



I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE  
Donald Trump  
US president



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## Govt decides to ban AL activities

Approves amendment to allow ICT to try political parties; July declaration within 30 working days



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

People celebrate the announcement at the InterContinental intersection last night.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has decided to ban all activities of the Awami League, including in cyberspace, under the Anti-Terrorism Act until the International Crimes Tribunal completes the trial of the party and its leaders.

Protesters at Shahbagh and in front of InterContinental burst into joy as the decision of the council of advisers, led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, was made public in a press

briefing last night.

The decision was made at a special meeting of the council following three days of demonstrations demanding a ban on the party and its trial for atrocities to suppress the July uprising.

The ban aims to “ensure national security, protect leaders and activists of the uprising, and safeguard plaintiffs and witnesses involved in the tribunal proceedings”, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul

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### INDO-PAK ESCALATION

Trump announces truce, hails ‘common sense’ of both countries

India accuses Pakistan of truce violations, says it has retaliated

Army chiefs of India, Pakistan to speak again on May 12

World leaders, including Prof Yunus, hail truce

Punitive measures announced by rivals, including Indus Waters Treaty, to stay for now

Civilian death toll rises to 66

Pakistan reopens airspace

## India, Pakistan agree to immediate ceasefire

Announcement comes after four days of military escalation; violations reported after rivals confirm cessation of hostilities



PHOTO: AFP

People exchange sweets, left, as they celebrate the announcement of a ceasefire between Pakistan and India in Multan, Pakistan, yesterday. People hold the national flag of India, right, in front of a banner praising the Indian defence forces for their military operation in Mumbai.

AGENCIES

Nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire yesterday after intense diplomatic pressure from the United States and other world powers, as their escalating conflict threatened to erupt into full-scale war.

US President Donald Trump posted the ceasefire announcement on his Truth Social network as the rivals conducted a series of strikes and counter-strikes against each other's key military installations and other places for the last four days.

“After a long night of talks mediated by the

United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE. Congratulations to both Countries on using Common Sense and Great Intelligence,” Trump posted.

Indian foreign secretary Vikram Misri said the two countries' military chiefs had spoken to each other and agreed that all fighting would stop at 5:00pm Indian time (1130 GMT), without using the word “ceasefire”.

In a statement on X, Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said: “Pakistan and India have agreed to a ceasefire with immediate effect.”

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## Reconciliation commission to be formed

Law adviser says he and CJ to visit S Africa to gain knowledge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul yesterday said a Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be formed to establish national unity.

The law adviser and chief justice will visit South Africa to see how such commissions work.

“After returning, we will share our experiences,” Prof Asif said speaking at a views-exchange meeting on the second draft of the “Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedies Ordinance, 2025”.

Those involved in genocide and crimes against humanity must face strict punishment, he said.

“We must build national unity... we must form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” he added.

“We will introduce strict laws to prevent

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### LICENCE TO FLY: PART-1

## Regulator repeatedly ignored red flags

CAAB's own inquiry finds irregularities by training academies, raising questions about aviation safety

ZYMA ISLAM

Time after time, the internal safety department of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh uncovered irregularities in pilot licencing and raised concerns about aviation safety, only to be overridden by the civil aviation's higher authorities.

An internal investigation by the regulator unearthed serious violations related to at least 144 pilot licences issued by CAAB, many from the last two years, according to documents seen by The Daily Star.

The findings cast a spotlight on the nation's aviation standards and may attract scrutiny from international watchdogs such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) or the Federal

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## People don't want to see AL anymore

Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The 18 crore people of Bangladesh no longer wish to see the Awami League due to its oppression, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He made the remarks at a rally organised by the BNP at the Polo Ground in Chattogram city. The event, titled “Rally to Establish Political Rights of the Youth,” was attended by thousands of leaders and activists of districts under the Chattogram division.

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 12

### BUSINESS

#### NOTICE

Read pre-budget special stories in a four-page supplement brought out by Star Business today.



Thousands of BNP leaders and activists from various units in Chattogram division attend a “Rally to Establish Political Rights of the Youth” at the port city's Railway Polo Ground yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## It's our duty to protect our border, keep it peaceful

Says Khalilur

RAMISA ROB

During a press conference in Dhaka on March 15, 2025, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres mentioned a humanitarian

“channel” from Bangladesh would facilitate the return of the Rohingya community, but said it would require “authorisation and cooperation”, as reported by Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Dr Khalilur Rahman, national security adviser, clarified Bangladesh's position on the matter in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star. “There has been an informal discussion between the UN and Bangladesh on humanitarian aid to Rakhine but no formal proposal has been made by any party,” he said.

“Like elsewhere in the world, such support would require the consent of all relevant parties and the satisfaction

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READ THE FULL SCRIPT ON PAGE 6



# Europe presses Russia for 30-day truce in Ukraine

Macron warns Moscow faces ‘massive’ Europe, US sanctions if it breaks truce

AGENCIES

The leaders of France, Britain, Germany and Poland yesterday agreed to call on Russia to accept a 30-day unconditional ceasefire starting Monday, Kyiv said.

The proposal came after the four leaders, part of an alliance Britain and France call “the coalition of the willing”, met President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv.

Russia has shown no signs of halting its three-year invasion of Ukraine and rejected a similar proposal put forward by the United States and Kyiv in March.

Moscow warned earlier that there could be no truce unless the West halted arms deliveries to Kyiv.

Russia now occupies about a fifth of Ukrainian territory -- including the Crimea peninsula, which it annexed in 2014 -- and intensified deadly attacks on the country this spring.

The US embassy in Kyiv warned on Friday that a “significant air attack” could hit Ukraine at some point within the next several days.

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk held talks with Zelensky earlier in the capital.

The five leaders later held a phone call with Trump, Ukraine’s foreign minister



In this handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry yesterday, (from L) Britain’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky, France’s President Emmanuel Macron, Poland’s Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Germany’s Chancellor Friedrich Merz attend a phone call with US President after their meeting in Kyiv.

PHOTO: AFP

Andriy Sybiga said on X.

“Ukraine and all allies are ready for a full unconditional ceasefire on land, air, and at sea for at least 30 days starting already on Monday,” he added.

On his way to Kyiv, Macron said that, once a 30-day ceasefire was in place, there could be “direct talks between Ukraine and Russia”.

However, Macron warned that Russia would face “massive” coordinated European and US sanctions if it broke the 30-day ceasefire.

“In the event of a violation of this ceasefire, we have agreed that massive sanctions will be prepared and coordinated between Europeans

and Americans,” Macron told a press conference in Kyiv.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have hinted they are open to negotiating with each other, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says this would only be possible once a ceasefire takes effect.

It is the first time the leaders of the four European nations have made a joint visit to Ukraine.

They were later seen embracing Zelensky and joined him in placing lanterns at a memorial for fallen soldiers in central Kyiv.

For Merz, who took office only this week, it was his first visit to Ukraine as chancellor.

Macron had not been to Kyiv since June 2022, when he went with the Italian and German leaders of the time.

The leaders said in a joint statement that they would ramp up pressure on Russia if it did not accept a ceasefire.

“We are clear the bloodshed must end. Russia must stop its illegal invasion,” it said

“Alongside the US, we call on Russia to agree a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire to create the space for talks on a just and lasting peace.”

The leaders also said they would discuss the creation of a European force that could provide Ukraine with security after the war.

Russia has said it will not tolerate any Western military presence in Ukraine once the fighting ends and has warned the proposal could spark war between Moscow and Nato.

The symbolic show of European unity came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin struck a defiant tone at a Moscow parade marking 80 years since victory in World War II.

In an interview with the US news channel ABC on Saturday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said arms deliveries from Ukraine’s allies would have to stop before Russia would agree to a ceasefire.

On the ground, Russia said that fighting had been taking place in four regions of Ukraine despite this week’s unilateral ceasefire by Moscow, saying its troops had been forced to respond to Ukrainian attacks.

Ukraine says Russia has continued to attack it and has called the ceasefire a farce. It did not join the truce but is calling instead for a 30-day ceasefire that US President Donald Trump is urging the warring sides to agree.

Reuters could not verify battlefield accounts by either side.

## July charter will safeguard citizens’ rights

Says Prof Riaz at Consensus Commission meeting with UPDF

BSS, Dhaka

The July charter, being prepared through dialogue with all stakeholders by the National Consensus Commission, will undoubtedly safeguard the rights of all citizens, Prof Ali Riaz, the commission vice-chairman, said yesterday.

“A democratic state cannot be built, nor can human dignity be upheld, without guaranteeing the rights of all citizens,” Prof Riaz told a discussion between the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) and the commission at the LD Hall of the parliament.

He said, “Only a democratic state can ensure the rights of its citizens, establish the rule of law, and deliver justice to the people through an independent judiciary.”

Therefore, the commission believes that the charter, which is being prepared incorporating the opinions of all political parties, will safeguard the rights of all citizens in the coming days, he said.

A four-member UPDF team was led by Dhaka region organiser Mikel Chakma. Others are party member Sunayan Chakma, Democratic Youth Forum President Zico Tripura, and Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Student Council President Amal Tripura.

So far, 28 political parties, including the UPDF, have taken part in talks with the National Consensus Commission.

## Monsoon rains to arrive early in India

REUTERS, New Delhi

Monsoon rains are expected to hit India’s southern coast on May 27, five days earlier than usual, marking the earliest arrival in at least five years, the weather office said, raising hopes for bumper harvests of crops such as rice, corn, and soybean.

The monsoon, the lifeblood of the country’s \$4 trillion economy, delivers nearly 70% of the rain that India needs to water farms and recharge aquifers and reservoirs. Nearly half of India’s farmland, without any irrigation cover, depends on the annual June-September rains to grow a number of crops.

## It’s our duty

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of a number of prerequisites for aid provision,” he added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh “is continuing to engage with the Arakan Army and the Myanmar government in the context of humanitarian support, repatriation of the Rohingya and the inclusion of the Rohingya at all levels of the emerging governance and security structure in Rakhine”, he said. “We realised the need for keeping contact with the Arakan Army when they took control of the Myanmar side of our border,” Rahman added, emphasising, “It is our duty to protect our border and keep it peaceful.”

On the other hand, Bangladesh has recently witnessed an influx of the Rohingya and without security in Myanmar, Bangladesh also cannot make progress on repatriation. However, the government is “coordinating with the relevant actors to prevent another wave of refugees into Bangladesh. In particular, we have signalled to the Arakan Army that they must ensure that there is no further violence, discrimination and displacement of the Rohingya inside Rakhine”, the national security adviser explained.

## Reconciliation commission

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such crimes from recurring. At the same time, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will demonstrate that the perpetrators are detached from our society.”

Writer and online activist Pinaki Bhattacharya joined the event virtually as the keynote speaker and presented his views on several sections of the draft ordinance, according to a law ministry statement.

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan; Education Adviser Prof CR Abar; Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman; International Crimes Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam, political analyst and columnist Farhad Mazhar; Supreme Court lawyer Ruhul Quddus Kajol, human rights activists Rezaur Rahman Lenin and Sayera Rahman Khan, and Mayer Daak Coordinator Sanjida Islam, among others spoke at the event.

## Somalia floods kill seven, displace 200 families

AFP, MOGADISHU

At least seven people were killed in an overnight devastating flood in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu, local government officials said yesterday.

Torrential rains, which started on Friday night and lasted about 10 hours touched off the floods that displaced more than two hundred families.

Nine houses were completely destroyed across various districts of Mogadishu, while six major tarmac roads were also damaged.

## India, Pakistan agree

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“Pakistan has always strived for peace and security in the region, without compromising on its sovereignty and territorial integrity,” he added.

“India and Pakistan have today worked out an understanding on the stoppage of firing and military action. India has consistently maintained a firm and uncompromising stance against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It will continue to do so,” posted Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on X.

Despite the truce, two Indian government sources told Reuters that the punitive measures announced by India and reciprocated by Pakistan, such as trade suspension and visa cancellations, would remain in place for now.

The sources also said the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, a critical water-sharing pact that India suspended after the Kashmir attack, would continue to remain in abeyance.

However, hours after the truce was announced, violations were reported from the main cities of Indian-occupied Kashmir, the territory that had borne the brunt of four days of fighting.

Blasts were heard in Srinagar and Jammu, and projectiles and flashes were seen in the night sky over Jammu, similar to the events of the previous evening, according to authorities, residents and Reuters witnesses.

Late at night, India’s foreign secretary Misri said there had been “repeated violations” and that the “armed forces are giving an adequate and appropriate response to these violations.”

The ceasefire comes after four days of attacks and counter-attacks by both sides that killed at least 60 people and saw thousands of civilians flee their homes along their border as well as in divided Kashmir.

The clashes involved fighter jets, missiles, drones and artillery and are the worst in decades.

On Wednesday, India had attacked what it said was “terrorist infrastructure” in Pakistani Kashmir and Pakistan, two weeks after 26 people were killed in an attack on tourists in Indian Kashmir.

Pakistan has denied any involvement and called for an independent probe.

Before the truce, the conflict escalated significantly yesterday after India and Pakistan struck each other’s key military installations overnight.

In the early hours yesterday, Pakistan launched counterattacks against India after three of its air bases – one in Rawalpindi and two others in Punjab – were struck.

Indian Wing Commander Vyomika Singh told a briefing that there were “several high-speed missile attacks” on air bases, but “limited damage” to equipment.

Authorities in Pakistan-administered Kashmir said 13 civilians were killed by Indian shelling overnight. India said 5 civilians were killed in Indian-administered Kashmir.

