said, "Building national consensus is not the commission's responsibility alone. Those of you who have joined the struggle and are engaging in dialogue – reach out to allies and other political forces. Let's find a way to unite."

Former DU VC

FROM PAGE 3
at the police station, Rashed demanded that the accused be arrested within 48 hours.

In his complaint, Rashed recounted events beginning on April 8, 2018, when students held a mass rally at Shahbagh as part of the quota reform movement. Around 6:30pm, police launched an "unprovoked" attack with tear gas, prompting wider student protests across DU and nearby institutions.

Many students, including female students who reportedly broke dormitory gates, joined the demonstration.

"Fearing this student uprising, the government resorted to conspiracy," the complaint alleged.

Rashed claimed that around 1:00am on April 9, individuals wearing "Dhaka College Chhatra League" t-shirts attacked and vandalised the VC's residence, setting parts of it on fire. DU's senior security officer filed a case about the incident on April 10.

The statement also said senior Awami League leaders, including Presidium Member Jahangir Kabir Nanak, were seen near the DU campus during the attack.

It further alleged that pro-AL, the then leadership of central and DU BCL, and senior Awami League members orchestrated the incident to discredit the peaceful student movement.

Others named in the case include AL leaders Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Enamul Haque Shamim; former BCL leaders Saifur Rahman Sohag, SM Zakir Hossain, Abid Al Hasan, Motahar Hossain Prince, Al Nahian Khan Joy, and Sakib Hasan Sum; Muktijoddha Sontan Command President Mehedi Hasan; the then president of DU Teachers' Association Prof Maksud Kamal; and former DU Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Abdus Samad.

Barrister Abdur Razzaq no more

FROM PAGE 3
Razzaq, told The Daily Star.

He said the janaza prayers will be held at the SC premises around 11:00am today.

The senior advocate, who was a former assistant secretary general Jamaat-e-Islami, was the chief defence counsel at the International Crimes Tribunal until the end of 2013, when he left Dhaka for London.

He resigned from his position as Jamaat's assistant secretary general from London on February 15, 2019. He returned home on December 26 last year after 11 years.

Razzaq was an expert on constitutional, civil, criminal, commercial and

international law. He had defended former Jamaat leaders Ghulam Azam, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Delwar Hossain Sayedee, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, and Abdul Quader Mollah before the ICT in Bangladesh during the trial proceedings in the cases filed in connection with the crimes against humanity and war crimes in 1971.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed has expressed profound grief at his death.

In a condolence message, the chief justice extended heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members and stated that the demise of Barrister Razzaq is an irreparable loss to the legal

community of Bangladesh. The nation has lost a distinguished jurist, he remarked.

Razzaq was born in 1949 in Shekhlal village of Beanibazar upazila in Sylhet. After obtaining his Barrister-at-Law degree from Lincoln's Inn, London, he returned to Bangladesh in 1986 and joined the legal profession.

PRAYER TIMING	
MAY 5	
Fazr	Zohr
Asr	Maghrib
Esha	
AZAN 4-15	12-45
JAMAAT 4-50	1-15
	5-15
	6-38
	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Dhaka South City Corporation
Engineering Department
Electrical Circle

Memo No-46.207.007.09.22.17.2025

Date-04/05/2025.

Re-Tender Notice

Re-Tender Notice is invited through e-GP Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Electrical Circle, Dhaka South Corporation for the Procurement of following packages :-

SI No.	Tender ID	Description of Work	Last Selling (Date and time)	Closing (Date & time)
1.	1101750	Supply, Fitting & fixing of necessary spare parts for Maintenance & repair of existing Air-Coolers at Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon Center, Surtapur Community Center and Outfall Staff Quarter Under Zone-5 of DSSC.	15-MAY-2025 12.30 PM	15-MAY-2025 02.30 PM

This is online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and hard copies/offline will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank Branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

If necessary, information please contact to the PE's Support Desk (02-223386009).

(Nur Mohammad)
Executive Engineer
Electrical Circle
Dhaka South City Corporation.
Phone: 02-223386009

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ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/২০৪/২০২৪-২০২৫

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project 1:
National Single Window Implementation and Strengthening Customs
Modernization
National Board of Revenue (NBR)
IDEB Bhaban (10th Floor), 160/A, Kakrail, Dhaka -1000, Bangladesh

Memo No. I(232)NSW Prokolpo/NBR-SD-8/Internal Audit 2025/2710

Date: 04 May 2025

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project-1 (P154580).

Loan No./Credit No./ Grant No.: IDA 6002-BD

Assignment Title: Internal Audit Services

Reference No.: NBR-SD-8

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) – a member of the World Bank Group toward the cost of the National Single Window Project (NSW), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for Internal Audit Services.

The Internal Audit Services ("the Services") shall be carried out in accordance with the International Internal Auditing Standards and international best practices, for example, application of COSO Integrated framework, International Professional Practices Framework etc. for following two periods:

Period-1: From July 2018 to June 2024

Period-2: from July 2024 to June 2026

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the primary procurement stage for the assignment can be obtained at the address given below.

The National Single Window Project (NSW) of National Board of Revenue (NBR) now invites eligible Audit Firms ("Consultants/Firms") to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested firms should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

The shortlisting criteria are:

- Core business and years in business,
- Relevant experience
 - Experience in Government of Bangladesh Audit projects,
 - Experience in auditing projects financed by multilateral banks (WB, ADB etc.),
 - Experience in establishment of Risk Based Internal Audit Departments;
 - Experience in auditing large development projects;
 - Experience in IT audit and internal process audit of IT projects;
- Technical and managerial capability of the firm.
- Firm's in-house staffing resources with relevant expertise (extent of relevant expertise available among the staff who are on the firm's regular payroll). However, CVs of key Experts will not be evaluated at the shortlisting stage.

