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You have made me endless...
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NCP, protesters block Shahbagh for ban on AL

Govt calls for patience; protesters to hold rallies in Dhaka, elsewhere today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding a ban on the Awami League, different political parties and student organisations blocked the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon and vowed not to leave until their demand was met.

The blockade began around 5:00pm, shortly after Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (south) of the National Citizen Party, urged people to block Shahbagh and not leave until the government issued a notification stating that the AL had been banned.

Hundreds of protesters were still at Shahbagh as of filing this report early today, keeping the intersection closed to traffic and chanting slogans.

Addressing the crowd late last night, Hasnat said there would be a rally at Shahbagh at 3:00pm today.

"At the same time, mass gatherings will also be held at every place across the country where people demonstrated during the July uprising," he said.

The AL and its associated bodies must be declared terrorist outfits and banned, he said.

He said the protesters had two other demands – an amendment to the International Crimes Tribunal Act to hold the trial of Awami League as a party and the announcement of the July Proclamation.

"It is a battle between the pro-Bangladesh forces and those of fascism."

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Hundreds gathered in the capital's Shahbagh yesterday afternoon and blocked the busy intersection, demanding a ban on the Awami League. The protesters vowed not to leave the area until the government fulfils their demand. Inset, they were demonstrating at Shahbagh intersection when the photo was taken around midnight.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, ANISUR RAHMAN

HOSPITALS, DIAGNOSTIC CENTRES

95% pvt facilities running without renewed licences

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Thousands of private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres continue to operate without renewing licences due to lax monitoring by the authorities, raising serious concerns over patient safety and quality of treatment.

Out of 19,627 registered private hospitals and clinics across the country, only 914 or 4.66 percent renewed their licences till April 27 this fiscal year. The number was 2,754 in fiscal 2023-24, shows data of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Similarly, 1,790 or around 5 percent of the 35,597 private diagnostic centres renewed licences so far, compared to 5,735 last fiscal year.

Annual licence renewal is intended to ensure that medical facilities meet standards for safety, staffing, hygiene, and other requirements – areas where many healthcare providers often fall short.

Health experts warned that the failure of a vast number of medical facilities to renew licences poses serious risks to patient safety

and undermines the quality of healthcare and hygiene.

Patients may receive subpar treatment, and a lack of oversight could lead to the use of substandard medical equipment or unsafe practices, they cautioned.

which a government committee recommends approval based on an inspection of the medical facility.

To complete the renewal, the health service provider must submit several documents, including an updated trade licence, income tax

STATUS OF LICENCE RENEWAL

YEAR	PVT HOSPITALS, CLINICS	DIAGNOSTIC CENTRES
FY2024-25 (Till April 27, 2025)	914 out of 19,627	1,790 out of 35,597
FY2023-24	2,754	5,735
FY2022-23	3,214	6,205

SOURCE: DGHS

It is mandatory for every private hospital, clinic, and diagnostic centre to renew its licence annually. Failure to do so may result in closure of medical facilities for non-compliance.

The renewal process starts with an online application from a health service provider, after

certificate, and environmental and narcotics clearance.

This correspondent spoke to four DGHS directors to understand the reasons behind the low number of licence renewals.

One of the directors said the submission of an environmental

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Govt moves to amend ICT Act to try organisations

Probe report in case against Hasina likely Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday said initiatives have been taken to amend the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) Act to try organisations those involved in crimes against humanity.

The government announcement came amid demonstrations by the National Citizen Party (NCP) in front of the CA's residence Jamuna, and at Shahbagh, demanding a ban on Awami League as a political party and a clear judicial roadmap for their trial.

Meanwhile, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said its investigation agency is likely to submit the probe report on Monday in a case filed over the atrocities during the July uprising against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

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INDO-PAK MILITARY ESCALATION

Fighting rages on for the third day

Rivals engage in war of words as heavy shelling continues along LoC; death toll crosses 50

AGENCIES

India and Pakistan yesterday accused each other of launching fresh strikes involving drones and artillery for the third consecutive day, raising fears of a wider conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

Islamabad said Indian actions were pushing the region "closer to a major conflict", and New Delhi, citing "numerous ceasefire violations" along the de facto border in Kashmir, vowed to respond forcefully to what it called Pakistan's "nefarious designs."

With six more deaths reported – 5 in Pakistan and one in India – the toll from three days of violence surpassed 50.

The escalation follows last month's deadly attack on tourists in the Indian-administered Kashmir, which claimed 26 lives. New Delhi blamed Islamabad for the attack, a charge Pakistan has firmly denied.

On Wednesday, India conducted air strikes on what it called "terrorist camps" in Pakistan. For the first time in over 50 years, the strikes targeted cities in Pakistan's mainland provinces.

Fear of a wider conflict has driven many villagers away from border areas in both

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🔄 Pakistan says India brought 'countries closer to a major conflict'

🔄 India vows response to Pakistan's 'nefarious designs'

🔄 US says it will not intervene in conflict; Saudi Arabia, Iran step up mediation efforts

🔄 India suspends IPL; Pakistan moves PSL to UAE

JULY MURDER CASE

Ivy arrested, sent to jail



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanjanj

Former Narayanjanj City Corporation mayor Salina Hayat Ivy was arrested in a July uprising murder case early yesterday following a night-long standoff with police at her residence in the city.

The stalemate unfolded after Ivy refused to leave in the dark of the night when a police team arrived at the house in the Deobhog area around 11:30pm on Thursday to take her into custody.

Police then waited overnight as her supporters gathered outside and chanted slogans against the move to arrest her. After nearly six hours, she came out and boarded the police vehicle at dawn.

Ivy, who was re-elected mayor with the Awami League's ticket in 2022 for

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Golden grains swirl in the air as farmers thresh freshly harvested paddy on a hot summer's day. They're quite happy with this year's harvest. Currently, Boro paddy is going for Tk 1,200-1,300 per maund in the wholesale market. The photo was taken recently in the Rajbandh area of Khulna city.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

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No democracy, rule of law sans press freedom

Asif Nazrul tells NOAB 20th anniversary event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Without press freedom, there can be no rule of law, human rights, or democracy in the country, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul has said.

He made the remarks while addressing the 20th anniversary celebration of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) at a city hotel yesterday.

Speaking about the criminal cases filed against at least 266 journalists after the political changeover of August 5, 2024, the adviser said he repeatedly promised action against those bringing false charges against journalists.

He, however, added that it will take time to address the issue since a case must be proven false in the trial after investigation and the filing of a charge sheet.

"Only after this process is complete and the case is proven false can we take action. We cannot act before that," he said. "We have no legal options at this

No democracy, rule of law sans press freedom

FROM PAGE 1
point, even if we all strongly believe that a case is false, and many people, often uninvolved, are implicated.”

Nazrul urged journalists to contribute to legal reforms. “You all can sit with the best legal minds in Bangladesh in a roundtable discussion and suggest what we should do. I promise that we will act accordingly.”

Reflecting on the broader culture of repression, the adviser said, “For 15 years, a culture of filing false cases has taken root. During this time, we collectively failed to protest. We really couldn’t. I always say that when anarchy begins in a country, it breeds more anarchy. The backlash of misrule lasts for years.”

He said the government had already taken some steps. “We have already repealed all cases under the Digital Security Act. We have made the necessary changes. If you want me to raise my voice every week, I will. There will be no mercy for those who file false cases.”

“Those who file false cases, at some level, carry on Sheikh Hasina’s legacy. Sheikh Hasina used to file false cases. We removed her. Now, some people are internalising her bad practices. I question and condemn them.”

He added, “Our police have been strictly instructed not to arrest anyone without substantial proof. But radical change cannot happen overnight. We may hope for it, but implementing it is difficult. We truly feel sorrow in many cases. Imagine someone suffering because of a false case. It’s deeply painful.”

“We in the government are all embarrassed by the harassment caused by false and abusive cases. But we are constantly trying. I urge everyone to suggest necessary legal amendments or steps. We will try to implement them,” he said.

“If a case reaches a stage where the law ministry has a role to play, we will fulfil our responsibility,” he added.

Chief Adviser’s Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said, “We can’t really

say we’ve reached a strong position in journalism. Circulation fluctuates. We are creating many narratives and making progress in several areas. But somehow, the lives of journalists remain precarious.”

He stressed the real-life consequences faced by journalists. “In the past, many journalists have had to die for dissent. When we talk about freedom of speech, the truth is—we haven’t been able to secure that space properly. Despite the government’s good intentions, some people are

police work can be extremely slow.”

“Our interim government truly wishes to institutionalise freedom of speech. That’s why, right at the beginning, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus invited editors and said, ‘Everyone, open your hearts and speak freely.’

“Beyond freedom of speech, a journalist deserves dignity. That dignity must be recognised by everyone, and their salaries should be paid properly.”

Bangladesh Press Council

their quality of life, always in line with the law of the land, and committed to developing the journalism ecosystem.”

He highlighted how the previous government suppressed the media in various ways and failed to provide incentives even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Today, our industry faces additional threats—declining circulation, reduced revenues, and rising production costs due to inflation. Print journalism is under

structural conflicts. Out of 45 industrial sectors in the country, 43 fall under the labour ministry, while only the newspaper industry is under the information ministry. This discrepancy has led to continued legal conflict, currently pending in the High Court.”

Azad urged the government to repeal all repressive laws enacted during authoritarian regimes.

“We call for the full repeal of repressive laws and any new legislation that may stifle free expression.”

Mahfuz Anam, founding president of NOAB, reflected on the media’s difficult journey. “We have not been able to truly establish independent journalism in Bangladesh. That’s because we have failed to make any government understand that criticism is acceptable. Independent journalism is the government’s best friend, not its enemy. But they always prefer praise. The moment there is criticism, their attitude changes, and we are marked as enemies.”

He added that the trend of filing false and abusive cases is weakening journalists and eroding public trust.

“When officials say, ‘There’s nothing to be done,’ even when the law is misused, it emboldens others to keep filing such cases. It’s killing journalists’ spirit, morale, and image. If punitive action is taken even just two or three such incidents, this harmful trend will begin to stop.”

“For those of us in the media, our true commitment is to the country. Our loyalty is to the people. Loyalty should be to our independence—not to promote the interests of any particular group. Independent media cannot serve factional interests,” he said.

The event was chaired by NOAB Senior Vice President ASM Shahidullah Khan Badal and moderated by NOAB member Devan Hanif Mahmud. Political leaders, businesspersons, and diplomats were among the attendees.

The event began with a solo performance by singer Warda Ashraf.



Guests and NOAB members at the 20th anniversary celebration of the Newspaper Owners’ Association of Bangladesh at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

trying to hijack those efforts. From the beginning, we’ve been clear that we don’t want to shut down any newspaper or TV station.”

About the cases against journalists, Shafiqul said, “Some people even file murder cases against journalists. And in such cases, our legal framework is so inadequate that I often find myself unable to help them in a meaningful way. Investigations are ongoing, but

Chairman Justice AKM Abdul Hakim said he would do everything necessary for the betterment of journalists.

NOAB President AK Azad said they were celebrating the milestone at a time when journalism in the country was at a critical crossroads.

“Over the past two decades, NOAB has remained firmly committed to defending press freedom, protecting journalists’ rights, and improving

severe pressure. Duties and corporate taxes have become major obstacles to the growth of this industry. In such a context, substantial reforms are needed in tariff and tax policies in the newspaper sector,” he said.

He also pointed to a “longstanding misunderstanding” between NOAB and the government over implementing the wage board.

“NOAB is not against journalists’ welfare. The problem lies in

95% pvt facilities running without valid licences

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clearance certificate was recently made mandatory for renewal. Previously, healthcare facilities could submit proof that they had applied for clearance, and that was deemed sufficient.

“Obtaining a clearance certificate takes a considerable amount of time,” the official said seeking anonymity.

A divisional director pointed out that the DGHS lacks dedicated manpower to inspect the huge number of healthcare facilities, often resulting in a backlog of applications.

Another DGHS official, on the condition of anonymity, said that previously, vehicles and fuel needed for inspections of healthcare facilities were funded under a special arrangement.

“But that arrangement is no longer in place, which is hampering the process.”

Several health officials said that many service providers often take advantage of the authorities’ failure to inspect the facilities timely due to manpower shortage. They simply submit applications without the necessary or up-to-date documents and continue operations.

Service providers are now demanding that the government ease regulations to let them renew licences every two years, they added.

Contacted, Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, director (hospitals) at the DGHS, said, “Many applications

are pending because the hospitals or diagnostic centres concerned have failed to submit up-to-date documents.”

The designated committees are gradually inspecting healthcare facilities, he said, expressing hope that the number of licence renewals will increase significantly by the end of this fiscal year.

ABM Haroon, acting president of Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic and Diagnostic Owners Association, claimed that 90 percent of the hospitals and diagnostic centres have submitted applications for licence renewal.

“But renewal is getting delayed as the DGHS lacks necessary manpower for inspection of facilities,” he told The Daily Star on April 29.

“Besides, it takes a long time to obtain environmental and narcotics clearance, which further slows down the renewal process.”

He said they requested the government to allow them to renew licences biennially, citing the ongoing manpower crisis at the DGHS.

Responding to a query, he said that a medical facility running without a renewed licence risks closure for non-compliance. However, the authorities take such action only in cases of serious irregularities.

Prof MA Faiz, former director general of the DGHS, said the number of health facilities has increased

significantly over the years but the health authority’s capacity to monitor their quality of service has not improved much.

“Those who are running hospitals or diagnostic centres also have responsibility here ... No facility should be operating without an updated licence.”

Once a licence is renewed, it becomes possible to verify whether a hospital or diagnostic centre has the required manpower, equipment, and other essential components in place, he noted.

People pay for services, but they often have no idea about the actual condition of a medical facility. That’s why inspection and licence renewal are necessary, he added.

Contacted, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said, “The shortage of manpower and resources needs to be addressed, and the system should be developed accordingly.”

“It may not be possible to increase manpower and resources immediately. We are aware of the reality and will try to resolve the issues,” he told this correspondent on April 29.

Asked about the service providers’ demand for biennial licence renewal, he said, “This involves procedural and legal issues. There will be discussions before a decision is made in this regard.”

Govt moves to amend ICT Act to try organisations

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On Friday, Information Adviser Mahfuz Alam wrote on Facebook that the government was going to incorporate a new provision in a law to try the Awami League as a party. “Trial of fascist [Awami] League must be held.”

The interim government, in its first draft for the amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973, included a provision to allow the trial of organisations.

The draft kept a provision that allows the banning of a political party for up to 10 years for committing crimes against humanity and genocide.

But the provision was not included in the draft approved by the advisory council.

Tajul wrote on his Facebook page yesterday, “I hope the investigation agency of the International Crimes Tribunal will submit its probe report of the July mass killings against Sheikh Hasina to the Chief Prosecutor’s Office on Monday.”

After the probe report is submitted, the formal trial against

Hasina will begin with filing of the “formal charge”, he said.

He added that the formal charge against senior police officials over the killings of six people in the capital’s Chankharpool during the July uprising would be pressed this week.

On April 22, the ICT fixed May 25 for the prosecutors to press charges against former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman and seven other police personnel over the killings on August 5 last year.

According to the prosecution, 22 cases are currently pending with the ICT, and 339 complaints have already been filed with the ICT investigation agency over the July atrocities.

Of the cases, three cases have been lodged against Hasina.

One case has named Hasina and former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun as responsible for their command decisions related to crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Another case involves allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the 15 and a half years of Awami League

rule.

Hasina, her defence adviser Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, ex-IGP Benazir Ahmed, forcibly retired Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan, and eight others have been accused in the case.

The third case has been filed over “mass killings” during a Hefajat-e-Islam protest at Motijheel’s Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013, against Hasina and four others—former home minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, ex-inspector general of police Hassan Mahmood Khandker, then DMP commissioner Benazir Ahmed, and Imran H Sarker, spokesperson for Gonojagoron Mancha, a platform that demanded the highest penalty for war criminals.

The ICT has already issued arrest warrants in those cases against Hasina who has been in India since her government fell on August 5 last year.

The National Central Bureau (NCB) of Bangladesh Police has already submitted a request to Interpol seeking a “red notice” against 12 people, including Hasina.

Fighting rages on for the third day

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countries, while several cities across the border have experienced blackouts.

On the third day of tit-for-tat exchanges, the Indian army said it “repulsed” waves of Pakistani attacks using drones and other munitions overnight, and gave a “befitting reply”.

India also accused Pakistani forces on Thursday of targeting three military stations—two in Kashmir and one in the neighbouring state of Punjab.

Pakistan Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the Indian army statement was “baseless and misleading”, and that Pakistan had not undertaken any “offensive actions” targeting areas within Indian Kashmir or beyond the country’s border.

Despite the denial, Indian officials said a new wave of drone attacks targeted Indian Kashmir yesterday evening, including the city of Jammu.

The source said “drones have been sighted in Jammu, Samba” in Indian-administered Kashmir and in Pathankot in the neighbouring state of Punjab, adding: “They are being engaged”.

Indian-run Kashmir’s Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on X: “Intermittent sounds of blasts, probably heavy artillery, can now be heard from where I am” in Jammu, adding that there was a blackout in the city.

AFP journalists on the ground reported heavy artillery shelling in the Indian village of Poonch near the border.

Earlier, India accused Pakistan of endangering civilian lives by keeping its airspace open during drone and missile attacks on multiple Indian cities, allegedly using commercial flights as a shield against counter strikes.

At a special briefing, an Indian military spokesperson said Pakistan launched 300–400 Turkish drones on the nights of May 7–8, targeting Indian cities.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said those hit civilian infrastructure and some military sites, calling Pakistan’s denial of involvement “an example of their duplicity.”

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s foreign ministry spokesperson yesterday said that India’s “jingoism and war hysteria” should be a source of serious concern for the world.

“It is most unfortunate that India’s

reckless conduct has brought the two nuclear-armed states closer to a major conflict,” Shafiq Ali Khan told a briefing in Islamabad.

Later, Pakistan’s military spokesman said it would not “de-escalate” with India.

“We will not de-escalate— with the damages India did on our side, they should take a hit,” Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry told media at a briefing.

“So far, we have been protecting ourselves, but they will get an answer in our own timing.”

In Pakistani-occupied Kashmir, officials said heavy shelling from across the border killed five civilians, including an infant, and injured 29 in the early hours of yesterday.

“In response, the Pakistan Army carried out a strong counterattack, targeting three Indian posts,” police official Adeel Khan told AFP from Kotli district, where four of the deaths occurred.

Pakistani military sources, meanwhile, said that forces had shot down 77 Indian drones in the last two days, claiming they were Israeli-made.

In Indian-administered Kashmir, a police official said one woman was killed and three people were wounded by heavy overnight shelling in Uri, some 100 kilometres from the state capital Srinagar.

“Several houses caught fire and were damaged in the shelling,” the official said.

Sirens blared for more than two hours yesterday in India’s border city of Amritsar, which houses the Golden Temple revered by Sikhs, and residents were asked to remain indoors.

Militants have stepped up operations in Kashmir since 2019, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government revoked its limited autonomy and took the state under direct rule from New Delhi.

Yesterday, schools were closed on both sides of the Pakistan and Indian border in Kashmir and Punjab, affecting tens of millions of children.

India has also closed 24 airports, but according to local media, the suspension on civilian flights may be lifted today.

The conflict has caused major disruption to international aviation, with airlines having to cancel flights or use longer routes that don’t overly the

Heatwave to prevail for 2 more days

BSS, Dhaka

An intense heatwave has been sweeping over Chuadanga, Sirajganj and some parts of the Khulna division. This is likely to continue for the next two days, according to the Met Office.

Meteorologist Khandaker Hafizur Rahman said the current heatwave will prevail today and tomorrow and may ease on Monday.

The country’s highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 41.2°C in Chuadanga, where it was 39.7 °C the day before. The lowest temperature yesterday was 22.5°C at Dimla of Rangpur division.

The Met Office said a mild to moderate heatwave may continue, and there could be an intense heatwave in some places in the next 72 hours starting 2:00pm yesterday.

A mild to moderate heatwave is prevailing over Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Rajarhat, Mymensingh, Moulvibazar, Rangamati, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali, Chittagong, Bandarban, Barishal, and Patuakhali districts as well as Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Khulna divisions, it said.

Ukraine nabs two ‘Hungarian spies’

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine’s SBU security service said yesterday it had detained two alleged Hungarian spies it accused of gathering intelligence, including the location of air defence systems, in the western Zakarpattia region bordering Hungary.