After the Indian strikes, Pakistan’s military spokesman Ahmed Sharif, in a live broadcast aired by state television in the middle of the night, warned: “Now you just wait for our response.”

After the retaliatory strikes, which India said targeted 36 sites including

military installations, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told senior officials, “We have given India a befitting response and avenged the blood of our innocent citizens”, his office said in a statement.

During the 4-day conflict, Pakistani military sources claimed their forces had shot down at least 77 Israeli-made hi-tech drones, while Indian officials said they had destroyed hundreds of Pakistani drones, many Turkish-made.

Pakistan also claimed to have shot down five Indian warplanes – including three multi-million dollar French Rafale fighter jets – although New Delhi has not confirmed any losses. New Delhi also claimed to have shot down Pakistani aircraft, which Islamabad denied.

Independent verification of claims by either side has been difficult.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the ceasefire came about after he and Vice-President JD Vance engaged with senior officials on both sides.

“I am pleased to announce the Governments of India and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site,” he said on X.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the development, calling it a “positive step” that should lead to peace, his spokesperson said.

News of the ceasefire was welcomed in Britain, the Indian subcontinent’s former colonial master and home to a huge diaspora from both countries.

“Today’s ceasefire between India and Pakistan is hugely welcome,” Foreign Secretary David Lammy wrote on X.

“I urge both parties to sustain this. De-escalation is in everybody’s interest.” Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus hailed the truce.

“I most sincerely commend Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi of India and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan for agreeing to a ceasefire with immediate effect and to engage in talks. Bangladesh will continue to support our two neighbours to resolve differences through diplomacy,” he said.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. “The announced ceasefire between India and Pakistan is a vital step toward de-escalation. All efforts must be made to ensure it is respected. The EU remains committed to peace, stability, and counter-terrorism in the region.”

News of the ceasefire was greeted with relief on both sides of the border and Pakistan’s airports authority said its airspace had been fully reopened.

Even before the surprise ceasefire announcement, officials from both sides showed a willingness to take a step back following the day’s exchanges.

Pakistan’s foreign minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, told local television that if India stops here, then “we will consider to stop here”.

India also reiterated its commitment to non-escalation, provided it is reciprocated by the Pakistani military.

Analysts and diplomats have long feared that conflict between the rivals could escalate into the use of nuclear weapons, in one of the world’s most dangerous and most populated nuclear flashpoint regions. Unlike India, Pakistan does not have a no-first-use doctrine.

## Deadlock broken

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as a buffer to smooth out “lumpiness in transactions” – large, irregular dollar deals that can cause sharp, temporary spikes in the taka’s value.

Under the proposed framework, the central bank would allow market forces to determine the exchange rate within a predefined band, but if volatility exceeds acceptable limits due to lumpy transactions

or speculative pressures, it would intervene using the stabilisation fund to supply dollars and stabilise the rate.

Since December last year, the government and the IMF held multiple rounds of talks in Dhaka and Washington over the realisation of the two tranches. Disagreements – particularly over exchange rate flexibility and efforts to raise the

country’s revenue-to-GDP ratio – had delayed the release of the fourth tranche.

After the meetings in Washington DC last month, consensus was reached on the revenue-to-GDP ratio. Both sides agreed to collect additional taxes of Tk 40,000 crore in the upcoming fiscal year, which is equivalent to 0.7 percent of the GDP.

## Govt decides to ban AL activities

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said at the briefing held in front of the chief adviser’s official residence.

A circular regarding the ban would be issued on the next working day, he said.

The Awami League was formed in 1949.

The advisers also approved an amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, giving the tribunal the authority to punish political parties, their affiliated organisations, or support groups.

Additionally, the council decided to publish the July declaration within the next 30 working days.

Nazrul only read out the decisions and did not take any questions.

During the uprising rooted in the anti-discrimination student movement last year, hundreds of people, including women and children, were killed in police firing or attacks by Awami League cadres.

A United Nations Fact Finding Mission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates that as many as 1,400 have been killed.

In a report in February, the mission said “serious human rights violations and abuses” committed by the security forces and armed Awami League supporters between July 15 and August 5, 2024, stemmed from a calculated effort to retain power at all costs.

Ousted prime minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina fled to India on August 5. Most of the party’s top leaders are either hiding abroad or are in jail.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam in a Facebook post demanded implementation of all the decisions of the advisory council as soon possible.

“The fascist murderers across the country must be identified and swiftly brought to justice. The Election Commission must quickly revoke the registration of the banned fascist Awami League,” he said.

The demonstrations began outside the chief adviser’s residence late on Thursday night after Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (south) of the NCP, urged his followers on Facebook to gather there to press home their demand for banning AL.



People demonstrating at Shahbagh.

They moved to Shahbagh, blocking the intersection, on Friday afternoon.

Yesterday, they vowed not to leave the streets until their demand was met. The protests spread to other parts of the city and the country.

The protesters then marched to the InterContinental intersection when the advisory council meeting was underway. They also threatened to isolate Dhaka from the rest of the country.

After the government announced its decision to ban the AL, leaders and activists of different political and student organisations, including the NCP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, brought out victory processions.

The protesters, divided into small groups, marched back to Shahbagh from the InterContinental intersection. They were chanting different anti-AL slogans.

However, none of the protest leaders commented on their next course of action until the filing of this report.

In a Facebook post, Hasnat urged the protesters not to leave the streets until the leaders formally announce their stance on the government’s decision.

In late October, the government banned the AL’s student wing,

Bangladesh Chhatra League, under the Anti-Terrorism Act-2009, amid demands from the student movement against discrimination.

The same month, the government reconstituted the International Crimes Tribunal by appointing its chairman and two members to start the trials of people who committed crimes against humanity during the uprising.

A second International Crimes Tribunal was formed on Thursday to expedite the trials and address the increasing number of cases filed.

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

The ICT was originally formed in March 2010 by the Awami League government to try the perpetrators of the crimes committed during the Liberation War in 1971.

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.

Information Adviser Mahfuj Alam on Thursday wrote on Facebook that the government was going to incorporate a new provision into the law to try the Awami League as a party.



## Two former MPs, Hasina's APS arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested seven people, including two former lawmakers from reserved women's seats and an assistant press secretary to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, from different places yesterday.

Shamima Akhter Khanam, a Krishak League leader and former MP from reserved women's seat of Sunamganj, and Ashraf Siddiqui Bitu, assistant press secretary to former PM Hasina, were held from the capital's Jigatola area yesterday, said Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP.

The arrestees were trying to destabilise the country by disrupting law and order and inciting public fear through flash processions in different parts of Dhaka, said DC Talebur.

Meanwhile, Selina Islam, another former MP from reserved women's seat, was held from a house in Gulshan, said Rabiul Hossain Bhuiyan, joint commissioner (North) of DB.

Selina's arrest is linked to a recent flash procession organised by the AI at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, said Rabiul.

Selina, along with her husband Kazi Shahid Islam Papul, a former MP from

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**A JOB WELL DONE.** What looks like a pristine waterbody used to be covered with algae, *inset*, in Hatirjheel lake near the Tejgaon area. Due to discharge of sewage and other pollutants the water became like that. The Daily Star published a photo on the issue on May 6. The authorities took initiative and cleaned the lake on Friday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Banning any political party not a solution

Says Gayeshwar

UNB, Dhaka

Banning any political party is not the solution to problems, as people themselves eliminate any party that goes against their interests, said BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy yesterday.

"No problem is ever solved by banning political parties. Rather, by changing the mentality of society and ensuring the rule of law, people decide who is acceptable or prohibited," he said at a discussion meeting.

The 12-Party Alliance, a coalition led by BNP and other like-minded parties, organised the programme at Jatiya Press Club, demanding the removal of any obstacles to BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman's return to Bangladesh and ensuring maximum security for him.

Gayeshwar said the Muslim League was the main architect behind the creation of Pakistan.

"But now, it's difficult to find any trace of its existence," he said.

He mentioned that the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) was once a major political force after the country's Liberation War in 1971, but it has

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### HEALTH REFORM

## Commission proposes four national health support networks

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Health Sector Reform Commission has recommended building national networks for four vital healthcare support services to ensure the availability, quality, and coverage of health services.

The four networks are: the National Pharmacy Network (NPN), National Diagnosis Laboratory Network, National Blood Supply Network, and National Ambulance Network.

The commission, which submitted its report last week, said each service would be interconnected and managed nationwide through its own integrated digital platform based on specified standards, ensuring that people can access them easily, quickly, and reliably.

The recommendations come at a time when service seekers face numerous hurdles in accessing these essential services.

For example, there are around four lakh registered pharmacies in the country, and 220 pharmacies, on average, receive approval daily, according to the commission's report.

However, most of these pharmacies operate without trained pharmacists, leading to the unregulated sale of antibiotics, widespread drug misuse, and an uncontrolled market, it said.

This situation jeopardises medicine quality, treatment efficacy, and patient safety, it added.

The commission recommended that a National Pharmacy Network be established by setting up 24-hour, in-house licensed pharmacies in all government hospitals, primary healthcare centres, and general practitioner (GP) clinics across the country.

The initiative aims to ensure that

poor and marginalised populations receive essential medicines free of cost or at subsidised prices.

These pharmacies must maintain an adequate stock of medicines according to the national essential drug list, and the services would be applicable for both inpatients and outpatients.

They would be operated by trained pharmacists, who would provide

### HAMID ABROAD

## Home adviser pledges legal action

UNB, Dhaka

Legal action will be taken against those found responsible for allowing former president Abdul Hamid to leave the country, said Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after visiting Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, the adviser confirmed that several officials have already been suspended, while others have been attached (transferred) pending investigation.

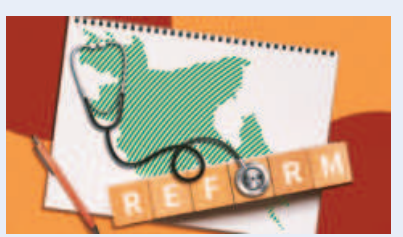
"A probe committee has been formed and asked to submit its report within three working days. Once the findings are in, necessary legal steps will be taken against those found guilty," he said.

The adviser noted that his airport visit was aimed at assessing current immigration procedures firsthand.

"I haven't travelled abroad since 2011. I came here to better understand the system. I found that immigration processes have improved significantly compared to before," he added.

Asked about reports of a travel restriction allegedly issued by the Special Branch (SB) prior to the former president's

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### PROPOSED SERVICES

**PHARMACY NETWORK:** Regulated, 24/7 hospital-based pharmacies

**LAB NETWORK:** Standardised national diagnostic services

**BLOOD SUPPLY NETWORK:** Centralised, safe blood distribution

**AMBULANCE NETWORK:** GPS-enabled emergency transport system

guidance on medicine use and promote rational consumption.

By digitally tracking the supply and distribution of medicines, it would be possible to forecast future demand and prevent theft and wastage.

Referring to similar systems in Sri Lanka and Thailand, the commission

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## 'Dream big and read more'

### Speakers tell students at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mountaineer Nishat Majumder, the first Bangladeshi woman to conquer Mount Everest, yesterday urged students to read more books to become better human beings.

"To become a truly good human being, there is no alternative to reading more books," she said while addressing an award ceremony for school students under the reading programme organised by Bishwo Shahitto Kendro at Bangla Academy.

Nishat shared how reading and determination shaped her life.

"Climbing Everest was my dream, and I achieved it. You, too, must hold on to your dreams and keep moving steadily towards your goals," Nishat said.

Speaking at the event, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro trustee Iftekharul Islam said, "Books have the power to transform young minds. You can clearly see the difference between those who read and those who don't."

The essence of a good book lingers in a reader's heart for years, Iftekharul told students.

"Back in 1978, Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed founded this institution with just 10 copies of poet Jasimuddin's 'Nakshi Kanthar Math', purchased for Tk 35. Today, his dream has engaged millions across the country in instilling the habit of reading among them," he also said.

During his speech, actor, writer, and translator Khairul Alam Sabuj said, "Real dreams aren't the ones you see in your sleep -- they're the ones you pursue with your eyes wide open."

He said, "The stronger your connection with books, the more you'll uncover your true self. And as you grow, so will the nation."

The Bishwo Shahitto Kendro's book reading programme, supported by Gramcenphone, involved over 20,000 students from 65 schools in the capital.

Of them, more than 5,000 students received awards in eight separate sessions on Friday and Saturday.

In total, around 2.5 lakh students from 1,400 educational institutions nationwide are currently enrolled in the book reading programme.



**STELLAR WOMEN SEASON 2**

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- Last Date of Submission: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025

### Healthcare

- Female physicians conducting research in their field of expertise
- Detailed PDF/PPT including their contributions to the society must be sent in with the form
- Last Date of Submission: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### Environment

- Women who are personally or professionally working to solve environmental problems with social/ local/ global implications with positive contributions to society
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## PRIMARY SCHOOLS North claims most awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educational institutions from northern districts claimed most of the awards, including those for the best school and best headteachers in this year's National Primary Education Awards.

Subrata Khajanchi Government Primary School in Dinajpur's Chirirbandar upazila was named the Best Primary School in the country. Md Mostafa Kamal, head-teacher of Padmapara Govt Primary School in Bogura's Gabtali upazila, and Shiuli Sultana of Subordinate Colony Government Primary School in Nilphamari's Syedpur, were awarded Best Head-teacher in male and female categories respectively.

The awards were presented yesterday at the inauguration of the National Primary Education Week 2025, held at the Directorate of Primary Education in Dhaka.

