

## BANNING PARTY ACTIVITIES Govt amends anti-terror law

Amendments pave way for penalising AL

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The interim government is set to bring the curtain down on the Awami League as a functioning political party.

The advisory council in a meeting yesterday approved an ordinance to amend the Anti-Terrorism Act-2009 so that it can ban all the activities of any entity.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus presided over the meeting at his official residence, Jamuna. The law ministry later published the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

The government is expected to issue a circular banning the Awami League's activities anytime now.

The election commissioners would then sit to decide whether to revoke the party's registration and bar it from elections.

The 2009 Act allows the banning of an entity, but does not contain any provision regarding the prohibition of an entity's activities.

After the latest amendment, section 18 (1) now authorises the government to "ban all activities of any entity".

The amended section 20 reads, "[The government] will ban publishing or printing any press statement by or on behalf of that entity, or organising any sort of publicity on mass media, online, social media or other media, procession, rally, gathering or press conference, or giving a public speech."

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Parties  
welcome  
ban on AL  
activities  
Demand swift trials of  
its leaders, aides

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties have welcomed the interim government's decision to ban all activities of the Awami League under the Anti-Terrorism Act until the trial of the party and its leaders is completed.

They also called for the prompt prosecution of all fallen autocrats and their aides.

The interim government, led by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, made the decision to ban all activities of Awami League on Saturday night, following three days of protests demanding a ban on the party for 15 years of fascist rule.

Parties and organisations that participated in the demonstrations include the National Citizen Party

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Exhausted after harvesting paddy under the scorching sun, a woman drinks water to quench her thirst while another stands beside her for her turn in a field in the Dhamura area of Uzirpur, Barishal.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## WHAT THEY SAY



"We are pleased that, albeit delayed, the interim government decided last night [Saturday night] to ban the activities of the fascist party Awami League and all organisations affiliated with it, in the interest of swiftly prosecuting those involved with the fascist regime for crimes against humanity and ensuring an unhindered trial process."

Mirza Fakhrul Islam  
Alamgir,  
BNP secretary general



"Our heartfelt demand has been partially fulfilled through the banning of Awami League's activities. But it has not yet been fully realised ... We have repeatedly met with the families of the martyrs. They do not seek financial assistance from the government. Instead, they want swift justice against Sheikh Hasina and her accomplices."

Shafiqur Rahman,  
ameer of  
Jamaat-e-Islami



"The priority should have been bringing those involved in mass killing to justice, not banning the political activities of Awami League. The politics of a party does not end simply because it is banned. We saw it in the case of Jamaat-e-Islami... I will not be surprised if the party becomes even more influential, like Jamaat have become."

Anu Muhammad,  
former economics  
professor at JU



"The future legal interpretation of this decision [of banning Awami League] is quite uncertain, because in our country, the law tends to operate according to the preferences of those in power. That's the reality we're witnessing. This is how the law functions here. So, when it comes to the future, it is really difficult to say how things will unfold."

Jyotirmoy Barua,  
Supreme Court lawyer

## LICENCE TO FLY: FINAL PART

## Pilots faked flying records

CAAB inquiry finds, regulator yet to take action

ZYMA ISLAM

One pilot flew only half the hours required to be certified. Another signed off on his own Airline Transport Pilot Licence—the highest level of aviation certification. A third falsified flight records, while a fourth became a "check pilot" for an aircraft he had never flown.

The paper trail shows that the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has long been aware of all this, yet all four individuals still retain their pilot licences.

One of them is currently a pilot with Biman Bangladesh Airlines, while another is employed as a check pilot at Sky Capital Airlines. A third was previously employed at US Bangla Airlines and the employment status of the other individual is unclear, according to documents and sources.

The findings by an internal inquiry by CAAB's safety department raise concerns about aviation safety and may invite scrutiny by international aviation watchdogs such as ICAO or the Federal Aviation Administration, aviation experts say.

Less than half qualified

On March 19, 2023, Abdur Rahman Akand, a graduate of the Bangladesh Air Force Academy, got the Airline Transport Pilot Licence, the most advanced pilot certification.

CAAB documents show that he had 26 hours and 5 minutes of flying as a pilot-in-command unsupervised, and logged 128 hours and 30 minutes of flying as a pilot-in-command under supervision.

According to aviation rules, a person must log 250 flying hours, of which 70 hours have to be unsupervised, while the rest of the hours can be flown under supervision. If the candidate has not logged 70 hours of unsupervised flying, they would need to fly 500 hours as a pilot-in-command under supervision.

But before being certified as an ATPL, Akand flew only 154.35 hours – less than

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TRUMP TARIFFS  
Lower tariffs,  
higher import  
of US goods  
on the cards  
Action plan to be  
dispatched in days

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh will propose lowering the import tariff for certain American goods and increasing the volume of imports of some items as part of the efforts to narrow the trade gap with the US, which elicited a fresh 37 percent reciprocal tariff from the Trump administration.

The import trend of some goods from the US suggests there is room for more.

For instance, in 2023, Bangladesh imported cotton worth \$2.22 billion from all over the world, with the US accounting for just \$336.52 million, according to a primary document seen by The Daily Star that is under preparation to assist the government.

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# Why Bijoy Sarani feels like Dhaka's true heartbeat

RBR

Dhaka doesn't have a city square per se, but places like Shahbagh and areas around Motijheel serve as a sort of one.

But in my opinion, the vibrant, colourful pavement adjacent to our Parliament building and the Bijoy Sarani thoroughfare can be a contender in the race to nominate a town square – one designated open space for the public to come and unwind.

The atmosphere of this prominent pedestrian area in Dhaka is electrifying, if I am to describe it simply.