Relations between Kyiv and Budapest remain cold as Hungary’s nationalist leader, Viktor Orban, openly sided with Moscow after it invaded Ukraine three years ago and refused to send Ukraine military aid. Orban has also opposed Kyiv’s bid to join the European Union.

Indian-Pakistan frontier.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament was suspended for a week yesterday, the Indian cricket board announced, a day after a fixture was abandoned in Dharamsala, less than 200 kilometres from Jammu, where explosions had been reported.

The Pakistan Super League, meanwhile, was moved to the United Arab Emirates after an Indian drone struck Rawalpindi stadium on Thursday.

India’s Directorate General of Shipping also directed all ports, terminals and shipyards to increase security, amid “growing concerns regarding potential threats”.

India and Pakistan have downgraded diplomatic ties and slapped a slew of measures against each other since the Pahalgam attack on April 22. India also suspended the critical Indus Waters Treaty between the two countries.

Pakistan yesterday said it responded to letters sent by India on the treaty’s suspension, asserting that the treaty is still in force.

World powers from the US to China have urged the two countries to calm tensions.

American Vice President JD Vance has called for de-escalation, underlining that Washington was “not going to get involved in the middle of a war that’s fundamentally none of our business”.

“We want this thing to de-escalate as quickly as possible. We can’t control these countries, though,” he said in an interview on Fox News show “The Story with Martha MacCallum.”

Meanwhile, the Chinese embassies in India and Pakistan advised citizens yesterday to closely monitor the situation and enhance safety precautions. It also advised its citizens against travelling to these countries.

Several countries have offered to mediate, and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyan Jaishankar in New Delhi on Thursday, days after visiting Pakistan.

The Saudi minister of state for foreign affairs Adel Al-Jubeir was also scheduled to visit Pakistan yesterday, a senior Pakistani official said. Al-Jubeir was in India on Thursday and met Jaishankar.

up living, at this level, in a state of practical atheism,” he said.

In an unscripted introduction to his homily in English, he also evoked a need to overcome divisions within the Church, telling his fellow cardinals: “I know I can rely on each and every one of you to walk with me.”

Many around the world were still digesting the choice of the man sometimes referred to in Rome as the “Latin Yankee” for his decades-long missions in Peru.

“A pope from the United States is almost more surprising than an Argentine and Jesuit pope,” such as Francis, wrote the Corriere della Sera daily. Francis was the first pope ever named from the Americas.

predecessor Francis, said people were turning to “technology, money, success, power, or pleasure.”

“A lack of faith is often tragically accompanied by the loss of meaning in life, the neglect of mercy, appalling violations of human dignity, the crisis of the family and so many other wounds that afflict our society,” said Leo in Italian, wearing a white papal robe trimmed in gold as he addressed the seated white-robed cardinals.

In an apparent message to evangelical Christians, Pope Leo also warned that Jesus cannot be “reduced to a kind of charismatic leader or superhero.”

“This is true not only among non-believers but also among many baptised Christians, who thus end



Bishwo Shahitto Kendro founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed awards a student at an event at the Bangla Academy auditorium yesterday. Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in collaboration with Grameenphone organised the two-day award ceremony of the School Students' Reading Programme. A total of 2,563 students from 31 schools in Dhaka received awards across various categories.

PHOTO: STAR

‘Inequality in education must be addressed’

Speakers at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro event urge govt to form education commission, ensure equal access

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government should prioritise reducing inequality and ensuring quality education, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

Education is the sector most affected by inequality in Bangladesh. As a result, children and adolescents are being deprived of quality education, which stands as a barrier to building a prosperous country and society, they added.

The remarks came during a two-day award ceremony of the School Students' Reading Programme, organised by Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in collaboration with Grameenphone, held at the Bangla Academy auditorium.

"There is no joy in our textbooks; they are not written to enlighten lives," said BSK founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

"Textbooks are not really books. If you define textbooks, they are just money. Textbooks mean jobs; textbooks mean

material advancement in life," he added.

Sayeed said studying and memorising textbooks often leave students tired and frustrated.

"We dislike many things in this country, but perhaps the thing we dislike the most is books. If I attend a wedding with a gift, do people expect that it will be a book? Books have become the most unwelcome thing for us because we only turn to them during exams," he added.

Speaking at the event, Centre for Policy Dialogue's distinguished fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya said while Bangladesh faces many major issues, the most deep and widespread structural problem is the lack of quality education.

"If we aspire to build a new Bangladesh driven by Artificial Intelligence and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, none of it will be possible without ensuring quality education.

Debapriya expressed disappointment

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‘Good mosquitoes’ may turn tide in dengue battle

Study finds Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes could help curb the transmission; experts skeptical

HOW WOLBACHIA WORKS

VIRUS BLOCKING: Wolbachia can interfere with the mosquito's cellular processes, making it difficult for viruses to replicate and spread within the mosquito's body

POPULATION SUPPRESSION: Wolbachia can also lead to a reduction in the overall mosquito population by affecting their reproduction

NO HARM TO HUMANS: Wolbachia bacteria do not cause illness in humans or animals

HELEMUL ALAM

An international team of researchers has developed a strain of Wolbachia-infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, dubbed "good mosquitoes". Tailored to Dhaka's tropical climate, they offer a potential breakthrough in the fight against dengue and other mosquito-borne viruses.

The study, conducted by scientists from Australia's QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, the University of Queensland, Bangladesh's icddr, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was recently published in Scientific Reports in a British journal called "Nature".

Wolbachia, a naturally occurring bacterium found in butterflies and some mosquito species (but not *Aedes aegypti*), blocks the mosquitoes' ability to transmit dengue, chikungunya, and Zika viruses. It is safe for humans and the environment, researchers say, and does not spread through bites or contact.

There are two main strategies for deploying Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes. The Suppression Strategy involves

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RISE IN CULEX POPULATION

Mosquito menace grips Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM and DIPAN NANDY

Abdullah Abbas, a resident of Dilu Road, uses mosquito repellents daily in a desperate attempt to protect his family from the worsening mosquito situation in Dhaka.

The situation has further intensified during the dry season this year.

"The mosquito problem here is extreme. I have to stay under a mosquito net the whole time I'm home," said Abbas.

Culex mosquitoes have made life difficult across many areas of the capital. Many residents say they often take refuge under mosquito nets even when they are not sleeping.

Though recent rains temporarily reduced mosquito numbers, locals report that they return in full force once the weather clears.

Putul Rani, from Shewrapara, said mosquitoes have become so unbearable that it's hard to stay at home.

Fatema Khatun, a housewife from Madhubagh in Moghbazar, added, "The city corporation doesn't spray insecticide here. Usually, coils or sprays help, but during the breeding season, even those don't work. We've been suffering for about a month, but there's been no visible action from the authorities."

The infestation has spread across homes, shops, schools, offices, and courts, frustrating residents over what they say is the lack of an effective response from the city corporations.

Despite using coils, sprays, and nets, many find these methods insufficient. In some areas, children are kept under nets even during the day.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman said Culex mosquito populations usually drop during rain and storms. However, in dense urban areas where breeding sites remain unaffected, they persist year round.

"Minimal control during the dry season contributed to the current crisis," Rahman said. "City corporations should use BTI [Bacillus

thuringiensis israelensis], effective against both Culex and Aedes mosquitoes. But BTI is not yet available in Bangladesh. Instead, we use temephos in drains and malaria oil B, which are often ineffective," he said.

He stressed the need for regular surveillance and consistent control efforts, especially after rain when breeding resumes. BTI is a biological agent that effectively kills mosquito larvae without harming other organisms.

Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Mohammad Azaz acknowledged the issue, stating that only 70 percent of field workers were performing their duties properly.



"We've decided to involve the army to monitor operations and improve effectiveness. An agreement will be finalised this week," he said.

He said DNCC is also focusing on controlling Aedes mosquitoes.

Meanwhile, Dr Nishat Parveen, acting chief health officer of Dhaka South City Corporation, denied claims of negligence. "DSCC has year-round programmes to control both Aedes and Culex mosquitoes. We've increased insecticide usage and are conducting crash programmes in every ward," she said.

DSCC Administrator Md Shahjahan Mia said, "It's not only the city corporation's responsibility. Residents must keep their surroundings clean. Continuous and coordinated action is essential to tackle the mosquito problem."

‘Watching a circus in name of investment’

Khasru slams recent summit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday slammed the recent investment summit,

describing it as a "circus" and arguing that no genuine investment would come to Bangladesh without political stability.

Speaking at a seminar titled "Youth Perspectives on Employment and Multidimensional Industrialisation" in Chattogram, he said, "We are watching a circus in the name of investment. Those who understand how investments work know this is not the way forward."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Another arrested over Parvez killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another arrest has been made in connection with the killing of Jahidul Islam Parvez, a third-year student of Primeasia University, in the capital's Banani area on April 19.

A team of Rab-1 and police arrested Faria Haque Tina, a student of the University of Scholars, from her Nodda residence on Thursday night, said Rasel Sarwar, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station.

The student was produced before a Dhaka court with a 5-day remand prayer yesterday, and the court granted a three-day remand.

So far, seven accused have been arrested in the murder case, OC Rasel said.

On April 20, Jahidul's cousin, Humayun Kabir, filed the case with Banani Police Station, naming eight people, including two leaders of the Banani

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

NU first year admission test rescheduled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The admission test for the first-year honours courses of the National University (NU) for the academic session 2024-25 has been rescheduled due to unavoidable circumstances.

The test will be held on May 31 (from 11:00am to 12:00pm) instead of the previous schedule (May 24, 2025), said Md Mostafizur Rahman, director (acting) of university's public relations department. He said other instructions will remain unchanged.



Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-10	12-45	5-00	6-36	8-00
JAMAT 4-45	1-15	5-15	6-40	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Offering hope, shelter and care to cancer patients

BANCAT stands by those in need; NRB Bank extends support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven-year-old Afiya Khatun's life was upended three years ago when she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a form of blood cancer that weakens the immune system.

While children her age were attending school, the girl from Jhenaidah spent much of her childhood in hospitals, undergoing treatment. Her family, devastated emotionally and financially, struggled to bear the overwhelming cost of care in Dhaka.

Tragedy struck again a year and a half ago when Afiya's father, the family's sole breadwinner, passed away. With no stable income, her treatment faced uncertainty.

Hope came in the form of Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT), a non-profit organisation that took responsibility for Afiya's treatment. For the past five months, she has been receiving care in Dhaka, fully supported by the organisation.

"We had no one in Dhaka," her mother said at a programme at Mosabbir Alok Nibash 2, BANCAT's facility in Bashundhara yesterday. "But this centre has ensured my daughter gets the care she needs."

BANCAT, established in 2021 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, provides free accommodation, food and transport for cancer patients who travel to major hospitals in Dhaka, including Dhaka Medical College and the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital, often with no financial or social support.

The facility can currently accommodate 90 patients and one caregiver per patient, both of whom receive meals and accommodation free of cost.

Yesterday, NRB Bank Chairman Iqbal Ahmed visited the facility and pledged personal support, donating Tk 5 lakh.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BANCAT, established in 2021 amid the Covid-19 pandemic, provides free accommodation, food and transport for cancer patients who travel to major hospitals in Dhaka. The facility can currently accommodate 90 patients and one caregiver per patient.

2 teens killed in Panchagarh road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Two teenagers were killed after a truck hit their bicycle in Debiganj of Panchagarh Thursday night.

Sanjoy Chandra Roy, 14, son of Raj Kumar Roy, and Anik Chandra Roy, 14, son of Atul Chandra Roy, were from Pamuli Bhullipara.

Sanjoy was a class eight student while Anik worked at a local workshop.

Debiganj Police Station OC Soyel Rana said the accident occurred when a stone-laden truck heading towards Debiganj ran over the boys from behind while they were returning home from Laxsmirhat Bazar.

The truck was intercepted by locals, who caught the driver, Abdul Halim, 60, and his helper, Jahid Hasan, and handed them over to the police.

Anik's family filed a case with the police station.

The two arrestees yesterday were produced before a Panchagarh court that sent them to jail, said the OC.



Workers prepare bitumen for roadwork in Khulna. After an entire day of intense labour amid soaring temperatures, they earn around Tk 700. The photo was taken in the Rajbadh area of Batiaghata recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

AL ban not a matter for BNP to decide Says Moyeen Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

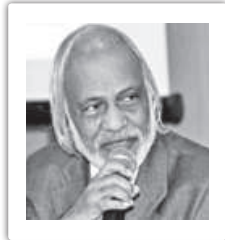
BNP Standing Committee Member Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday said the decision to ban Awami League can be taken by the Election Commission or the government, not by BNP.

He made the comment while speaking to journalists after a meeting with a delegation from the Carter Center at the BNP Chairperson's office in Gulshan.

"Our secretary general has already said this is a matter for the people to decide. The people will determine who will participate in the election and who won't..." Moyeen Khan added.

He also said, "You [the journalists] have asked me whether Awami League will participate in the election or not, whether they will be accepted or not, whether they will be banned or not. Why don't you ask this question to Awami League? Do they really want to participate in the election? Do they really want democracy? That is for them to say."

"Nine months have passed. Has a single leader of Awami League sought forgiveness from the people for their oppression, looting, and misdeeds? Has anyone admitted their mistakes?" he asked.



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The construction of an 81-metre bridge over the Kumar river in Ujangram area of Kushtia Sadar upazila remains incomplete even after nearly five years.

The delay has disrupted road communication on the Kushtia-Alamdanga route, increasing transportation costs for local farmers and contributing to a rise in road accidents.

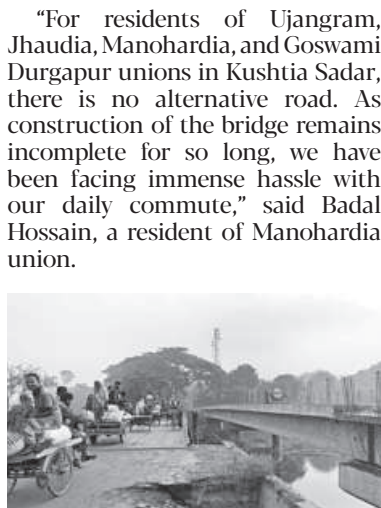
The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) initiated construction of the bridge on November 3, 2020 at a cost of Tk 7.25 crore, aiming to replace the old steel structure at the same spot, which had become vulnerable and risky for vehicular movement.

The project was originally scheduled for completion by March 8, 2022. However, despite two extensions to the deadline, a significant portion of the work remains unfinished.

The bridge is vital for connecting people from Kushtia Sadar, Harinakundu of Jhenaidah, and Alamdanga of Chuadanga.

KUMAR RIVER

Bridge delay hampers life, livelihoods



Sumaiya, a student of Kushtia Government College from Jhaudia union, said, "Buses cannot ply the old bridge, and the new bridge remains under construction, so bus operation remains halted on the route. As such, commuting daily to attend classes became impossible, so I now have to live in the town."

Jalil, a local farmer, said, "Our

vegetables used to be transported to markets in Dhaka. Now, large trucks cannot cross the old bridge, so traders use smaller vehicles, which increases their transport costs. As a result, they offer us lower prices for our produce."

The bridge construction is being carried out by a joint venture called MNM and SE (JV) from Pabna's Bera upazila.

Contacted, Nuruzzaman Mia, proprietor of the firm, said delay in fund disbursement by LGED has slowed down the progress.

"About 90 percent of the work has been completed. The remaining 10 percent will be done by next month. However, I have so far received only Tk 4 crore of the project cost," he said.

Md Abdur Razzak, executive engineer of LGED in Kushtia, said, "The work is almost completed. The sub-contractors, who were previously engaged, disappeared after August 5 changeover. Now, the main contractor has taken full responsibility to finish the work. We hope to open the bridge by next month."

Maize cultivation transforms lives on Teesta sandy chars

S DILIROY, Lalmonirhat

Char farmer Maqbul Hossain, 65, has been cultivating maize on seven bighas of sandy char land on the Teesta riverbed for the past 10 years. Before switching to maize, he could hardly grow any crops on the char lands and had to struggle with poverty to survive. But after starting maize cultivation, his family began to prosper.

Maqbul Hossain lives in Char Shoulmari area of Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat.

This year, Maqbul harvested 290 maunds of maize from seven bighas of land. He spent Tk 81,000 on maize cultivation and is selling the crop at Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,160 per maund.

"If I had not started cultivating maize on sandy char, I would still be struggling with poverty. Maize cultivation has brought prosperity to my family," he said.



Delwar Hossain, 60, a farmer from Char Doani area, said he lost 10 bighas of land to river erosion and had to move to the city with his family, earning a living by driving a rickshaw. As chars re-emerged on the Teesta riverbed, he returned to his village 12 years ago and started cultivating maize. This year, he cultivated maize on eight bighas and harvested 322 maunds.

He said, "With the income I earn every year from maize cultivation, I can meet my family's needs and still save some money."

Many other farmers echoed him.

Shafiqul Islam, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Rangpur, said maize has been cultivated on 126,501 hectares of land in five districts of the Rangpur region -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Nilphamari -- with a production target of 13.92 lakh tonnes. About 50 percent of the maize is produced in char areas.

This year, it has been cultivated on 33,055 hectares of land in the district, with most of it grown on the sandy char land along the Teesta riverbed, he said.

The country's annual maize demand is around 70 lakh tonnes, while production currently stands at about 68 lakh tonnes. "No maize will have to be imported after the next two to three years," he added.

Former public prosecutor held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Zahirul Islam Selim, the recently removed public prosecutor and vice president of the Cumilla city Awami League, was arrested at his residence in the city early yesterday.

He was detained on allegations of conspiring to incite unrest through an online meeting involving ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, said Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohinul Islam.

He said the former PP is an accused in a case related to an attack on the anti-discrimination student movement.

Police said he will be presented before the court today.

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Sealed tenders hereby invited by Prime Bank PLC. from reputed companies in the relevant field for providing below item:

Name of Work	Period of Sale		Last Date of Submission
	From	To	
Temenos Transact Implementation for Prime Bank PLC.	12.05.2025	20.05.2025	20.05.2025

Details are given on the Prime Bank website.
<https://www.primebank.com.bd/tenders>

Head of Facility Management Division

Prime Bank

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of Executive Engineer
Rajshahi PWD Division-2, Rajshahi
Phone-0247-812276 & Fax-772279
www.pwd.gov.bd

Memo No: 25.36.8100.120.16.051.24.1189 Date: 08/05/2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following works:

e-Tender ID No.	Name of the work	Last Date and Time for Tender Security Submission	Tender/Proposal Closing & Opening Date and Time
1108857	Establishment of Cancer Unit of Medical College Hospital of Eight Divisional Head quarter (15 Storied building with 17 storied foundation having 2(two) basement) at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, Rajshahi (Sub-Head: Remaining, Finishing & Ancillary Works of Cancer Hospital Building at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, Rajshahi).	29-May-2025 11:00	29-May-2025 12:00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender Registration in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>), is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP registered Bank's Branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Abu Hayat Muhammad Shakiul Azam)
Executive Engineer
Rajshahi PWD Division-2, Rajshahi.
email: ee_raj2@pwd.gov.bd

GD-1126

New political platform 'UP Bangladesh' launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

A new political platform, United Peoples Bangladesh (UP Bangladesh), was launched yesterday.

The 82-member platform, which includes former leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir and the Jatiya Nagarik Committee, was announced at the Central Shaheed Minar around 4:30pm.

Former Dhaka University Shibir president Ali Ahsan Zanaed was named convenor, with Arefin Muhammad Hizbullah as member secretary. Rafe Salman Rifat, also a former DU Shibir president, was appointed chief coordinator, Nayeem Ahmad as chief organiser, and Shahrin Sultana Era as spokesperson.

At the programme, Zanaed said the platform would work to resist fascism, communalism, and corruption. "Our political journey is rooted in the July uprising. Our only politics will be to realise the dreams of the martyred families," he said.

UP Bangladesh aims to pressure the government to prosecute those responsible for the July killings and to ensure rehabilitation for the injured and support for the families of the deceased.

JOYNAGAR IN FARIDPUR

'Tal-pakha' artisans struggle to stay afloat

SUZID DAS, Faridpur

Seventy-year-old Shomiruddin Nagarchi's back is bent with age, but his hands remain steady as he sits cross-legged on the mud veranda of his tin-roofed house in Joynagar village under Boalmari upazila of Faridpur.

Around him are piles of freshly crafted palm-leaf fans (locally known as "tal-pakha"), a symbol of tradition that has endured for generations.

For Shomiruddin, making palm fans is not just a livelihood but a legacy. "I have no farmland. My father and grandfather made these fans, and I learned from them," he says with a quiet smile. "It's love, it's heritage. That's why I can't leave it."