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A farmer tries his luck catching fish in a canal in Sylhet's Khadimnagar union, near the Airport Area. After heavy rainfall, water from the hills flows into the canal, carrying fish with it. Taking a break from work, the man hopes to supplement his family's food by fishing. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Pirojpur's 43 canals reduced to drains and dumps



KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Once, the canals flowing through Pirojpur town were the main route for transporting goods and people via paddle and engine-run boats.

Municipal records show that at least 43 canals once crisscrossed the locality.

However, now it is unimaginable for even small boats to ply these canals, as most of those, including the widest Damodar canal, have been filled up or encroached upon by locals at various points.

Several canals have been narrowed down into drains in the name of development. As a result, these waterways are no longer of any use to townspeople or visitors.

"During the British era, two steamers could cross through the Damodar canal at a time," said an elderly local, Mohammad Babul.

"But now, it is on its deathbed," he added, noting that the canal has become heavily silted up alongside being encroached upon from both sides.

Raju Sheikh, another local, said, "During our childhood, a huge number

of water vessels would use the Damodar canal, which connected the Kacha river at Hulerhat and the Baleswar river at the old boat ferry terminal, as a shortcut."

The same scenario is seen in other canals of the town, including Krishnanagar Basabari canal, Khamkata Phultala canal, Dhuppasa canal, Mondalpara canal, Shikarpur canal, and Royerkathi Police Lines canal. None of the 43 canals within Pirojpur town is currently usable, as they have been filled up and occupied.

"People living beside the canals randomly throw garbage and waste into them, and there is no monitoring to prevent it. So, the canals are being filled up and gradually dying," said Mizanur Rahman, another local.

Mainul Ahsan Munna, a development worker in the town, said there is no alternative to canals. "But the canals flowing through Pirojpur town are being killed and filled up before the eyes of the municipal authorities," he said, adding that no steps have been taken to save them.

He said due to the destruction of the canals, water from the river can no longer

enter the town. Even during floods, water gets trapped in the town area.

Contacted, Dhruba Lal Datta Banik, executive engineer of Pirojpur municipality, said they will free the grabbed canals with the help of the district administration.

He acknowledged that almost all of the 43 canals are barely surviving at present.

"We have sent a proposal to the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Improvement of Ponds, Canals Across the Country Project (IPCP) for the re-excavation of the canals," he said.

"If our proposal is passed, then we will be able to bring around 30 kilometres of canals and four ponds back to life," he added.

Contacted, Mohammad Ashraf Alam Khan, deputy commissioner of Pirojpur, said the Pirojpur district administration has a plan for excavating the dying canals.

"We have primarily begun cleaning and re-excavating the two-kilometre-long Bharani canal flowing through the town. Others will be re-excavated in phase," the DC said.

## One held for assaulting two girls on launch

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Munshiganj

Police yesterday arrested a man allegedly for assaulting two girls and vandalising a Dhaka-bound launch at Munshiganj Launch Terminal on Friday night.

The suspect, identified as Nehal Ahmed Jihad, 25, was arrested around 2:00pm following the incident.

Md. Firoyz Kabir, additional superintendent of police (crime and operations), confirmed the arrest, saying that legal action will be taken against all those involved upon completion of a full investigation.

Saiful Alam, officer-in-charge of Munshiganj Sadar Police Station, said a group of passengers had travelled by launch for picnic from South Keraniganj, Dhaka, to Mohanpur, Chandpur. During their return trip, the launch stopped at Munshiganj terminal for shopping, where an altercation reportedly broke out with a group of local youths.

Accusing the passengers of immoral behaviour, the locals allegedly vandalised the vessel around 8:00pm. A viral footage circulating on social media shows

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 11					
Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:10	12:45	5:00	6:36	8:00	
JAMAAT 4:45	1:15	5:15	6:40	8:30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

## Prioritise environment while taking up dev projects

Says Rizwana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmental protection must be prioritised in large-scale development projects, said Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday.

She was addressing the 4th International Conference on Urban and Regional Planning (ICURP) 2025 at Dhaka University.

Urging policymakers not to view objections from the environment ministry as obstacles, she said, "These are essential safeguards."

She emphasised that every inch of land must be brought under proper planning, adding, "There is no alternative to it."

The two-day conference, organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), focused on "Spatial Planning for Just Transition in Bangladesh".

Rizwana stressed that laws alone are not enough; a shift in mindset is also vital. "Every ministry must act responsibly. Like the agriculture ministry's input in housing approvals, all sectors' environmental impacts must be assessed."

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## GHATAIL UPAZILA IN TANGAIL

## People suffer due to stalled road work

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Renovation of the 5-km road from Palima in Kalihati upazila to Lokerpara in Ghatail upazila of Tangail has not been completed, even after a year and a half beyond the scheduled deadline.

As a result, residents of at least 25 nearby villages are enduring extreme hardship.

The road serves as a crucial communication link between Gopalpur, Bhuiyanpur, Kalihati, and Ghatail upazilas. Thousands of people and hundreds of vehicles rely on this route daily.

According to the Office of the Upazila Engineer (LGED) in Ghatail, the contractor firm "M/S Islam Brothers Limited" was given the project to renovate the 4.98-kilometre-long road at a cost of Tk 2.98 crore.

According to the tender, the work was supposed to be completed by July 31, 2023, but that deadline passed over 1 year and 8 months ago.



During a recent visit, it was observed that the road has turned into a dust-covered stretch with bricks and sand scattered around. When vehicles pass, the dust is blown around, creating a red layer on cropland, houses, and trees. Pedestrians also face great difficulty in navigating the muddy and dusty road.

Shafiur Rahman, a teacher at Jogihati Khandakernagar Adarsha High School, said, "Students from 12 educational institutions and local residents use this road. We demand that the development and renovation work be started immediately."

Autrickshaw driver Sona Miah said driving on this road is very challenging. Minor and major accidents frequently occur, and vehicles often sustain damage to various parts.

"It's really difficult to travel on this road amid numerous potholes," said Abul Hossain, an official of a local NGO.

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**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Upazila Engineer  
Upazila: Mirzapur, District: Tangail.  
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.9366.000.14.002.21-386 Date: 08/05/2025

**Tender Notice No: 09/2024-2025**  
**Open Tendering Method (OTM)**

e-GP tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following package below:

Sl No	Tender ID No	Name of Works & Package No	Tender Security (Tk)	Tender document last selling (Date & Time)	Tender Security Submission last Date & Time	Tender Opening (Date & Time)
1	110R245	1. Maintenance work of Mirzapur Upazila Parishad Dormitory (2-Unit, Building-1) 2. Maintenance work of Mirzapur Upazila Parishad Dormitory (2-Unit, Building-2) 3. Maintenance work of Mirzapur Upazila Parishad Dormitory (4-Unit, Building-1) 4. Maintenance work of Mirzapur Upazila Parishad Dormitory, Mirzapur (4-Unit, Building-2) 5. Repair Works of Officers Quarter the name of "Gaz" under Mirzapur Upazila Parishad, District: Tangail. e-Tender ID: e-Maint/Mir/Tan/2024-25/W-01	60000/-	25-May-2025 01:00 PM	25-May-2025 02:00 PM	25-May-2025 03:00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the 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 and **Tender Security money should be submitted through any registered Bank Branch before 25-05-2025, Time 02:00 PM**. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

(Signed) Upazila Engineer (A.C.)  
Mirzapur, Tangail.  
Mobile: 01708-161471  
Email: [us.mirzapur@lged.gov.bd](mailto:us.mirzapur@lged.gov.bd)

GD-1128

## SHERPUR'S JHENAIGATI UPAZILA

## 18 years after collapse, bridge still unrepaired

Locals endure long detours and risky crossings on makeshift platform

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A bridge in Sherpur's Jhenaigati upazila that collapsed 18 years ago has yet to be repaired or replaced, forcing thousands of residents in 15 villages to endure daily hardships.

The bridge over Kabirajpara canal, constructed in 2007, collapsed during a flash flood in the same year. Since then, locals have built a makeshift wooden bridge to cross the canal.

Residents alleged that the original structure collapsed due to



the use of substandard materials by the contractor, and no effective steps have been taken since to construct a new bridge.

Thousands of people, including a large number of students, rely on the bridge on Kabirajpara and Putulpura roads, especially during the dry season. Though the upazila headquarters is only a few kilometres away, the absence of a concrete bridge has forced locals to travel double the distance, causing suffering and increasing travel costs and time.

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## The alarming state of private healthcare

### Licence renewal failures are undermining healthcare integrity

It is deeply concerning that thousands of private hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres across the country continue to operate without renewing their licences, largely due to inadequate monitoring by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). Reportedly, out of 19,627 registered private hospitals and clinics, only 914, or just 4.66 percent, renewed their licences as of April 27. The previous year saw slightly better compliance, with 2,754 facilities renewing their licences. Likewise, only 1,790 of the 35,597 registered private diagnostic centres—around 5 percent—have completed their renewals this year, compared to 5,735 last fiscal year. This situation poses serious risks to patient well-being and safety, treatment quality and overall service standards, as well as hygiene in these facilities. A lack of oversight by the authorities could also lead to the use of substandard medical equipment or unsafe practices, as experts have warned.

According to the acting president of the Bangladesh Private Hospital, Clinic, and Diagnostic Owners Association, 90 percent of hospitals and diagnostic centres have applied for renewal this fiscal year. However, the process faces delays due to the limited inspection capacity of the DGHS. The requirement for environmental and narcotics clearance further slows down the renewal process. Previously, facilities could submit proof that they had applied for clearance, which was considered sufficient for licence renewal. However, a recent policy change now mandates the submission of an environmental clearance certificate, adding another obstacle to timely renewals.

The authorities' failure to conduct inspections efficiently has also allowed some healthcare providers to exploit the system, submitting renewal applications without necessary or up-to-date documents while continuing operations unchecked. This issue demands immediate attention. Over the past two decades, private healthcare facilities have proliferated across the country, mainly due to gaps in the public healthcare system. Unfortunately, many of these hospitals prioritise profits over patient care, treating healthcare as a secondary concern. Some even operate without the required credentials, a situation made worse by the inefficiency of the regulatory bodies. Without regular renewals, maintaining quality healthcare will become increasingly difficult.

A renewed licence ensures that a healthcare facility has the necessary manpower, equipment, and operational standards in place. Therefore, we urge the DGHS to expand its inspection team and improve resource allocation to ensure thorough evaluations of these institutions. While the renewal process should be simplified to avoid unnecessary hassles, private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres must still comply with standard procedures and submit proper up-to-date documents. Additionally, the DGHS must proactively scrutinise the thousands of private healthcare facilities that have mushroomed across the country over the years. And institutions failing to meet required standards should have their licences revoked to uphold healthcare integrity and protect patient welfare across the country.

## Our flawed education system must be fixed

### Why is there no education reform commission?

Speakers at an award ceremony of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro raised one of the biggest challenges in education—the stark disparities in the quality of education across different streams, resulting in intensified social inequality. We have three major streams of education: Bangla medium, English medium, and the madrasa system, which mostly offers education to the less privileged sections of society. The glaring discrepancies in the quality of education in each stream result in differences in opportunities, creating an elite class (a tiny portion of the population) that enjoys the most opportunities, while the majority of students fall behind in terms of securing the best jobs and achieving financial prosperity.

There has been, moreover, no assessment of market realities—whether the number of jobs available coincides with the number of university degree holders. Thus, we see many young people with Master's degrees remaining unemployed or working in low-paid jobs. Vocational education, on the other hand, can provide many young people with skills that are in demand both at home and abroad and can lead to better-paying jobs. But very little thought has been given to improving and expanding vocational education.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, the founder of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, has also pointed out the lacklustre curricula followed by most schools in the country. Textbooks currently do not engage students and therefore will not be able to produce the kind of enlightened individuals needed to build a nation. The archaic method of rote learning does not lead to critical thinking or analytical skills.

We also agree with one of the speakers that it is disappointing that although an education committee was formed to address reforms in the primary and non-formal education systems, the interim government has yet to form an education commission to holistically address the challenges of the education sector. What could be more important than proposing reforms to this flawed education system, where the quality of education a student receives depends on their family's social and economic status?

We know that in the past there have been many commissions that have made recommendations to address the challenges of an unequal education system, but successive governments have done little or nothing to implement any of them. We expect, however, that the next democratically elected government will give education the priority it deserves, as it is a critical factor in Bangladesh's progress. Education must be accessible to all, enlightening, and relevant for today's world. To that end, establishing an education reform commission is a necessary step.

# ‘Peace at the border is Bangladesh’s duty’

*In light of a United Nations’ proposal for establishing a humanitarian channel into Myanmar’s Rakhine state, Dr Khalilur Rahman, national security adviser and chief adviser’s high representative for the Rohingya issue, speaks to Ramisa Rob of The Daily Star clarifying Bangladesh’s position and what lies ahead.*

### What is the current status of Bangladesh’s involvement in humanitarian assistance in Rakhine state?

The question of humanitarian support to the Rakhine state arose when we learned about the acute humanitarian crisis it was facing. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) predicted impending famine-like conditions. We were concerned that this situation would drive more people from Rakhine into Bangladesh.

We are already shouldering the burden of sheltering over 1.2 million forcibly displaced Rohingya from Myanmar and cannot simply afford another wave of refugees. It’s already a big burden for us.

Given the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Rakhine state, the UN and Bangladesh began consideration of the provision of humanitarian support. Since all other aid delivery avenues are not viable due to conflict, Bangladesh turned out to be the only feasible option. The UN would organise distribution of aid through its channels within Rakhine, and Bangladesh would provide logistical support to transfer aid across the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

We also considered that aid to Rakhine would help stabilise the state and pave the way for creating enabling conditions for the return of the Rohingya people to Myanmar.