The shortlist will contain four to six firms.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs, 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" September 2023 ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest. In addition, please refer to the following specific information on conflict of interest related to this assignment: neither a consultant (including personnel and sub consultants), nor an affiliate (that directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with that Consultant), shall be hired for any assignment that, by its nature, creates a conflict of interest with another assignment of the Consultant;

Consultants are requested to submit at least the following supporting documents in support of the above-mentioned criteria: (a) The Firm's Incorporation/Trade/registration documents from the country of the firm; (b) JV agreement/letter of intent (if applicable); (c) Firm's brochure; (d) Audited financial reports for last 3 years; (e) list of the firm's in-house/regular staff with relevant expertise (f) description of experience of similar assignments (including nature, scope of services, contract amount, name of employer, period of contract (date of contract signing to date of completion) funding agency(s), location /country of service etc.).

Firms may associate with other firms to enhance their qualifications, but should indicate clearly whether the association is in the form of a joint venture and/or a sub-consultancy. In the case of a joint venture, all the partners in the joint venture shall be jointly and severally liable for the entire contract, if selected.

An audit firm will be selected in accordance with the FBS method described in the Procurement Regulations and to be specifically set out in the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours.

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail) by 19 May 2025.

(Mr. Jewel Ahmed)
Project Director

Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project 1 (BRCP 1): Implementation of National Single Window (NSW) and Strengthening Customs Modernization, 160/A, (10th floor) IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000
E-mail: pdnsw.nbr@gmail.

GD-1062

In Search of Premodern Bengal's Literary Treasures

Bangladesh may be geographically small, but its contributions to the world are immense. Tony K. Stewart did more than most to highlight Bangladesh's significance globally.

REBECCA MANRING

With the passing of Professor Tony K. Stewart, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in Humanities Emeritus, the field of South Asian religions, and more specifically, premodern Bengali literature, has lost one of its leading lights. His contributions to Bengal studies, and indeed to the history of cultural frontiers and entangled religions more widely, have had momentous impacts on these fields. He will long be remembered for his masterful studies of the biographies of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and the hagiographies of fictional Muslim holy men. His scholarship straddled the study of Hinduism and Islam in premodern Bengal, fields more typically siloed. Stewart's writings are characterized by a unique combination of cultural history, literary theory, textual criticism, and hermeneutics. He produced consummate analyses of the grammar of hagiography and the cultural and ideological work these genres performed in Bengal. At the same time, his skilful English translations introduced a wide audience to Bengali historical and fictional figures, the focus of his lifelong scholarly work. Stewart's first major work, his dissertation from the University of Chicago (1985), eventually became his magnum opus, *The Final Word* (OUP, 2010), following the publication of the late Edward C. Dimock's translation of the *Caitanya Caritamṛta*, which Stewart edited. With poet Chase Twichell he also published *The Lover of God: Rabindranath Tagore's 'Bhanusimher Padavali'* (Copper Canyon Press, 2003).

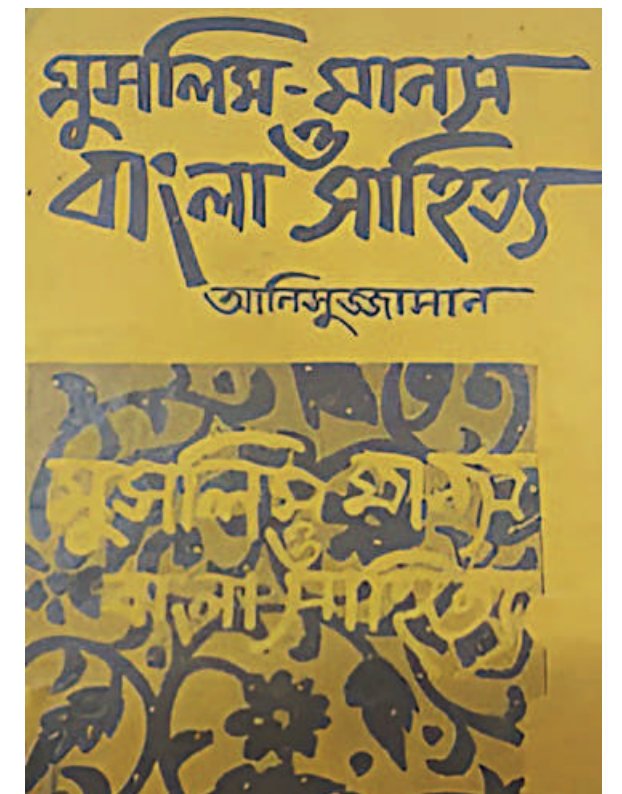
Thereafter his work turned east and most of his research and other scholarly activities focused on what is now Bangladesh and the Islamic literatures of Bengal. Most notably, he worked on the tales of Satya Pir, who represents a rapprochement of Muslims and Hindus in a plural Bengali society in the premodern period. In *Fabulous Females and Peerless Pirs* (OUP 2004) he translated eight tales out of several hundred, each focused on the ways women, aided by Satya Pir, keep the world ordered in the wake of male-generated chaos. In *Witness to Marvels: Sufism and Literary Imagination* (University of California, 2019) he examined the ways the Islamic imaginative has insinuated

Working in what is now West Bengal, Sukumar Sen completed his PhD in 1937 under the tutelage of some of the best historical linguists of the day: L.D. Barnett, R.L. Turner (author of *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*) and Jules Bloch with a dissertation entitled "Historical Syntax of Middle and New Indo-Aryan (Bengali)." He began collecting and editing manuscripts of Old Bengali materials, and that led him to Middle Bengali *maṅgala-kāvya* texts. Sen began with *Manasa-maṅgala* and published a critical edition of *Caṅḍi-maṅgala* in 1977; working with Pañcanana Moṅḍal, he critically edited and published the first third of Rūpama Cakravartī's *Dharma-maṅgala* in 1944, with a second edition that included one additional *pala* in 1956.