I was crossing the area last Tuesday, which was a weekday, mind you, and the place was pulsating with activity; I had to stop and soak in the happy energy. Weekends must be extra fun.

I am not sure if I can find the correct words to describe the flurry of happenings on that joyful pavement. It was after office hours, and the sun hung low in the sky, emitting a golden orange hue of light.

The summer breeze soothed the day's tiredness. For me, it was a picture-

perfect Dhaka moment – exactly how I want to see my beloved metro.

Groups of young office executives, university students, and friends were engaged in fun banter and serious office discussions, pulling each other's legs, and raucous laughter – just the way young people ought to be: carefree and joyful.

Their jubilant mood seeped into me and other elderly couples lazing in the sun.

Young ones in love, mothers and children, and loners seeking me-time – it was a motley crowd.

"I left Dhaka when I was 24. I was a tailor in Saudi Arabia for almost three decades. I have recently returned, and I am enjoying the mood here. When I left, the area around Sangsad Bhaban was barren, but look at it now," says Yasin, chewing on a sweet betel



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

leaf he bought from Asma, who was selling cigarettes and paan on that pavement.

Asma's makeshift shop was just a cigarette-selling set on top of a wooden stool. She sat on the concrete under a big Bakul tree (Indian Medlar). Her no-nonsense attitude and well-brewed milk tea pull customers to her pop-up stand.

"I have been doing business here for the last eight years. I started the business with my own money, and I earn a decent living. Who is there to stop me from working just because I am a woman in a man's world?" she answered me when I asked if the men around her accept her presence.

There were quite a few young women selling cupcakes, alongside agar-agar jello with coconut shavings, which seemed to be a new kind of street food.

Sitting with a child in her lap, Amena, a young girl, was selling these baked desserts.

A young lad with developmental disability was selling ice-chilled fizzy drinks, water, and a traditional yoghurt drink called mattha.

Then there was the crowd-pleaser ghoti gorom

chanachur, which in exact translated words would mean a street snack of fried and crispy chickpeas, lentils, peanuts, and rice flakes – that are kept hot under a ghoti or pot, which in turn is kept warm with slow-burning wood dust.

It is a local treat along with Dhakaiya masala muri with ghunni chaat (puffed rice and chickpeas) and Jhal Muri.

The thing that I really appreciated was that the walkway is jammed with young and old independent retailers, hawking their unique items, handcrafted goods, clothing, and food.

It is an interesting place to relax and feel upbeat because the ambience there is very chilled.

What caught my attention was a teenager with a Boxing Arcade Machine. For just Tk 20, you can test



your punching power. He is surrounded by a crowd of young men keen to impress.

I must confess, I tried my hand and failed miserably, drawing sympathy from the gathering.

Part-timers and freelancers find this public area friendly for brisk business. Ordinary people find it a lively and happening place to loosen up and take a break at the day's end.

Next time you are in that vicinity, take the time out to explore the exuberance there.

## Accomplices of 1971 war crimes must apologise

Says Mahfuj Alam

BSS, Dhaka

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Md Mahfuj Alam yesterday said that the issue of 1971 must be resolved, and the accomplices of war crimes must apologise.

"The Pakistani ideology will have to be ditched for participation in politics in Bangladesh," he said in Facebook.

He wrote the post titled "Two Words", whose first point was: "Pakistan has committed genocide in this country. (Even if Pakistan officially apologises, even if the country agrees to apologise again, accomplices of war crimes are yet to apologise). Making a narrative in favour of genocide for any excuse must be stopped. Sabotage of the July force, by infiltrating it, must be stopped. [You] have to come in with a clean heart."



In his second point, he wrote, "The pro-Mujib leftist forces will have no mercy. They are the brains behind the League's enforced disappearances and murders and massacres in the anti-Modi movement and at Shapla. They belong to the 36 Division."

The adviser also said, "They are still in their position, untouched despite their repulsive brokering during July. Till today, the pro-Mujib leftists are culturally and intellectually betraying July. They continue to plot against the forces of July staying in the country. All these B-teams of the League will soon be defeated. There is no use in relying on anyone else."

Earlier, in another post, he said, "The decision has been made to ban the activities of the Awami League. A provision has been added to the legal process to ban the party. The July Proclamation will be issued within the next 30 working days."

The government has decided to ban all activities of the Awami League until the trial of its leaders and activists is over at the International Crimes Tribunal.

This decision was taken in a special meeting of the advisory council Saturday night with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in the chair.

## Lower tariffs, higher import of US goods on the cards

FROM PAGE 1

The US share in global cotton export was 35.81 percent, and the import duty of US cotton in Bangladesh is zero percent, said a person who is familiar with the document.

Similarly, in 2023, Bangladesh imported propane or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) worth \$1.9 billion, of which \$51.32 million came from the US.

That year, the total worth of LPG exported by the US was \$20.88 billion, with Bangladesh accounting for 0.25 percent of this purchase. The tariff on LPG imports from the US is zero.

Similarly, primary estimates suggest that Bangladesh has a lot of room to import more soybean products, wheat, natural gas, gold, corn, human vaccine, jewellery articles, boards and panels from the

US.

The country would also offer to import products that the US exports heavily worldwide but currently hold a small share in Bangladesh's import basket, the document showed.

Those products are cotton, ferrous waste and scrap, natural gas, wheat, light oils, milk and cream.

Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman said, "We have not received this document yet, although we are preparing our reply for the US government. We will send our reply to the United States Trade Representative (USTR) within two to three days."

Bangladesh will rationalise the tariff rates following the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) system of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as both the US and Bangladesh are

members. The MFN rate means that the rate given to the US must be the same for other countries as well.