Shomiruddin's wife, Bhanu Nagarchi, also works alongside him. The couple, whose only daughter was married off years ago in Jhenaidah, now live alone.

Bhanu said together they make around 50 to 60 fans a day, often working from dawn until late at night.

But times have changed. With the spread of electricity and the rise of electric fans, demand for the palm fan has declined sharply, she added.

"There used to be so much

work... two artisans could make over 100 fans in a day," Shomiruddin recalled. "Now, we barely make 25 to 30 a day."

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw the entire village at work. Men sliced palm leaves and split bamboo, while women stitched and coloured

of near unemployment. Some turn to other work, including joining village musical troupes to make ends meet.

Papi Begum, 35, a homemaker, said she and her family make 50 to 60 fans a day. A single fan retails for Tk 40 to 50, but wholesalers buy in bulk



the fans.

Talking to the craftsmen revealed that Joynagar is home to around 100 families engaged in the craft. During the peak season from Chaitra to Ashwin, the village comes alive with activity. However, from Kartik to Falgun, the artisans face months

-- about Tk 2,500 to 3,500 per hundred, depending on market rates.

"Costs have climbed: a single fan now costs Tk 10 to 15 to make, including palm leaves, bamboo, thread and dyes, leaving little profit," she said.

SEE PAGE 9 COLD 4

India tells X to block over 8,000 accounts

AFP, Washington

India has ordered X to block over 8,000 accounts, the platform said Thursday, adding that it was reluctantly complying with what it described as government-imposed "censorship."

The move appears to be part of India's sweeping crackdown targeting social media accounts of Pakistani politicians, celebrities and media organizations amid deadly confrontations between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

The order, which X said includes demands to block international news organizations and other prominent users, comes a day after Meta banned a prominent Muslim news page on Instagram in India at New Delhi's request.

It said that in most cases, the government had not specified which posts from the accounts violated Indian laws.



Indian villagers react while waiting for transportation as they evacuate, following overnight Pakistani artillery shelling in Uri, about 100 km from Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

China-made Pak J-10 downs two Indian fighter jets

Say US officials; Delhi has not acknowledged loss of planes

REUTERS, Islamabad, Washington

A top Chinese-made Pakistani fighter plane shot down at least two Indian military aircraft on Wednesday, two US officials told Reuters, marking a major milestone for Beijing's advanced fighter jet.

An Indian Air Force spokesperson said he had no comment when asked about the Reuters report.

The performance of a leading Chinese fighter jet against a Western rival is being closely watched in Washington for insights into how Beijing might fare in any showdown over Taiwan or the wider Indo-Pacific.

One US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was high confidence that Pakistan had used the Chinese-made J-10 aircraft to launch air-to-air missiles against Indian fighter jets - bringing down at least two.

Another official said at least one Indian jet that was shot down was a French-made Rafale fighter aircraft. Both officials said Pakistan's F-16 aircraft, made by Lockheed Martin, were not used in the shootdown.

Delhi has not acknowledged the loss of any of its planes and instead said it carried out successful strikes against what it said was "terrorist" infrastructure inside Pakistan.

World powers from the US to Russia and China have called for calm in one of the world's most dangerous, and most populated, nuclear flashpoint regions.

In France, Rafale manufacturer Dassault Aviation consortium, which makes the Meteor air-to-air missile, could not immediately be reached for comment.

While Reuters reported on Wednesday that three Indian planes went down, citing local government officials in India, this marks the first Western confirmation that Pakistan's Chinese-made jets were used in the shootdowns.

Pakistan's Defense minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, told Reuters on Thursday that the J-10 was used to shoot down three French-made Rafale planes, which were newly acquired by India. Altogether, Pakistan says it downed five Indian planes in air-to-air combat.

The Rafale and the model of the J-10 used by Pakistan are both considered generation 4.5 fighter jets, placing them at the leading edge of combat aircraft.

Western analysts and defense industry sources said the live use of some of the advanced weapons that could be deployed in future major power conflicts would be scrutinized in minute detail, but emphasized it was too early to draw firm conclusions.

INDO-PAK ESCALATION

Conflict offers rich intel opportunity for China

Analysts believe Beijing's extensive satellite network is deployed to deeply scrutinise Indian actions in real time

REUTERS, Hong Kong

The conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir offers a potentially rich intelligence harvest for China in its own rivalry with India as it gains data from its fighter jets and other weapons used in action by Pakistan.

Security analysts and diplomats say China's military modernisation has reached a point where it has the ability to deeply scrutinise Indian actions in real time from its border installations and Indian Ocean fleets as well as from space.

"From an intelligence perspective, this is a rare target of opportunity right on China's borders involving a key potential adversary," said Singapore-based security analyst Alexander Neill.

Security analysts say both sides have taken steps to strengthen their military facilities and capabilities along the border, but it is also from above that China packs an intelligence gathering punch.

The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) notes that China now fields 267 satellites - including 115 devoted to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and a further 81 that monitor military electronic and signals information. It is a network that dwarfs its regional rivals, including India, and is second only to the US.

"Both in terms of space and missile tracking capabilities, China is much better off now in terms of being able to monitor things as

they happen," said Neill, who is an adjunct fellow at Hawaii's Pacific Forum think-tank.

China's defence ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters' questions about the deployment of its military satellites and other questions about its intelligence gathering.

Pakistan's military media wing and information minister did not immediately respond to a request

includes us," he said.

Chinese military intelligence teams would be eager to garner information on any Indian use of air defences and launches of cruise and ballistic missiles - not just in terms of flight paths and accuracy but command and control information, analysts and diplomats say.

Any deployment of India's BrahMos supersonic cruise missile



for comment on any information sharing with China. Pakistan has previously said it has an "all-weather strategic, cooperative partnership" with China.

India has not commented on the issue, but its top diplomat in Britain, High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami, told Sky News on Thursday that China's relationship with Pakistan was not a concern for India.

"China requires a relationship with all of its neighbours, that

a weapon it developed jointly with Russia - would be of particular interest, some analysts say, given they do not believe it has been used in combat.

China has also beefed up its intelligence gathering at sea. It has been increasingly active in the Indian Ocean in recent years, with China deploying space tracking ships as well as oceanographic research and fishing vessels on extended deployments, open source intelligence trackers say.

Israel intercepts missile launched from Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's military said it intercepted a missile launched from Yemen yesterday, with AFP journalists reporting explosions heard in the Jerusalem area.

"Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several areas in Israel, a missile launched from Yemen was intercepted," a military statement said after earlier announcing it had "identified the launch of a missile from Yemen toward Israeli territory".

Meanwhile, some 200 seafarers aboard more than 15 ships stuck for weeks off Yemen's port of Ras Isa are preparing to offload cargoes and leave thanks to a ceasefire deal between Houthi militia and the US, maritime and labour union sources said on Thursday.

Still, threat levels for shipping remained high given the Houthis' confirmation that Israeli-related assets remained open to attack and the attendant risks to broader shipping, maritime officials said.

Ships with no connection to Israel had been targeted in the past with no certainty of safe passage, reports Reuters.

President Donald Trump announced on Tuesday the US would stop bombing the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen as they had agreed to stop targeting US ships in Red Sea waters off the Arabian Peninsula country.

However, the deal does not cover close US ally Israel, the Houthis stated on Wednesday.

Malaysian ex-PM Mahathir blasts 'old world' Trump

AFP, Putrajaya



Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad is giving President Donald Trump three months before his fellow Americans force him to rethink his stringent global tariff strategy, accusing the US leader of "living in an old world".

Speaking to AFP in an interview two months ahead of his 100th birthday, the plain-speaking Mahathir said: "Trump will find that his tariffs are hurting America, and the people in America will end up against him."

The US president's stop-start tariff rollout will hit Asian nations hard - including Malaysia, which faces a 24 percent levy in July unless the two countries can strike a deal.

"It's going to cause America a lot of problems, so I give Trump three months," said Mahathir, who ruled Malaysia in two stints lasting nearly a quarter of a century.

Still working a five-day week from his office in the administrative capital Putrajaya, the sprightly nonagenarian remains as outspoken as ever.

"Donald Trump is irrational. I don't think he thinks carefully about what he's doing," said Mahathir.

"His policies on migration -- and also trying to reduce the cost of government, sacking thousands of people -- all these things are not good.

"It will not make America great," he said, taking a jab at Trump's MAGA election slogan.

Asked what he thought of some of Trump's foreign policies -- proposing to take over Greenland and seize control of the Panama Canal -- Mahathir said the US leader was "living in an old world".

Throughout his long career, Mahathir was a proponent of a "Look East" policy -- pushing Malaysians to find solutions in Asia rather than depending on Western nations.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, watch Russian service members marching past during a flower-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Victory Day, marking the 80th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, in central Moscow, Russia, yesterday.

Trump fires librarian of US Congress

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump has fired the country's top librarian, a senator said, cutting short the term of the only woman and first African American to take on the role.

New Mexico Senator Martin Heinrich shared an email late Thursday that he said Carla Hayden had received informing her of her termination from the role of librarian of Congress "effective immediately."

Hayden was nominated to manage the world's largest library in 2016 but has been criticized by conservatives, including members of the American Accountability Foundation lobby group, which has accused her of seeking to "indoctrinate America's children with radical sexual ideologies."

End campus paralyses without delay

KUET, Barishal University protests must leave space for compromise

The continued paralysis at the Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET), which has been effectively closed for over two and a half months now, may be a reflection of the present turbulent time itself, but nothing justifies such disruptions as they leave a profound impact on the future of students. The situation, triggered by clashes over a demand of student politics ban on February 18, provides a troubling example of how unchecked disciplinary violations, administrative inertia, political interference, and an inability to compromise can combine to hold an entire institution hostage. Despite the syndicate's decision on Sunday to resume academic activities, the reopening has been stalled due to the reluctance of teachers protesting over assaults and smear campaigns against some faculty members.

KUET teachers have been on strike for five days now. Even though the interim vice-chancellor has been holding repeated meetings and the syndicate has reportedly made progress on the teachers' demands, a breakthrough in the stalemate continues to be elusive. Meanwhile, in an apparent repeat of this chaotic mess, Barishal University is heading towards its own shutdown. Over the past week, a group of students have staged protests demanding the VC's resignation—accusing her of “authoritarianism” and unprofessional conduct—with a section of teachers also extending their solidarity. Students have declared that they will suspend academic activities, excluding semester exams, from Monday if their demands are not met.

These are not isolated disruptions. Since the political upheaval of the July uprising, we have seen repeated episodes of campus unrest across the country, where students, divided into various factions, as well as teachers and administrators clashed over various grievances but effective solutions were rarely achieved. We have also seen such unrest at various colleges and even the polytechnic institutes, where students recently enforced a shutdown over slow progress on their six-point demand. Although the students' platform has decided to temporarily suspend the shutdown programme, allowing classes to resume, exams will remain on hold for now.

This state of affairs in our academic institutions is deeply regrettable. We call on all parties involved to recognise the heavy cost of their uncompromising stances. While some of their demands are genuine, their chosen methods of expression are throwing academic calendars into disarray, delaying exams and graduation, and hurting both current students and future admissions. There is no alternative to proper response from the authorities to address legitimate grievances, but students, and teachers, too have a responsibility here. They must prioritise uninterrupted continuation of academic activities regardless of the issue at hand, while continuing negotiations in parallel. Only through cooperation and compromise can we protect our broader academic interests.

WASA must fix water crisis in Chattogram

Develop master plan, serve neighbourhoods without WASA lines

We are concerned about the plight of Chattogram city residents deprived of access to water from WASA. According to a report by Prothom Alo, despite WASA spending about Tk 8,800 crore since 2009 on eight water supply projects, about a third of the residents still struggle for safe water every day. Their number—considering the variations in population figures given by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and Chattogram City Corporation (CCC)—would be anywhere between 12 lakh and 21 lakh people, underscoring the severity of the problem. Without any supply from WASA, they are forced to rely on deep tube wells, purchased water, or nearby ponds and other water bodies, leaving them exposed to various risks.

The Chattogram WASA has about 98,000 customer connections. Excluding those without WASA lines, the current daily demand is 560 million litres, while daily production capacity stands at 500 million litres. That means WASA is struggling to serve even those connected to its grid. The crisis, according to the above-mentioned report, is most severe in 10 wards: 1, 2, 10, 11, 18, and 37-41. Apparently, WASA connections simply don't exist in over 100 neighbourhoods. What's equally troubling is that WASA has no master plan to address the needs of a growing city even after six decades of operation. A comprehensive master plan based on accurate data and future projections could be useful in mapping out where pipelines are missing, how much water is required in each zone, and how many treatment plants must be built.

Without such planning, the agency has been executing project after project in an ad-hoc manner, which is deeply troubling. We urge the Chattogram WASA to treat this issue with the urgency it demands, as access to safe water is a fundamental right. As things stand, the first step towards resolving the crisis should be to develop a robust master plan. As experts have pointed out, this plan must account for future population growth, area-specific needs, and pipeline expansion to neglected zones. Moreover, given the questionable planning and execution of past projects, WASA must improve its project design and implementation capacity, and also address the mismatches in existing population figures so that everyone benefits from its projects and initiatives without exception.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Mandela becomes South Africa's president

On this day in 1994, Nelson Mandela, whose efforts to end apartheid led to his imprisonment (1962-90) and earned him a share (with F.W. de Klerk) of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, became the president of South Africa.



We need more than air purifiers to clean up Dhaka's air



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Almost everyone in Dhaka is a doctor. They can walk into a pharmacy and order common medicine for cold, indigestion, or allergies. One of my health-conscious colleagues even recommended taking a daily dose of medicine for allergic rhinitis, regardless of whether symptoms are present. Given Dhaka's high concentration of air pollutants—150 percent above the air quality guideline limit set by the World Health Organization (WHO)—each citizen involuntarily inhales toxins equivalent to 1.7 cigarettes a day. The nagging itchy sensation in our breathing tracts is no fluke.

The apparently well-intentioned prescription of my colleague belies a dangerous problem: a self-suggested remedy that ignores the bigger picture. Similarly, reading about the plan to install smog towers (air purifiers) in Dhaka city makes me reflect on the paradoxical gap between noble intention and the harsh, wider reality.

As many know by now, the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has recently announced the installation of 25-30 industrial-grade air purifiers, donated by a foreign philanthropist as part of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. According to media reports, each tower, valued at Tk 50-60 lakh, will be installed under a pilot project that includes options for “limited branding,” while the DNCC will cover the electricity bill.

The introduction of pollutant-fighting giant machines sounds surreal in a city that cannot even fill potholes or guarantee pedestrians the right to walk on footpaths. Yet, there is this new hype created around cleaning the air for city residents with just 25-30 air purifiers. The proposition is as ridiculous as setting up an air conditioner inside an oven. Each of these machines can clean approximately 30,000 cubic feet of air per minute. With 25-30 machines, we may be able to purify 45-54 million cubic feet per hour. Even the DNCC administrator says one machine has the strength of 80-100 trees. If that is the case, might it not be more feasible to provide four large trees to 20 houses in an area rather than pursue such an

ambitious endeavour?

The technology may be useful for temporarily improving air quality in a hospital or school compound, but it can never be a long-term, large-scale solution. The experiences of New Delhi and Beijing, which have used this Dutch technology for ionising pollutants, can offer some insight. As Dhaka undergoes



What we really need to do to keep the air clean is put a stop to hazardous practices like burning garbage out in the open, which directly affects public health.

FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

massive modernisation, we are likely to bear the burden of a construction fiesta for years to come. Old buildings are being demolished to make room for new condominiums and business complexes.

Then, there are the ongoing projects of flyovers, metro lines, airport expansions, underpasses, etc. Factory waste, construction dust, and brick kilns, according to the Department of Environment (DoE), are responsible for 60-70 percent of total air pollution. The next culprit is vehicle emissions. The red alert issued against old, rickety buses belching black smoke is a complete joke, as nobody wants to throw stones at the hives of transport workers. Other sources include burning leaves and garbage, road dust, or smoke from substations and generators that we install to deal with load-shedding. The sources of air pollutants are in plain sight. Yet, instead of addressing the root causes, the DNCC has opted

for an initiative that feels less like a cure and more like a cosmetic fix.

Beijing reduced its smog crisis not only through high-tech air filtration systems but also by reforming its overall environmental policies. It shut down or relocated factories, rerouted traffic, enforced strict emission standards, and adopted green policies, including planting millions of trees. If Dhaka wants to replicate Beijing's success, it too needs systemic changes.

The issue with CSR is that companies making the funding often prioritise their own agendas. They rarely include after-service in their contracts. However, these machines need regular maintenance and filter changes, as clogging is a constant issue. DNCC's current reputation for maintenance

policymakers insist on using glass jars for water or fountain pens for writing to reduce plastic dependency—yet they allow the plastic industry to thrive. Their lip service simply allows us to be indifferent to environmental issues. What good is pouring water from a jar at a seminar if the bottle that carried the water was plastic? Has the city corporation taken recycling seriously?

We need to implement green policies that address the root causes of pollution. Modernising brick kilns is a priority. We must phase out the traditional, fixed-chimney kilns and impose taxes on those who don't adopt green materials. Financial incentives and strict enforcement of rules are key. Law enforcement agencies must ensure construction companies use dust nets, water sprinklers, and on-site waste management. Loose gravel and soil near trees can be covered with wood chips. While the need for transportation remains endless, we must invest in electric vehicles, create bike lanes, and ensure regular vehicle emission testing.

As citizens, we also need to be aware of our contribution to the crisis. Our household substations, diesel generators, and AC overloads generate significant pollution. Many of us install solar panels just to meet RAJUK compliance. But by adopting newer technology, we can equip our homes and commercial buildings as neighbourhood microgrids. Smart cities around the world are utilising all available surfaces for alternative energy. Our elevated motorways can be layered with solar panels, and our malls and shopping areas can use kinetic pavement to convert pedestrian footsteps into electric energy.

Air pollution is a crisis that cannot be taken lightly. According to the World Bank, air pollution in Bangladesh was responsible for 78,145-88,229 deaths in 2019, accounting for about 20 percent of the country's premature deaths. The economic impact is equally alarming, with air pollution costing the equivalent of 8.32 percent of GDP in 2019.

The facts are self-evident. We need to make community leaders aware of them. For instance, we can request religious leaders to use Friday sermons to create environmental awareness, promote the greening of public spaces, and encourage people to reject vehicles that belch black smoke.

It's easy to dismiss Dhaka as an unliveable city. The challenge for us is to replace that tantrum with the slogan—“Dhaka is everyone's responsibility”—and act accordingly.

UPHOLDING NATURAL JUSTICE

A true dawn or an illusion?



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MD ANWAR HOSSEN

Natural justice stands as a fundamental principle within the common law system, serving to protect fairness, transparency, and integrity in judicial and administrative processes. Although not formally enshrined in legislation, its core tenets—the right to a fair hearing (*audi alteram partem*) and the rule against bias (*nemo iudex in causa sua*)—have been shaped and affirmed through judicial pronouncements over time. These principles function as essential safeguards against arbitrary or unjust decision-making, ensuring that individuals are given a meaningful opportunity to present their case before an impartial authority. Regardless of the setting in which they are applied, the enduring importance of procedural fairness underpins public confidence in the justice system and reinforces the rule of law.

The notion of natural justice has evolved within Bangladesh's legal system from its British common law roots. Though not explicitly enshrined in our constitution, it is upheld through judicial interpretation and case law, influenced by the UK and post-colonial Indian legal traditions. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh, particularly through Article 102 of the constitution, plays a crucial role in enforcing these principles by issuing writs when the legal rights of people are violated. Courts have consistently ruled that administrative and quasi-judicial bodies must adhere to the principle of natural justice, even in the absence of statutory mandates, especially when decisions

affect individual rights, livelihoods, or reputations. Violations, such as denial of a fair hearing or evident bias, often prompt judicial intervention through writs like certiorari, mandamus, or prohibition. The doctrine of legitimate expectation further reinforces the obligation to ensure fair treatment and consultation in public law decisions. While the application of natural justice in administrative matters allows some flexibility, authorities are still expected to act in good faith, ensure fair hearings, and avoid conflicts of interest, with the courts empowered to review and nullify decisions when these principles are breached.

Constitutional status and enforcement of the notion of natural justice vary across countries. While the core values remain consistent, the US provides explicit constitutional protections, the UK relies on common law traditions, India blends constitutional provisions with active judicial interpretation, and Bangladesh upholds natural justice through judicial enforcement of broader constitutional rights.