Sen moved around the countryside in search of manuscript materials for his work with Middle Bengali literature. His reputation began to grow, and many people who owned old manuscripts offered them to him. Eventually he amassed a collection of nearly one thousand pieces. His collection, now held in the National Library in Kolkata and available also on microfilm, epitomized Sukumar Sen's ideas about what constitutes Bengali literature. He applied his meticulous scholarship to that collection to produce his five-volume *Baṅgala Sahityera Itihasa*, one of the first comprehensive studies of Bengali literature, which Sen later summarized and published in English; it also provided the basis for his many publications on the language itself.

Sukumar Sen's vision of Bengali literature included the above-mentioned *maṅgala-kāvya*, epic literature (mostly Bengali *Mahabharatas*, with several *Ramayanas*), and Vaiṣṇava texts. He paid no attention to Bengali Muslim (including Sufi) literature or to literature in general produced in what is now Bangladesh. He received so much criticism for that lacuna that not long after, he published his slim volume, *Islami baṅgla sahitya* (1951). But other scholars meanwhile more than made up for Sen's omission.

Working in East Pakistan and later, Bangladesh, Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharad (1871-1953) was also amassing a collection of premodern Bengali literary manuscripts. Karim was primarily but not exclusively interested in Muslim contributions to Bengali literature. In the course of his work, he discovered about one hundred Muslim poets of the premodern period, who had been previously unknown to modern scholars. Abdul Karim edited and



Covers of books by Ahmed Sharif and Anisuzzaman

his uncle in scholarly impact and output. Surrounded by his uncle's literary collections as a child and young adult, Sharif surprised no one with his own career choice. But by the time Sharif came of age, the Bangladesh liberation movement was well underway, and he became one of a group of left-leaning opposition intellectuals.

As for his literary work, he edited some forty manuscripts and published most of them. Probably his finest work, though, is his two-volume *Baṅgali O Baṅgla Sahitya* (1978, 1983), a comprehensive history of medieval Bangla literature of different communities, including Buddhist, Vaiṣṇavas, Bauls, and Sufis. Sharif produced several other important books on the literature of the medieval period.

Sharif's scholarship was outstanding, and thanks to him, and to his uncle, we know something of the literary wealth of premodern Bengal. Sharif was not only a brilliant intellectual, but also a rationalist and humanist who possessed strength of character and determination. He was a dedicated and fearless intellectual who frequently spoke out against fundamentalism, military rule, autocracy and, prior to 1971, the opponents to Bangladesh liberation. In March 1971 he administered the oath at the Shaheed Minar in Dhaka to writers vowing to fight against Pakistani autocracy. He served as General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh from 1969 to 1973. He received many awards over the course of his career, including the Bangla Academy Literary Prize, the Daud Literary Prize, and the National Ekushe Award. Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata awarded him an honorary DLitt. Even after his retirement, Sharif remained committed to the study of early Bengali literature, and continued to help younger scholars work through sometimes difficult texts. He spent many hours in the first months of 1994 reading Vaiṣṇava *jvani* with this writer, for example, and working through the often challenging related manuscripts she had found.

Sharif's contemporary Anisuzzaman (1937-2020) was equally brilliant and equally committed to human rights. Anisuzzaman was born in 24 Parganas in India, but shortly after Partition, when he was in seventh grade, his family shifted first to Khulna and later to Dhaka, where he completed his education. He was a prolific writer. Among his most notable books are *Muslim Manas and Bengali Literature* (1964), *Muslim Bangla Periodicals* (1969), *Baṅgla Sahityera Itihasa* Vols. 1 and 2 (1987), *Creativity, Reality and Identity* (1991), and two memoirs, *Kahirobodhi* (2003) and *Bipulaprihibi* (2015).

Like Ahmad Sharif, Anisuzzaman was very much involved in politics, and particularly with the Liberation Movement. When the liberation war started, he and many colleagues left for Calcutta, and worked hard for his countrymen and -women from there as General Secretary of the Bangladesh Teachers' Association.

Anisuzzaman's teaching career began at Chittagong University and shortly after independence he took up a position at Dhaka University. He also conducted research at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, and at the United Nations University. He was honoured with visiting positions at the University of Paris, at Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies in Calcutta, at North Carolina State University, and served terms as President of both Bangla Academy and of Nazrul

Institute. He was a frequent guest lecturer in the US Department of State-sponsored Critical Language Scholarship Program in Dhaka (2006-2015). Throughout his life he was very generous with his time and wisdom with more junior scholars, always willing to help think through ideas and work on difficult texts.