The National Board of Revenue is working to find 100 goods on which Bangladesh can offer duty reduction, Rahman said.

Moreover, Bangladesh has already paid the arrears of three American companies and is getting ready to make full payment to Oracle, he added.

Bangladesh will also promise to reduce the non-tariff barriers for the ease of doing business and refrain from using counterfeit software in different offices.

During last month's meeting, the USTR suggested that Bangladesh source the goods directly from America. For instance, Bangladesh imports cars from General Motors

and LG goods from other countries such as Korea and India, although these are American brands.

Bangladesh will also give preference to Boeing when it purchases aeroplanes, Rahman said.

Meanwhile, in a letter sent to Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin on May 7, USTR Ambassador Jamieson Greer suggested that Bangladesh address areas of unfair trade practices, such as labour rights violations and measures that may restrict digital trade.

"My team is ready to engage with Bangladesh to address the persistent bilateral trade deficit by reducing Bangladesh's agricultural and industrial tariff and non-tariff barriers as well as aligning with the United States on economic security matters," Greer said in the letter.

had expected a complete ban on the Awami League."

Meanwhile, Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, in a statement yesterday said that banning the Awami League's political activities through an executive order would only generate public sympathy for the autocratic AL.

He demanded that the government prosecute AL as a political party, saying the party had lost the moral right to operate in Bangladesh due to its responsibility for the July massacre.

Firoz also called on the government to try Jamaat-e-Islami for war crimes and genocide during the 1971 Liberation War, alongside bringing the AL to justice for the July massacre.

In a statement yesterday, Ganosamhati Andolan Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki and Executive Coordinator Abdul Hasan Rubel said over the past 15 years, Awami League has been involved in enforced disappearances, killings, suppression of public voice, disenfranchisement, corruption, and money laundering.

Most recently, in July and August of 2024, they carried out indiscriminate killings. Therefore, it is essential that, alongside prosecuting Sheikh Hasina and her associates for these crimes, the Awami League as a political party must also be brought to trial.

"Only through the judicial process and the establishment of justice can the future of Bangladesh be secured," the statement said.

The leaders called upon the people to remain united to establish a new political arrangement through justice, reform, and elections.

## Govt amends anti-terror law

FROM PAGE 1

The Council of Advisers on Saturday decided to ban all activities of the Awami League under the Anti-Terrorism Act until the International Crimes Tribunal completed the trial of the party and its leaders for atrocities during 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 said on Saturday.

The decision to ban the Awami League's activities came after three days of demonstrations by the National Citizen Party (NCP) and several other political and student organisations.

Hundreds of people, including women and children, were killed during the uprising.

A fact-finding mission of 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.

Formed in 1949, the Awami League is one of oldest political parties in the country. Earlier, in October last year, the government banned the party's student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League, under the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, amid demands from the student movement against discrimination.

**EC DECISION AFTER GAZETTE**  
Asked about the fate of the Awami League's registration with the Election Commission as a political party, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin told The Daily Star that they would decide on the matter after officially receiving the government circular banning the party's activities.

"No decision on the matter can be taken without the government's circular, which must be taken seriously. Once we receive the exact order, we will review the legal aspects and determine the next steps accordingly," he added.

Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarker told this newspaper yesterday that the commission would

hold a meeting as soon as it got the circular.

EC officials said the commission was prepared to hold the meeting today. "It is almost certain that the commission will not go against the government's decision," said a highly placed source at the EC.

Since 2008, a total of 50 political parties have been registered with the EC, while five parties' registrations have been cancelled.

The Freedom Party's registration was cancelled in 2009 as it failed to provide the party charter.

The Jamaat-e-Islami's registration as a political party was declared illegal by the High Court in 2013. Following the verdict, the EC cancelled Jamaat's registration in October 2018. Jamaat's appeal against the High Court verdict is now pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

After 2018, Oikyabaddho Nagarik Andolan, Pragatashil Ganatantrik Party and Jatiya Ganatantrik Party lost their registrations as they failed to fulfil certain conditions.

**HISTORY OF BAN**  
Throughout Bangladesh's political history, various parties and organisations have faced bans.

After independence, all religion-based political parties, including the Jamaat, were banned following the adoption of the country's constitution in 1972.

In a sweeping political move on January 25, 1975, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dissolved all political parties, including the Awami League, and introduced one-party rule under Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League or BAKSAL. Following his assassination on August 15 the same year, all political activities were suspended under martial law.

Political activities resumed in 1976 following the lifting of the ban. During this time, some leaders revived the Awami League. In 1979, the then-government allowed all previously banned parties, including the Jamaat, to re-enter the political arena.

During the Awami League's tenure in 2013, the High Court revoked the Jamaat's registration. Last year, the government banned the Jamaat and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, under the Anti-Terrorism Act. After the July uprising, the interim government lifted the ban in August.

Several organisations, including Purbo Banglar Sarbabora Party and the Purbo Banglar Communist Party, were banned under the 1974 Special Powers Act.

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588 lives lost  
on roads last  
month  
**Says Road Safety  
Foundation report**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 588 people were killed and 1,124 injured in 593 road crashes across the country in April, according to a report published by the Road Safety Foundation.

Among the deceased, 86 were women (14.62 percent) and 78 were children (13.26 percent), the report said.

Motorcycles were involved in 218 of the crashes, resulting in 229 deaths accounting for 38.94 percent of total fatalities.

In addition, 116 pedestrians (19.72 percent) and 74 drivers or their assistants (12.58 percent) were among those who lost their lives in the accidents.

The report said seven waterway accidents led to eight deaths and four injuries. Meanwhile, 22 railway-related incidents caused 24 deaths and left six others injured.