There has been informal discussion between the UN and Bangladesh on humanitarian aid to Rakhine but no formal proposal has been made by any party. Like elsewhere in the world, such support would require consent of all relevant parties and satisfaction of a number of prerequisites for aid provision. These include, among others, unimpeded access of aid providers and recipients, non-discrimination in the provision of aid, non-weaponisation of assistance and suspension of armed activities.



Dr Khalilur Rahman

FILE PHOTO: STAR

### How is Bangladesh balancing between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar ruling junta?

We realised the need for keeping contact with the AA when they took control over the Myanmar side of our border. It is our duty to protect our border and keep it peaceful. For this reason, we decided to make contacts with the AA.

We have continued to engage them in the context of humanitarian support, repatriation of the Rohingya, and the inclusion of the Rohingya at all levels of the emerging governance and security structure in Rakhine.

Our contact with the AA is due to practical necessity. We are also maintaining contacts with the Myanmar government. We need to keep in touch with all relevant actors with a view to sustainably resolving the Rohingya issue.

### The foreign adviser has recently said certain conditions will need to be met for Bangladesh’s agreement to the UN proposal for humanitarian assistance. What are those conditions and has there been any progress in such discussions?

All the relevant parties need to agree. Moreover, the AA needs to ensure that access of aid providers and recipients is not impeded, aid is not weaponised and there are no armed activities. Moreover, the AA needs to sincerely demonstrate its commitment to an inclusive society in Rakhine by including Rohingya at all levels of Rakhine’s governance and security structure. Otherwise, it will appear to the world as a picture of ethnic cleansing, which we will not accept. We are awaiting the AA’s response.

### What are the security stakes and risks for Bangladesh?

Giving aid in a conflict situation is

likely to jeopardise safety and security of the aid providers and recipients. Prevalence of landmines and IEDs is another threat to safety and security. These issues need to be addressed ahead of the provision of aid.

### What would China’s position be regarding the UN humanitarian assistance to Rakhine? What would India’s position be?

Saving lives from an impending humanitarian disaster is a collective responsibility of the global community. All of us need to join efforts to tackle this problem. Stability in Rakhine is our priority. We can’t make much progress towards repatriation without achieving it.

### We are already seeing more Rohingya coming into Bangladesh. If this continues, how does Bangladesh plan on addressing another influx?

We don’t want another influx of refugees. We simply can’t afford it. There was a sizable influx of Rohingya from Rakhine during intensified conflict between the AA and Myanmar forces from 2023 until autumn of 2024. Rohingya refugees have continued to enter Bangladesh thereafter, albeit in smaller numbers.

We are coordinating with the relevant actors to prevent another wave of refugees into Bangladesh. In particular, we have signalled to the AA that they must ensure that there is no further violence, discrimination and displacement of Rohingya inside Rakhine. They have the responsibility to observe international law including international humanitarian law. And the world is watching. Our continued contacts with them will depend upon their action in this area, as well as on Rohingya representation.

# Our path to a peaceful and equitable society

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### MD. LAWHA MAHFUZ and AHMED ABID

The fall of Awami League's 15-year rule on August 5, 2024, was a turning point in the socio-political history of Bangladesh. The movement was sparked by student movements, social mobilisations, and civil disobedience against deep-rooted injustice. Nine months on, as the administration of Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus struggles to attain stability, one painful question lingers: can Bangladesh escape retribution and move onto the path of justice, reconciliation, and peace?

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report categorically puts gross human rights violations in the protests on the doorstep of the Hasina regime. To comprehend the present, we have to trace the roots: after half a century of independence, Bangladesh remains entangled in its colonial legacy. As Johan Galtung argued, when state institutions are based on structural violence, entrenching inequality, exclusion, and authoritarianism, they cultivate a culture of violence. This is articulated not only in physical violence but through discriminatory legislation, uneven access to resources and justice, politicised policing, and elite-driven development—all characteristics of a consequentialist, neoliberal regime.

The ousted regime exacerbated these inequalities by championing mega infrastructure projects while leaving the majority of citizens jobless, voiceless, and vulnerable. What was promoted as progress turned into a system of crony capitalism, where wealth and opportunity circulated within an elite few.

The 2024 uprisings did not emerge

in a vacuum. They are the latest in a proud history of youth-led democratic mobilisations in Bangladesh, from the Language Movement of 1952 to the Liberation War of 1971, the 1990s democratic uprising, the 2013 Shahbagh movement, and the 2018 Road Safety protests. Each time, students and young people stood at the frontlines, demanding justice and awakening national conscience. But this time the legacy of past movements inspired students to form their own party, reflecting that they do not rely on existing political parties, but rather, they want to reform the system.

Yet, for as much as the formation of a youth-led party is a radical step in political innovation, it also raises basic questions of sustainability, political maturity, and dangers of reproducing the same exclusions and hierarchies they seek to transcend.

Institutional reform is necessary, but justice must reach further than the courts. Reconciliation—political, social, and moral—is the basis for healing a divided country. The violence in 2024 killed many, injured others, and traumatised a multitude. Students, forced to restore order and help with flood relief, returned to schools without recognition or healing—channelling their pain and hope onto the walls in graffiti. For lasting peace, truth-telling and acknowledgment must be national priorities.

Around the world, truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs), such as South Africa's, have assisted countries in dealing with past atrocities and healing. Bangladesh also requires such a process, both to

punish perpetrators and to remember victims, record abuses, and create a shared memory for generations to come.

The interim government, though unelected, bears a historical responsibility. It must institutionalise a national reconciliation mission, which must ensure several matters.

First, public recognition and reparation for victims of violence, both from the protest movements and state responses, must be provided. Secondly, there should be support for the wounded individuals and families of the deceased, including psychological counselling and financial aid. Third, transparent investigations into abuses of power, especially extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and use of excessive force is crucial. And finally, public archives or commissions to preserve the truth about the 2024 movement including the war crimes of 1971, allowing space for dialogue and memorialisation should be established.

Besides, justice is not merely a function of courts, rather, it is a collective ethical commitment. As philosopher John Rawls argued, a just society is one in which institutions protect the least advantaged and where citizens accept moral responsibility for upholding justice in both public and private life. In Bangladesh's case, this means more than rebuilding institutions; it calls for a shift in societal values.

Citizens must ask themselves: how do we contribute to the systems of injustice, either by action or by silence? Are we complicit in discriminatory practices, or do we stand in solidarity with the oppressed? An emergent new Bangladesh cannot be engineered through isolated legal or administrative change from the top. Without a general moral awakening in which empathy, equity, and civic courage become settled cultural imperatives, any political transformation will remain superficial

and vulnerable. Real justice does not just demand new laws, but new ways of living together as a society.

Therefore, renewal at the institutional level is required. Police, judiciary, education, and financial systems must be reconstructed on the foundation of transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability. The policies must address the most vulnerable, with stronger social safety nets, education reform, and decentralisation of development. No less important is the safeguarding of freedom of speech, press freedom, and academic freedom—freedoms eroded by the previous regime. Democratic growth demands a strong culture of dissent and dialogue. Equally important is the protection of religious ethnic minorities, including Indigenous people. The state must ensure that secularism, pluralism, and human rights are not abstract ideals but lived realities.

Bangladesh is at a moral and political crossroads. The collapse of the previous regime in 2024 was revolutionary as well as an opportunity to construct a new social pact based on justice, equality, and reconciliation. In the era of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, the colonial paradigm is obsolete. Technologically empowered youth can reveal facts hidden by political elites even in the face of suppressive laws by autocratic regimes.

However, genuine peace cannot be achieved by demanding vengeance or eliminating history. Brave questioning, communal healing, and concerted action are called for. Claiming the entirety of 1971 history is important; limiting it to just the 2024 movement would be a fatal mistake.

The way forward requires more than fresh politicians or statutes—it requires fresh ethical vision. Bangladesh must have a choice between timeless injustices and a world of freedom, dignity, and solidarity.



# Pope Leo XIV: History made in the Vatican

**Zeenat Khan**  
is a contributor to South Asia  
based journals and magazines.

**ZEENAT KHAN**

History has been made. For the first time in the history of the Vatican, an American Cardinal has been elected to lead as the head of the global Catholic Church. His given name is Robert Prevost. As for a papal name, Cardinal Prevost has chosen Pope Leo XIV. The new Pope delivered his message first in Italian and then switched to Spanish. Some spectators who were at Saint Peter’s Square, listening to the Pope, said they detected Pope Leo’s American accent. It’s a given. Addressing the roaring crowd, the first thing the new Pope said when introducing himself, as reported by a TV anchor, was that he was an Augustinian priest, but a Christian above all, and a bishop, “so we can all walk together.”

On May 8, when the midday local news was on, it broke the ongoing news broadcast and flashed on screen “Breaking News.” Earlier in the morning, I saw black smoke curling upwards from the chimney of the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel. This, as we know, signifies that the 133 cardinals who were sequestered inside the chapel did not reach a consensus. They started the new Pope selection process on May 7. Hundreds and thousands of Catholics and non-Catholics were waiting in anticipation at Saint Peter’s Square and were somewhat disappointed after seeing the black smoke. The news agencies predicted that it would be at least another 24 hours before the next round of vote count results were announced. By then, it was almost dinner time in Rome. Suddenly, there was white smoke coming out of the chimney, indicating that a decision had been made by the papal conclave and that a candidate had gained the two-thirds majority to announce a winner.

About an hour passed after people around the world saw the white smoke billowing in a live telecast. We still did not know the name of the new Pope. But that did not matter. The mood changed to one of euphoria. People were hugging one another and shedding happy tears. After a while, the wait became unbearable for some, as they were impatient to see the new Pope emerge onto the balcony to greet everyone. They

had been standing there for hours for news. One television reporter said, “The keys of the kingdom are passed on to the new successor of Saint Peter!” There were lots of guesses as to the name of the new pontiff. People were pondering which papal name the new Pope was going to pick. Meanwhile, the new Pope was getting dressed in three cassocks.

Finally, the doors of the Vatican balcony flung open. Everyone was stunned to see the new Pope coming out with other cardinals. People who had gathered there firsthand experienced how history was made. Seeing the American Cardinal in the Pope’s attire, everyone roared in unison. It was a moment unlike any other that people had seen in the Vatican’s history. It was indeed a pleasant surprise for many, though his name had been tossed around right after Pope Francis passed away. Pope Leo was Pope Francis’ favourite.

The marching bands and Swiss Guards parading across Saint Peter’s Square kept the booming crowd entertained. It was a jubilant and colourful scene to witness. Amid the crowd, there was a pregnant American woman who told a reporter that she was in Rome only for a day. She seemed delirious with happiness that she could witness such a monumental event.

As soon as I texted the message that a new Pope had been selected to someone close to me, the reply came in two seconds: “I had a hunch, but that was fast. Part of the impetus may be to soften the impact of Trump, to lessen the cruelty, just saying.” At first, I did not quite agree. I thought Pope Leo was chosen because of his own merit. At a time when the world is divided, a Pope will not be chosen just because he is an American.

According to some of the media reports, Pope Leo is very much like the late Pope Francis. He is deeply committed to the betterment of the world’s poor. Leo is a native of Chicago. He grew up in Chicago’s rough South Side, infamous for crime, poverty, and segregation. Historically, Chicago natives live below the national poverty line. The city is plagued with many problems. One can hope the new Pope will address these historical

issues, as he can relate to such social evils, having witnessed them. He also knows how such social and economic problems impact the lives of many people if these issues are not eradicated.

During a time of deep political

the world. The world will be waiting to see how Pope Leo will implement the Vatican policies that concern the global population. The Vatican Church plays a significant role, as the pontiffs usually have influence over world leaders. The new Pope could be a peace

Pope Leo is hopefully going to be a leader on the world stage, “a bridge builder” between countries. As a missionary, Leo spent many years in Peru. He was first a missionary and then an archbishop. In his first speech as Pope, Leo mentioned Peru and his time there.



Newly elected Pope Leo XIV, Robert Prevost addresses the crowd on the main central loggia balcony of the St Peter's Basilica for the first time, after the cardinals ended the conclave, in the Vatican, on May 8, 2025.

PHOTO: AFP

# The impact of US tariffs on our economy



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**NAWSHAD AHMED**

International trade is supposed to offer numerous benefits to countries. Trade between countries takes place because different countries have cost advantages in the production of certain goods and services, which they use to produce more than what they need for internal consumption and export the surplus to other countries.

Trade creates opportunities for additional production, employment and foreign currency income. However, speaking from the perspective of developed and developing country trade patterns, we observe that trade may not equally benefit all countries. A global analysis of trading patterns reveals the following:

i) The highly industrialised developed nations mainly export manufactured goods, whereas developing countries export more raw materials, agricultural goods and low value-added products.

ii) Developed economies export not only goods but also various services and technology.

iii) Most developed countries enjoy trade surpluses, while it is the opposite for developing nations.

iv) The agricultural exports from

developing countries, like coffee, tea, cocoa and sugar, are too demand-sensitive and the prices fluctuate a lot.

v) Cheaper imports may harm domestic producers because they cannot compete with imported products.

vi) Trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas harm low-income exporting countries.

Along with a more general analysis of trade patterns in the world, there have been sectoral studies on labour-intensive exports like readymade garments (RMG), the mainstay of Bangladesh’s exports, earning about 85 percent of the total exports of the country. The decision by the US administration to impose reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi export items to the US, of which RMG figures at the top, has resulted in increased concerns among the exporters. The US has imposed a reciprocal tariff of 37 percent on Bangladeshi exports, announced on April 2, which is likely to impact the volume of exports and reduce foreign exchange earnings for us. Bangladesh already pays a 15.62 percent tariff on RMG exports to the US. If Bangladesh has to pay an additional 37 percent tariff on exports to the US, the total tariff rate will stand at over 52 percent, which is a high rate.