In Bangladesh, natural justice is not explicitly stated in the constitution but is upheld through Articles 27 and 31, which ensure equality before the law and protection from arbitrary actions. Article 102 empowers the High Court Division to enforce these rights and invalidate decisions violating natural justice. Judicial interpretation plays a vital role in safeguarding fair hearings and impartiality, compensating for

the absence of direct constitutional language. Any person, citizen or not, may invoke Article 102 of the constitution to seek a remedy for violation of natural justice in Bangladesh.

However, despite being fundamental to a fair legal system, the principles of natural justice face numerous systemic challenges in Bangladesh that hinder their consistent application. Procedural fairness and judicial impartiality are often compromised due to factors such as legal illiteracy, excessive bureaucratic discretion, judicial delays, political interference, and corruption. Many citizens and administrative officials remain unaware of their rights to fair hearings and available remedies. Arbitrary decision-making by the officials connected with the affairs of the authorities is common, especially in areas like land acquisition, adjudication of statutory power and licensing, due to a lack of clear guidelines. Court backlogs delay justice, while political and corrupt influences and interference weaken impartiality. Institutional accountability in almost all affairs is limited, allowing procedural impropriety. Moreover, inadequate training of judges, government officials, and personnel connected with the administration of justice often leads to flawed, unlawful, arbitrary, or biased decisions. Consequently, the enforcement of the rule of natural justice remains significantly constrained, undermining both the legal system's integrity and the rule of law.

To overcome the challenges, several key steps should be taken. Legal institutions must be reformed by enforcing a strict code of conduct, ensuring transparency, and holding officials accountable, followed by strict disciplinary action. Anti-corruption efforts should include digital case management systems, regular audits, and strong penalties and disciplinary

action against corrupt practices. Judicial independence must be protected by introducing constitutional safeguards and creating independent and impartial bodies for appointing judges. Compulsory training programmes should be provided to judges, lawyers, and administrative officers regularly to build their understanding of the principles of natural justice, legal and ethical responsibilities. To reduce case backlogs, the judiciary should be strengthened with more manpower, other logistic support, digital tools, and alternative dispute resolution methods. Finally, fair and transparent recruitment and promotion systems must be established in judicial and administrative services to promote meritocracy over favouritism.

As Bangladesh transitions into a new political era after August 2024, there is a renewed sense of optimism about restoring natural justice, an ideal that has been significantly weakened in recent years by persistent allegations of political bias, state repression, and manipulation of legal institutions. The interim government has signalled a clear commitment to reform, emphasising the independence of the judiciary, the importance of fairness, impartiality, and the right to a fair hearing, principles that were often disregarded in the past. While legal experts and civil society groups remain cautiously hopeful, they stress the urgent need for concrete, measurable reforms that uphold the rule of law, good governance, and the access to justice for all to safeguard individual freedoms and protect the administration and judiciary from political influence and interference. At this critical juncture, reestablishing the principle of natural justice is not merely an aspirational goal; it is an essential cornerstone for establishing the rule of law, good governance and access to justice to restore public confidence in democratic institutions.

How education spending reveals a government’s true priorities



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KAMRUL HASSAN MAMUN

The truest measure of a government’s sincerity is not found in its slogans or manifestos, but in how much importance it places on education. And the clearest, most objective indicator of that commitment is the budget allocated to the education sector. Numbers don’t lie—they tell us where priorities truly lie. Let’s consider the track record of the previous government. In FY2018, they allocated an annual budget equivalent to 2.2 percent of the GDP to education. A gradual decrease followed: in FY 2021, the education budget allocation was equivalent to 2.09 percent of GDP; 2.08 percent for FY2022; 1.83 percent in FY2023; 1.76 percent in FY2024; and finally, a historic low of just 1.69 percent in FY2025. Let that sink in: a steady, deliberate decrease in education spending over the years.

But the story doesn’t end with shrinking budgets. In reality, the actual investment in meaningful education was even lower than what the budget figures claimed. To make matters worse, the leadership of the education ministry was entrusted to corrupt figures. University leadership, too, was shaped not by merit but by blind loyalty. Vice-chancellors (VCs) and pro-VCs were chosen for their political subservience and academic mediocrity, not for their vision or scholarship. So, let’s ask ourselves a simple but serious question: can a government that systematically devalues education claim to be patriotic?

One of the more theatrical attempts by the former government to appear reform-minded was the rollout of a new national curriculum, which they claimed was inspired

by models from Finland and Japan. But here’s the hard truth: no curriculum, no matter how well-designed, can succeed without quality teachers. Even Finland’s world-renowned system would collapse if implemented with Bangladesh’s current salary structure, training, and social value of primary and secondary school teachers. A curriculum isn’t magic; it’s just a framework. What brings it to life are the people who teach it.

At the university level, physics is physics, whether you are at Harvard, MIT, Dhaka University or Rajshahi University. But the outcomes vary drastically. Why? Because of the teachers. If you swapped Harvard’s physics faculty with that of DU, Harvard would begin to falter, and DU would soar. That’s the transformative power of inspired educators. The real priority, therefore, should have been to recruit, train, and retain excellent teachers, to elevate the profession and make it desirable to the nation’s best minds. Instead, the new curriculum added confusion, anxiety, and disappointment to an already stressed system. And in many ways, this educational frustration played a quiet but significant role in the downfall of the previous regime.

I still hold hope in the current government. But that hope now hangs by a thread, and it depends entirely on the next national budget. If the interim administration allocates a budget that’s equivalent to at least 4.5 percent of our GDP, my confidence will remain. If they dare to go further—to five percent or beyond—it will be a historic moment for Bangladesh, and a sign that we finally have a government that understands the foundation of nation-



Education reform is the first and most urgent step towards building a better Bangladesh.

building. But if they repeat the Awami League government’s mistakes and hover around two percent, my optimism will vanish. Because the truth is, the root of nearly every crisis in this country—corruption, inequality, intolerance, weak institutions—can be traced back to one thing: a broken education system. To build a developed nation, we need enlightened minds. And the only scalable way to produce enlightened minds is to invest in educational institutions. When you hire truly exceptional teachers, you don’t need an elaborate curriculum; their thinking, speaking, and behaviour become the curriculum.

Now, a pressing question: what if the government listens? What if we suddenly double the education budget? How should that money be spent? First, we must face an uncomfortable truth: Bangladesh does not have a single university that qualifies as a real research university. What we currently call universities are, in reality, teaching colleges. A genuine research university has multiple postdoctoral researchers in each department, both local and international. Globally, it’s

not uncommon for departments in top institutions to have 50 or more post-docs. The same cannot be said for Bangladesh. To change that, we must offer international-standard fellowships. That means at least Tk 100,000 per month for post-docs, and at least Tk 80,000 per month for PhD students. Without that, we simply won’t attract top talent.

Of course, if PhD students and post-docs are paid well, their supervisors—our faculty members—must also be compensated fairly. At a minimum, salaries should be aligned with those in India or Pakistan. The same logic applies to teachers at primary, secondary, and college levels. Only then will we see our best minds return from abroad and choose teaching not as a last resort, but as a calling. This is not a utopian demand. We are not asking for salaries matching those of the West. We are simply asking to consider and compare with our South Asian neighbours.

To reverse the trend of brain drain, we must create an ecosystem for meaningful, world class research. That means building

new institutes, upgrading university infrastructure, and hiring outstanding researchers. It also means freeing critical institutions from the shackles of bureaucracy. The University Grants Commission (UGC) should be made an independent body. Similarly, organisations like the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) must be liberated from ministerial control. Their researchers should receive competitive pay and benefits.

Let me illustrate how our system treats talent. A scientist from the BAEC recently won a Fulbright scholarship, one of the most prestigious academic awards in the world. And yet, the higher authorities denied him leave to pursue it. Meanwhile, bureaucrats routinely travel abroad on public money, for conferences, training, or “exposure visits” of questionable value. Many even go for higher education on government funding, with full leave granted. But a scientist with a Fulbright? Denied. This hypocrisy reveals a deeper rot. Merit is punished, mediocrity rewarded. Talented individuals aren’t nurtured, they are pushed away. Promising young lecturers are blocked from going abroad for PhDs unless they complete two years of service. As a result, many drift into university politics, get trapped in networks of convenience and compromise, and never rise to their potential.

Education reform is not a luxury. It is not something we can “get to later.” It is the first and most urgent step towards building a better Bangladesh. And at the heart of that reform must be respect for knowledge, for teachers, and the pursuit of truth. Allocate at least 4.5 percent of GDP to education in the upcoming budget. If you dare to go further to five percent or more we will know: we have, at long last, a government with vision. If not, the people will judge you by the same metrics we used to judge your predecessors. Because in the end, budgets are moral documents. They reveal what a government truly values. And history will remember those who chose to invest in minds, not monuments.

You have made me endless...



Milia Ali
is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

MILIA ALI

When Pochishe Baishakh (Baishakh 25), Rabindranath Tagore’s birthday, comes, I feel a deep urge to acknowledge his all-pervading spiritual presence in my life. However, it’s difficult to express in words my feelings for someone who has been the nucleus of my core beliefs since childhood. There is one way to chronicle the progression of my relationship with Rabindranath Tagore—through his songs, a terrain I can traverse with some degree of ease and familiarity. This column, therefore, is not an essay on Tagore’s literary contributions or a critique of his impact on the Bangalee psyche. I concede with humility that there are numerous scholars and authors who are better equipped to write a critical analysis of his writings. Hence, this is an intimate narrative, tracing the evolution of my persona through Tagore’s songs.

My first awareness of “self” occurred while I was listening to Tagore singer Suchitra Mitra sing, “*Kothao amar hariye jawar nei mana monay monay, mele dilem gaaner surer aye daana monay monay*” (“There is no bar to losing myself in an imaginary world. I can soar on the wings of a song in my mind”). I was perhaps five years old, but the experience of being drawn into a world where I could spread the wings of imagination and travel to a fairy tale land must have been surreal. My Uncle Jamil Choudhury, who took me to this musical “festival,” often reminisced about the little girl who sat through the entire rendition with starry-eyed amazement and hummed the song for the next few days. Thus began

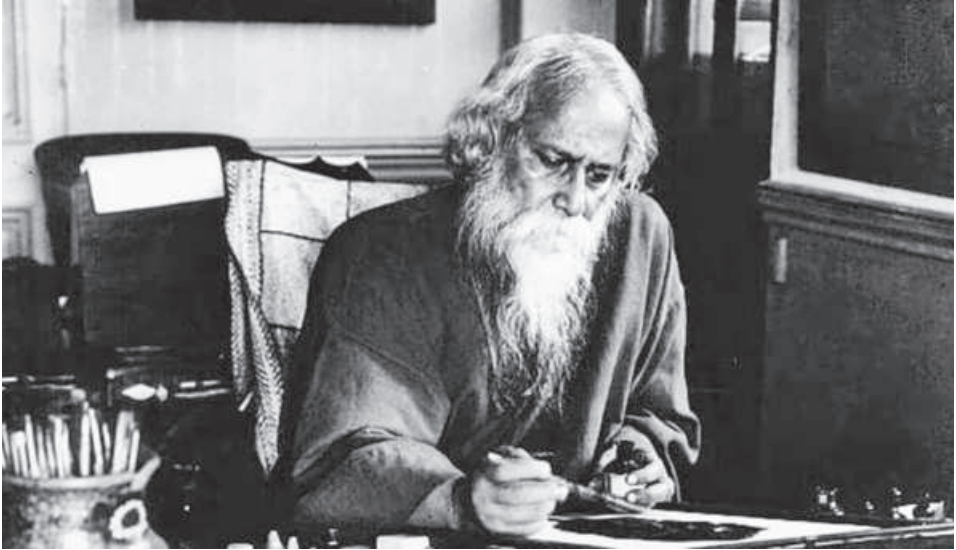


PHOTO: ARCHIVE

Tagore’s empathetic understanding of the intricacies of the human mind made his love songs exceptionally sensual and sensitive.

my “Rabindra Sangeet” journey, culminating in a larger expedition of self-discovery and introspection.

Once the voyage began, every experience took me one more step towards the awakening of the senses through the poet’s lyrics and melody. I marvelled at the “accident,” which had plunged me into an orbit—the orbit of life which is a divine gift. Observing the world through Tagore’s music and poetry, I felt a

through the ecstasy of love, I experienced it in Tagore’s lyrics and music. In her book *Rabindranath Tagore: A biography*, Krishna Kripalini writes, “If I were asked what was his (Tagore) most dominant quality which might explain all the varied aspects of his personality and genius, I should say that he was first and last and above all else a lover.” Tagore’s empathetic understanding of the intricacies of the human mind made his love

songs exceptionally sensual and sensitive. Added to this was his deep connection with nature. The relationship between nature and man is so masterfully woven in his lyrics that one can feel the monsoon rain or the south wind emote with the same intensity as the human lover.

My Tagorean experience reached its pinnacle in 1971. Turbulent tides of change swept through our country in the late 60s. It impacted the lives of Bangalees in a major way, leading to the creation of a free Bangladesh. Tagore’s literary works were an integral part of this patriotic movement. I developed a natural love for Bangla music early in life when I started to take lessons in Rabindra Sangeet in the music school, Chhayanaout, where I was initiated into the fascinating world of Tagore’s songs. Like many of my generation, my pride in Bangalee culture and heritage was rooted in Tagore’s writings.

When I crossed the border from Bangladesh to India in June 1971, to participate in the Liberation War, unwittingly, I had stepped into a very important crossroad of history and was destined to be a part of a momentous era. I joined a group of Bangladeshi musicians. We walked through the refugee camps of displaced Bangladeshis, singing “Amar Sonar Bangla” to keep the spirit of a free Bangladesh alive for the unfortunate thousands who were demoralised. Part of our mission was also to create awareness about our independence struggle for a “Golden Bengal” among the people of India through a musical narrative.

The forced exile was yet another step towards getting to know the real “Robi Thakur.” It took me to his ashram Santiniketan where I met my music gurus—legends Kanika Banerjee and Nilima Sen—and other notable Tagore personalities like Debabrata Biswas. I was but a novice trying to make a modest entry into the Rabindra Sangeet world. What I discovered was that, in the monastic environ of Tagore’s ashram, egos had been shed. Hence, an insignificant young girl from a country with only a name,

but no territory, was readily accepted into the affectionate fold of his disciples!

Life’s voyage took me to other lands and other cultures. However, every time I felt lonely and desolate, I was reconnected to my roots through Tagore. Whether it was teaching “*Ami chini go chini tomare, ogo bideshini*” (“I know you, Oh, maiden of a distant land”) to street children in Yerevan, Armenia, or organising his birthday celebrations in Bucharest, Romania, Tagore provided me with the opportunity to showcase the cultural treasures of my native land and helped me bond with strangers in most unique ways.

Recently, as I was sitting in my home in Virginia, US on a rainy afternoon and humming strands of Rabindra Sangeet, I felt nostalgic about my childhood friends, the monsoons of Bengal, the afternoon tea sessions and idle chit-chats with family, and even the clamour of loud conversations and honking cars in Dhaka. But above all, I missed my music which is no longer in the centre stage of my life, primarily because I am in a setting where Tagore is not part of the mainstream. The thought filled me with a sense of sadness, because “the song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day...”

However, whenever I feel desolate, I am consoled by the lyrics of one of Tagore’s Baul numbers, “*Amar praner manush ache prane tai heri tai sokol khane*” (“The man of my heart, dwells in my heart, which is why I see him everywhere”).

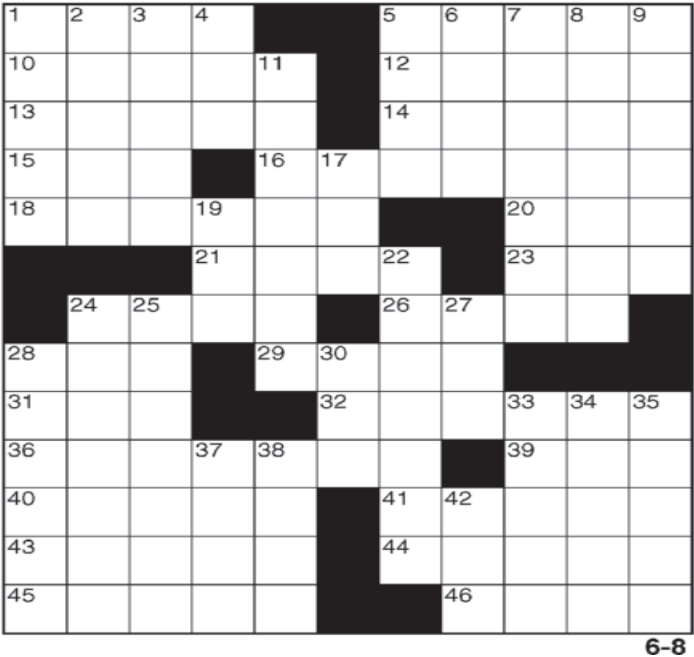
I realise how aptly the words express my deep relationship with the poet. Of course, Tagore is and always will be deep within me. Each time I feel that I have lost him, he makes his presence felt by filling up the empty receptacle of my heart with the elixir of life.

Thank you, Gurudev, for making the finite journey of my life an infinite experience!

Note: Translations have been collected from various sources. Some liberties have been taken by the author in paraphrasing Tagore’s lyrics.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Pleat
- 5 Work byproduct
- 10 Distant
- 12 Bamboo eater
- 13 Sorceress of myth
- 14 Inert gas
- 15 Cain’s mother
- 16 Hamlet’s home
- 18 Broncos’ home
- 20 “Golly!”
- 21 Persia, today
- 23 Go astray
- 24 Showed up
- 26 Says further
- 28 Periodical, for short
- 29 Malek of “Bohemian Rhapsody”
- 31 Keats work
- 32 Casual pants
- 36 Crown repairer
- 39 Old hand
- 40 Finished
- 41 Love, to Luigi
- 43 Deli fixture
- 44 Canyon’s cousin
- 45 Scientist
- 46 Looked over
- DOWN
- 1 Confronted
- 2 Green hue
- 3 Sophia of “Two Women”
- 4 Bashful pal
- 5 Reach across
- 6 Cordial
- 7 Set to wed
- 8 Fans
- 9 Oil carrier
- 11 Tennis great
- Roger
- 17 Important time
- 19 Energy
- 22 Convention ID
- 24 Marching beat
- 25 Programs
- 27 Racket
- 28 Unassuming
- 30 Online pop-ups
- 33 Creamy color
- 34 Join together
- 35 Spirited horse
- 37 Be a squealer
- 38 Concept
- 42 Homer’s bartending pal



YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



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Iran agrees to fourth round of nuclear talks with US: report

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran has agreed to hold a fourth round of indirect nuclear talks with the United States on Sunday in Oman, the semi-official Tasnim News Agency reported yesterday, citing a member of the Iranian team.

The fourth round of negotiations, initially scheduled for May 3 in Rome, was postponed, with mediator Oman citing “logistical reasons”.

“Following a proposal by the Omani foreign minister to hold the fourth round of talks on Sunday, Tehran has announced its agreement,” Tasnim quoted the unnamed member of Iran’s delegation as saying. “The fourth round of Iran-U.S. talks in Oman has been finalised.”

US President Donald Trump, who withdrew the U.S. from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, has threatened to bomb Iran if no agreement is reached with his administration to resolve the long-standing dispute.



This photo, taken on Thursday and released by North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday, shows a joint strike drill involving long-range artillery and missile systems of the Korean People’s Army’s eastern front division at an undisclosed location in North Korea.

PHOTO: AFP

Danish PM furious over ‘US spying’ on Greenland

AFP, Oslo

Denmark’s prime minister yesterday voiced outrage after media reports that Washington would step up spying in the Danish autonomous territory of Greenland, which is coveted by US President Donald Trump.

The Wall Street Journal reported this week that US intelligence agencies had been ordered to find out more about its independence movement and opinions on American exploitation of resources.

According to the newspaper, intelligence agencies had been asked to identify people in Greenland and Denmark who support US objectives.

“Of course, you cannot spy against an ally,” Danish Prime Mette Frederiksen told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) coalition in Oslo.

Frederiksen noted that Denmark’s Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen had already been in contact with the US and that the reports were “rumours”.

On Thursday, the charge d’affaires at the US embassy in Denmark Jennifer Hall Godfrey was summoned to a meeting at the Danish foreign ministry.

“We cannot tolerate people spying on each other. This message was sent very clearly today,” Lokke told Danish broadcaster DR on Thursday.