**Bangladesh at a 'crucial crossroad' of transformation  
Says Chinese envoy**  
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh can learn from China's success in state governance, social development, and technology, said high-ranking officials from both countries at an event yesterday.

They made the remarks at the opening of the China-Bangladesh Readers Forum on Chinese President Xi Jinping's book "The Governance of China", held at a city hotel.

The event was jointly organised by the State Council Information Office of China, China International Communications Group, and the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh.

A China Book Corner was also inaugurated at the National Library, marking 50 years of diplomatic ties between the two nations.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Shahida carries more than just brick chips -- she carries the weight of hope for a better future. Every day, she works at a construction site in Mohammadpur for over eight hours and makes Tk 450 a day to ensure her tenth-grade son can stay in school. Her husband remains in their village home, while she shoulders the family's dreams in the city. The photo taken on Rajia Sultana Road, Mohammadpur yesterday on Mother's Day.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Lack of political will stalls critical reforms

Reform commission members tell BIP event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several heads of key reform commissions have voiced concern over the lack of political will to implement long pending reform proposals, accusing political parties of prioritising power over equity and justice.

Their observations came on the second day of the 4th International Conference on Urban and Regional Planning, organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, chief of the Electoral System Reform Commission, said politicians selectively support reforms that benefit their electoral interests.

"We are trying to build consensus and enact laws to prevent the return of autocracy. But politicians only support reforms that help them gain or retain power."

**We are trying to build consensus and enact laws to prevent the return of autocracy. But politicians only support reforms that help them gain or retain power.**

**Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar**  
Chief of Electoral System Reform Commission

**No ruling party has taken a holistic approach to governance. Our cities are shaped by a nexus of bureaucrats, political-business elites, and foreign agencies.**

**Prof Anu Muhammad**  
Eminent economist

ensure justice and equity," he said. Dr Majumdar criticised proposals for an upper house in parliament, saying political parties are demanding equal representation as the lower house, defeating the purpose of bicameralism.

Prof Dr Tofayel Ahmed, chief of the Local Government Reform Commission, said, "Ideally, politicians should engage with academics and experts on reforms. Instead, we are left knocking on their doors."

Prof Ahmed emphasised the lack of decentralisation in governance, with local bodies deprived of authority over crucial sectors like education and health.

"We've recommended district-level planning, but we don't even know what a district's budget is. This must be made public," he said.

Speakers at the event stressed that both urban and rural planning must centre on the working class population.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Police to take stern action against banned orgs  
**Says Dhaka DIG**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police will take stern action against banned organisations if they attempt to disrupt public security, said Rezaul Karim Mallik, the newly appointed Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Dhaka Range, yesterday.

He made the statement while addressing a press conference at his office in the capital's Segunbagicha.

When asked which organisations are considered banned, he said, "You are surely aware that those who act against the government or work against the interests of the people -- they are the ones considered banned."

The DIG also warned of strict action if any police personnel are found involved in criminal activity.

Amendment to try organisations a timely initiative  
**Say ICT prosecutors**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution of the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday described the recent amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, 1973 as a timely initiative.

The amendment allows the tribunal to try and punish individuals, political parties, their affiliated bodies, and supporter groups involved in crimes under the Act.

**The amendment allows the tribunal to try and punish individuals, political parties, their affiliated bodies, and supporter groups involved in crimes under the Act.**

The interim government made the change through an ordinance and issued a gazette notification on Saturday.

"The amendment allows the tribunal to take action against organisations as well as individuals, which is a timely initiative," said Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim, prosecutor (administration) of the International Crimes Tribunal.

"Although Bangladeshi laws already allow

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

**JULY UPRISING**  
Injured protesters continue sit-in



DU CORRESPONDENT

Individuals who were injured during the July mass uprising yesterday continued a sit-in protest by blocking Dhaka's Shahbagh intersection.

They began their demonstration on Saturday night to press home their three-point demand that includes a permanent ban on the Awami League, official recognition of the "July Charter", and access to proper medical treatment.

The protest comes after a three-day demonstration led by leaders and activists of the National Citizen Party (NCP) and other political groups demanding a ban on the AL.

While most of the protesting groups left the Shahbagh intersection following the government's announcement of a ban on AL's political activities,

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## National plan must prioritise people, nature

Political parties tell event

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Bar polluters from polls
- Planning should be inclusive
- Decentralised development
- EC should screen eco-offenders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders from various political parties yesterday pledged that no future initiatives in Bangladesh would be taken at the expense of people's lives, livelihoods, or the environment.

They stressed the need for strict regulations to bar any political party from nominating individuals for parliamentary elections who are involved in polluting rivers or destroying forests.

Their remarks came during a high-level policy roundtable titled "Planned Bangladesh and Equitable Development of Urban, Regional and Rural Areas: Political Commitments and Future Roadmap," organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital.

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman said most individuals who destroy biodiversity operate under the protection of political godfathers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Vehicles inch through narrow lanes in the capital's Tejgaon Nabisco area, where ongoing DPDC underground power line work has left the road dug up, triggering traffic congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

Rain likely in Dhaka today

**Says BMD**

STAR REPORT

Rain or thundershowers with lightning flashes and temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Dhaka divisions today, said Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

The weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere in the country.

A severe to very severe heat wave is now sweeping over Dhaka, Tangail, Manikganj, Faridpur, Chuadanga, Rajshahi, Sirajganj and Jashore. Furthermore, a mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping elsewhere across the country and it may continue, the BMD said.

Senior meteorologist Md Bazlur Rashid said, "There is a chance of rainfall in many areas of Dhaka, Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Sylhet divisions tomorrow [today]."