Higher tariffs on Bangladeshi exports will cost more for American consumers, resulting in reduced demand. This may discourage many Bangladeshi investors, who may decide to close down factories or scale down production, the consequence of which will be reduced employment. Although the US quickly announced a 90-day suspension of this decision on April 9, the uncertainty surrounding exports to the US still looms on the horizon. Besides RMG, there are other products like leather goods, home textiles, fish and pharmaceutical products that Bangladesh exports to the US. Many analysts think it is a revival of protectionist policy to promote domestic industries and create more jobs in the US, but it may not prove feasible in reality. The world has seen a post-Second World War period of trade promotion where the US pushed for free trade. However, less developed economies were mostly following protectionist policies to promote domestic production and industrialise their countries.

The RMG sector in Bangladesh has been producing quality products at the lowest possible price and has been able to maintain its edge in the global market for the last four decades. The industry plays a crucial role in its ability to employ four million people, of whom 60 percent are women, contributing to economic growth and foreign exchange earnings, which amounted to \$38.48 billion in 2024. The country achieved 7.23 percent growth in RMG exports in 2024.

Bangladesh is now the second-largest RMG exporter, behind only China. The country has an ambitious target of exporting a total of \$100 billion from the textile and garments sector by 2030. This is not an easy task in the face of steep global competition, rising

transport and shipping costs, and pressure from international buyers to bring down production costs.

The average unit price of garments exported to the US declined by 2.20 percent in January 2025. The price of garments exported to the European Union declined even more, by 4.84 percent during January to December 2024. This is resulting in lower profit margins for producers, especially smaller RMG industries, which are having a hard time continuing production and paying increased minimum wages, rising bank interest rates, and higher electricity and gas prices. On the one hand, there is international pressure to enhance minimum wages, and on the other, there is pressure from buyers to lower costs. This balancing act puts industry owners in a tight position.

Under these circumstances, the raising of tariffs by the US is surely going to affect the garment sector and put industrialists and workers in jeopardy. It is not easy to estimate the import tax-induced price elasticity of demand for Bangladeshi products in the US if a sharp rise in taxes is imposed, given the fact that the proposed tax rates vary from country to country for similar products, like textiles and apparel products. And there is the possibility of potential substitution efforts by US consumers. A robust economic analysis would be able to estimate the global impact of higher tariffs on imports for both the importing and exporting countries, which can be carried out only when such a situation arises in reality. But initial assessments indicate the likelihood of global economic contraction as a consequence of imposing high import tariffs. The policy suggestion is obvious: limiting international trade by

imposing higher tariffs should be avoided.

The World Bank published its “Macro Poverty Outlook” on April 23, as part of its South Asia Development Update, which includes economic growth forecasts. Bangladesh is predicted to achieve only 3.3 percent GDP growth in FY 2024-2025, the lowest rate in the last 36 years. This is an unexpectedly low growth rate for the country and may result in three million people sliding into extreme poverty (living on less than \$2.15 per day), increasing the extreme poverty rate from 7.7 percent in FY24 to 9.3 percent in FY25. This prediction is based on a low rate of investment, domestic political uncertainty and global risk, especially international trade policy uncertainty affecting exports from Bangladesh.

To mitigate the looming economic uncertainty, the government, with the cooperation of the private sector, should make all efforts to sustain export growth through improvement of infrastructure, adoption of innovation, continuous capacity building, stimulating private investment and improving foreign exchange reserves. To deal with increasing poverty, the government should focus more on strengthening public works programmes and correcting beneficiary targeting errors in existing social safety net programmes, along with increasing the budget allocation in the upcoming national budget. About 120 social safety net programmes in Bangladesh absorb about 17 percent of the annual budget, the efficacy of which is generally unknown because of the poor evaluation culture in the country. Therefore, in-depth evaluation of safety net programmes should be routinely conducted by the government.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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## Buddha Purnima cultural festival to be held in six districts including Dhaka

To mark the occasion of Buddha Purnima, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), organised a simultaneous cultural festival across six districts, including Dhaka yesterday. While the Buddhist holiday falls on May 11 this year, the festivities were scheduled a day in advance.

The festival took place in Dhaka, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari. The central event was held at the Nandan Mancha of BSA in Dhaka, where Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki and several other dignitaries were in attendance.

Ambassadors from countries including China, Thailand, Singapore, and Cambodia were invited. The president of the Bangladesh Bauddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, Bhedanta Buddhapriyo Mahathero, also graced the event.

The festival showcased cultural harmony, with traditional Buddhist music and dance taking centre stage alongside popular musical acts in each region.



# Cannes Market to feature Ebadur Rahman's 'Tractatus Bengalium'

The film *Bangali Bilash* by Ebadur Rahman—one of Bangladesh's most esteemed writers, film critics, and directors—is confirmed to be screened at the Marché du Film de Cannes (Cannes Film Market), the commercial wing of the Cannes Film Festival, this year.

In a press statement, Rahman shared that he will be attending the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, running from May 13 to 25. Notably, the 190-minute feature *Bangali Bilash*, internationally titled *Tractatus Bengalium*, is scheduled to be screened before agents and distributors on May 18, as part of the Marché du Film segment.

It features Indian actress Rituparna Sen, alongside Bangladeshi artistes Farhana Hamid, Naima Tasnim,



Shatabdi Wadud, and Azad Abul Kalam, among others.

The filmmaker also mentioned that *Bangali Bilash* has already

drawn the attention of international distributors and festival curators. "My trip to Cannes this year is part of that ongoing journey."

## Deepto Star Hunt crowns its champions

The grand finale of Deepto Star Hunt revealed the winners of the competition. Misti Ghosh from Kishoreganj and Sakib Hossain from Barishal were officially declared the champions.

The first runners-up are Fariha Rahman from Jashore and Shafiu Raj from Barishal, while the second runners-up positions went to Sanjida Chowdhury from Sylhet and Hafiz Rahman from Barishal.

The star-studded finale featured captivating performances from the top six contestants and popular Bangladeshi musicians.

The event was graced by judges, including Tariq Anam Khan, Shihab Shaheen, and Rafiath Rashid Mithila.

As part of their victory, the winners of Deepto Star Hunt will have the opportunity to star in major films, web-films, web-series, and TV series. Kazi Media Limited will sign an exclusive two-year contract with them, offering regular acting opportunities across multiple platforms.



### WHAT'S THE HAPS?

#### 'Bhalo Theko Phool'

Cultural organisation Joltorongo is set to celebrate its 10th anniversary this Friday (May 16) with *Bhalo Theko Phool*, a crowdfunded musical tribute to patriotism and humanity.

Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury will inaugurate the event, which will notably feature special performances by young sarangi players Mahima Mehzabin and Yusuf Ahmed, along with other musical presentations.

**Date:** Friday | May 16

**Time:** 7pm onwards

**Venue:** Chhayanaut Cultural Center



## Bangladesh Film Directors Association gets new leaders



The Bangladesh Film Directors Association held its election on Friday at the Reporters' Unity. The results were announced by Election Commission Chairman Abdul Latif Bachchu following voting.

Shaheen Sumon has been elected president for the new term, securing 166 votes, while Shahin Kabir Tutul has been elected general secretary with 180 votes.

Others elected to the new committee include Abul Khair Bulbul as vice president, Kabirul Islam Rana as deputy general secretary, Simon Tariq as treasurer, Wazed Ali Bablu as secretary of publicity, Publications and Office, Bandhan Biswas as secretary of International Affairs and Information Technology, and Mostafizur Rahman Manik as secretary of Cultural Affairs and Sports.

The Executive Committee members are Chotku Ahmed, Shahadat Hossain Liton, Polli Malek, and Zakir Hossain Raju, among others.

## Kangana Ranaut to make Hollywood debut



Kangana Ranaut is gearing up for her Hollywood debut with the horror drama *Blessed Be The Evil*.

As reported by Variety, she will play the lead alongside *Teen Wolf* star Tyler Posey and Scarlett Rose Stallone. The story centres on a Christian couple who, after experiencing a heartbreaking miscarriage, relocate to a remote, abandoned farm with a sinister past.

There, their relationship and faith are put to the test by a dark supernatural force.

The film is being produced by Lions Movies and is set to begin filming this summer in New York. The production team opted to shoot in the US to steer clear of potential complications arising from recently announced Trump-era industry tariffs.

*Blessed Be The Evil* will be directed by Anurag Rudra, known for *Tailing Pond*, who also co-wrote the script with Gatha Tiwary, the founder and president of Lions Movies.

# NEWS

### Getting loans

FROM PAGE 12  
a record Tk 345,765 crore, with toxic loans rising sharply following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government in August last year. The large amount of defaulted loans is a reflection of massive irregularities.

According to the new guideline, banks must now obtain prior approval from the BB before providing loans of Tk 50 lakh or more to bank directors, their family members, any related institutions or companies under their control. For shareholder companies or their nominated directors, the threshold is Tk 1 crore or more.

If the total or expected amount of credit facilities provided to significant shareholders, their family members or related institutions exceeds Tk 1 crore, the bank must report the transaction to the BB within seven working days. This requirement marks a major shift as such prior approval was not mandatory under previous rules.

Additionally, a bank director can only borrow up to 50 percent of the value of the shares they hold in the bank.

If a director's loan exceeds the 50 percent-limit, the matter must be presented at the bank's board meeting and reported to the BB immediately.

The guideline also states that the total amount of loans issued by a bank to all related persons and institutions must not exceed 10 percent of the bank's Tier-1 capital. Tier-1 capital is the bank's core financial strength, including equity and retained earnings, and is used to absorb losses.

Furthermore, while someone is serving as the managing director or chief executive officer of a bank, neither they nor any institution or company under their control can receive any form of credit facility.

Any existing loans to such individuals or their affiliated entities cannot be extended, renewed or modified, and no interest waivers or exemptions are permitted.

However, the MD or CEO may be issued a credit card, but only under the same conditions as regular customers. In this case, the BB must be notified at least seven working days before the credit card is issued.

### India blocks YouTube

FROM PAGE 12  
The blocked Bangladeshi channels — Jamuna TV, Ekattor TV, BanglaVision, Mohona TV, Somoy TV, and DBC News — are all YouTube-verified and together have over 54 million subscribers. Indian users trying to access these channels now receive the message: "This content is currently unavailable in this country because of an order from the government related to national security or public order."

Digital rights research group Digitally Right, through its initiative Dismiss Lab, first reported on Friday that four

YouTube channels Bangladeshi TV stations had been blocked in India. The figure was updated to six in a revised report on Saturday.

Jamuna TV confirmed to Dismisslab that they received official notifications from YouTube regarding the blocking.

Geo-blocking is the practice of limiting access to digital content based on the user's geographic location. In this instance, while the Bangladeshi channels remain available worldwide, their content has been specifically made inaccessible to viewers in India.

## A guardian of Bangladesh's folk music

FROM PAGE 12  
age-related complications and was admitted to the hospital on Friday after experiencing severe breathing difficulties. Just before dawn, at 5:30 am, his resonant voice—one that had carried the spirit of Bengali folk music across borders and generations—fell silent.

He was laid to rest later that day at Dhaka's Azimpur graveyard, beside his parents—his father, the legendary folk music pioneer Abbasuddin Ahmed, and his mother, Lutfunnesa Abbas.

A tireless researcher and collector, Abbasi devoted his life to safeguarding over 2,000 traditional folk songs—captured not from scripts but from mouths weathered by time and toil. His Dhaka home became a sanctuary for Baul singers from Kushtia, whose sacred songs, once fading in obscurity, found a second life through his efforts. He was the first to document and broadcast the original melodies of Lalon's works, opening a path for spiritual folk music to reach new audiences.

Abbasi's influence transcended performance. He served as Director General of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, wrote more than 21 books, and represented the country at numerous international forums. His anthologies—"History of Folk Music", "The Birthplace of Bhawaiya"—remain cornerstones in cultural research. Yet, despite accolades and

acclaim, he stayed rooted. He valued a handwritten letter from a village admirer as deeply as an academic award.

His funeral, held at the Gulshan Azad Mosque, was attended by family, admirers, and fellow artists. Among the tributes, Professor Muhammad Yunus described Abbasi as a light in the cultural firmament whose work would continue to inspire.

Indeed, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi leaves behind more than memory—he leaves a map. A bridge between generations, a steward of tradition, his legacy will echo in the strains of folk songs sung by riverbanks, in archives preserved with care, and in the hearts of all who still believe in the quiet power of melody.

### Buddha Purnima

FROM PAGE 12  
Religious Affairs Adviser AFM Khalid Hossain was present on the occasion.

On the eve of Buddha Purnima, Prof Yunus extended warm felicitations to the Buddhist community in Bangladesh and around the world today.

"This year's celebrations have come at a time when the teachings of Lord Buddha to foster peace, harmony, and unity are more relevant than ever before," he said in a message issued by the CA's Press Wing.

"On this auspicious occasion, I wish that our path forward as a humanity be lit with understanding, compassion, and joy," said the chief adviser.

### People don't want fallen forces rehabilitated

FROM PAGE 12  
Tarique said democracy still remains the only viable option recognised globally to establish a safe and humane state.

He said the BNP has been consistently calling upon the government from the very beginning to announce a clear roadmap or action plan so that the public has a transparent understanding of its

activities.