In the twenty-first century interest in premodern literature has waned, and there is little institutional support for its pursuit. The Bangla Academy is a beacon of light. Growing out of the language movement of 1952 and modelled after the Academie Francaise, the organization has fully embraced its work in the promotion and development of the Bengali language. It continues to emphasize the nation's literary and linguistic heritage and has a vast publication agenda. It has become the largest publishing house in the nation, with a catalogue of several thousand books and journals.

Outside of South Asia, a number of scholars in addition to Tony K. Stewart have developed love for Bengali and the Bengali language. Sadly, many are no longer with us. Edward C. Dimock (1929-2001) brought Bengal to the U.S. academy. He first travelled to India, with his wife and five small children, in the mid-1950s. There he studied with Professor Sukumar Sen, among others. Dimock eventually taught for 35 years at the University of Chicago, where he trained Stewart as well as many other scholars who made their own important contributions to the study of Bengali culture and literature.

Clinton B. Seely (b.1941) served two years in the U.S. Peace Corps teaching biology at the Barisal Zilla School in then-East Pakistan as he learned Bangla. Seely went on to earn his PhD from the University of Chicago working under Dimock's tutelage. He subsequently spent a great deal of time in Calcutta during his studies and produced his dissertation "Doe in Heat: A Critical Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibananda Das (1899-1954)," in 1976. That was just the first of his works with Bengali literature, which included translations of compositions by Buddhadeva Bose, Ramprasad Sen, and Michael Madhusudan Dutta. Seely also helped produce an intermediate Bengali textbook for foreign learners and several software packages for writing in the Bengali script.

Carol Salomon (1948-2009) probably did more than anyone to foster the study of the Bengali language in the U.S. Over the years she spent a great deal of time in Calcutta and in Shantiniketan, as well as in Bangladesh. The first time she heard Baul music she became fascinated with the Bauls, their music, their philosophy, and their way of life. Completely fluent in the language, she became something of a celebrity in both Bengals, but especially in Bangladesh, and her premature death was widely mourned. Salomon trained many U.S. scholars in the Bengali language. My own *parampara* goes through Dr. Salomon on the one hand, and to Professor Dimock via Professor Stewart on the other.

Salomon's career paralleled that of her friend and colleague Jeanne Openshaw, of the University of Edinburgh, who has written extensively on the Bauls, and continues to do so. Other U.S. scholars working today include and are not limited to Joel Bordeaux, Keith Cantu, Lisa Knight, Glen Hayes, Rachel McDermott, Sufia Uddin, and this writer. France Bhattacharya, in Paris, has translated several *maṅgala-kāvya*s. Scholars working at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in the U.K. have also

worked extensively on premodern Bengali texts pertaining to Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism.

The most versatile and generous current scholar of pre-modern Bengali literature is Professor Thibaut d'Hubert, who earned his PhD and completed his Habilitation in 2018 from the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) in Paris. He has worked on Kṛtibāsa *Ramayana*, Alaol's *Sayphulmuluk Badiujjama*, the *Nirnāma*, as well as on the Brajbali poems of Govindadasa and the Persian *ghazals* of Akbar's court poet Faydi. D'Hubert has also striven to foster the study of premodern Bangla literature through organizing annual reading retreats that bring together scholars from around the world who are actively working on Middle Bengali projects. The community he developed continued to meet, virtually, during the pandemic to read various of the *Sitala-maṅgalas*. Participating scholars have come from Australia, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, France, India, Japan, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S. and are at various stages in their respective careers, ranging from graduate students to very senior scholars. As we sit around the table puzzling over a text, each one of us has something to contribute and we work as equals.

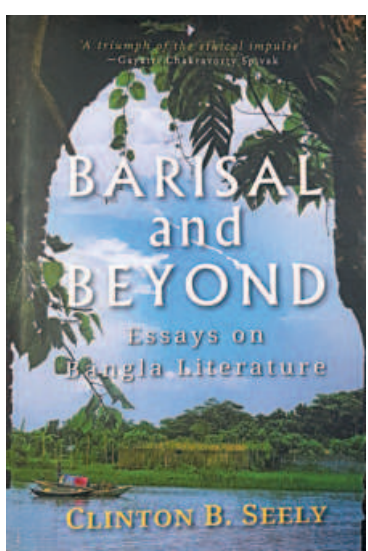
While currently there may be little institutional support for the study of premodern Bengali literature outside of the Bangla Academy in Dhaka, the community of concerned scholars continues to grow. For all involved, it is very much a labour of love.

That love of the language led Tony Stewart to acquire a flat in Dhaka and to develop and serve as the first director of the U.S. Department of State-funded Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program for Bangla, hosted in Dhaka by the Bangla Language Institute at Independent University-Bangladesh. That program brought American students in a wide range of disciplines (anthropology, agriculture, law, medicine, religion, literature, history, and more) to Bangladesh. Those students learned in the classroom for several hours daily, partnered with local students to learn about daily life while improving their conversation skills, and visited sites of historical and cultural interest during their ten weeks in the summers in Dhaka. Some even found time to volunteer in local NGOs. Many had had no prior exposure to either the language or to Bangladesh but continued their study of Bangla back in the U.S., and a number returned to the CLS program more than once. Stewart insured that during their time with the program, they had the opportunity to interact with people who had been involved in the Liberation Movement, with writers and artists, and even had an evening with Baul singers. They learned about the ecological challenges of life in Bangladesh, from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the Sundarbans. Many of those students have in time taken up positions in the American academy, or the Foreign Service, making use of their skills in the language as well as their knowledge of Bangladeshi civilization and culture. Bangladesh may be geographically small, but its contributions to the world are immense. Tony K. Stewart did more than most to highlight Bangladesh's significance globally.