In this series, we cover three reports from Sirajganj, Pirojpur, and Habiganj revealing how a dysfunctional healthcare system is taking a heavy toll on the rural population. Together, these stories expose chronic neglect and mismanagement in public health infrastructure, leaving citizens to bear the consequences.

## MULIBARI OF SIRAJGANJ Tk 10.79cr trauma centre lies idle

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

A 20 bed trauma centre for accident victims, established beside the Jamuna Bridge in Mulibari area of Sirajganj, has yet to become operational in four years.

As a result, the newly-built infrastructure is gradually getting damaged due to a lack of maintenance, while more funds are being sought for repair work, sources said.

According to the Health Engineering Department (HED) in Sirajganj, the three-storey trauma centre was established to provide emergency treatment to road accident victims on the Jamuna Bridge West Zone, one of the busiest highways in the northern region, by acquiring around one acre of railway land beside Mulibari rail crossing.

The construction work began in 2019 and was completed in 2020 at a cost of Tk 10.79 crore. Later in June 2021, it was handed over to the health ministry,



**Efforts are underway to initiate the hospital's operation soon after equipping it with the required machinery and appointing necessary manpower.**

**Dr Md Nurul Amin**

Civil surgeon of Sirajganj

said Md Shahinur Islam, assistant engineer of HED in Sirajganj.

Dr Md Nurul Amin, civil surgeon of Sirajganj, said although the construction work has been completed, the centre is yet to be equipped with necessary facilities and manpower, so its operation has not begun.

The health directorate approved 20 posts on February 5 this year, including two consultants, two medical officers and four senior staff nurses for the hospital, but appointments to the posts are yet to be made, he said.

"Efforts are underway to initiate the hospital's operation soon after equipping it with the required machinery and appointing necessary manpower," the civil surgeon added.

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## Bangladesh at a 'crucial crossroad'

FROM PAGE 3  
At the event, BNP standing committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan said Xi Jinping's ideas of inclusive society, equitable development, and transparent governance align with Bangladesh's aspirations.

"We believe in socialism in the context of people's welfare. A peaceful society is possible when we reduce the gap between rich and poor," he said.

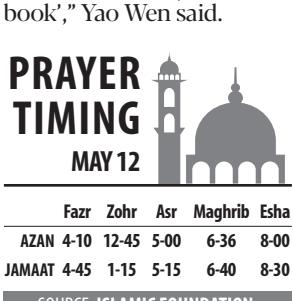
Road, Transport and Bridges Adviser Fouzul Kabir Khan said Xi Jinping's book highlights national unity, economic development, and good governance.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam

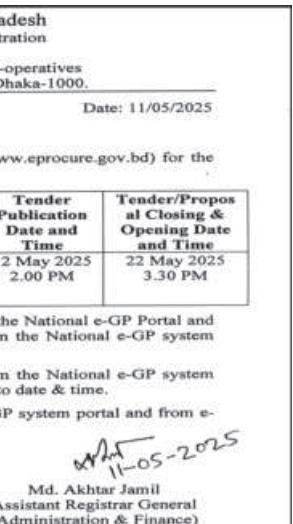
said Bangladesh follows a Western model of governance and is less familiar with the Chinese approach, but China's development deserves close study.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen said China's modernisation journey could serve as a reference for Bangladesh and other Global South countries, as Bangladesh stands at this "crucial crossroads of transformations".

"China achieved in decades what took the West centuries - rapid economic growth and lasting social stability - proving modernisation doesn't require Westernisation," he said.



SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration  
Local Government Division  
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives  
Transport pool Building (8th Floor), Secretariat Link Road, Dhaka-1000.  
Memo No. 46.04.0000.000.101.36.001.17.752  
**Re-Tender Notice**  
Re-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following package-

Tender ID No. Reference No. Description Tender Publication Date and Time Tender/Propos al Closing and Opening Date and Time  
1072596 Re-Ten.46.04.0000.000.102.07.0005.25.20 Procurement of End Point Security/ Protection for BDRIS 12 May 2025 2.00 PM 22 May 2025 3.30 PM

These are online Tender, where only e-Tenders 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.

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GD-1131

11-05-2025  
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## National plan must

FROM PAGE 3

"We must put an end to this culture," he said.

Amar Bangladesh Party (AB) Chairman Mujibur Rahman Manju said unplanned development over the past 53 years has taken the greatest toll on national resources.

Zonayed Saki, chief Coordinator of Ganoshamati Andolan, said every national plan must prioritise people, life, and nature. "Every inch of Bangladesh must be brought under inclusive planning," he added.

Ariful Islam Adeeb, senior joint convenor of the National Citizen Party, echoed the need for strong environmental accountability. He urged all political parties to pledge that they would not nominate individuals harmful to the environment.

"In addition, the Election

Commission should ensure that such individuals are barred from candidacy," he said. He also criticised the tendency of elected representatives to focus solely on their own constituencies, which he said is a major reason behind uncoordinated and unplanned development across the country.

Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party, described Dhaka as a "toxic city" and emphasised the urgent need for decentralisation of development, education, and healthcare.

The session was chaired by BIP President Dr Adil Muhammad Khan. Other speakers included Nagerik Oiyya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Ashraful Alam, joint secretary of Islami Andolon Bangladesh.

FROM PAGE 3

action against organisations, having this power within a tribunal of international standards adds credibility and public trust," he added.

With the amendment, the tribunal can now suspend or ban an organisation's activities, declare it illegal, suspend or cancel its registration or licence, and confiscate its property.