Doubts growing over govt’s ability

FROM PAGE 12

During the time of autocratic rule, it was not just Sumon, but countless others across Dhaka and the entire country were abducted, tortured and murdered.”

The BNP leader noted that Sumon’s sister, Sanjida Islam Tuli, founded a social organisation in 2014 called Mayer Dak, bringing together the families of those who disappeared during the autocratic rule.

“This is a matter

of great concern and astonishment that the police administration raided Sumon’s sister’s house last evening in an attempt to arrest him.”

Tarique said the police later claimed they were unaware of Sumon’s disappearance.

“For the sake of argument, let’s assume they were unaware of Sumon’s case. But a former president, who served during the autocratic regime, was able to leave the country through the

airport yesterday [early Thursday].”

The BNP leader said former president Abdul Hamid fled the country in a manner almost similar to that of Sheikh Hasina.

Tarique said the interim government now claims to have known nothing about Hamid’s departure. “Since yesterday, I have spoken to many people, and each one is questioning what the interim government truly knows.”

At the same time, he said, allegations are

emerging that the interim government is wasting time under the guise of reform, possibly to create opportunities for the fleeing autocrats and their associates to leave the country safely.

“On the other hand, it may be trying to create grounds to subtly sow division within the unity of anti-autocratic or anti-fascist political parties through various issues. These issues are repeatedly raising questions in the minds of the people.”

Helicopter crash in Sri Lanka kills 6 military personnel

AFP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan Air Force helicopter crashed during a graduation ceremony yesterday, plunging into a reservoir and killing six of the 12 people on board, a military official said.

The personnel were preparing for a grappling demonstration when their Bell 212 careened into the reservoir at the Maduru Oya national park, the official told AFP.

“There were 12 people

on board, and six of them survived with minor injuries,” said the official, who declined to be named.

Those killed included four special forces commandos and two Air Force gunners. The survivors were admitted to hospital.

The crash took place halfway through the ceremony in Maduru Oya, nearly 300 kilometres (187 miles) east of Colombo.

After a slew of parades, the chopper crew were expected to perform a

“fast-roping” manoeuvre, showcasing their skills in descending from the helicopter while it hovered just above roof height.

After the crash, the graduation ceremony was called off and an investigation into the cause of the incident was launched.

“The Commander of the Air Force has appointed a special nine-member committee to conduct a detailed investigation,” the military said in a statement.

80pc tariff

FROM PAGE 12

by the Biden administration.

China hit back by imposing export curbs on some rare earth elements and raising tariffs on US goods to 125 percent, in addition to extra levies on select products including soybeans and liquefied natural gas.

The weekend talks in Geneva have been described by Trump administration officials as a step towards de-escalating tensions with China.

T rex ancestors

FROM PAGE 12

Morrison told CNN.

T rex ancestors — tyrannosaurids — would have been fewer in number within their environment compared with the herbivorous dinosaurs they preyed on, much like apex predators such as lions are today, Morrison said.

“And because they are fewer, there are also fewer chances for them to then be preserved in the fossil record,” he said.

No concrete progress

FROM PAGE 12

ceasefire that began in January this year but cut off all supplies when it resumed its offensive against Hamas in March.

“The Israelis are going to be involved in providing necessary military security because it is a war zone but they will not be involved in the distribution of the food or even bringing the food into Gaza,” Huckabee told a press conference.

Asked whether the supply of aid was dependent on a ceasefire being agreed between Israel and Hamas, Huckabee said: “The humanitarian aid will not depend on anything other than our ability to get the food into Gaza.”

“So, it is not dependent upon other things regarding military action,” he said.

Meanwhile, a UNRWA spokeswoman yesterday said it is “very difficult” to imagine any operation to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza Strip without the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

Two sisters

FROM PAGE 12

Mishti found both women had injuries to the head. She also discovered that their almirah was open.

Speaking to this newspaper at the spot, Mirpur Police Station Sub-Inspector Mamun Hossain said the bodies have been sent to the morgue for post-mortem examinations.

“In our primary observation, it appears that two women were murdered. We’re looking into the incident to determine the motive and identify suspects,” he added.

Ivy arrested, sent to jail

FROM PAGE 1

a third term, is accused in at least five cases over the killings and attacks during the uprising that ousted the party last year, according to Tarek Al Mehedi, an additional superintendent of police.

Talking to reporters before leaving with the police, Ivy denied any wrongdoing and questioned the arrest, adding that she was unaware of the charges.

“Am I an oppressor? Have I committed murder, engaged in extortion? Do I have any record of attacking any opposition party in Narayanganj city? Then, for what reason, in whose interest, have I been arrested?” she said.

Noting that the uprising was rooted in the anti-

discrimination student movement, she asked, “So, why is this discrimination still here? Then, what is the value of honest politics and integrity?”

Ivy also said police claimed an arrest warrant was issued against her, but could not show any document. “I’m going with them out of respect for the law,” she said.

More drama followed as a group of people attacked the police vehicle carrying Ivy on its way to the SP’s office around 6:30am.

The attackers hurled bricks and stones, and two crude bombs also exploded when the vehicle reached near the former Grindlays Bank branch on Bangabandhu Road, witnesses said. Police then sped up and left the place.

Ivy was unhurt, but several of her supporters, who were marching behind the police vehicles, and two police personnel were injured in the attack, said Nasir Uddin Ahmad, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

A police man was seen being taken to the 300-bed hospital in Narayanganj with serious injuries.

The attackers later brought out a sudden procession in the city, chanting slogans against the Awami League and Ivy.

Her supporters blamed BNP activists for the attack.

Narayanganj city BNP Convener Sakhawat Hossain Khan, who lost to Ivy in the 2016 mayoral polls, said he had no information about anyone from the party

or its affiliated bodies’ involvement in the attack. “If anyone has done so, organisational action will be taken against them following an investigation.”

Later in the day, a Narayanganj court ordered to send Ivy to jail after police produced her in a case filed over the killing of a garment worker named Minarul during the July uprising.

Police did not seek her remand while no bail petition on her behalf was submitted, said Court Police Inspector Kaium Khan.

Ivy, the first woman to become a mayor in Bangladesh, was later taken to Kashimpur Female Central Jail in Gazipur, said Forkan Wahid, jailer of Narayanganj District Jail.

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Madhumati erosion escalates

Locals blame unregulated sand extraction
for worsening crisis

PARTHA CHAKRABORTTY, *Bagerhat*

Thousands of people living in Kashipur, Makrail, Ramchandrapur, and Naokhola villages along the bank of the Madhumati in Narail's Lohagara upazila are having sleepless nights as the river's erosion has turned severe recently.

Numerous homes, schools, mosques, and cropland have already been devoured by the river, while many more structures and vast stretches of agricultural land are at risk of erosion.

Locals and affected families alleged that indiscriminate sand extraction from the river has compromised the integrity of the riverbank embankments, exacerbating erosion in the area.

Shamsunnahar, 65, a widow living in Kashipur village, said several dredgers have been extracting sand and stockpiling it behind her homestead. "Due to this, water began seeping through and caused the land underneath my homestead to collapse. Eventually, my only shelter went into the river's womb," she said.

Visiting the affected areas recently, this correspondent observed that although the Madhumati has a low water level and gentle current, erosion was visibly active along the riverbank.

Sandbags placed by the Bangladesh Water Development Board in previous years had either sunk or

shifted, rendering the embankments ineffective. As a result, fresh erosion has begun in several places, putting numerous structures at risk — including the Makrail Government Primary School, three other educational institutions, several mosques, and local roads built under the Ashrayan Project.

Locals said while the WDB had somewhat managed to check erosion in past years by reinforcing embankments with sandbags, the extraction of sand by dredgers in both leased and non-leased areas recently led to widespread damage.

"I lost my home twice to Madhumati's erosion earlier, and rebuilt it later, only to find it at risk yet again," said Margina Begum, an elderly resident of Makrail village.

Fazlul Mridha of the same village said the river devoured several acres of his family's land, while his brother had to dismantle his home and relocate after sand extraction from the river caused the nearby embankment to collapse.

Abhijit Kumar Saha, executive engineer of the WDB in Narail, said following complaints from residents, local authorities recently halted sand extraction from unauthorised areas and suspended leases of several sand quarries.

"Measures are underway to repair the damaged embankments," he added.



Watching a circus in name

FROM PAGE 3

According to him, even foreign participants at the summit seemed more concerned about the country's political future than its economic prospects. "The main question they asked was: When is your election?"

"Only a government elected by the people can ensure accountability, stability, and real investment," he said, adding, "We've removed autocracy, but we've yet to see a truly elected government in Bangladesh."

Commenting on

current public sentiment, Khasru said, "There's been a psychological shift after Sheikh Hasina's fall. Those who fail to grasp this have no political future. We understand this transformation — and Tarique Rahman has provided leadership in this direction."

Outlining BNP's economic vision, he pledged to liberalise 10-12 sectors beyond garments, offer bonded warehouse facilities, and simplify business registration through a fully digital process.

"To attract FDI, we will assign young professionals from BIDA as 'captains' to guide each investor throughout the process," he added.

He reiterated, "Bangladesh's top three economic priorities are investment, investment, and investment."

The event also featured speakers including Cornell University lecturer Jamal Uddin, political analyst Zahed Ur Rahman, Jahangirnagar University's Nahrin Khan, filmmaker Maburur Rashid Bannah, and activist Syed Abdullah.

Another arrested

FROM PAGE 3

Thana unit of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), and accusing 25-30 unnamed persons.

According to the case statement, Jahidul and some friends were having snacks around 3:00pm near the university after an exam. They were laughing and joking when two female students of another private university and some others were seen nearby.

Three individuals approached Jahidul and

questioned why they were laughing, alleging the group was mocking the girls. A quarrel followed but was resolved with the intervention of the authorities. Later, around 4:40pm, Jahidul was stabbed in the chest, the statement said.

He was rushed to the hospital but died due to his injuries.

According to the police, Tina was one of the two girls mentioned in the case statement.

‘Good mosquitoes’ may turn

FROM PAGE 3

releasing only infected males, which produce unviable eggs when mating with wild females, reducing mosquito populations. The Replacement Strategy releases both males and females, allowing infected females to pass the bacteria to offspring, gradually replacing virus-spreading mosquitoes, according to the study.

International trials have shown remarkable success. In Australia's northern

Queensland, dengue incidence dropped by 96 percent following releases.

Similar results — up to 95 percent mosquito population control — have been recorded in Indonesia, Brazil, Colombia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the US.

In the latest study, researchers used a heat-tolerant strain of Wolbachia known as wAlbB, crossbreeding it with local Aedes mosquitoes over several generations to create wAlbB2-Dhaka. Lab tests showed it reduced dengue virus transmission by 92.7 percent. Further analysis showed no significant decline in fertility, hatch rate, or survival, suggesting it could survive in Dhaka's conditions.

"This is not genetic modification," said Dr Mohammad Shahiul Alam of icddr,b. "These are mosquitoes carrying a natural bacterium proven safe in multiple countries. It may provide a biological defence against dengue and related diseases."

Lead author Hasan Mohammad Al-Amin said the findings pave the way for field trials in Bangladesh. "The lab results are promising, but large-scale use will require careful testing and planning," he said.

icddr,b has signed a Material Transfer Agreement with QIMRB to use Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes in Bangladesh for non-commercial purposes.

Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, executive director of icddr,b, said his

organisation stands ready to support government-led field trials and aims to integrate this method with vaccine development efforts.

ENTOMOLOGISTS SKEPTICAL

Despite the enthusiasm, local entomologists remain skeptical about the method's effectiveness in densely populated urban settings.

"This concept may work on islands or contained environments, but not in chaotic, crowded cities like Dhaka," said GM Saifur Rahman, entomologist and mosquito specialist. "Lab-reared mosquitoes are often weaker and may not survive long. Also, wild males may outcompete the infected ones, reducing mating success."

He warned that environmental stressors, such as extreme heat and urban pollution, could reduce the survival and spread of the modified mosquitoes. "Most Aedes mosquitoes breed in hidden indoor spaces like basements, where the released ones may never reach."

Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University echoed this concern, saying that unlike trial locations such as Indonesia and Australia, Dhaka lacks natural barriers to control mosquito dispersal.

He said the Wolbachia method should only be seen as one component of an integrated mosquito management strategy. "It's promising, but not a silver bullet for Bangladesh's dengue crisis," he said.



A visitor offers a bottle of water to a monkey at a mini zoo in Barishal. As temperatures continue to rise, staying hydrated is essential for both humans and animals. The photo was taken near Durga Sagar in the Madhabpasha area of Babuganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Offering hope

FROM PAGE 3

"I'll donate personally," he said. "At our next board meeting, we will discuss further contributions. This is a great initiative for people who cannot afford costly treatment. Supporting this project is an opportunity to make a real difference."

BANCAT's General Secretary Mahzabin Ferdous said the organisation follows up with patients for up to three years after treatment.

She also highlighted another programme, "Alok Katha", where quilts are stitched and sold to raise funds for patients while ensuring fair wages for the workers.

BANCAT's Executive Director Najmus Ahmed Albab, a cancer survivor himself, said, "I received the best treatment in the world, but many of our people can't afford that. They deserve the same care. That's why I took up this cause as my life's mission."

‘Tal-pakha’ artisans

FROM PAGE 4

Wholesale traders collect fans from Joyngar and distribute them across Faridpur, Rajbari, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Magura, Khulna, Gopalganj and Barishal.

"Joyngar's fans are well-made and durable. They can last four to five years," said Prabir Mitra, a wholesaler from Kaderdi. "That's why they're still in demand across the

country."

Rafiqul Alam, chairman of Satoir Union Parishad, said there are plans to plant palm trees in the area to address the raw material shortage.

Boalmari UNO Tanvir Hasan Chowdhury said a proposal has been sent to bring the artisans under a small and cottage industries project, offering training and low-interest loans.

Inequality in education must

FROM PAGE 3

that, despite forming numerous commissions, the interim government has yet to establish an education commission.

"I cannot explain the reason behind this. At one point, they even formed a committee to review the curriculum, but after facing criticism, they backtracked, and nothing came of it. This remains a matter of deep regret."

He added, "If there is one area where inequality is most deeply rooted in Bangladesh, it is education. The system itself creates this inequality. Some receive quality education, while others receive none."

Those who are financially well-off send their children to one type of school, while those without means are left with no option but to enrol them in under-resourced village schools, he said.

He further said that if we cannot eliminate inequality in education, then those who speak of fighting

inequality are missing the very foundation of that struggle.

"Educational inequality must be eradicated by ensuring there is no gender discrimination, and that underprivileged communities, such as indigenous groups and children from remote char areas, are not left behind," he added.

Explaining the reasons behind students' opposition to the quota system, Debapriya said private sector investment has remained stagnant for the past decade and a half.

As a result, new jobs are not being created in the private sector. At the same time, due to poor quality education, many graduates are not considered suitable for the few available roles, he said.

"Yes, foreigners are coming and taking our jobs. But employers often argue that they cannot find qualified local candidates," he added.

Debapriya questioned


how jobs could be created when, on one hand, the quality of education remains low, and on the other, there is a lack of investment.

"Right now, only the government is creating jobs. That's why we must understand how this structural failure has contributed to democratic unrest. It must be taken seriously, not dismissed," he said.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of SHUJAN, said if students remain committed, a prosperous Bangladesh can be built.

Siddique Zobair, senior secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, renowned magician Jewel Aich, noted actor Khairul Alam Sabuj, and Grameenphone's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Tanveer Mohammad also spoke at the event.

At the two-day award ceremony, a total of 2,563 students from 31 schools in Dhaka received awards across various categories yesterday.



GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL COMMERCIAL OFFICER
BANGLADESH RAILWAY, DHAKA

INVITATION FOR-TENDER

e-Tender Notice No: 54.01.2654.204.07.029.24- 648

Date: 08-05-2025

e-Tender is invited in National e-Gp System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below:

Sl No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Description of works	Tender Document last selling date & time	Tender closing & opening date & time
1	1102955	54.01.2654.204.07.087.24	"Procurement of Bedsheet & Pillow Cover"	26-May-2025 12.00	26-May-2025 16.00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hardcopies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-Gp System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-Gp System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to one hour before last selling time

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-Gp System Portal and fran e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

এস (২৫)(৪২০)

MD. MOHABBAT JAN CHOWDHURY
Divisional Commercial Officer
Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka

08.05.2025

GD-1125

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Noakhali Road Division, Noakhali
☎02334433670
E-mail: eenoa@rhd.gov.bd

Reference No. 35.01.7500.457.11.004.20-815

Date: 08.05.2025

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl Tender No.	Package No	Description of Works	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)	Tender Opening (Date & Time)
01	1107788/NRD/ADP/OSTETM/NSEZ/PW-03/ 2024-2025.	Improvement of Dinmonibazar-Moulavibazar-Companihatal-Choto Feni Nodi Road (Z-1508) at 1st Km to 10th Km (p) (Ch. 0+000 to 9+205) and Lakshmipur-Char Alexander-Sonapur Road (Z-1405) at 55th Km (p) to 68th Km (p) (Ch. 54+038 to 67+935) to Appropriate Standard with various Incidental works Under Noakhali Road Division during the year 2024-2025 (PW-03).	16/06/2025 up to 4:00 PM	17/06/2025 12:15 PM	17/06/2025 12:15 PM
02	1107789/NRD/ADP/OSTETM/NSEZ/PW-04/ 2024-2025.	Improvement of Dinmonibazar-Moulavibazar-Companihatal-Choto Feni Nodi Road (Z-1508) at 10th Km (p) to 29th Km (p) (Ch. 9+205 to 28+325) and Sonagazi - Olamabazar - Chardebeshpur-Companiganj Road (Z-1434) at 6th Km (p) to 8th Km (p) (Ch. 5+800 to 7+280) to Appropriate Standard with various Incidental works Under Noakhali Road Division during the year 2024-2025 (PW-04).	16/06/2025 up to 4:00 PM	17/06/2025 12:20 PM	17/06/2025 12:20 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any Member of Scheduled Banks branches up to 4:00 PM on 16-06-2025.

(Sowmya Talukder)
ID No.602316
Executive Engineer (C.C.), RHD
Road Division, Noakhali.

GD-1127

RETHINKING LAW

Reimagining Sustainability for the Global South:
A CALL FOR JUSTICE,
INNOVATION, AND EQUITY

For the Global South, home to nations burdened by colonial histories and entrenched economic inequalities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be more than aspirational rhetoric. They require contextualised, justice-oriented strategies that reflect the unique political, ecological, and socio-economic landscapes of these regions.

DR. M SHAWKAT ALAM, DR. SUMAIYA KHAIR, and DR. MUHAMMAD EKRAMUL HAQUE

In an age shaped by climate emergencies, widening inequality, and growing geopolitical tension, the notion of sustainable development emerges as both an aspiration and a necessity. For the Global South, home to nations burdened by colonial histories and entrenched economic inequalities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be more than aspirational rhetoric. They require contextualised, justice-oriented strategies that reflect the unique political, ecological, and socio-economic landscapes of these regions. Our recently published book, *Implementation of Sustainable Development in the Global South: Strategies, Innovations, and Challenges* (Hart Publishing 2024), engages with these themes in depth. This opinion piece draws from the book's opening chapter, 'Reimagining Routes to Sustainability,' to highlight the transformative pathways and structural reorientations necessary to realise the SDGs in the Global South.

The SDGs are guided by the promise to "leave no one behind," yet their practical implementation has often failed to account for entrenched disparities between the Global North and South. Indeed, the economic prosperity of many developed nations was built on centuries of extractive colonialism, resource plunder, and environmental degradation—realities that have directly contributed to the current global inequalities. Exploitative trade regimes, asymmetric investment flows, and inadequate climate finance continue to reinforce these disparities. According to the World Bank's International Debt Report 2024, developing countries spent a record \$14 trillion to service their foreign debt in 2023, funds that could have been used to strengthen climate mitigation, build infrastructure, or expand social protection systems.