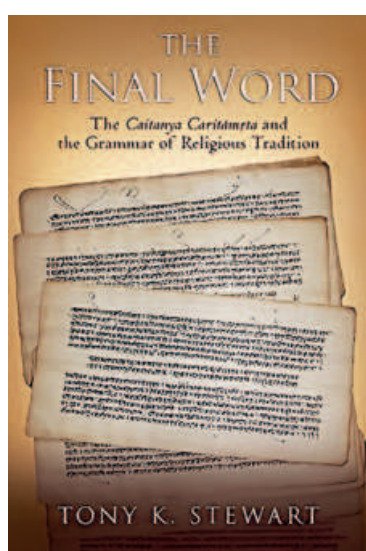
Rebecca J. Manring, PhD, is a Professor of India Studies and Religious Studies at Indiana University-Bloomington.



Tony K. Stewart (16 February 1954 – 6 October 2024)



Cover of Barishal and Beyond (UPL edition, February 2025)



Two significant books by Tony K. Stewart



itself seamlessly into a Bengali consciousness through mythic heroes who extend their help and protection to anyone regardless of sectarian affiliation. The accompanying anthology of unabridged translations of those key tales has recently appeared as *Needle at the Bottom of the Sea: Bengali Tales from the Land of the Eighteen Tides* (University of California, 2023).

The study of premodern Bengali literature began to develop in the first third of the twentieth century. Until then, scholars had viewed post-Sanskritic linguistic creations as less serious than their predecessors of the Golden Age of the Gupta period, even sometimes labelling them "vulgar." But in the years just before independence some linguists began to urge their academic colleagues to take vernacular material seriously and as worthy of consideration. Not only did this literature provide valuable evidence about the history of the Bengali language, it also had much to tell us about everyday life and cultural values in the region prior to the arrival of Europeans.

published eleven of the texts he found.

In 1920-21 Bangiya Sahitya Parishad published his catalog of Bengali manuscripts, *Baṅgala Prachin Puthir Bivaran*. The Department of Bengali of Dhaka University later published a catalog of the manuscripts preserved in its library under the title *Puthi Parichiti*. That University acquired those works years later, when Karim's nephew Ahmed Sharif joined the faculty as the first research assistant in the Bengali Department (1950). His employment was conditional upon the donation of the manuscript collection, in exchange for which the university would take responsibility for its preservation.

Karim's collection included works by Hindu authors as well, and most of those manuscripts are in the Varendra Research Museum in Rajshahi. His work was widely recognized and appreciated. The Nadia Sahitya Sabha bestowed the title of 'Sahitya Sagar' upon him, but he himself preferred the title 'Sahitya Bisharad,' which the Chattal Dharmamandali gave him.

Abdul Karim's nephew Ahmed Sharif (1921-1999) arguably exceeded



Opener Mohammad Naim was seen enjoying with his teammates during a practice session of Bangladesh 'A' side in Sylhet on Sunday ahead of the three one-dayers against their New Zealand counterparts, beginning today at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium. As stated by the Bangladesh Cricket Board, this series will act as a platform for Naim, who finished as the top run-getter in the two previous T20 tournaments in the country (BPL and NCL), and other players to stake a claim in the national team for the upcoming international white-ball series.

PHOTO: BCB

“New Zealand 'A' side is quite strong. If we give him [Naim] a big opportunity in a 50-over game, then he can fully express his potential. Because in T20s, you have to rush to score runs. Hence, this [50-over match series] will be a great opportunity for him.”

BCB chief selector, Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu

'Bad feeling in the tummy' for Arsenal ahead of PSG trip

REUTERS, London

Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta hoped to carry positive momentum into Wednesday's Champions League semifinal second leg at Paris St Germain, but instead, called on his players to harness their rage from Saturday's 2-1 home defeat by Bournemouth. Declan Rice marked his 100th Arsenal appearance with a well-taken goal to give the hosts a lead at the break as they sought to tighten their grip on second place in the Premier League. But a nearly full-strength Gunners side conceded two sloppy goals from Dean Huijsen and Evanilson in eight second-half minutes, dashing Arteta's plans to travel to Paris off the back of a much-needed league victory.

Arsenal trail PSG 1-0 after the first leg at The Emirates.

"A positive result would really help us to build what we wanted towards Wednesday," he told reporters. "So what we have created now is a lot of rage, anger, frustration, and a bad feeling in the tummy."

"So (we must) make sure that we use that for Wednesday to have a massive performance in Paris, win the game and be in the final."

Arteta made two changes from Tuesday's defeat by PSG, one of which was full-back Jurrien Timber after he was withdrawn in the closing stages of the first leg.

Sohan-led Bangladesh 'A' take on NZ 'A' today

SPORTS REPORTER

The first one-day match between Bangladesh 'A' and New Zealand 'A' will take at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today.

Nurul Hasan Sohan was named captain of a 15-man Bangladesh 'A' squad for the first two matches.

Sohan will lead a squad of mostly national team players, with pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja being the only uncapped player.

Anamul Haque Bijoy, who recently made his come back to the Test side in the Chattogram Test against Zimbabwe, has been picked alongside Mosaddek Hossain, who led Abahani Limited to the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) title this season.

Pacer Ebadot Hossain, who has not played for the national team since his lengthy layoff post-injury, has also been picked for the first two games.

The New Zealand 'A' team, led by Nick Kelly, landed in Bangladesh on Thursday to play three one-dayers and two four-day matches against their Bangladeshi counterparts.