"If people have a clear understanding of the government's operations, there will be no scope for confusion, suspicion, or misinformation," the BNP leader said.

Tarique urged journalists to publish investigative reports on attacks against religious communities in various parts of the country, such as Ramu in Cox's Bazar, Nasirnagar

in Brahmanbaria and other areas like Rangpur, Gaibandha, and Sunamganj.

He expressed his belief that identifying those responsible for these incidents would prevent anyone from using religious communities for political gain.

He also extended his greetings to the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.

### Heatwave disrupts daily life

FROM PAGE 12  
another week, he added.

Today, there is a likelihood of rain accompanied by gusty winds and thunderstorms in parts of Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions, according to the BMD bulletin.

Speaking from Kurigram, Subal Chandra Roy, in-charge of the Rajarhat Agricultural Meteorological Observatory, said, "The maximum temperature in this region has been fluctuating between 36.5°C and

38°C for the past week. Such weather conditions may prevail for the next few days."

In Lalmonirhat, farmers are struggling to cope with the scorching heat.

Noor Hossain, a worker from Durakuti village, said he has not been able to work in the fields in the last five days. "Many are forced to work for just 1-2 hours before leaving the field," he said.

Rajshahi experienced the highest temperature yesterday at 40.7°C,

confirmed the Met office.

In Chattogram, the maximum temperature recorded yesterday was 35.6°C.

Fahim Hasan Reza, an assistant professor of Child Health at Chattogram Ma O Shishu General Hospital, said over 40 percent of the patients in his ward are being treated for diarrhea and pneumonia.

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Rajshahi, and Chattogram contributed to the report]

### People don't want to see AL

FROM PAGE 1  
Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Fakhrul said, "While you're holding a rally here at this ground, another rally is taking place in New Market in the city. Another rally is going on in Dhaka. And what is the demand? The demand is to ban the Awami League, isn't it? Not only all of us who are here, my friends, but also the 18 crore people of Bangladesh don't want to see the Awami League. Since the country's independence, Awami League oppressed the people, destroyed democracy, and established one-party rule through Baksl regime."

He claimed that Ziaur Rahman, late president and founder of BNP, implemented the first state reform by restoring democracy after a period of one-party rule."

Zia granted freedom to the press, ensured the independence of the judiciary, liberalised the economy, and laid the foundation for today's economic growth — whether through establishing the garment industry or by facilitating overseas employment, Fakhrul added.

He said, "Today, the main aim of Tarique Rahman behind these youth rallies is simple — you, the youth, have awakened, you have defeated the fascist, you have forced her [Sheikh Hasina] to leave the country. Now, reclaim your rights with courage, my friends. Stay

calm but vigilant — every conspiracy, every plot must be overcome."

Speaking at the rally as the special guest, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury praised the youth for their fight to restore democracy and the people's rights.

For these, countless lives have been lost over the past 15 years, he said.

Khasru said that thousands of party activists were murdered or forcibly disappeared during the autocratic rule, while around 6 to 7 million were falsely implicated in legal cases. Some died in police custody; many were forced to flee their homes, taking shelter in paddy fields and remote areas. Yet, the movement never stopped.

"We have sacrificed much to return Bangladesh to its people," the BNP leader said, adding that democracy must not be held hostage anymore.

He, however, said the signs are there. "No group should be allowed to hold the people hostage for their own interests. If anyone has a political vision or programme for the country, they must present it before the people. No one should be allowed to seize the country's future, ignoring its citizens," Khasru.

Khasru said the new political arrangements floated by some party have already been proposed by Tarique Rahman and Khaleda Zia through their

31-point reform agenda.

"We have visited every district, all corners of the country. Tell me, has any other party presented their reform proposals before the people as we have done?"

He added that in the upcoming election, they would seek the people's mandate based on the 31-point agenda. If the people give them the mandate, a national government will be formed according to this framework.

He said the national government will include all stakeholders of the uprising and who faced oppression during the autocratic regime.

Former Bangladesh cricket captain Tamim Iqbal also spoke at the rally.

Naming several young BNP leaders, Tamim said that he regularly speaks to BNP leaders for the welfare of sports. "We discuss how we can bring back Chattogram's sporting glory."

He said he was confident that when the youth get the opportunity, they would do their utmost to advance sports in Chattogram — whether in cricket, football, badminton, or any other disciplines.

Citing his health condition, the former skipper said, "I'm happy to receive your love today. As you know, I have health issues and am recovering slowly. I shouldn't speak too much."

Swechhasebak Dal President SM Zilani presided over the event.



## Regulator repeatedly ignored red flags

FROM PAGE 1

Aviation Administration, aviation experts say.

One of the most widespread violations by two training academies – Galaxy Flying Academy and Bangladesh Flying Academy – involved pilots being granted licences without completing their mandatory solo flight hours, the CAAB investigation found.

Solo flights are a critical component of pilot training, designed to ensure that candidates can operate an aircraft independently and handle in-flight challenges with confidence.

Other irregularities involved one pilot certifying himself by signing his own licence and another being made a “check pilot” of a type of aircraft he had not even flown. Several pilots also logged false flight hours to meet licence requirements (Read in Part 2 tomorrow).

Meanwhile, a recent inspection by the Anti-Corruption Commission found that written tests for pilots had been conducted using unauthorised software through a private company, which The Daily Star could not find at its official address.

There are three types of pilot licences – Private Pilot Licence (PPL), Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) and Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL).

A PPL is the first step that certifies a person to fly, while a CPL is an additional licence that a person must obtain to become a professional pilot. The ATPL is the highest level of pilot certification, allowing holders to serve as the pilot-in-command of commercial airliners after meeting extensive flight experience and training requirements.

Of the 144 individuals who obtained licences in questionable manners, 120 are PPL, 22 are CPL and 2 are ATPL. A concrete figure was not available, but some of them are currently employed at various airlines in different capacities, including in Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

**RULES OVERLOOKED** Galaxy Flying Academy and Bangladesh Flying Academy (BFA) are two popular flying institutions in Bangladesh. Together, they produce dozens of pilots every year.

In the last few years, these two institutions

recommended piloting licences for 144 students even though they did not complete their 150 nautical miles (nm) solo flights and 300nm cross-country flights as pilot-in-command, which are prerequisites for getting the PPL and CPL, respectively, the CAAB investigation found.

According to CAAB’s Civil Aviation Rules and Air Navigation Order, obtaining a PPL requires pilots to complete five hours of solo cross-country flight time, including at least one flight covering a minimum distance of 270km (150nm) with landings at two different aerodromes.

Those seeking a CPL must complete a 300nm cross-country flight as pilot-in-command. To qualify as a commercial pilot, they must also undertake a flight covering at least 540km (300nm) and make landings at two different aerodromes.

An aerodrome is the space in which aircraft flight operations take place – an airport is within an aerodrome.

However, the CAAB investigation found that the pilots graduating from Galaxy and BFA did not follow the planned route, and their flying hours were much less than that mentioned in the syllabus, raising questions as to whether the required skills had actually been tested.

Both academies treat Rajshahi airport as their training base for this check.

Galaxy students seeking PPL licences flew the Rajshahi-Bogura-Saidpur-Rajshahi route.

At least 110 such students flew the 150nm solo flight without stopping at Bogura or Saidpur, which is mandatory, shows a letter sent by Galaxy to CAAB in December 2024.

Explaining this breach to the aviation authorities, the academy said its students did not make stops at the transit airports because, after shutting off the aircraft, a certified aircraft engineer would need to sign a release form before the plane could take off again. “Due to a shortage of engineers [at the academy], we are unable to do so,” said Galaxy.

Galaxy also said since Bogura is a restricted military base, prior coordination is required

with the air traffic controller for landings, and so they do not land there.

In fact, on September 24, 2023, Galaxy had written to the CAAB and sought this exemption citing safety reasons, but the request was turned down.

CAAB officials told The Daily Star that the academy was denied the exemption because there is no compulsion to use this specific route; the students are free to fly any route and stop at any airport in Bangladesh.

In addition, 10 students from Galaxy seeking CPLs were required to fly 300nm on the Rajshahi Saidpur-Jashore-Rajshahi route and make full stops in the transit airports.

The students instead flew

“

**“We are aware of the problem and we can tell you that it will be resolved soon. Since the details are not finalised yet, I am not elaborating.”**

Brig Gen (retd) MUHAMMAD HASAN IMAM FARAZI  
CEO, Galaxy Flying Academy

from Rajshahi to Saidpur and then went back to Rajshahi, and did the same with Jashore.

“The students returned to the base after the first leg to refuel as the endurance did not cover for the whole route,” the Galaxy letter explained.

Aviation experts said that this means the students did not learn the route between Saidpur and Jashore. They also said that the academy could have easily sent a barrel of fuel to Jashore or Saidpur airports. One barrel, currently priced less than \$300, would be sufficient to refuel a Cessna 152 or Cessna 172—the planes flown by the students—twice and once, respectively.

Bangladesh Flying Academy (BFA) followed a similar pattern.

Its students also flew

training flights on Rajshahi-Bogura-Saidpur-Rajshahi route; same as Galaxy and, like Galaxy students, they did not stop at Bogura and Saidpur before returning to Rajshahi.

In a letter to CAAB on February 26, 2025, BFA justified this and said, “Bogura is a restricted airport. Therefore, the students flew over the airfield.”

All students were also required to fly solo, not with their instructors accompanying them, yet they did exactly the opposite.

In an explanation to CAAB, the BFA said, “Once an aircraft is switched off Saidpur, a pilot or an engineer needed to sign the documents for transition; therefore, a safety pilot was onboard.”

Aviation experts within the CAAB told The Daily Star that BFA could have simply had a pilot or an engineer present, for only about Tk 60,000 a month, on the ground at Saidpur to sign the documents when the students landed.

The same thing happened with the 300nm solo flight mandatory for the advanced Commercial Pilot Licence.

The students were required to fly on Rajshahi-Jashore-Saidpur-Rajshahi route and make full stops in the transit airports. But they instead flew from Rajshahi to Jashore and went back to Rajshahi, and then flew a round trip to Saidpur, BFA wrote to CAAB.

“Due to shortage of endurance we had to return to Rajshahi for refuelling and restart for the second leg,” it says.

Aviation experts, however, say the academy could have refuelled at either Jashore or Saidpur using barrels of fuel and handpumps.

The students flying the 150nm “solo flights” also had their teachers onboard with them, even though this was supposed to be unsupervised flights, meaning they flew their exam flight with help, documents show.

“From over-cautiousness of avoiding a situation/accident, which may cause suspension of flying training, sometimes solo flights were conducted with safety pilots onboard... The matter is highly regretted and will not be repeated in

the future,” the BFA letter reads.

At least 22 students were given licences by CAAB—10 PPL and 12 CPL—after graduating from BFA even though they flew under supervision and did not follow the route.

A glimpse into a meeting held at CAAB shows how, despite warnings by CAAB’s safety departments, some of these students were given licenses by the regulatory body’s high-ups.

On May 21, 2024, members of CAAB’s Flight Standards and Regulations Department arranged a meeting with the then licensing head to discuss whether they could accept reduced flying durations for two of those 22 cadet pilots from BFA.

“

**“As this is an ongoing issue, we hope it will be resolved by the civil aviation authorities. So we would not comment on this issue at this time.”**

A spokesperson for Bangladesh Flying Academy

The meeting noted that “flight time does not commensurate with the fulfilment of CPL skill test requirement”.

However, the authorities later decided that “considering previous practices” and “unavoidable circumstances”, as stated by BFA and Galaxy, the candidates should be granted the licence, according to CAAB documents.

Both pilots were later granted CPLs, enabling them to be pilots for hire. One of these two pilots are currently employed at Biman in an assisting role, while the other is unemployed.

Speaking anonymously, an official from one of the two academies told The Daily Star that his academy had indulged in these deviations because they did not want to bear the

expenses of maintaining a set-up of engineers, pilots and refuelling facilities at the other airports.

Brig Gen (reted) Muhammad Hasan Imam Farazi, chief executive officer of Galaxy Flying Academy, said, “We are aware of the problem and we can tell you that it will be resolved soon. Since the details are not finalised yet, I am not elaborating.”

The Daily Star spoke to three BFA officials, including its chairman Captain Shahabuddin Ahmed, Bir Uttam, by phone and sent them questions via WhatsApp, but none of them agreed to speak on the record.

However, one senior official, seeking anonymity, said, “As this is an ongoing issue, we hope it will be resolved by the civil aviation authorities. So we would not comment on this issue at this time.”

When cadet pilots finish their flying school and complete all checks, the respective academy applies for licences to CAAB on their behalf. CAAB then verifies the students’ records and flight log, and grants the licence if they deem fit, aviation experts say.

“So the CAAB authorities cannot shrug off their responsibilities if students were granted licences without fulfilling their training requirements,” said a CAAB official, requesting anonymity because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Manjur Kabir Bhuiyan downplayed the training rules violation by the academies, and insisted that such violations do not raise safety concerns.

“This is not really a safety issue. We are carrying out a detailed study. This does not mean they cannot fly safely,” he said.

Asked whether CAAB would be legally liable if one of these pilots had an accident, he said, “It is not really logical that a pilot who did not make a full stop landing in the third airfield in his early life will be involved in an accident.”

Manjur, who assumed the role of CAAB chairman in August 2024, added that there has not been any violation that would constitute “unsafe flying”

and that CAAB always complies with ICAO safety standards.

“Concerns will arise only if misinterpreted, misleading or wrong information is published. So far, we have not found any issue of potential Significant Safety Concern,” he told The Daily Star in a written response.