The ordinance also defines "organisation" as any political party, any group affiliated with or associated with such a party, or any group of individuals that,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

in the tribunal's opinion, supports, propagates, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a party or entity

It states that the tribunal

can take action against any organisation found to have committed, ordered, attempted, aided, incited, abetted, conspired, or in any way facilitated crimes against humanity.

The ordinance followed

a special meeting of the

interim government's

advisory council on

Saturday, where the

amendment was approved.

in the tribunal's opinion, supports, propagates, endorses, facilitates, or engages in the activities of such a party or entity

During the session,

the council also decided

to prohibit all activities of

Awami League, including

its online presence, under the Anti-Terrorism Act until the tribunal's proceedings against the party and its leaders are completed.

The council said the

decision aims to protect

national security,

the July Movement's

activists, and ensure the safety of

complainants and witnesses

in the tribunal cases.

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## INDO-PAK BORDER

Villagers in no hurry to return to their homes

REUTERS, Jammu

After spending days in temporary homes and with relatives, people from both sides of the Indian and Pakistani border are sceptical about this weekend's ceasefire and in no hurry to return to their villages.

Indian cities like Jammu and Amritsar, which were spooked by the sounds of explosions after the truce was agreed, remained quieter than normal yesterday with many shops choosing to close and people preferring to stay indoors.

Indian and Pakistani authorities advised people who had left border areas not to return to frontline villages just yet.

After four days of fighting, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire on Saturday under US pressure, but within hours explosions



A resident inspects his damaged house following cross-border shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) between Pakistan and India in the Jura sector of Neelum Valley, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, yesterday. Inset, Vartika, the daughter of an IAF soldier who died in an attack on Udhampur, salutes her father as his body is taken away on the day of his funeral at their home in Mahradasi village, Rajasthan, India.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



rang out in border towns and India accused Pakistan of violating the pact.

The arch rivals had been involved in the worst fighting in nearly three decades, firing missiles and drones at each other's military installations and killing almost 70 people.

"URGENT APPEAL: Do not return to frontline villages. Lives are at risk. Unexploded munitions remain after Pakistani shelling," said a police notice in Indian Kashmir.

Hundreds of people were shifted to temporary homes, while others left to stay with relatives far from the border as fighting intensified earlier in the week.

"I want to go back to my village in Bihar. Do not want to go back there (to the border) and die," said Asha Devi, a 22-year-old farm labourer in the Akmor region, one of the areas worst affected by shelling in recent days.

Kabul Singh, head of a village close to the border, said people were scared to return home after they heard the blasts following the ceasefire announcement.

On the Pakistan side of the border, some residents displaced from villages were advised to wait until today midday before returning.

## Ready to meet Russia if ceasefire agreed

Says Ukraine's Zelensky after Putin calls for 'direct talks' with Kyiv

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that Kyiv would meet with Moscow for talks in Istanbul on May 15, but said that Russia must first commit to a 30-day ceasefire starting today.

Zelensky – using rare language since Moscow launched its invasion more than three years ago that has devastated Ukraine – said he saw a "positive sign" from Russia.

The warring sides have not held direct talks since March 2022,

Putin rejects ceasefire ultimatum proposed by European leaders

Erdogan says efforts to end Ukraine war at 'turning point'

Russia launched over 100 drones at Ukraine: Kyiv

shortly after the Kremlin launched its invasion in February of that year.

Zelensky's comments came after Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed that Kyiv and Moscow meet on May 15.

However, in the nighttime press conference at the Kremlin, Putin did not comment on the 30-day ceasefire proposal put forward by



Kyiv and its European allies.

Putin said Russia was proposing direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul in an attempt to "eliminate the root causes of the conflict" and "to achieve the restoration of a long-term, lasting peace" rather than simply a pause for rearmament.

"We are proposing that Kyiv resume direct negotiations without any preconditions," Putin said from the Kremlin.

On a visit to Kyiv on Saturday the leaders of France, the UK, Germany and Poland pressured Russia – with US President Donald Trump's support – to commit to an unconditional ceasefire in Ukraine starting from today.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday told Russian and French leaders that a "historic turning point" has been reached in

efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war and that Ankara was ready to host talks between the two warring parties, his office said.

Russia's invasion has dragged on for more than three years and killed thousands of people.

"There is no point in continuing the killing even for a single day. We expect Russia to confirm a ceasefire – full, lasting and reliable – starting tomorrow, May 12, and Ukraine is ready to meet," Zelensky said on social media.

"It is a positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war," Zelensky said, in a break of tone.

Meanwhile, Kyiv yesterday said that Moscow had launched more than 100 drones into Ukraine at night, shortly after a Russian 72-hour ceasefire had ended at midnight.

## OMAN MEETING

US, Iran discuss 'tech elements' of nuclear deal

REUTERS

The US government's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff had a fourth round of direct and indirect discussions with Iran in Muscat, Oman, yesterday where they were discussing "technical elements" of a nuclear deal, according to a senior US administration official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The US and Iran have agreed to hold another meeting in the near future, the US official said.

Though Tehran and Washington both have said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the decades-long dispute, they remain deeply divided on several red lines that negotiators will have to circumvent to reach a new nuclear deal and avert future military action.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff held the fourth round of talks in Muscat.

Araghchi, before departing for Muscat, told Iranian state TV that "Iran has well-known positions based on clear principles... We hope to reach a decisive stance in Sunday's meeting". He added that Iran's expert team was in Oman and "will be consulted if necessary".

## Eight killed in Israeli strike on Khan Yunis

Say Gaza rescuers; four children among dead

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence yesterday reported eight deaths, including four young children, in an Israeli air strike on tents housing displaced people in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Israeli fighter jets targeted three tents housing dozens of displaced people overnight, killing "eight people, including four children aged two to five and two women", civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike.