The second and third one-dayers are slated for May 7 and 10 at the same venue. The first four-day match, starting on May 14, will take place at the same venue, while the final four-day game will be played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur from May 21.

A lengthy presser that offered very little clarity

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunday's press conference held by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was the perfect example of a board deflecting the issues instead of acknowledging them.

In a lengthy presser, attended by chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, selector Abdur Razzak, and BCB cricket operations committee chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, the board announced T20 squads for the upcoming UAE and Pakistan tours, alongside naming Liton Das as the skipper of the shortest format till the 2026 T20 World Cup.

However, from what could be surmised from the statements made, it seemed as if the board was trying to hide the elephant in the room - Bangladesh's struggle in forming a squad with players backed by performances.

Batter Jaker Ali, all-rounder Mahedi Hasan, and leg-spinner Rishad Hossain turned up with noteworthy T20 performances in recent times, but the selectors clearly struggled to form a squad with the rest. Liton has himself struggled for form.

"In Liton's case, experience is crucial," Fahim backed the decision to make Liton the T20 captain.

"We don't have many experienced cricketers at the moment. There have been discussions about his form, but he has the potential. If he can organise his game, he'll be a key asset. Everyone is optimistic about his tactical abilities, and we believe he'll play an important role once he starts performing," Fahim added.

Bangladesh T20 squad for UAE, Pak tours

Liton Das (c), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain Emon, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Jaker Ali, Rishad Hossain, Mahedi Hasan, Tanvir Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Tanzim Sakib, Nahid Rana, Shoriful Islam

The irony is that, Fahim, before being included in his current role at BCB, has often made statements about how it was high time for players like Liton, with more than five years of international experience, to have already established themselves as performers in the side.

The current ODI and Test skipper Shanto, from whom Liton took over the charge of the T20 side, is another player who got a nod in the side for the upcoming series solely based on his experience.

"Shanto has played roughly 50 matches, so he brings in some experience," chief selector Lipu explained.

Shanto's T20 form has been under scrutiny for a while now, and to include him in the squad that already has players of a similar profile like Tanzid Tamim, Soumya Sarkar, and Liton made it clear

that the BCB was banking only on his experience to come through for the side.

Meanwhile, opener Mohammad Naim, who remained the top run-getter in the recent Bangladesh Premier League and the National Cricket League, was named in the Bangladesh 'A' side for their New Zealand series, with hopes of him "expressing his full potential" before being considered for the national side.

The BCB also could not clarify the exact approach with which the Tigers would go ahead in the format in the coming days, with chief selector Lipu mentioning something as generic as: "Whenever the national team plays, the target is always to win. But to achieve that, I think, considering the transformation that is going on in T20 cricket, we need to prepare in the bilateral series for improving our average performances in any global tournament. We have to practice, and that should be reflected in the bilateral series. We can lose by a big margin, but the approach should be the same. This is our message for them."

Meanwhile, Rakibul Hasan was the highest wicket-taker in the just-concluded Dhaka Premier League, yet he was not named in the squad as he was considered a like-for-like option with the included Tanvir Islam and Nasum Ahmed, who was left out.

Considering everything, even after the lengthy presser, the question over the direction that the side wanted to take and what profiles are required remained unclear as always.

SHORT CORNER

Probe committee formed over AHF Cup failure

The National Sports Council (NSC) on Sunday formed a three-member committee to look into Bangladesh hockey team's failure in the recently-concluded AHF Cup in Indonesia. The committee, however, has not been given any timeline to submit its report. Five-time AHF Cup champions Bangladesh finished third in the tournament, failing to qualify for the Asia Cup for the first time.

'Like a dream,' says Sabalenka after third Madrid title

World number one Aryna Sabalenka said her sensational form this year is "like a dream" after defeating Coco Gauff 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) on Saturday to win her third Madrid Open title. Last year's runner-up cruised past the American in the first set before digging deep in the second to triumph in a tie-break. Sabalenka recorded her tour-leading 31st victory this season on the Madrid clay, adding the WTA 1000 trophy to titles in Brisbane and Miami.

Firmino 'proud' after making more Champions League history

Roberto Firmino said he was proud of making history with his Saudi club and becoming an Asian Champions League winner, six years after lifting the prestigious European equivalent with Liverpool. Firmino was named the most valuable player after inspiring Al Ahli to beat Kawasaki Frontale 2-0 on Saturday as the club became Asian champions for the first time. "I'm very happy and very proud of the team," said Firmino.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.



Real keep pressure on leaders Barca

REUTERS, Madrid

Kylian Mbappe scored two goals as Real Madrid fought off a late comeback attempt from Celta Vigo to secure a 3-2 win on Sunday and stay within four points of LaLiga leaders Barcelona whom they visit in next weekend's "El Clasico".

Arda Guler broke the deadlock for Real shortly after the half-hour mark with an excellent left-footed shot from a tight angle. Mbappe doubled Real's lead six minutes later with a powerful right-footed finish. Then Guler's through ball set up Mbappe again three minutes after the break.

Seventh-placed Celta made a late charge as Javi Rodriguez scored in the 69th minute and Williot Swedberg also struck seven minutes later, but Real were able to see off the late pressure.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Discipline not an issue for BFF!

ANISUR RAHMAN

The recent physical assault on match commissioner Sujit Banerjee by Saad Uddin during a Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) between Bashundhara Kings and Abahani has put focus on Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) reluctance to enforce disciplinary measures in top-tier football.