Significant Safety Concern (SSC) status is a ranking given to a country’s civil aviation by ICAO in case of major deficiencies in aviation safety oversight system. Bangladesh was under the SSC status in 2009-2012.

**SUSPICIOUS SERVICE** Since 2017, an organisation named A4Aero Ltd has been conducting the written exams for the aspiring pilots. The tests are conducted through a software, which also scores the answer sheet and the CAAB automatically receives a copy of the results.

The full ownership and control of the software remains with A4Aero. Even the data is stored in the cloud server of A4Aero, giving rise to the possibility of fraudulence and cheating, according to a report by a government agency.

The ACC investigators, who visited the CAAB office on March 17, 2025, found that the public procurement rules were not followed when giving the job to A4Aero.

CAAB is designated as a Critical Information Infrastructure by the government, meaning that the software it uses must undergo thorough quality testing by the Bangladesh Computer Council.

Documents also show that the organisation was not even registered in 2017, the year it began taking the tests. It was registered on February 27, 2018. As of April 2024, it has taken 14,084 tests.

The organisation is owned by Captain SM Nazmul Anam, a former flight safety director at CAAB.

Talking to The Daily Star last week, he said that during his tenure at CAAB (2012-2015), Bangladesh came out of a “Significant Safety Concern” status assigned by the ICAO between 2009 and 2012.

“We began developing the software in 2017 because CAAB was struggling with question-paper leaks during its physical tests and we were encouraged to do so by CAAB. CAAB was supposed to formally procure the software but it never did. They have just been using it,” said Nazmul, currently a Regional Officer for flight safety at ICAO’s Asia-Pacific region.

Asked whether CAAB has access to the data and control over the software, he said, “The developers have left the company. I do not have the source code and neither does CAAB. The data is stored in the cloud server of my company.”

Less than 24 hours before going to print – and four days after he was interviewed – he told this paper yesterday morning that he had found the source code and handed the database over to CAAB.

During last week’s interview, he said he pays for the cloud space himself, with expenses going up to \$200 per month, and noted that since the code of the software has not been updated in years, it is a cyber security risk.

“Since we did not have an agreement with CAAB, this software has never been through any quality testing,” he said.

He however insisted that it is not possible to cheat using the software.

The Daily Star visited the office address listed on the company’s website last month, but could not locate the company there. When pointed this out, Nazmul said the company is fully remote, and has no physical office.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Manjur Kabir admitted that the software in question was under development and trial when A4Aero offered the service, but he denied that CAAB had no access control over it.

Asked about the risk of using the software in cheating, he said, “We have not so far received any formal complaints or proof of any kind of cheating in exams. However, CAAB is in the process of acquiring new software with full features for taking the test.”

## Raise tobacco tax to curb use

FROM PAGE 3

According to the group’s proposal, setting the price of a 10-stick pack of low and medium-tier cigarettes at Tk 90 – up from the current Tk 60 and Tk 80 respectively – could encourage nearly 2.4 million adult smokers to quit. It could also prevent approximately 1.7 million premature deaths, including 9,00,000 among the youth, she claimed.

The group also proposed setting retail prices of high-tier cigarettes at Tk 140 and premium-tier cigarettes at Tk 190 per 10 sticks, slightly higher than the current Tk 185.

Prof Shafiq Nahin Shimul of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University said the current tax measures are ineffective in reducing tobacco use, as the government does not implement recommended

hikes.

He urged that the revenue collected from tobacco taxes be earmarked for specific health services.

Prof Sohel Reza Choudhury, head of Epidemiology and Research at the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute, said tobacco use is directly linked to four major non-communicable diseases, including heart and respiratory illnesses, which account for about 70 percent of deaths in the country.

“Although tobacco consumption has declined in Bangladesh, the rate of reduction is slower than in many other countries. Increasing taxes on tobacco products is one of the most effective ways to speed up this decline,” he said.

Bangladesh Health Reporters Forum President Rashed Rabbi

and PROGGA’s Head of Programmes Hasan Shahriar also spoke at the event.

### Home adviser

FROM PAGE 3

Sub-contractor Md Harun, the adviser said, “I’m not aware of any such restriction being sent to us. I currently have no information on that. Since you’ve brought it up, I will look into the matter.”

He emphasised that the investigation committee will thoroughly examine all relevant issues and ensure accountability. “Those who are guilty will definitely be punished,” he said.

Abdul Hamid left the country for Thailand through Dhaka airport early Thursday. In response, a three-member inquiry committee, headed by the additional inspector general (administration), was formed to investigate the circumstances surrounding his departure.

### People suffer

FROM PAGE 4

Sub-contractor Md Harun, who recently took over the work, said the contractor left, leaving the work unfinished. He said around 70 percent of the work has been completed.

“Necessary measures have been taken to speed up the work, and the project will be completed quickly,” he added.

Contacted, Mohammad Kamruzzaman, executive engineer of LGED in Tangail, said steps would be taken to resume the work as soon as possible.

## Commission proposes

FROM PAGE 3

said implementation of such a system would reduce reliance on unregulated private pharmacies, increase transparency in the supply chain, and significantly enhance the cost-effectiveness of government expenditure on medicine supply.

The commission also emphasised the need to establish a centrally managed National Ambulance Service Network across the country, which would ensure timely, high-quality, and equitable emergency transport services from urban centres to remote areas.

This network would include GPS-enabled vehicles, a central call centre, and a tiered fleet system, funded through government allocations, corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, and voluntary contributions, it said.

Coverage could be expanded through public-private partnerships based on a social business model, building a financially sustainable structure, it added.

Referring to success stories in India and Rwanda, the commission said that if such a system is introduced in the country, it would reduce delays in accessing care and deliver emergency services to all segments of the population.

The initiative would lower out-of-pocket expenses associated with private transport – paving the way for a more sensitive and inclusive healthcare system, it added.

Although the

commission recommended establishing a National Diagnosis Laboratory Network and a National Blood Supply Network, it did not provide details about these initiatives.

### Two former

FROM PAGE 3

Lakshmipur-2, are also accused in a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission in November 2020 over laundering around Tk 148 crore and concealing Tk 2.31 crore in assets.

The four other arrestees are: Abdus Sobhan Bhuiyan alias Hasan, former Chaudhagram upazila chairman in Cumilla; Awlad Hossain Liton, three-time mayor of Matlab South Municipality and a leader of Chandpur AL unit; Nargis Akter, president of Madaripur district Jubo Mohila League; and Mahmud Hossain, former joint convener of the now-banned Bangladesh Chhatra League’s Shabbagh Thana unit.

### Prioritise

FROM PAGE 4

Highlighting Rajuk’s limitations, she said development authorities alone can’t ensure sustainability. “We must empower institutions and ensure local participation,” she added.

She warned that unplanned development threatens biodiversity and stressed that real accountability lies with the true encroachers of natural areas.

## North claims most awards

FROM PAGE 4

This year’s event is being held with the theme “Ensure quality education, Build a Discrimination-Free Bangladesh.”

A total of 150 awards were conferred, including 42 to individuals and institutions, and 108 to students for outstanding performances in sports, cultural activities, and subject-based quizzes.

Officials from the northern districts also dominated the individual

award categories.

Sherpur’s Md Obaidullah was named Best District Primary Education Officer, Muhammad Rafiqul Islam of Tangail PTI as the Best PTI Superintendent, and Md Zakir Hossain Sarkar of Syedpur upazila as the Best Upazila Education Officer.

In the institutional categories, Rajshahi PTI was selected as the Best Primary Teachers’ Training Institute.

Md Kamruzzaman of Rajshahi PTI was awarded

## 18 years after collapse

FROM PAGE 4

“During monsoon, the situation worsens. Crossing the bamboo bridge becomes dangerous, and transporting agricultural goods becomes extremely difficult,” said Enayet Ali, a farmer from Hatibandha village.

Hossain Ali, another resident of the same village, said, “As this is a frontier area frequently hit by flash floods, a well-planned and durable bridge is essential

to ease our suffering.”

“Farmers often fail to get fair prices for their produce as they cannot easily transport goods to nearby markets. Middlemen take advantage, and many farmers are forced to sell their produce at home,” said Md Jahangir Alam, chairman of Hatibandha Union Parishad.

The chairman said locals, with support from the union parishad, built a wooden platform bridge

the Best PTI Instructor. Md Masud Karim from Dimla, Nilphamari, was named Best Upazila Resource Centre Instructor.

Educators from some other regions were also recognised. Md Inam Ullah Khan of Sreemangal’s Sharerganj Govt Primary School, and Farzana Islam of Hasania Government Primary School in Jamalpur Sadar were conferred awards for Best Assistant Teacher in male and female categories respectively.

a few years ago, which remains the only way to cross the canal.

Contacted, Shuvo Basak, upazila engineer of the Local Government and Engineering Department, said the 50-foot bridge on the earthen road was not built by LGED.

He could not confirm which agency constructed it.

He, however, said he would look into the issue and take steps to build a new one.

## One held for assaulting two girls

FROM PAGE 4

Jihad assaulting two female passengers on the deck using a belt.

Another widely shared video shows several young men beating a woman on the second floor of the vessel. Their identities have not yet been confirmed, the OC added.

When asked about the incident, Nehal told local journalists, “I did this for their own good. Some people were looting on

the launch, so I went there with my friends. When we arrived, I helped evacuate the people I knew. The crowd had become aggressive towards the two girls. At that moment, they asked us to ‘save’ them. As a brother, I intervened by striking them a few times. I respect the law, and to control the situation, I hit them two or three times as a brother.”

Law enforcement officials later intervened and brought the situation

under control. The launch, MV Captain, subsequently departed Munshiganj for Dhaka.

Police said filing of a case against Jihad and others allegedly involved was underway.

Meanwhile, rights group BLAST yesterday condemned the incident. In a statement, it demanded legal actions against the culprits and appropriate safety measures for the young women.



# BCB ‘relieved’ after Indo-Pak ceasefire

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday expressed relief after India and Pakistan agreed to a “full and immediate ceasefire”, while two Bangladesh players returned home safely from Pakistan.

The Tigers are due to tour Pakistan later this month for a five-match T20I series, starting in Faisalabad on May 25. However, following the ceasefire, BCB officials voiced renewed optimism about the Pakistan series.

“We are definitely much relieved now. It’s not only for being Bangladeshi; overall, the people of the whole sub-continent are relieved,” BCB’s media and communication chairman, Iftekhar Rahman Mithu, told The Daily Star yesterday after board directors’ meeting at the BCB office.

Earlier in the day, BCB’s cricket operations department held a separate meeting with the players to gather their views on touring Pakistan. “The BCB wishes to reiterate that... all decisions concerning the tour will be made with careful consideration of the current situation in Pakistan,” stated the BCB press release, a few hours before the ceasefire decision came to light.

Bangladesh’s two-match T20I series against the UAE, preceding their Pakistan tour, had remain unaffected. BCB president Faruque Ahmed also noted that the situation “has become easier” comparatively following the ceasefire.

The Tigers are set to depart for UAE on May 14.



Bangladesh pacer Nahid Rana and leg-spinner Rishad Hossain and two journalists, who were in Pakistan for the Pakistan Super League, returned home in the afternoon yesterday after the tournament got postponed on Friday due to the conflict between Pakistan and India. However, hours after their return, Pakistan and India agreed to a ceasefire.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## SHORT CORNER

### Kohli wants to retire from Tests: Reports

India’s veteran batter Virat Kohli has told the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) that he wants to retire from Tests, reports multiple Indian news outlets. According to The Indian Express, the 36-year-old recently expressed his desire to retire from the five-day format and top BCCI officials have asked him to reconsider.

### U-19s look to bounce back

Bangladesh will look to bounce back from the disappointment of being held to a 2-2 draw by Maldives when they take on Bhutan in their second and last group match of the SAFF U-19 Championship in Arunachal Pradesh, India today. The match will kick off at 4:30pm Bangladesh time.

### Inter reset for league title push

Inter Milan came through a dramatic Champions League semifinal but need to put the euphoria quickly behind them as they bid to haul in leaders Napoli and retain the Serie A title. A win for Inter on Sunday would put pressure on Napoli who host Genoa later on the night.

\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star’s website

## EL CLASICO Real Madrid’s last ROLL OF THE DICE



- Barca have won all three Clasicos this season, having only once beaten their rivals in four consecutive competitive games.
- Barcelona have not lost any of their last 15 games in La Liga (W13 D2).
- Kylian Mbappe has scored 36 goals for Real Madrid this season, and needs just one more to equal the best scoring record for a player in their first season with the club.

“This year they [Real Madrid] can’t handle us.”  
Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal

“Despite all our problems, the fact we are here and we can fight in this match is something beautiful.”  
Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti

AFP, Barcelona

Real Madrid’s season appeared disastrous a few weeks ago but if Carlo Ancelotti’s side can finally beat rivals Barcelona in Sunday’s LaLiga Clasico, their title defence will be resuscitated.

Madrid were left licking their wounds after a Champions League quarterfinal thrashing by Arsenal, and coach Ancelotti is poised to depart at the end of the season, but it could yet be with a major trophy in his hands.

Barcelona’s European exit at the hands of Inter Milan on Tuesday brightened spirits in the Spanish capital and if Madrid can overhaul the Catalans at the top of the table, they could transform their season.

The nature of Madrid’s rivalry with Barcelona means winning LaLiga could either feel great or underwhelming, depending on how their nemesis fares in Europe.

With Barcelona’s quadruple dream crushed by Inter, should Madrid defend their title they could even classify their season as a success.

The Catalans, who currently lead by four points with four matches remaining, would be left with only the Copa del Rey and Spanish Super Cup, both of which they won by beating Real Madrid in the final.