In this backdrop, the foundational argument in our work is about moving beyond the "one-size-fits-all" development paradigm. Sustainable development must not be dictated solely by global agendas designed without a clear understanding of local contexts. Uniform policy

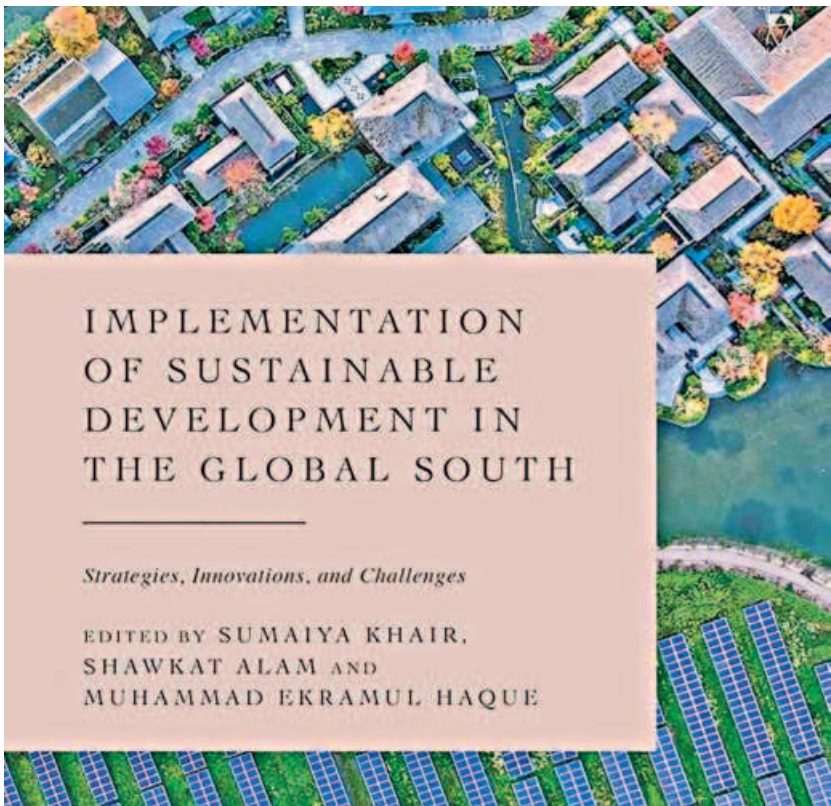
frameworks can obscure the nuances of community-specific realities, often erasing valuable indigenous knowledge and socio-cultural practices. Effective implementation of the SDGs requires policies shaped through inclusive, participatory processes that prioritise the voices of the marginalised.

Adapting global initiatives to local realities is no simple task. The SDGs embody a noble vision for global justice and sustainability, but without empowering local actors, these goals risk becoming mere performative exercises. Many communities, especially in the Global South, are excluded from international agenda-setting spaces. Yet these same communities are expected to implement and live the outcomes of decisions made elsewhere. A meaningful localisation process must empower these stakeholders by involving them in planning, decision-making, and implementation.

The discourse on sustainable development gets enriched when diverse knowledge systems, particularly those of Indigenous peoples are recognised as legitimate and valuable. What scholars term "onto-epistemological pluralism" reflects the importance of respecting alternative worldviews, cosmologies, and cultural practices that offer unique insights into sustainability. These perspectives are not simply add-ons; they challenge the dominant neoliberal development models and offer genuinely transformative alternatives. Indigenous philosophies of stewardship, collective ownership, and balance with nature offer a roadmap to sustainability that is ethical, practical, and environmentally sound.

Central to this reimagining is the principle of co-creation. Development initiatives must no longer be conceived in elite circles and then handed down to local populations. Instead, we must foster a model where affected communities are active collaborators from the outset. Participatory development not only empowers communities but also builds trust, enhances transparency, and fosters innovation that is grounded in lived experiences.

Another critical shift is required in how we understand our relationship with the environment. The current era demands a radical departure from anthropocentrism, the idea that human



interests should dominate all decision-making. An ecocentric worldview, in contrast, recognises the intrinsic value of all life and the interdependence of ecosystems. Legal and policy frameworks must evolve to reflect this paradigm, embedding the principles of ecological justice and stewardship at the heart of sustainable development.

We argue for a decisive shift in how development success is measured. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to dominate policy thinking, but it fails to account for environmental degradation, social inequity, and well-being. Alternative frameworks that include social indicators, environmental health, and human development are essential. Similarly, financing for the SDGs must move beyond official development assistance and encompass a broader set of tools: domestic revenue mobilisation, debt restructuring, equitable trade, climate finance, and meaningful technology transfers. A global financial architecture that supports rather than constrains sustainable development must be a collective priority.

Good governance remains a linchpin in achieving the SDGs. Effective, transparent, and inclusive governance structures are crucial for implementing sustainable development strategies. However, governance must be multilevel, linking international frameworks with national policy and local implementation. In this context, public officials must be equipped not only with technical knowledge but also with strategic foresight, ethical leadership, and cultural competence.

Additionally, civic organisations, grassroots movements, and academic institutions hold a crucial role, acting as both watchdogs and collaborators. They enrich policy formulation, advocate for marginalised communities, and drive accountability. Their engagement is essential to ensure that sustainability efforts are not only technocratic exercises, but also democratic processes rooted in justice and inclusion.

We must also reimagine policy coherence and data governance. Development goals must be integrated across sectors and levels of government,

breaking the silos that often impede effective action. Reliable, disaggregated, and timely data is critical for measuring progress, identifying gaps, and informing policy decisions. Investment in data infrastructure, particularly in the Global South, is a foundational requirement for effective SDG implementation.

Bangladesh serves as a compelling case study. The country has made significant progress in reducing poverty, improving gender parity, and enhancing disaster resilience. Yet, it continues to face entrenched challenges such as urban inequality, climate vulnerability, and limited access to global markets and technology. Bangladesh thus illustrates the dual realities of potential and precarity that define sustainable development in much of the Global South. It also highlights the ingenuity of bottom-up approaches such as women-led development programmes, community-based climate adaptation, and legal mobilisation for environmental justice that deserve wider recognition and support.

As we move closer to the 2030 deadline, the SDGs stand at a critical crossroads. Over 30% of the goals are off track or regressing. This sobering reality demands a renewed global compact—one that centres equity, redresses historical injustices, and puts the agency of the Global South at the forefront of development governance. Developed countries must fulfil their commitments to finance, trade justice, and climate action—not as acts of benevolence, but as moral and legal obligations arising from historical responsibility.

Our book, *Implementation of Sustainable Development in the Global South*, is both a scholarly contribution and a call to transformative action. It urges scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to shift from rhetoric to responsibility, from abstraction to action. Let us reimagine development not as a gift from the powerful to the poor, but as a shared endeavour rooted in dignity, rights, and mutual respect.

The writers are Professor, Macquarie Law School, Australia, Professor, University of Dhaka, and Professor, University of Dhaka. All three are co-editors of the book *Implementation of Sustainable Development in the Global South* (Hart 2024).

LAW VISION

FDI in Bangladesh: A Supplement to BIDA's
Investment Summit

SEKANDER ZULKER NAYEEN

The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) recently hosted an Investment Summit to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the country. The initiative was widely praised, with particular commendation for the Executive Chairman, Mr. Ashik Chowdhury, whose presentation raised expectations for a substantial influx of foreign capital. However, in a post-Summit media briefing, Mr Chowdhury took a pragmatic stance, clarifying that the Summit was merely an effort to promote Bangladesh as a potential investment destination, encouraging investors to overcome their previous negative perceptions of the country's investment environment and ensure that Bangladesh remains on their menu of investment destinations. During the same media briefing, he further acknowledged that no foreign investor would immediately commit to investing in the country simply because they attended the Summit.

Mr Chowdhury's post-Summit briefing sounds reasonable, as foreign investors typically evaluate several critical factors, including legal, economic, political, and operational aspects, before investing in a developing economy like Bangladesh. This piece will focus on certain legal aspects, particularly investment protection, to supplement BIDA's efforts in promoting FDI in Bangladesh.

Foreign investors generally

enquire about two tiers of legal mechanisms: the international investment protection mechanism and the domestic judicial mechanism. Regarding the international investment protection mechanism, Bangladesh offers impressive substantive and procedural protection. It has signed around 33 Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and five Treaties with Investment Provisions (TIPs) to ensure substantive and procedural investment protection standards. All these treaties commit to ensuring the most common substantive investment protections, namely, Minimum Standard of Treatment (MST), Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET), National Treatment, Full Protection and Security (FPS), and protection against expropriation. Additionally, the country's Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act 1980 ensures similar substantive protection standards, allowing investors to bring claims under this law in the absence of enabling investment treaties between Bangladesh and the investor's home state.

On procedural protection, most of the investment treaties Bangladesh has signed allow investors to sue Bangladesh in an international arbitral forum, most commonly before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Furthermore, Bangladesh is a member country of the ICSID and the New York Convention (NYC), which provides investors access to ICSID arbitration

against Bangladesh and the enforcement of the arbitral award in the territory of Bangladesh under the NYC.

However, Bangladesh's domestic judicial mechanism may not seem impressive in investors' pre-investment assessments. Investors typically engage with the domestic judiciary in various



ways. For instance, upon investing in the country, they may enter into contracts with local traders, suppliers, individuals, and even the government, and resort to the local judiciary, mainly the civil courts, in case of any breach of these contracts. Consequently, before investing, they primarily enquire about the effectiveness of the judiciary in terms of trial length, litigation costs, case management, court automation, e-judiciary, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and so

on. To develop an overall perception of judicial effectiveness, they usually depend on some globally recognised indices, such as the Ease of Doing Business, the Index of Economic Freedom, and the World Justice Project - Rule of Law Index.

Unfortunately, the Bangladesh judiciary does not maintain a good ranking in those indices. For

example, it was ranked, mainly for the enforcement of contracts, at 189th out of 190 countries in the index of 'Ease of Doing Business'. The Index of Economic Freedom scored judicial effectiveness in Bangladesh as below the world average. A similar ranking has been revealed by the World Justice Project, where the country's judicial effectiveness has been ranked at 127th out of 142 countries.

Although Bangladesh offers robust international investment

protection standards, as previously noted, its reputation in this regard has been undermined by the inefficiency of its domestic judicial system in supporting these protections. In particular, an international arbitral award is required to be submitted before the Dhaka District Judge Court for recognition and enforcement. The court proceeds to enforce the award following the Arbitration Act 2001 and the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) 1908 as if it were its own judgments. Therefore, such enforcement of arbitral award depends upon the effectiveness of the civil justice system in the country, which always struggles to survive amid inadequate logistical support, including technological one, amid intricate procedural requirements under the CPC. Sometimes, the award debtor misuses CPC's provisions to delay the enforcement for an indefinite period. As a result, the court cannot provide prompt and effective support for the enforcement of the awards. Moreover, in some instances, judicial interference in the investment arbitration proceeding and enforcement has further undermined Bangladesh's reputation. A well-cited example is the Saipem v. Bangladesh arbitration, where the Bangladeshi court's intervention in the arbitral proceedings and enforcement process drew substantial international criticism.

To address the issues of judicial effectiveness, the Judicial Reform

Commission has proposed, among others, improvements in trial length reduction, ADR promotion, and e-judiciary implementation. Additionally, the government is reportedly preparing to amend the CPC too, easing procedural hurdles.

However, legal amendments alone may not sufficiently restore investor confidence, given the existing case backlog and an inadequate number of judges in our civil courts. Besides continuing the current reforms, Bangladesh should consider introducing dedicated, technology-driven special courts, perhaps Commercial Courts, across judicial tiers. These courts should be staffed by specially trained judges with expertise in IT, ADR, Investor-State Dispute Settlement, and arbitration law, and operate under simplified procedural rules. Additionally, the current interim government, along with the next elected government, should make a clear and specific commitment to continue judicial reforms, ensuring that investors receive the necessary legal protection by the time they commence business operations. Such targeted interventions would significantly complement BIDA's initiatives and could serve as a meaningful step toward ensuring that Bangladesh is both an attractive and secure investment destination.

The writer is investment law researcher at City St George's, University of London and an Additional District Judge in Bangladesh.

What to WATCH

T Sports

BPL football
Police vs Abahani
Live from 4:00 pm
Bangladesh A vs
New Zealand A
3rd one-day

Live from 9:00 am

Star Sports

Select HD1

Premier League
Southampton vs
Man City
Live from 8:00 pm

Bournemouth vs Aston Villa

Live from 10:30 pm

Sony Sports 2

Bundesliga
Bayern vs Borussia
Monchengladbach
Live from 10:30 pm



The Europa League final on May 22 will be an all-English affair as the 15th and 16th placed sides in the Premier League, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur, will fight it out to salvage their dreadful seasons with a chance to seal a spot in the Champions League next season. United, 3-0 up after the first leg last week, won 4-1 at Old Trafford, thanks to a brace from substitute Mason Mount. Meanwhile, Tottenham eased past Bodo/Glimt with a 2-0 away win after gaining a comfortable 3-1 victory in the first-leg. Dominic Solanke and Pedro Porro found the net for Spurs.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS



SAFF U-19 C'SHIP Bangladesh held by Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER

Favourites Bangladesh began their SAFF Under-19 Championship campaign on a disappointing note, surrendering a two-goal lead to settle for a 2-2 draw against Maldives in their Group A opener at the Golden Jubilee Stadium in Arunachal Pradesh, India, yesterday.

Captain Nazmul Huda Faysal and Rifat Kazi each found the net in the first half, giving Bangladesh a promising advantage. However, Maldives struck back through Anoof Abdulla and Ethan Ibrahim, who scored in the second-half to deny Golam Rabbani Choton's side a winning start.

Bangladesh dominated possession from the outset and created numerous scoring opportunities. They went ahead in the 13th minute when Faysal unleashed a powerful strike from outside the box, shortly after Samuel Raksan missed an open net.

Rifat, who had earlier driven a shot wide after nutmegging a defender in the 25th minute, doubled the lead with a header on the stroke of half-time.

The second half, however, was a different story. The Bangladeshi defence struggled to cope with Maldives' incisive forward passes. Abdulla reduced the deficit in the 57th minute, and Ibrahim equalised with a low left-footed effort in the 73rd.

Bangladesh will face Bhutan in their second and final group match on Sunday.

SHORT CORNER

Xabi Alonso confirms exit from Bayer Leverkusen at end of season

Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso confirmed Friday he will leave the club at the end of the season, amid reports linking him to Spanish giants Real Madrid. Alonso, however, did not confirm his next post. Spanish and German media reported Friday the 43-year-old has already agreed to join Real and will link up with the club after the Club World Cup, replacing Carlo Ancelotti.

Bangladesh to participate in Futsal Asian Cup Qualifiers

Bangladesh will send a futsal team to the upcoming AFC Futsal Asian Cup Qualifiers, Bangladesh Football Federation president Tabith Awal confirmed on Friday. The 16-team 2026 AFC Futsal Asian Cup will be held in Jakarta in May next year and Bangladesh will be vying for a spot in that tournament through a qualifying round, which is scheduled to be held in September this year.

Chelsea and Betis to face off in Conference League final

Abde Ezzalzouli emerged as Real Betis' hero on Thursday after he netted an extra-time winner to make them the first Spanish side to reach the Conference League final with a 4-3 aggregate victory over Fiorentina after it ended 2-2 at full-time in the second-leg, setting up a showdown with Premier League side Chelsea. Earlier, Favourites Chelsea, fielding a second-string team, cantered into the final with a regulation 1-0 second-leg win over Swedish side Djurgarden, thanks to a first-half goal from Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.

Kings' Saad, Roxy suspended

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) disciplinary committee fined Bashundhara Kings and Abahani Tk 100,000 each for unruly behavior by their fans during a recent Bangladesh Premier League match.

The committee also decided to issue a show-cause notice to Kings, asking why their next home matches should not be held behind closed doors at the Bashundhara Kings Arena due to their supporters' misconduct.

Additionally, Kings' assistant coach Mahbub Hossain Roxy and defender Saad Uddin have been barred from all BFF-sanctioned tournaments pending further decisions. Roxy was found guilty of making an indecent gesture, while Saad Uddin engaged in unsporting behavior and pushed the match commissioner after being sent off following the match against Abahani.

According to BFF, show-cause notices were to be served to Kings, Roxy, and Saad within two days of the committee's decision, which had come on Wednesday. However, no specific timeline has been given for final verdicts. Committee chairman Mejbahuddin Ahmed said a second meeting will be held shortly to finalise pending actions.

In other disciplinary decisions, Kings' support staff Tamim Shikari received a six-month stadium ban for verbally attacking Abahani officials. Mohammedan fan Awlad Hossain was banned for a year after chasing a Brazilian player from Bangladesh Police FC in Cumilla.

The BFF has fined Mohammedan a total of Tk 2.75 lakh for three separate incidents involving fans and officials, while Bashundhara Kings were fined Tk 2.25 lakh for three incidents. Abahani were fined Tk 1 lakh for a single event. Although Mohammedan were fined Tk 100,000 for a smoke flare incident during a league match against Bashundhara Kings, no decision was made regarding a similar incident caused by the Kings fans during the Challenge Cup final in November last year.

INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT

Tigers' calendar, Asia Cup in limbo

STAR SPORTS DESK

The ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has been suspended while the Pakistan Super League (PSL) has been postponed as the conflict between India and Pakistan rages on. These decisions could end up disrupting Bangladesh's cricket calendar in the coming months and this year's Asia Cup.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) yesterday announced that the ongoing season of IPL was suspended "with immediate effect for one week," a day after the match between Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals was called off midway in Dharamsala, which is less than 200 kilometres away from Jammu where both sides are exchanging heavy artillery.

A total of 16 matches are left in the season, and although BCCI has not announced an official resumption date, it is reportedly exploring a window later in the year.

According to Times of India, India is unlikely to participate in the Asia Cup or send the Indian team for their scheduled tour of Bangladesh, opening up the August-September window which they would then use

According to Times of India, India is unlikely to participate in the Asia Cup or send the Indian team for their scheduled tour of Bangladesh, opening up the August-September window which they would then use to complete the IPL season if the need arises.

to complete the IPL season if the need arises.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday night announced that the remaining eight games of the 10th edition of the PSL have been postponed, a day after relaying that these matches would be played in the UAE.

As per ESPNcricinfo, PCB began the process of flying players to the UAE on Thursday. Nahid Rana and

Rishad Hossain, the two Bangladeshi players taking part in the PSL, left for the UAE yesterday alongside other overseas cricketers. Nahid and Rishad will then board a chartered flight to Bangladesh from the UAE.

"In this situation, a collective effort is being made to find a solution. A meeting was held yesterday [Thursday] and they will try to ensure that at some point today [Friday] all the cricketers are moved from Pakistan to a safe place," BCB president Faruque Ahmed said in a video message yesterday.

Also, PSL's postponement was based on the situation in the country worsening, according to PCB's press release yesterday, and the five-match T20 series between Pakistan and Bangladesh, originally slated to begin on May 25 in Faisalabad may also not see the light of day.

The Tigers were supposed to land in Pakistan on May 21. The BCB, however, is not keen on making any decisions on the series yet given the fact that Pakistan are the hosts and any postponement or cancellation call will come from their side. The main priority for BCB is moving Nahid and Rishad out of Pakistan alongside two Bangladesh journalists covering the PSL.

Draw with Fortis extends MSC's title wait

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Mohammedan SC came from behind to secure a 1-1 draw against Fortis FC at the Bashundhara Kings arena yesterday, a result that has potentially extended their wait of winning this season's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

Before the game, Mohammedan needed nine points from five matches to secure their maiden professional league title.

But after earning one point against Fortis, Mohammedan now could have to wait for their penultimate match or the last match to take the coveted trophy home if second-placed Abahani Limited don't slip up.

Mohammedan are at the top of the 10-team table with 35 points, eight clear of Abahani, who have played one match fewer and have a chance to close the gap with the leaders if they win today against Bangladesh Police FC.

In yesterday's match, both teams struggled under the scorching sun but hosts Fortis FC fared a little better. Fortis took the lead in the 23rd minute, with Piash Ahmed Nova capitalising on a defensive error.

Gambian Essa Jallow snatched a ball from a Mohammedan midfielder and ran into the danger zone before getting intercepted by Mohammedan defender Jahid Hasan Shanto. But the ball fell to

unmarked Piash who made no mistake.

After resumption, Mohammedan equalised in the 73rd minute courtesy of a stunning goal from substitute Mahbub Alam.

The opportunity arose from a corner kick, which the Fortis defenders had initially cleared before Mahbub's spectacular left footer from 30 yards found its mark.

In the day's other two matches, hosts Brothers Union held third-placed Bashundhara Kings to a goalless draw in Munshiganj while Dhaka Wanderers Club notched up their third victory of the season, a 2-1 win over bottom-placed Chittagong Abahani, and are now breathing down the necks eighth-placed Fakirerpool Young Mens Club.

Meanwhile, there were also some uncertainty over the three league matches yesterday, as the referee panel had initially announced that they would not conduct the games until their unpaid wages were cleared by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

It has been learnt that the referees returned to their jobs after the BFF cleared Tk 18.86 lakh of their dues for the just concluded Federation Cup and promised to clear the rest of their unpaid wages in the BPL before Eid-ul-Adha.