Video filmed by AFP shows rescuers in the dark evacuating bodies by ambulance, one of them in a white plastic body bag while the other was wrapped in a blanket, as well as a wounded baby.

Bassal said the Israeli military also destroyed five houses with explosives in the east of Gaza City, in the territory's north, and fired artillery at the Abassa area east of Khan Yunis, without reporting any casualties.

The Gaza health ministry said on Saturday that at least 2,701 people have been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza, bringing the overall death toll since the war broke out to 52,810.

Meanwhile, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said yesterday that the country has fully endorsed US President Donald Trump's aid plan for Gaza, laid out by the American envoy to Israel.

## FIRST SUNDAY MESSAGE

### Pope Leo XIV appeals for 'no more war'

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope Leo XIV appealed to the world's major powers for "no more war" in his first Sunday message to crowds in St Peter's Square since his election as pontiff.

The new pope, elected on May 8, called for an "authentic and lasting peace" in Ukraine and a ceasefire in Gaza and release of all Israeli hostages.

Leo also welcomed the recent ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and said he was praying to God to grant the world the "miracle of peace."

"No more war!" the pope said, repeating a frequent call of the late Pope Francis and noting the recent 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which killed some 60 million people.

Leo said today's world was living through "the dramatic scenario of a Third World War being fought piecemeal," again repeating a phrase coined by Francis.

The new pope said he carries in his heart the "suffering of the beloved people of Ukraine." He appealed for negotiations to reach an "authentic, just and lasting peace."

He also said he was "profoundly saddened" by the war in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid and release of the remaining hostages held by the militant group Hamas.

Leo said he was glad to hear of the recent India-Pakistan ceasefire and hoped negotiations would lead to a lasting accord between the nuclear armed neighbors.

He added: "But there are so many other conflicts in the world!"

## S Korea's former PM Han drops presidential bid

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's former prime minister and acting president Han Duck-soo ended a short, ill-fated attempt to win the conservative party's presidential nomination yesterday after days of internecine disputes just days out from the election.

Rival Kim Moon-soo was chosen as nominee for the People Power Party after party members voted on Saturday to retain him over Han, whose late entry into the race derailed the consensus over its candidate for the June 3 presidential vote.

Han yesterday said he "humbly accepts everything" and hopes Kim wins the snap election, which was triggered by the impeachment of the country's former president.

Kim formally registered as a PPP candidate yesterday morning, and is now South Korea's conservative hopeful against frontrunner Lee Jae-myung of the opposition Democratic Party.

Han and Kim struggled for unity in the past week and had held a series of failed talks to discuss how to unite their conservative campaigns to avoid splitting the vote.

Lee has been a clear frontrunner to replace conservative former President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was removed from office in April for violating his duties when he declared a short-lived martial law in December.

Kim, who was selected as the conservatives' candidate in the party convention a week ago, resisted pressure from the party to step aside in favour of the more popular Han, who had declined to participate in the nomination process while he was still serving as prime minister.



Mothers and relatives of missing persons in different states of Mexico hold signs during a march to demand the government to clarify their disappearances, within the framework of the celebration of Mother's Day in Mexico City, on Saturday.

## Bus carrying pilgrims crashes killing 21 in Lanka

AFP, Colombo

An overcrowded bus carrying dozens of Buddhist pilgrims plummeted into a precipice in Sri Lanka yesterday, killing at least 21 and injuring 24, a senior transport official said.

The nation's winding roads are among the most dangerous in the world, and the crash off a cliffside road yesterday was among the deadliest recorded in Sri Lanka in decades.

The roof and side panels of the bus were sheared off, and more than half the seats were ripped from the floor of the vehicle, which landed wheels up into a tea plantation, photos of the wreckage showed.

The state-owned bus was carrying around 70 passengers – about 20 more than its capacity – through the central hilly region of Kotmale when the driver lost control and it veered off the road before dawn, police said.

## We must learn from history

Justice demands proper trials, not just bans

On late Saturday night, the interim government announced a ban on the activities of Awami League, including its online presence, under the Anti-Terrorism Act. The ban, we are told, will remain in place until the International Crimes Tribunal concludes the trial of the party and its leaders. This is a unique step. Following 15 years of repression and particularly its role during the July uprising, there is a widespread sense of public disgust towards the AL, which is clearly visible to all. Public outrage intensified when former President Abdul Hamid was recently permitted to leave the country for Thailand. This served as a trigger, prompting the government to impose the ban in a matter of days, despite having shown reluctance to do so in the previous 10 months. The key question now is: how will this decision impact our politics and future elections?

Looking at historical examples globally, the banning of political parties is relatively rare. Even rarer is a ban that successfully achieves its intended objectives—the banning of the Nazi Party, which played a central role in starting the Second World War, being a unique exception. In our own history, we have witnessed the banning of religion-based political parties after our independence. However, that ban was lifted under President Ziaur Rahman. Sheikh Hasina's AL government also banned Jamaat-e-Islami shortly before its fall from power. Even before that, in 2013, Jamaat was barred from contesting elections by a High Court ruling. That decision was repeatedly used by Hasina's AL government as a pretext to crack down on Jamaat's leaders and activists—as well as on other dissidents falsely associated with Jamaat. But did that prevent Jamaat's survival and later emergence as a powerful political force?

It is a matter of fact that Sheikh Hasina and numerous leaders and activists of the AL have committed grave human rights violations. What is unfortunate is that, despite the passing of 10 months, we have not seen the government make significant headway in appropriately prosecuting the alleged criminals within the AL, starting from the very top. And looking at historical examples, both globally and locally, whether a blanket ban serves the purpose of properly dispensing justice remains questionable.