To do that, Madrid must manage something they have not been able to pull off all season – winning a Clasico.

“We will have a great opportunity, we have to prepare well – it’s an almost decisive match,” said Ancelotti.

The teams have faced off three times and Barcelona triumphed on each occasion, in the two aforementioned finals and in the first league clash at the Santiago Bernabeu in October.

Barcelona netted 12 goals across the four games, conceding four, with Hansi Flick’s side outplaying Madrid on each occasion.



## Arsenal aim to harness pain of honour guard Newcastle, Chelsea chase CL entry

AGENCIES

Mikel Arteta has urged Arsenal to channel the frustration of giving champions Liverpool a guard of honour on Sunday into fuel for next season’s Premier League title bid, while Eddie Howe has challenged Newcastle to meet expectations by securing Champions League qualification.

Arsenal, destined to finish the season without silverware after falling short in the title race and crashing out of the Champions League semifinals, travel to Anfield still nursing wounds from their Paris defeat.

The Gunners, still waiting for their first league title since 2004, face the uncomfortable task of honouring Arne Slot’s Liverpool, who clinched the title two weeks ago, leaving Arsenal trailing in second.

“Something has to drive you, motivate you, and pain for this is a good one to use, when you really want to do something. It’s the right thing to do, usually as a motivation for next season,” Arteta said of Sunday’s guard of honour.

Meanwhile, Newcastle host fifth placed Chelsea at St James’ Park, knowing victory would significantly boost their hopes of returning to Europe’s elite competition.

The Magpies, level on points with Chelsea but ahead on goals scored, are locked in a tight battle for a top-five finish alongside Manchester City, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa.

Although Newcastle lifted the League Cup in February, ending a 56-year trophy drought, Howe insists their ambition remains high.

“We feel an expectation, certainly internally, to try to deliver Champions League football,” said Howe. “Winning the cup final gave us a freedom and a new-found confidence... but that feels like it was, in football terms, quite a while ago.”

Guards of honour date back as early as 1955, when Manchester United formed one for Chelsea.

Arsenal endured a bitter moment in 2013 when they formed a guard of honour for Manchester United, whose ranks included their former captain Robin van Persie after his switch that season.

Liverpool’s most recent guard of honour came in 2020, with Manchester City, Aston Villa, Brighton, Burnley, Arsenal, Chelsea and Newcastle United all lining up to applaud the champions as they emerged from the tunnel.

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Many of the top performers of the recently-concluded Dhaka Premier League (DPL) couldn’t deliver impactful performances for the Bangladesh ‘A’ team in their three-match one-day series against New Zealand which concluded yesterday in Sylhet.

The hosts lost the last game by four wickets but still won the series 2-1 courtesy of dominating victories in the opening two games.

Despite winning the series, seeing many top DPL performers struggling to deliver in familiar conditions and in their favourable format against a new opponent once again raised the question about the standard of Bangladesh’s domestic scene.

Anamul Haque Bijoy, who was the top scorer in the league with 874 runs at an average of 79.45 and even earned his place back into the Test team with his DPL exploits, could make only 79 runs in three innings against New Zealand ‘A’. He got starts in the opening two matches, making 38 and 39 respectively, but couldn’t kick on.

Another top performer Mohammad Naim, who finished as the third highest scorer with 618 runs, also disappointed in the series, making just 62 in three innings.

DPL player of the tournament Mosaddek Hossain, who made 487 runs and took 30 wickets in the season, made just 17 runs in two innings but impressed



with the ball, finishing the series as the joint highest wicket-taker with five scalps.

Former national selector Hannan Sarkar, who coached some of these cricketers during his recent successful DPL campaign with Abahani Limited, reiterated what is time again said about Bangladesh’s domestic cricket while trying to explain these poor performances.

“Of course, there is a difference between our domestic games and international matches. There is nothing to hide because it’s an open secret,” Hannan told The Daily Star yesterday.

“We can’t ignore or overlook the big gap between domestic and international matches. We always talk about this in discussions. And it has once again come to the light.”

Hannan, however, tried to bat for the players, saying, “Many of the players were

out of the international scene for a long time. It won’t be right to judge them by two or three matches.

“We can’t say that Naim has done too badly. In the first two innings, he couldn’t extend his innings. Today [yesterday], he failed but in the first two matches, he got starts but could not convert... So, I don’t want to judge these players by one, two or three innings,” he said.

Hannan felt if these players get to play in more such series in the coming days, it will get easier for them to perform well at the international level.

“We are lucky that our A team programme is running and we can get some international flavour there to some extent... If they get more such series and come back in the team after performing well in those, it will help them to perform well in international cricket.”

## BPL Chittagong Abahani relegated

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani’s demotion to the Bangladesh Championship League was confirmed after Young Men’s Fakirerpool Club beat Rahmatganj MFS 2-1 in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture in Munshiganj on Saturday.

The port city outfit, who patched up a squad with very little finances following the political change in August last year, have only three points from 14 games. With only four matches remaining, they cannot catch up with eighth-placed Fakirerpool, who now have 16 points.

Winners of the inaugural Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup in 2015 and the Independence Cup the following year, the port city outfit had been a constant fixture in Bangladesh’s top-flight football since 2013-14 season. This promising era had come after a few struggling seasons since the beginning of the professional league in 2007, eventually culminating in them being relegated at the end of the 2010-11 season.

Meanwhile in yesterday’s match, Irfan Hossain gave Fakirerpool a 26th-minute lead before Mosharof Hossain Shanto doubled the advantage eight minutes after restart. Although Rajon Howladar reduced the arrears in stoppage time, the Old Dhaka outfit could not avoid defeat against a side they had beaten 6-1 in their first meeting of the league.

In the other match of the day, Dhaka Abahani failed to gain ground on runaway leaders Mohammedan with a goalless draw against Bangladesh Police in Mymensingh.

The six-time professional league winners started the day eight points behind Mohammedan following the Black and Whites’ draw against Fortis FC on the previous day, but could only reduce the gap to seven points, with only four matches still remaining.

The Sky Blues, with 28 points from 14 matches, are three points ahead of third-placed Bashundhara Kings.




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MUSTAFA ZAMAN ABBASI  
(1936-2025)

## A guardian of Bangladesh's folk music

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the quiet hours of early Saturday morning, Bangladesh bid farewell to one of its most cherished cultural figures. Mustafa Zaman Abbasi—eminent musicologist, author, singer, and television personality—passed away at the age of 87 at a hospital in Banani.

His daughter, Sharmin Abbasi, confirmed the news, marking the end of a luminous life steeped in melody, memory, and an unwavering devotion to Bengal's cultural arena.

Abbasi had long been battling

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2



Traders transporting massive loads of paddy straw on a Nosimon, a locally made vehicle that should be off the highway, while an overloaded rickshaw van carries sacks of farm produce. Such blatant disregard for road safety often leads to crashes. The photo was taken on Khulna-Satkhira highway.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Getting loans to be tougher for bank directors

### BB issues guideline to tackle irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BB tightens rules to rein in bank's in-house irregularities. The central bank has tightened rules on lending to individuals and institutions connected to banks — such as directors, managing directors, their family members, and bank subsidiaries — to tackle widespread irregularities and scams in the banking sector.

On Thursday, the Bangladesh Bank issued a new guideline titled "Transactions with Bank-Related Persons or Institutions" with the view to ensuring the proper use of bank funds and restore depositors' trust.

Although the Bank-Company (Amendment) Act 2023 already covers such transactions, the guideline provides detailed instructions and regulations.

Over the past 16 years of the Awami League rule, several bank directors took out large loans, some of which were allegedly siphoned out of the country.

For example, the controversial S Alam Group — led by its owner and family members — allegedly controlled more than half a dozen banks and took loans through fake or paper-based companies, according to the central bank.

As of 2024, defaulted loans in the banking sector hit

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## People don't want fallen forces rehabilitated

### Says Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has underscored the need for taking legal measures against those who have repeatedly violated the constitution and formed illegitimate parliaments and governments.

Tarique said the people do not want to see the return or rehabilitation of fallen, fugitive, autocratic, and evil forces, who were involved in enforced disappearances, murders, abductions, corruption, looting, and money laundering in any form within government or politics.

He was speaking yesterday at a BNP programme for exchanging greetings with members of the Buddhist community at the party chairperson's Gulshan Office.

Tarique said people are now agreed on two key issues: firstly, that no one should be allowed to turn Bangladesh into a subservient state in the future, and secondly, that the absconding, subservient and anti-democratic forces must not be allowed to raise their heads again.

"Every political party in Bangladesh, including the BNP, completely agrees with this demand of the people," Tarique said.

He called on people from all walks of life to remain alert so that no one can conspire to usurp their right to vote.

"But until a democratic government is established in the country, we must ensure that no one is able to conspire to hijack our democratic political rights and our right to vote," the BNP leader said.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

## India blocks YouTube channels of 6 TV stations

### Jamuna, Ekattor, Somoy among them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh government has warned of "reciprocal action" after YouTube blocked six of its television channels from being accessed in India "at the request of the Indian government", which cited national security concerns.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for the ministry of posts, telecommunications, and information technology, said Bangladesh will seek a formal explanation from the platform and, if none is provided, it may take reciprocal action.

He said in a Facebook post YouTube that India has geo blocked at least four Bangladeshi television stations.

"By blocking Bangladesh as a broadcast location, the rights of Bangladeshi citizens living in India who regularly watch these channels are being infringed upon. Such an action appears to go against international consumer rights norms."

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

## US-China talks to defuse trade war begin in Geneva

Low expectations for major breakthrough amid distrust

AFP, Geneva

Senior US and Chinese officials were meeting in Geneva yesterday in a bid to de-escalate a trade war sparked by President Donald Trump's sweeping tariff roll-out and further fuelled by Beijing's robust retaliation.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer were conferring with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in the first such talks between the world's two largest economies since Trump slapped steep new levies on China last month.

The closed-door discussions began at mid-morning yesterday and were due to continue today at the residence of the Swiss ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

And after a break at around lunchtime, the delegations returned to the discrete villa with sky blue shutters near a large parc on the left bank of Lake Geneva, according to AFP journalists on site.

Tariffs imposed by Trump on the Asian manufacturing giant since the start of the year currently total 145 percent, with cumulative US duties on some Chinese goods reaching a staggering 245 percent.

In retaliation, China slapped 125 percent levies on US goods, cementing what appears a near trade embargo between the world's two

largest economies.

Trump signalled on Friday that he might lower the sky-high tariffs on Chinese imports, taking to social media to suggest that an "80% Tariff on China seems right!".

"The president would like to work it out with China.... He would like to de-escalate the situation," US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick told Fox News on Friday.

Trump's press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, clarified that the US would not lower tariffs unilaterally, adding that China would need to make concessions as well.

In any case, a move to that level would be a symbolic gesture, since the tariffs would remain prohibitively steep.

"The relationship is not good" between Washington and Beijing, noted Bill Reinsch, a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"We have trade-prohibitive tariffs going in both directions. Relations are deteriorating," said Reinsch, a longtime former member of the American government's US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

"But the meeting is a good sign."

"I think this is basically to show that both sides are talking — and that itself is very important," said Xu Bin, professor of economics and finance at the China Europe International Business School.



➤ US slapped China with 145 percent tariff

➤ In retaliation, China slapped 125 percent levies on US goods



## Buddha Purnima today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today.

Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha. On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Kapilabastu at the foothill of the Himalayas.

He attained supreme enlightenment at the age of 35 and finally departed into nirvana at the age of 80 in 483 BC.

The day is a public holiday. On the occasion, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus greeted the members of the Buddhist community.

Buddhist religious leaders and the leaders of the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust yesterday met and exchanged greetings with the chief adviser on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at the State Guest House Jamuna.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

## Soviet-era space relic crashes after 50 yrs in orbit

CNN SCIENCE

A Soviet-era spacecraft, Cosmos 482, likely crashed into the Indian Ocean west of Jakarta, Indonesia early yesterday after spending more than 50 years in orbit.

Launched in March 1972, the probe was originally intended to reach Venus but failed to exit Earth's orbit.

According to the European Space Agency (ESA), Cosmos 482 re-entered the atmosphere early yesterday, splashing down in the Indian Ocean west of Jakarta, Indonesia, as confirmed by Russia's Roscosmos.

The ESA noted that the ground sensors lost track of the object, indicating it had already fallen. Experts had monitored the spacecraft for years as it gradually descended due to atmospheric drag.

Designed for Venus' extreme atmospheric conditions, Cosmos 482 was expected to survive reentry. Space debris expert Marlon Sorge noted that its heat shield may have kept it intact. However, authorities advised caution if remnants were found.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

An elderly day labourer pushing a cart in the extreme heat at the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday when temperatures topped 40C.

## Heatwave disrupts daily life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country has been experiencing extreme heat as temperatures topped 40 degrees C in Dhaka and elsewhere.

In Chuadanga, the season's highest, 42 C, was recorded yesterday while mercury reached 40.1 C in the capital, reports UNB and the Met office.

A severe heatwave is sweeping over Rajshahi and Chuadanga, while mild to moderate conditions prevail in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chattogram, Barisal, Khulna, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kurigram, and Moulvibazar.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecasts that the sweltering conditions may persist for at least four more days, despite the possibility of rain and thunderstorms in some places.

The weather is expected to remain mostly dry with partly cloudy skies during this period.

Temperatures in Dhaka may fall today and there is a likelihood of rain tomorrow, said meteorologist Shaheenul Islam.

The sweltering heat may persist

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4