The high-stakes fixture at the Bashundhara Kings Arena on Friday also saw an Abahani player assaulted by Kings' fans, following altercations involving players and officials both on and off the field. These incidents, though severe, are not isolated.

Throughout the current football season which only has 24 days remaining, matches involving major clubs such as Kings, Abahani, and Mohammedan have been marred by repeated episodes of unsporting behaviour. Despite this, the BFF has not taken significant disciplinary action, prompting concerns among stakeholders about the federation's seriousness in maintaining order.

The ongoing issues began early in the season. During November's one-off Challenge



Cup between Kings and Mohammedan at the Kings Arena, the home fans threw smoke flares onto the pitch, halting play, with the match eventually won by the home side 3-1 loss. The management of Mohammedan, who were leading 1-0 before the smoke flare incident, later wrote to BFF, refusing to play at the Kings' ground until fan security was ensured. However, they were forced to return there for a league fixture last month, during which their supporters again faced hostility from the home fans.

Another high-voltage clash between Mohammedan and Abahani in Cumilla witnessed a scuffle in the gallery, briefly halting the match. A Mohammedan supporter even

chased a Bangladesh Police player after an on-field dispute involving Mohammedan's Nigerian forward Emmanuel Sunday.

Despite multiple reports being submitted by referees and match commissioners after such incidents, the BFF's disciplinary committee has yet to act. This passivity contrasts sharply with past seasons, when players and officials were penalised for even minor infractions, including verbal abuse of referees.

A member of the disciplinary committee, speaking on condition of anonymity, revealed they had not received any documentation from the competition department, making it impossible to proceed. Alarming, the member admitted to being unaware

of the full composition of the current committee, which was restructured in February to include five members, led by former secretary Mejbahuddin Ahmed.

One senior referee lamented the growing trend of impunity: "After a recent match outside Dhaka, referees were harassed in front of club officials. We reported it, but no action has been taken. This encourages repeat offenses."

However, there may be movement soon. BFF executive member and Professional League Management Committee's deputy chairman Zakir Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star: "Both the referee and the match commissioner had submitted reports on the recent Kings-Abahani incident. He confirmed meeting with the competition department and expects the reports to reach the disciplinary committee by Monday, with a decision likely before the next match day."

Chowdhury also noted that the league committee would meet soon to address the worsening disciplinary climate.

Unless BFF takes swift and firm action, repeated violations risk undermining the integrity of domestic football.

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India cuts water flow through Baglihar dam

Say media reports after Delhi suspends Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan

AGENCIES

Days after placing the Indus Waters Treaty into abeyance to punish Pakistan over the Pahalgalam terror attack, India has curtailed the flow of water through the Baglihar dam on the Chenab river and is planning similar measures at the Kishanganga dam on the Jhelum River, PTI reported, citing a source.

India has taken several punitive measures against Pakistan following the cold-blooded killings of 26 people – mostly tourists – in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgalam on April 22, including downgrading diplomatic ties, banning Pakistani ships from Indian ports and stopping imports.

Pakistan had objected to India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, declaring that any attempt to stop waters flowing into the country would be deemed an act of war.

The source familiar with the matter told the news agency these hydroelectric

dams – Baglihar in Ramban in Jammu and Kishanganga in north Kashmir – offer India the ability to regulate the timing of water releases, reports Hindustan Times online.

The Baglihar dam has been a longstanding point of contention between the two neighbours, with Pakistan having sought World Bank arbitration in the past. The Kishanganga dam has faced legal and diplomatic scrutiny, especially regarding its impact on the Neelum River, a tributary of the Jhelum.

On Saturday, Pakistan banned Indian flag carriers from using its ports hours after New Delhi announced a similar measure as a fresh punitive step against the neighbouring country for its role in the April 22 attack.

"In view of the recent development of maritime situation with neighbouring country, Pakistan in order to safeguard

- » India planning similar measures with Jhelum river
- » Pakistan bans Indian flag carriers at all ports
- » Modi meets Indian Air Chief Marshal



Despite several incidents of deaths from riding on train roofs in the past, many people continue the practice. The lack of awareness among the general public also leads them to cross rail lines without using footbridges. The photo was taken yesterday at the Airport Railway Station in the capital. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Scientists found another source of gold in the cosmos

CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have been trying to determine the cosmic origins of the heaviest elements, like gold, for decades. Now, new research based on a signal uncovered in archival space mission data may point to a potential clue: magnetars, or highly magnetised neutron stars.



Scientists believe lighter elements such as hydrogen and helium, and even a small amount of lithium, likely existed early on after the big bang created the universe 13.8 billion years ago. Then, exploding stars released heavier elements like iron, which became incorporated in newborn stars and planets.

But the distribution of gold, which is heavier than iron, throughout the universe has posed a mystery to astrophysicists.

"It's a pretty fundamental question in terms of the origin of complex matter in the universe," said Anirudh Patel, lead author of the study published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters and a doctoral student of physics at Columbia University in New York City, in a statement. "It's a fun puzzle that hasn't actually been solved."

Astronomers observed a collision between two neutron stars in 2017. The cataclysmic clash released ripples in space-time, known as gravitational waves, as well as light from a gamma-ray burst. The collision event, known as a kilonova, also created heavy elements like gold, platinum and lead. Kilonovas have been likened to gold "factories" in space.

Meeting with IMF today to break deadlock

Exchange rate flexibility main hold-up

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government and the International Monetary Fund are set to meet again today for another round of negotiations over the release of the fourth and fifth tranches of a \$4.7 billion loan programme.