The BFF has so far cleared the dues of 25 of the 68 completed matches in BPL till yesterday.



Scholastica Mirpur celebrate winning the U14 title of Dhaka's Rising Stars school football tournament after a 3-0 victory over Sir John Wilson, with Bangladesh Football Federation president Tabith Awal joining the celebration at Fortis Jalshiri Ground, Purbachal, on Friday. [Inset] Sir John Wilson celebrate a goal during their 3-1 win over Scholastica Mirpur in the U12 final, exacting revenge for their senior side. The tournament, sponsored by Prime Bank, featured eight English-medium schools from Dhaka.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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Doubts growing over govt's ability to govern: Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman said yesterday that some recent incidents, including former president Abdul Hamid's departure from the country, are raising doubts among people about the interim government's ability to fulfil its responsibilities.

"If we observe recent developments, doubts are gradually growing among various sections of people and professionals for various reasons about the interim government's ability to carry out its duties," he said while virtually exchanging greetings with members of the Christian community.

The BNP leader, however, said their party still supports the current interim government in every aspect to establish a representative government accountable to the people through public mandate.

Bangladesh Christian Forum organised the programme, marking the Easter Reunion at an auditorium in the capital's Farmgate Khamarbari area.

Mentioning Sajedul Islam Sumon, the BNP leader who disappeared after being abducted by law enforcers in December 2013, Tarique said, "We still have not received any information about the whereabouts of our colleague."



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Palestinians in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, receive food from a charity kitchen on Thursday. The United States announced that a new foundation will soon unveil aid plans for Gaza, bypassing the United Nations, as Israel's two-month blockade continues to cause severe shortages in the war-torn region.

PHOTO: REUTERS

80pc tariff on Chinese goods 'seems right' Says Trump

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that 80 percent tariffs on Chinese goods "seems right" as representatives prepared for weekend talks to contain a trade war between the world's two largest economies.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and chief trade negotiator Jamieson Greer will meet Chinese economic tsar He Lifeng in Switzerland for talks that could be the first step toward resolving their trade disputes.

"China should open up its market to USA — would be so good for them!!! Closed markets don't work anymore!!!" Trump said in a Truth Social post.

"80% tariff on China seems right. Up to Scott B," Trump said.

Since taking office in January, Trump has hiked levies on imports from China to 145 percent, in addition to those he imposed on many Chinese goods during his first term and the duties levied on Beijing

SEE PAGE 8 COL 8

T-rex ancestors crossed from Asia to North America 70m years ago

CNN ONLINE

The direct ancestor of Tyrannosaurus rex would have arrived in North America after crossing a land bridge from Asia, according to a new study.

The report is the latest to weigh in on the fierce debate among paleontologists over the origins of the king of the dinosaurs.

A team led by Cassius Morrison, a doctoral student of paleontology at University College London, or UCL, used mathematical modeling to conclude that T rex precursors likely arrived in North America after crossing the Bering Strait between modern-day Siberia and Alaska around 70 million years ago.

The finding tracks with past research that suggests T rex was more closely related to the large carnivore Tarbosaurus in Asia compared with top predators in North America such as Daspletosaurus, Morrison said in a statement.

At the time, the area would have been home to temperate rainforests, with a climate somewhat similar to British Columbia today,



SEE PAGE 8 COL 8

Two sisters found dead in city flat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police last night recovered the bodies of two women in their rented apartment in Mirpur's West Shewrapara.

The deceased were identified as Mariam Begum, 60, and her sister Sufia Begum, 55.

According to HM Jahangir Hossain, owner of a local pharmacy, Mariam's husband, Kazi Alauddin, a retired forest officer, rented the apartment on the first floor of the five-storey building around 15 years ago.

Mariam, her daughter Mishti, and her sister Sufia have been living in the apartment since then. Alauddin mostly stays in Barishal.

"Last night, around 8:00pm, when Mishti returned from work, she found the front door of the apartment open. As she entered, she found her aunt Sufia lying on the floor of the dining room and her mother lying on the floor of her bedroom," Jahangir said, quoting Mishti.

Jahangir also said

SEE PAGE 8 COL 8

'No concrete progress' in Gaza truce talks

Say Hamas sources after meetings with Egyptian, Qatari mediators

AGENCIES

A Hamas delegation held two meetings with Egyptian and Qatari mediators in Doha this week but they produced no breakthrough in the search for a Gaza truce, sources close to the group said yesterday.

"Egyptian officials met twice with a high-level Hamas delegation led by (chief negotiator) Khalil al-Hayya (and) Qatari officials on Wednesday and Thursday in Doha," one source told AFP.

A second source said the talks were "serious" but made "no concrete progress".

Israel announced plans on Monday to expand its military campaign, drawing a chorus of international criticism. Israel's military has said the expanded operations approved by the security cabinet on Sunday would include displacing "most" of Gaza's population.

An Israeli security source said there was still a "window of opportunity" for a hostage release deal to be struck to coincide with US President Donald Trump's May 13 to 16 visit to the region.

But one of the sources close to Hamas told

AFP yesterday: "We do not expect an agreement to be concluded" by then.

Hamas fighters engaged in "fierce fighting" with Israeli soldiers on Thursday in the south of the Gaza Strip near Rafah, the Palestinian group said.

The statement, issued on Telegram, suggests that Hamas is still active in areas. In a later statement, it said fighters ambushed an Israeli 12-man force inside a house in the Tanur neighborhood in the eastern Rafah area with two anti-personnel and anti-armour rockets, killing and wounding several soldiers.

The Israeli army confirmed in a statement yesterday that two of its soldiers had been killed in combat in the southern Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said yesterday that Israel and Hamas will not be involved in Gaza aid distribution but Israel will take part in providing security, reports Reuters.

Israel cut most aid supplies into Gaza after the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023. It let more aid into the enclave during a fragile

- Israel to be involved in Gaza security, not aid distribution: US envoy
- Hamas fighters engaged in 'fierce fighting' in Rafah
- Trump to visit KSA, UAE, Qatar from May 13-16

SEE PAGE 8 COL 8



Church must fight 'lack of faith'

Says Leo XIV in first mass as pope

AFP, Vatican City

Leo XIV urged the Catholic Church to "desperately" counter a lack of faith in his first homily as pope yesterday, a day after the modest cardinal largely unknown to the world become the first US head of the 2,000-year institution.

Chicago-born Robert Francis Prevost on Thursday became the 267th pope, spiritual leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics and successor to Argentina's Pope Francis, after a secret conclave by his fellow cardinals in the Vatican's

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

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PHOTOS:
MIR MASUDUL ALAM

JU in full bloom

Seasonal blossoms transform the campus into a canvas of colour

Down by the pond in front of the Zahir Raihan Auditorium, Konokchura flowers reflect so vividly on the water that it almost looks like a turmeric fair has come alive. The branches above shimmer like fireflies caught in midday sun.

SAKIB AHMED

Summer is here: loud, dusty, and relentless. The days feel longer, the sun sharper, and the air heavier. Across much of the country, people stay indoors, trying to escape the heat. But on the campus of Jahangirnagar University, the season sings a different song.

Here, summer doesn't just bring sweat and sunburn -- it brings colour.

Walk down any path, and you'll find bursts of red, purple, yellow, and white peeking through the trees and along the brick walkways.

Krishnachura (Royal Poinciana/Delonix regia) trees set the sky on fire with their blazing red blooms, while Jarul (Pride of India/

“Jahangirnagar University offers exactly the kind of environment that plants need to thrive”.

Professor Dr Amir Hossain Bhuiyan,
Environmental Science Department,
Jahangirnagar University.



PHOTOS: AURITRO SATTAR

A drone view captures a striking intersection on campus, flanked on both sides by blooming Jarul trees in full splendour.

like Shantiniketan, Switzerland, and along the pond beside Maulana Bhashani Hall, Jarul trees bloom with such deep purple intensity that the whole scene turns poetic.

“Sitting by the Jarul-lined pond helps me forget the heat,” says Ishrak Ahmed Ratul, a history major and residential student of Maulana Bhashani Hall. “It’s like a built-in stress-relief spot.”

Down by the pond in front of the Zahir Raihan Auditorium, Konokchura flowers reflect so vividly on the water that it almost looks like a turmeric fair has come alive. The branches above shimmer like fireflies caught in midday sun. To the right, the Shaheed Minar stands surrounded by these “golden princesses,” their blooms forming a gentle halo around the memorial.

“Every time I pass here, I find myself pausing just to take a photo,” says Sanjida Khanom, a journalism student. “Sometimes I don’t even realise I’ve stopped walking... it just draws you in.”

Over at Murad Chattar, the air smells of freshly brewed tea and warm sunlight. You might be

sipping from a small cup beside the new Arts Faculty building when a few Konokchura petals drift gently down and land on your saucer. From the new Administration Building all the way to AFM Kamal Uddin Hall, these yellow blossoms line the campus paths like golden guardians.

“Even though it’s summer, my tea sales are doing better than expectations. Who wouldn’t want to enjoy a cup while soaking in the beauty of this place?” says Md Kalam, who runs a tea stall right under a Konokchura tree.

Outside the Social Sciences Faculty, right past the main gate, there’s a tree that always catches the eye. Its flowers (some pink, some white) cover the branches like quiet confetti. Students often slow down here, not for photos, but just to walk under the shade. Similar trees stand proudly outside the Computer Science and Engineering Building and Shaheed Salam-Barkat Hall. Their pink flowers are already drawing eyes and cameras.

“I never knew so many shades of pink existed,” says Ikramul Hasan Nayeem, a computer science

student.

“But these trees show me something new every day.”

These are Cassia renigera (Rainbow Shower Tree) and Cassia javanica. They also bloom side by side in yellow and pink near the Jahangirnagar School and College entrance and at Chourangi. Their contrast is joyful, elegant, and unmistakably summery.

And if you wander even further, you’ll find more: Jaba (Hibiscus) in bold reds, Sonalu in rich gold, fragrant Baganbilas (Bougainvillea) in pinks and purples, and pure white Kathgolap lining the quiet roads near Begum Khaleda Zia Hall. Students walking by often pick up fallen Kathgolap petals to tuck behind their ears.

“It’s my little way of carrying campus beauty with me,” says Sabikunnahar Shifa, a residential student of Begum Khaleda Zia Hall, smiling as she adjusts a petal behind her ear.

Professor Dr Amir Hossain Bhuiyan of the Environmental Science Department told The Daily Star, “Jahangirnagar University offers exactly the kind of environment that plants need to thrive. In addition, we planted high-quality trees here in a planned way... arranged in rows, ensuring that different species bloom in different seasons. That’s why the campus always looks colourful, no matter the time of year. We also plan to plant even more flowering trees.”

But while the flowers keep blooming, a quiet sadness is also in the air.

Bit by bit, Jahangirnagar University is losing pieces of its natural beauty. Over the years, thousands of trees have been cut down. Several lakes have vanished, filled in to make way for buildings, roads, and construction. The campus is expanding. New structures rise, new facilities are built, and progress marches on. But with each tree lost, with each lake vanished, something gentle slips away. The songs of birds grow quieter. The shade becomes a little harder to find.

Associate Professor Mir Masudul Alam, an alumnus of the International Relations Department who has spent the last six years photographing wildlife on campus, reflects on the changes.

“Back in our university days, there was more room for wild plants and animals. Even in 2019, I used to

find indigo flowers and wild



An aerial view of the Chourangi intersection, adorned with blooming Cassia javanica (Pink Shower) and Krishnachura (Royal Poinciana) trees.

A scenic view of the road leading to the women’s dormitories at Jahangirnagar University, flanked by blooming Cassia javanica (Pink Shower) on one side and Sonalu (Golden Shower Tree / Cassia fistula) on the other.

PHOTO: AURITRO SATTAR



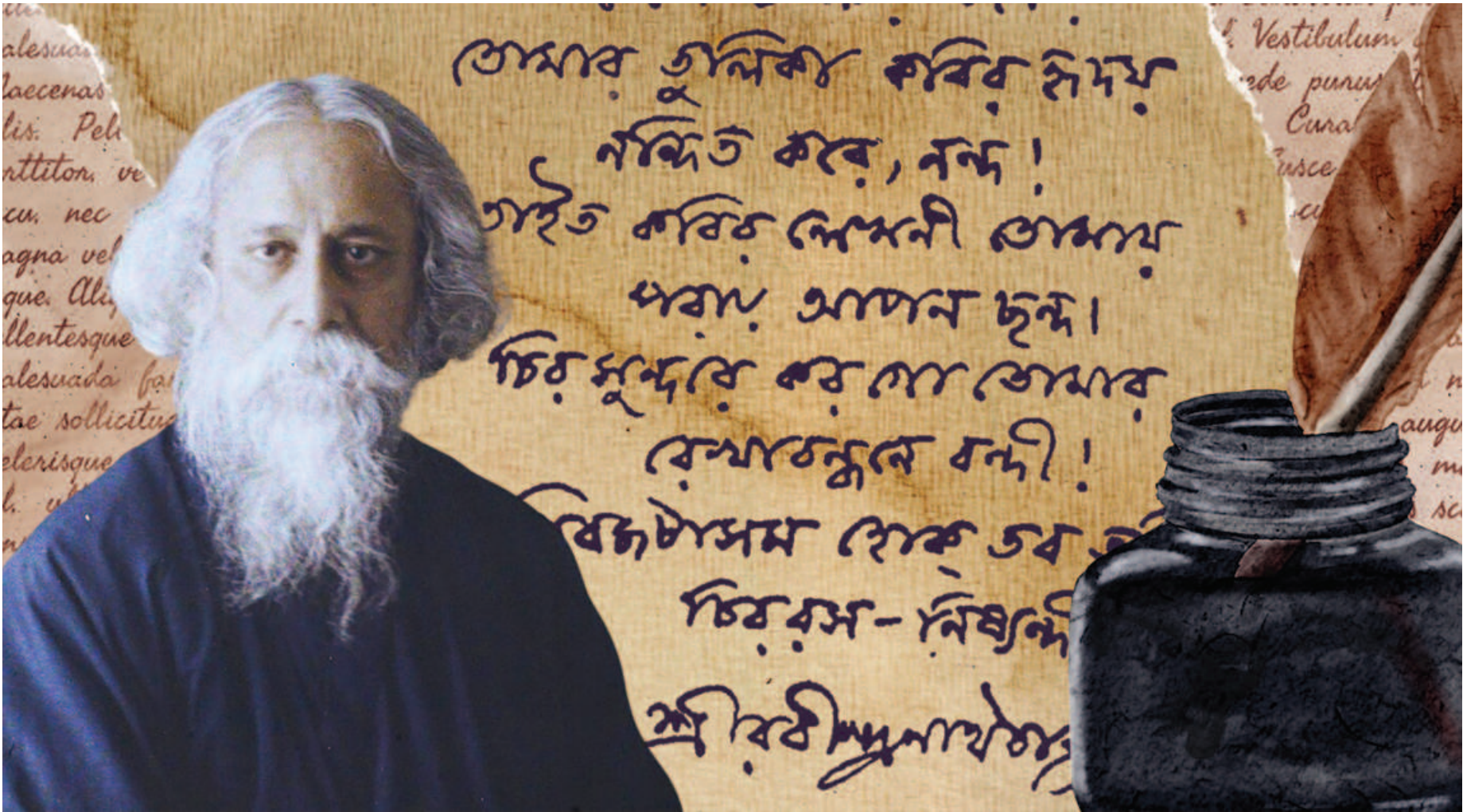


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

ESSAY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S engagement with Islamic culture and Muslims

Tagore was born into a Brahmo Samaj family, a progressive Hindu sect founded by Rammohun Roy after being influenced by Islamic monotheistic ideals. Roy received his early education in a Muslim madrasa, where he mastered Arabic and Persian, enabling him to study the Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy and classical Sufi poetry in their original languages.

MOHAMMAD A. QUAYUM

The English poet W.B. Yeats once expressed his profound admiration for Rabindranath Tagore, describing him as “someone greater than any of us”. Similarly, after meeting the poet at an event in Cambridge, UK, Francis Cornford, granddaughter of Charles Darwin, remarked, “I can now imagine a powerful and gentle Christ, which I never could before”. Despite such acclaim for his polymathic genius, Tagore often attracted broadsides from various factions, including, in his own words, “political groups, religious groups, literary groups [and] social groups”.

Some of this vitriol has come from his home turf, where several critics have accused him of religious bias, branding him a Hindu nationalist, a hierophant of a Hindu-centric India and a Hindu extremist who held an intrinsic bias towards Muslims. However, this view seems specious, given Tagore's lifelong aspiration for global unity of humanity and engagement with Islamic culture and Muslims in a spirit of inclusivity and good fellowship.

A proponent of the principles of Advaita (non-duality of creation) and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family), Tagore rejected narrow-minded ideologies of all forms that restricted the individual's personal growth and rendered them “unfit for citizenship of the world.” In *Fireflies*, he condemned sectarianism in a deprecatory trope:

The Sectarian thinks
That he has the sea
Laddled into his private pond.

Critics who accuse Tagore of Hindu chauvinism and antipathy towards Muslims fail to appreciate his non-traditional Hindu background as a Brahmo and his fiery critique of Hindu formalism in his work. They also overlook that Tagore made significant efforts to unite Hindus and Muslims to create a Mahajati in India. For example, he established an Islamic Studies Department at Visva-Bharati University in 1927 and a Chair of Persian Studies in 1932. He also admitted Muslim students, including the renowned writer Syed Mujtaba Ali, right after founding the university in 1921. Moreover, he maintained amicable relationships with various Muslim writers and intellectuals of his time, took compassionate actions to alleviate the hardships of his Muslim tenants in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) while managing their family estates, and publicly honoured the religion and prophet Muhammad in national media outlets on Muslim festive occasions.

In a lecture at Oxford University in 1930, Tagore explained that his sensibility was shaped by “a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mohammedan and British.” The influence of Islamic culture began on him early, as he was raised in a Persianate ambience, surrounded by Muslim food and dress. Many of his family members were “Mussalman type of Achkan and Jibba”, and Tagore's earliest surviving photo from age 10 shows him wearing a Jibba robe like Iranian royalty.

Tagore was born into a Brahmo Samaj family, a progressive Hindu sect founded by Rammohun Roy after being influenced by Islamic monotheistic ideals. Roy received his early education in a Muslim madrasa, where he mastered Arabic and Persian, enabling him to study the Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy and classical Sufi poetry in their original languages. Subsequently, he authored a long essay in Persian, “Tuhfat al-Muwahhiddin”, in which he vehemently criticised Hindu idolatry and superstition, concurrently advocating their reform from an Islamic perspective. The movement's

reliance on the Qur'an and Sufi literature was so profound that a Brahmo missionary named Girish Chandra Sen was the first to translate the Qur'an into Bangla, who also used Sufi poetry to impart ethical and spiritual teachings to the Brahmo Samaj adherents.

Tagore and his father, Debendranath Tagore, were fervent champions of Sufi literature. Debendranath, proficient in Arabic and Persian, revered Diwan-i-Hafiz as a sacred book and recited it regularly as part of his midnight meditations. Influenced by his father, Tagore also became intoxicated with it. During his visit to Iran and Iraq in 1932, Tagore spent an entire week in Shiraz to honour the mausoleums of two eminent Sufi poets, Saadi and Hafiz, declaring himself a natural successor to these Sufi saints.

During his visit, Tagore profusely praised the Islamic civilisation in Iran and Iraq. In an

drama “Basanto” to Nazrul. After Tagore's death, Nazrul became so distraught that he composed several poems honouring his icon, including the long elegy “Rabihara” and “Salam asta Rabi.”

All the Muslim writers in Tagore's circle have paid glowing tributes to Kabiguru, but none more than Poet Golam Mostafa. He described Tagore as a Muslim at heart and stated categorically, “We did not find any hostility towards Islam in the vast literature produced by Tagore. On the contrary, there is so much of Islamic content and ideals in his writings that he can be called a Muslim without hesitation.”

Tagore spent 10 years from 1890 to 1901 in Shelaidah, Kushtia, looking after their family estates in East Bengal. During this period, he had the opportunity to engage closely with Bengali Muslim culture. His boatman and retainer, Abdul Majhi, and most of the 3000



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

address to the Armenians, he applauded Iran for its “message of brotherhood, of freedom, of federation in the task of establishing peace and goodwill”. He also lauded the people and lifestyle in Iraq, acknowledging how profoundly Islam and Muslims have contributed to the Indian civilisation. He urged an audience of Iraqi writers to send more people of faith to India to help alleviate its ongoing ethnic and religious feuds by uniting different communities under the banner of fellowship and love, transcending petty factionalism.

Tagore maintained cordial relationships with numerous Muslim writers and intellectuals of his time, including Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Shahid Suhrawardy, Golam Mostafa, Jasimuddin, Syed Mujtaba Ali, Muhammad Mansooruddin, Bande Ali Miyan, and Sufia Kamal. He invited Dr Shahidullah and Abdul Wadud to deliver lectures at his institutions in Santiniketan, appointed Suhrawardy as the Nizam Professor at Visva-Bharati and Syed Mujtaba Ali, who had a PhD from a German university, first as a professor of the German language and then as a professor of Islamic culture.

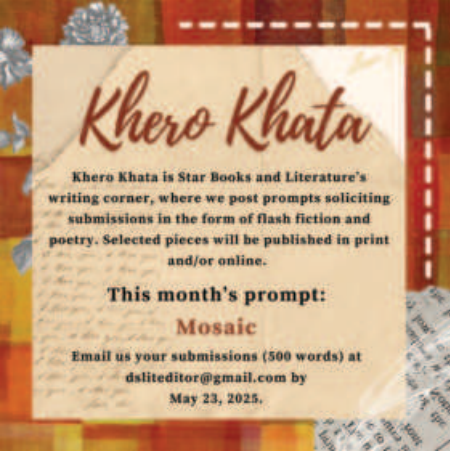
Nazrul was first introduced to Tagore by Shahidullah. At their first meeting, Tagore invited Nazrul to stay back at Santiniketan, but Nazrul, a maverick and a bohemian, refused to. However, he later became an enthusiastic exponent of Rabindra Sangcet. He also dedicated his anthology of poems, *Sanchita*, to “Poet-Emperor, Rabindranath Tagore”. In return, Tagore dedicated his dance-

tenants working on their land were Muslims. This daily interaction with Muslim families helped the young poet understand and appreciate their way of life and traditions.

Tagore's respectful embrace of the Muslim community is evident in many of his works but most incisively in a letter written in 1931, affirming, “As far as the country itself is concerned... we cannot deny the fact that the Mussulmans are our close relations... I love [my Mussulman tenants] from my heart because they deserve it”. To mitigate their hardships, Tagore administered various measures, including reforming the estate judiciary system, establishing a bank, a school and several industries.

In 1935, Tagore wrote the Foreword to a book, *A Simple Guide to Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilisation*, by Maulvi Abdul Karim. In it, he explained that although Muslims and Hindus have been living together in Bengal for centuries, they were still hostile towards one another because of their widespread ignorance and apathy towards each other's culture. His solution was a mutually sympathetic understanding of their values and traditions and an enduring fellowship rooted in love, empathy and trust—a vision Tagore cherished and championed much through his life and works.

Professor Mohammad A. Quayum, Flinders University, Australia, has published one authored, two translated and three edited books, as well as several articles and book chapters on Rabindranath Tagore.



POETRY

Runner

WASIMA AZIZ

Like little boys racing against red-orange hues against dark, dark blue to spread the day's news; Runner, with a bag packed and ready to go at a moment's notice (you will never find me staying past my welcome); Runner, get going now. The sun's coming up and you need to be off someplace else, someplace less - comfortable.

Runner / wayfarer / “jajabor” as they say in your mother-tongue (in your mother's tongue?), your place is in the wrinkled edges of the in between, in the crevices folded into cliffs of granite that lead from world to world. Do not make a hearth in the heart of any home. Runner, there is danger in standing still. Runner, the sun is rising over these hills—gray green turned gold in the morning light. Runner, there is no kindling like the sun on your face and this pack on your back and the burn in your lungs as you trudge through these paths of packed earth and gravel.

Runner, keep steady. This pack is heavy and we must go a long way.

Wasima Aziz is an undergrad student currently learning to let things be. Send words of advice to wasima.aziz11@gmail.com or find her on Instagram @washeem_cant_decide.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

Do you hear me, Ma?

MUSTAFA TAJWAR ARAF

For all that melts in this month of fallen petals rising, you're a paperclip, hanging on the edge of my bookshelf, bent into a heart.

You drag me off and bend me down, cry for me and kneel me down, turn to me when you frown; and all of it melts, like spring to summer.

Why mustn't I reek of hatred, from birth to maternity? You left me at the edge, wallowing for help, hanging from the ledge.

My cries stop.

I remember. I remember the time I held your finger with all my strength and told you about the times I hadn't given up. You didn't bat an eye, and I felt hanging.

Do you remember when I was 7 and you, with your newly bought side bag, hanging, got mistaken for my sister? We laughed together and called them dummies. Do you remember, they weren't?

All these flowers I bring you after every rendezvous, my love for you, why do they sag? Tie a knot on their neck, let them hang, keep them from falling. It must remind you of something, someday.

Mustafa Tajwar Araf is a highschool student who writes his heart out when he can't go out.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA



PHOTOS:
SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

DORA

explores within

SHARMIN JOYA

A self-taught artiste driven by passion, Nadia Dora carved her path into the world of music with nothing but determination and a deep love for the craft. Known for a voice that can pack a punch, she quickly made a name for herself in the folk genre—a testament to her unique signature style.

Now, she is ready to take a new turn. The singer has stepped beyond her folk roots to explore a more diverse musical direction, beginning with her latest release *Chol Preme Pure Jai*—a chill step number whose lyrics, tune, and composition have been handled by Autumnal Moon. Released under the banner of G Series, the track marks a refreshing shift in Dora's journey as an artiste.

We caught up with the singer after an exclusive photoshoot at The Daily Star Centre to talk about her evolution, her inspirations, and her forthcoming musical journey.

"People are familiar with my folk songs, and I usually perform folk numbers more than any other genre, whether on stage or at any show," shared the singer. "However, after a three-year break, I wanted to come back with something outside my usual style. So, I shared my thoughts with Moon da, expressing my interest in experimenting with a different genre—and he took care of the rest! I'm truly overwhelmed by how warmly people have embraced the song."

It's not just the music that has captured attention—the accompanying music video, filmed across the breathtaking landscapes of Nepal, is a visual delight. Featuring Dora herself amid stunning natural backdrops, the video adds both depth and emotion to the song's narrative.

"We shot it last year in Nepal and it was a truly memorable experience—one I'll always cherish," she shared. "This was my first time appearing in a music video alongside having to act in it as well. Previously, I only appeared in studio setups alongside the musicians to lend my voice. This time, it was a completely different experience," she mentioned.

Although Nadia Dora comes from a culturally rich background, her journey

into music was anything but conventional. Without formal training, she shaped her path, inspired by the voices she admired. "Whenever I listened to singers like Fareeda Parvin, or later Anusheh Anadil, Faizan Rashid Ahmad Buno (Popularly known as Buno) from Bangla band, Nigar Sultana Sumi from Lalon band, and Sharmin Sultana Sumi from Chirkutt—my love for folk music grew stronger," she shared.

This passion for music led her to become a part of the band Dharok. "We didn't have original songs back then, but we used to cover Rabindra Sangeet and other classics," Dora recalled.

In 2014, she, alongside some of her close friends, formed the band Pandora, only to focus on working on a new style of fusion and rock music. Their last release was in 2016, and Dora disclosed that they have reunited once again with original material in the works.

The current lineup includes Zia on bass, Fahim, also a co-founder, on lead guitar and vocals, Debashish on drums, and Bipu on guitar.

"We're working on two new songs, which we hope to release by the end of this year. Fahim and Debashish were abroad for a while, which delayed our work. But now we're back and also actively performing at stage shows."

Dora spoke candidly about the common practice of syndicating artistes in the music scene. "The problem arises when an artiste starts working with a particular group—they often become part of a syndicate without even realising it. Such grouping is deeply concerning, as it hampers the entire industry. Individual artistes end up losing new potential creative collaborations because of such alliances."

"I won't shy away from admitting that I, too, was part of a syndicate for a long time. Now, I'm glad to have returned after a break, and moving forward, I hope to work in an environment that encourages open and creative collaborations rather than building barriers through a 'syndicated mindset.'"

Dora also shared her concerns about recent disruptions in stage shows, which have reportedly been hampered by so-called "mobs". "We perform on stage regularly, and to be honest, due to growing security concerns in recent times, we often decline shows outside Dhaka," she admitted. "However, so far, we haven't faced any problems and things have been going well, with excellent security at our events."

When she is not making music, Dora works in the sales and marketing department of a private television channel, balancing her dual careers with dedication.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix

The Four Seasons Season



Apple TV+

Murderbot



HBO Max

Duster



Prime Video

Overcompensating



Bongo

Fyakra



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Play: Komola Ronger Bodh
May 9-11 | 5pm and 7pm
Bangladesh Mohila Samity



Play: Agunjatra
May 11 | 7pm onwards
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Natya Utsab 2025
May 13-16 | 7:30pm onwards
Jahangirnagar University

1-MIN REVIEW

'Superboys of Malegaon': A love letter to storytelling

Superboys of Malegaon is a charming and deeply human ode to the power of storytelling. Set in a dusty town far removed from Mumbai's glamour, it captures the grit, humor, and heartbreak of amateur filmmakers chasing an impossible dream.

Adarsh Gourav and Vineet Singh deliver heartfelt performances as friends navigating artistic ambition, financial strain, and personal ego. Reema Kagti's direction keeps the film grounded yet buoyant, while Varun Grover's writing balances



satire with sincerity.

The movie unfolds like life—unpredictable, messy, and poignant—constantly reinventing

itself while staying emotionally coherent. Its playful nods to cinematic history and social commentary never overshadow the central story of friendship, creativity, and survival. Reminiscent of films like *Be Kind Rewind* or *The Full Monty*, it celebrates underdogs with big hearts.

Funny, soulful, and honest, *Superboys of Malegaon* doesn't just entertain—it quietly inspires. It reminds us why people make art in the first place: not for perfection, but for connection.

'What Was That?' BY LORDE



Following an unannounced performance in Washington Square Park that swelled into a crowd-control moment, Lorde returned to the spotlight with *What Was That?*, a haunting new single that marks a dramatic tonal shift from her 2021 album *Solar Power*.

This jittery synth pop track, co-written with Jim-E Stack and co-produced with Daniel Nigro, projects raw emotional turbulence—drawing from a deeply personal chapter of heartbreak, hormonal shifts, and creative rebirth.

The music video, directed by Lorde herself under her birth name Ella Yelich O'Connor, mirrors this emotional chaos. Set across dimly lit interiors and blurred cityscapes, it captures Lorde wandering in solitude until a final shot where she screams silently into the night sky, encapsulating the feeling of quiet implosion.

On streaming platforms, *What Was That?* notched over 20 million streams within its first three days on Spotify and claimed the fifth spot on the platform's Global Top 50.

STYLE STATEMENT

SHAH RUKH KHAN

The internet went into a frenzy when Shah Rukh Khan made his Met Gala debut, last Monday, in a fierce look designed by designer Sabyasachi. Draped in a black, maharaja-inspired suit, the King of Bollywood exuded unmatched grandeur.

The long coat—cut from exquisite Tasmanian wool—merged traditional Indian royal design with global haute couture.

Structured shoulders and dramatic wide lapels made his look a masterclass in balancing opulence with edge.

His timeless elegance met modern power dressing—and the world watched in awe.



WHAT'S PLAYING



From café corners to cash flow

The business behind urban coffee culture

The modern coffee shop trend began gaining momentum in Bangladesh around 2010, especially in cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, driven by the rise of the cafe culture and lifestyle-based hangout spots, according to industry people

SUKANTA HALDER

Once considered high-priced, cold brew coffee and espresso-based drinks have become a defining feature of urban life in Bangladesh, blending community, creativity and culture in every cup.

From quiet locations in lively neighbourhoods to sleek establishments filled with freelancers and students, the coffee scene is no longer just about beverages. It is about a sense of belonging and identity in a rapidly changing cityscape.

Industry people say there has been a slow yet steady change in generational preferences over the past decade and a half, with the prevalence of social media having contributed to the paradigm shift in taste and preferences.

Economic growth and the subsequent boom in disposable incomes also contributed to the rise, drawing more people towards aspirational lifestyles and the cafe culture.

The modern coffee shop trend began gaining momentum in Bangladesh around 2010, especially in cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, driven by the rise of the cafe culture and lifestyle-based hangout spots, according to industry people.

In Dhaka, trendy cafes are visible in neighbourhoods such as Dhanmondi, Banani, Uttara and Mirpur, which now host dozens of such establishments.

In the mid 2000s, Coffee World was one of the few places one could visit for premium coffee, but cafes really came into vogue around 2012, challenging the status quo which firmly had tea as the undisputed king of beverages.

However, many cafes have sprung up since, becoming frequent haunts where young professionals and students are often spotted working side-by-side on laptops.

These outlets serve as de facto co-working spaces, offering essential amenities like Wi-Fi, electrical outlets and a quiet ambience.

North End Coffee Roasters, a local brand that began with a sleepy outlet in 2011, is generally considered a pioneer in the field, which quickly became populated by international chains like Gloria Jean's Coffees in 2011 and Crimson Cup afterwards.

Local brands like Beans & Aroma Coffees followed suit with an outlet

marketed more as a lifestyle than just a drink in recent times, a strategy that attracted the burgeoning young population, comprising freelancers, startup techies and students alike.

Young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in great numbers invested in independent local cafes, not relying on franchises, to exhibit their taste in décor and baked goods, he added.

However, Islam pointed out that the high cost of importing premium beans due to exorbitant duties and scarcely developing local coffee plantations pose real challenges to the growing industry.

Other challenges include high real estate costs, lack of trained and skilled baristas.

Market saturation in upscale neighbourhoods is another major concern, especially as the establishment of new cafes accelerated sharply after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, he added.

In terms of customers, the 18-40 age

Awake Cafe & Bistro, said they entered the business in 2023 with the goal of providing a premium and cosy experience for urban customers in Dhaka.

He said the response has been very encouraging, with increasing interest in specialty coffee and comfortable social spaces.

"Over time, our customer base has grown consistently, forming a loyal community of regulars," he said.

Starting with one outlet in the Bashundhara residential area, the company is now working on opening another in the same location.

They have invested around Tk 8 crore into the business, covering outlet setup, staff training, equipment, marketing, and supply chain.

Their customer base includes young professionals, university students, freelancers, and entrepreneurs, with families and businessmen also frequenting the cafe due to its welcoming ambience and reliable

private company, said she sometimes prefers coffee shops for work purposes as well.

"Sometimes I meet clients or hold small meetings at coffee shops," she said. "The relaxed environment makes discussions easier. I also occasionally work from there just to enjoy a change of atmosphere."

Shamima Akhter, director of corporate affairs, partnerships and communications at Unilever Bangladesh Ltd, said offices are no longer defined by four walls, especially for Gen Z.

Also, post-Covid, the concept of working a full five days from the office has also changed, and line

which are now entering the booming market by opening new outlets and launching local coffee brands.

With the market growing steadily, Bangladesh's coffee culture is fast becoming a reflection of modern urban identity, blending tradition with global influences.

Whether for work, leisure or connection, coffee now stands at the centre of city life, brewing not just drinks but conversations, creativity and community.

Nestle was the first to formally market coffee in Bangladesh, starting in 1998.

Nestlé Bangladesh Limited observed that the nation's evolving coffee culture mirrors a broader socio-economic shift driven by youth preferences and global influence.

With a large segment of the population under 30, the move from traditional tea stalls to modern cafes underscores changing urban lifestyles, it said.

The statement also said that the rise of cafe culture, particularly from the 2010s onward in Dhaka and Chittagong, is closely tied to increased exposure to Western trends via media and travel.

Despite the booming coffee culture in Bangladesh, coffee shop owners face significant challenges in sustaining and scaling their businesses, it said, adding that these challenges often include dependence on imports, limited local production and rising input costs.

The statement said coffee culture has slowly started to permeate smaller towns as well.

Coffee market grows at 56% annually Just a decade ago, large industrial groups had little presence in Bangladesh's coffee market. At the time, Swiss multinational Nestle dominated the sector, meeting most of the demand.

Besides Nestle, a few small companies imported and distributed coffee on a limited scale.

However, with changes in consumer food habits, several industrial groups and companies have since entered the market.

While tea consumption in Bangladesh has grown by 5 percent annually over the past 10 years, the coffee market has expanded by 56 percent per year, according to official figures.

Import data shows that in 2012, Bangladesh imported 264 tonnes of coffee. A decade later, in 2022, this figure jumped to 1,745 tonnes, an average annual growth of 56 percent.

In other words, demand for coffee is growing 11 times faster than that for tea. Still, tea remains dominant, with a market size 53 times larger than that of coffee.

Companies involved in coffee marketing report that coffee is consumed in only 15 percent of households in Bangladesh while the figure for tea stands at over 90 percent.

But with the rise of coffee culture, this figure is steadily increasing.

Currently, Bangladesh imports coffee from around 40 countries, including eight of the world's top 10 coffee producers. Notably, 88 percent of imports come from just five countries, namely India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil and Vietnam.



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

group dominates the market. Middle to upper-middle class, urban, social media-savvy, and health-conscious people are the predominant strata of the society that frequent cafes.

Although the trend remained largely confined to Dhaka and Chattogram for a long time, it is now starting to spread to places like Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Cox's Bazar. University towns such as Sylhet are showing growth potential, thanks to youth-driven demand, they added.

Jewel Das, area manager of Coffee World, said they were the first international coffee chain to start operations in Bangladesh in 2005 with the opening of an outlet in Banani.

Within the next three months, they opened four more outlets. They have also finalised locations for two new coffee shops, he said. Work is set to begin soon, and the outlets are expected to open by November this year.

"When we started our business, people weren't that used to coffee. Back then, only around 20 percent of people were familiar with it. Now, that figure has grown to 70 percent," he said.

The supply chain has also matured to an extent. Previously, coffee beans had to be imported to run the business. Although still in small quantities, coffee beans are now being produced in Bangladesh, he added.

Amit Costa, assistant manager of

internet.

Ahanaf Sayeed, managing director of Maclarens, recalled that in 2018, spending Tk 350 to Tk 400 on a cup of coffee was considered too expensive for most people.

"You could have a full meal for that price. But now it is quite normal. Coffee shops have become culturally accepted in Bangladesh. We are seeing both young people and the older generation embracing cafe culture," he said.

Maclarens opened in January last year. Initially, daily sales ranged between Tk 1,500 and Tk 2,000. At present, sales stand at around Tk 20,000 to Tk 30,000.

Sayeed plans to open a second branch in Motijheel in September.

"After that, we intend to expand gradually into areas where cafe culture has not yet arrived," he said.

In many neighbourhoods, coffee is now served alongside tea at roadside stalls, often accompanied by cheerful chatter. As a result, coffee is quickly gaining popularity among tea drinkers.

Rafiqul Islam, a third-year university student, said he often goes to coffee shops to relax between classes or after long hours of study.

"It's a comfortable place to hang out with friends, work on group assignments, or even spend some alone time," he said.

Sharmin Akhter, an executive at a

managers do not feel the need to see their teams sitting inside the office, she said.

Rather, the concept of hybrid has become the norm and it resonates well with the youth. It gives them a feeling of empowerment and freedom, she added.

Akhter added that office workers love to hang out in coffee shops with teams and even with clients. While meeting rooms are available in the office, having a meeting at a midpoint, a kind of neutral venue, is accepted as well.

She said coffee shops are well decorated, provide good Wi-Fi, and, most importantly, offer a diverse menu suitable to all palates.

"Coffee shops are great places for team building, too. During a team hangout, we do finish work as well, but it is much more friendly than sitting inside a meeting room," she added.

"Also, we must not forget that food is a big part of Bangladeshi culture. So, I can attend a call while enjoying good food against the backdrop of a great venue without any further cost."

Whether it is students discussing coursework, young professionals holding informal meetings or artists brainstorming their next big project, coffee shops have become the unofficial social hubs of urban Bangladesh.

This shift has caught the attention of major companies and industrial groups,



in Uttara in 2014. Today, they have three outlets in Dhaka, with a fourth currently under construction.

Tariqul Islam, chairman of Beans & Aroma Coffees Limited, said the period from 2015-2017 was a real turning point as small boutique cafes became commonplace.

This is because the popularity of third-wave coffee ideas, including artisanal blends and high-quality brewing gained traction, he said.

Moreover, the social media marketing of "instagrammable" cafe spaces drew in the youth.

He added that coffee has been