The two sides will meet virtually to break the deadlock over the issue of liberalising the exchange rate, which has been holding up the authorisation of the two instalments, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

If Bangladesh accepts the IMF's prescription for a more flexible exchange rate, the foreign exchange market may turn volatile. So, the country sought a \$1 billion stabilisation fund for prompt intervention in the market, the officials said.

The IMF did not respond immediately to Bangladesh's request in the series of in-person meetings between the two sides in Washington, DC in the last week of April.

Earlier, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed told journalists on his return from Washington that the IMF has agreed to a \$500 million stabilisation fund.

"They [IMF] told us to remove the band under the crawling peg. If the band is removed, the dollar would appreciate unsustainably," he added.

IMF-BANGLADESH NEGOTIATIONS SO FAR

- ➔ Bangladesh proposed \$1b stabilisation fund
- ➔ IMF prescribed boosting NBR's revenue collection by 0.7 percent of GDP in next fiscal
- ➔ NBR plans to collect additional Tk 30,000 crore with new tax measures
- ➔ Another Tk 10,000Cr to be collected through administrative measures
- ➔ ADB also wants updates of IMF negotiations

Under the crawling peg system at present, the exchange rate fluctuates within a narrow range.

Since December, government and IMF officials have held multiple rounds of talks in Dhaka and Washington. Disagreements – particularly over exchange rate flexibility and efforts to raise the country's revenue-to-GDP ratio – had delayed the release of the fourth tranche.

However, the finance ministry officials

said a consensus has been reached on the issues regarding the National Board of Revenue (NBR) in Washington, including the revenue-to-GDP ratio.

The government has agreed to collect an additional Tk 30,000 crore in revenue in the next fiscal year under a new tax measure endorsed by the IMF.

Initially, the IMF had recommended raising additional taxes equivalent to 0.9 percent of the national GDP.

However, following a series of meetings, both sides settled on a lower target of 0.7 percent – an estimated Tk 40,000 crore in additional taxes – of which Tk 10,000 crore is expected to be collected through administrative measures.

Under the new tax plan, the government will raise the value-added tax (VAT) on several products to the standard rate of 15 percent, cut back on tax holidays and withdraw various exemptions.

There is no disagreement between the government and the IMF on NBR-related matters, a senior NBR official told The Daily Star.

"We plan to engage with the business community, and they may not be too unhappy, as inputting VAT credits could offset the higher tax rates and benefit them in the long run," he said.

In January, the NBR increased VAT and supplementary duties on nearly 100 goods and services in an effort to

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Unconstitutional, unacceptable, irrational

Says Human Rights Forum about call to abolish women's affairs commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) has strongly condemned recent demands from certain groups calling for the abolition of the government-established Women's Affairs Reform Commission and the enactment of a blasphemy law in the country.

In a statement issued yesterday, HRFB labelled these demands as "irrational, unconstitutional, and unacceptable", expressing serious concern over the exploitation of religious sentiments to mislead the public and undermine progressive reforms.

HRFB stressed that while individuals have the right to critique any commission or its reports, calls for the outright abolition of such commissions are unjustifiable.

The organisation also condemned efforts to impose opinions through threats, violence, or hate speech under the guise of religious justifications, stating that such tactics are incompatible with democratic principles and human rights.

The Women's Affairs Reform Commission, HRFB noted, was formed as part of a broader governmental effort to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination.

Its recommendations were based on international human rights standards,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

ACC probing 3 aides to 2 advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated an inquiry into corruption allegations against three former personal staffers of two government advisers.

The individuals under investigation are Md Moazzem Hossain, former assistant private secretary (APS) to LGRG Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain; and Tuhin Farabi and Mahmudul Hasan, former personal officers (POs) to Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum.

All three have recently been removed from their posts.

Meanwhile, the anti-graft body has also launched an investigation into allegations against ABM Gazi Salauddin Tanvir, former joint member secretary of the National Citizen Party.

Confirming the developments yesterday, ACC Director General Md Akhter Hossain told reporters: "We have initiated the investigations against the APS and POs of the two advisers, as well as Gazi Tanvir, in line with ACC laws and regulations."

"We began looking into the allegations after receiving complaints against them.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Once the lifeline of Rajshahi, the bountiful Padma is now severely depleted, with little water and shallow depth. Where it roared, silent sandbars now occupy its breadth, making travel difficult. This fall in water levels can be attributed to a combination of factors, including reduced flow from upstream, increased deposition of silt, and poor rainfall. The photo was taken yesterday from the 1 dam in Rajshahi city. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Maldives president holds record 15-hr press conference

AFP, Colombo

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu addressed a press conference for nearly 15 hours, his office said yesterday, claiming it broke a previous record held by Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

Muizzu, 46, began the marathon press conference at 10:00 am (0500 GMT) on Saturday, and it continued for 14 hours and 54 minutes with brief pauses for prayers, his office said in a statement.

"The conference extended past midnight – a new world record by a president – with President Muizzu continuously responding to questions from journalists," the statement said.

In October 2019, Ukraine's National Records Agency claimed that Zelensky's 14-hour press conference had broken an earlier record of over seven hours held by Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

The government of the Indian Ocean archipelago said Muizzu's extended session was also intended to coincide with World Press Freedom Day on Saturday.

"He acknowledged the crucial role of the press in society and emphasised the importance of factual, balanced, and impartial reporting," the statement added.



Mohamed Muizzu

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