It is more than likely that the ban will drive many AL members to other activities, as we have seen previously with associates of other banned political parties. So, instead of taking the easy way out by simply banning the party, the government should focus on meeting the primary demand post-uprising: justice for the many atrocities perpetrated by AL members, through transparent and proper trials. We must learn from global, Asian, South Asian, and our own history about the results of banning a political party.

## Let this budget mark a break from the past

Strengthen budget transparency to build public confidence

As the nation prepares for its first budget following the uprising, likely to be unveiled within a month, the latest findings from the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Survey should serve as a wake up call for the interim government. Bangladesh continues to languish near the bottom of global lists on budget transparency—ranking 37th among 125 countries in 2023, and trailing behind most of our South Asian peers, according to the survey. It thus confirms what we have long known: the persistent lack of openness and accountability in fiscal governance under the Awami League and previous governments, particularly in the formulation and implementation of budgets.

In fact, the whole process of budgeting, starting from the very onset, has long been plagued by a top-down approach, with very limited public participation and almost ceremonial legislative engagement. For instance, while many countries publish pre-budget statements—outlining the broad parameters of fiscal policies, economic forecast, and anticipated revenue, expenditures, and debt levels—to encourage discussion, Bangladesh does not do so. Moreover, recommendations from experts are seldom reflected in the proposed or approved budgets, rendering public consultation and any parliamentary discussion futile. Equally alarmingly, important materials that can help guide public debate—such as simplified budget summaries, monthly implementation reports, and audit reviews—are either missing or delayed. This trend is deeply problematic. In the absence of meaningful public participation in the decisions affecting their lives—such as which taxes to levy, which services to provide, or how much debt to take on—the whole process becomes authoritarian.

The lack of transparency and accountability inevitably fuels inefficiency, waste, and corruption. The question is, how can we expect people to pay taxes faithfully when they do not properly know where their money is going—having had little engagement or impact in the budgeting process—or worse, when they suspect that it is being misused? We must not let this trend continue. The interim government has a chance to demonstrate a clear break from the past, setting the ground for greater budget transparency from future political governments. It must begin by publishing a pre-budget statement to initiate public discussion, and ensure public opinion is properly reflected in eventual decisions. The authorities should also strive to adhere to global best practices at every stage of this crucial public matter.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### First flight over the North Pole

On this day in 1926, aboard the semirigid airship Norge, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, American scientist Lincoln Ellsworth, and Italian engineer Umberto Nobile made the first undisputed flight over the North Pole.

# Ban on AL and future actions



### THE STREET VIEW

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MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In moments of national transition, the desire to undo the past through dramatic gestures is tempting. After years of repression, injustice, and fear, many understandably crave a break from the old order—a symbolic act that declares, “never again.” For some, banning the Awami League (AL) appears to be that break.

This decision, driven by years of repression and authoritarian rule, may seem like poetic justice to some. But it carries a heavy price: the risk of turning democratic renewal into another round of political vengeance.

There is no denying the extent of damage the AL has done over the last 15 years, particularly from January 5, 2014. Many citizens hoped that, at the very least, AL leaders would publicly acknowledge their wrongdoing, express regret, and ask for forgiveness. But instead of remorse, what has come is provocation—from exile, through messaging that seeks to inflame rather than reconcile. The public anger, already deep, has only intensified. And yet, even in the face of this resentment, we must ask whether banning the party outright solved the problem of punishing the individuals who committed crimes against humanity.

Make no mistake, the AL has much to answer for and it must be held accountable for its brutal actions and those responsible must be punished.

From the 2014 “midnight election” to the brutal crackdown on student protesters during the July uprising of 2024, the party’s leadership has repeatedly flouted democratic norms and trampled on human rights. There is widespread and legitimate demand for punishment.

Let’s begin with the obvious: the Awami League is not merely a political party—it is a multigenerational institution. Millions of people across the country supported it in the past, many of them born into families that have been part of the party for decades. What will happen to these people in



Hundreds gathered in the capital's Shahbagh on May 10, blocking the busy intersection, and demanding a ban on the Awami League.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

the new reality? How will they react is the important question.

What’s more, a ban gives the AL exactly what it needs to recast its image—from oppressor to oppressed. The same party that wielded state power to silence dissent now gets to claim victimhood.

Then there is the legal dimension. Bangladesh is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which clearly states that restrictions on political rights must meet the tests of legality, necessity, and proportionality. A blanket party ban—the most extreme form of political restriction—can

justify that we punish the guilty—not everyone who are not directly involved with them. Collective punishment, even when driven by righteous cause, undermines the very legitimacy of transitional justice. History shows that dissolving parties rarely heals nations. It more often deepens fractures, stokes grievances, and makes martyrs of those who once stood accused.

Supporters of the ban may point to the student movements, particularly the July uprising, as moral justification. And indeed, the courage of Bangladesh’s young protesters deserves admiration. They braved

Perhaps worryingly, this move sets a precedent. Today, it’s the AL. Tomorrow, it could be any party deemed “unacceptable.” Once the door to blanket political bans is opened, it becomes easier to silence dissent and concentrate power under the guise of legality.

Bangladesh deserves more than symbolic ruptures. It deserves the hard, principled work of imparting justice and institution-building. Accountability must replace impunity. We must also ensure political pluralism. If we are to escape our past, we must choose justice and democracy.

# How we can navigate the tariff maelstrom



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ZAHEDUL AMIN

The importance of the readymade garment (RMG) sector to the Bangladesh economy cannot be overstated. Contributing 85 percent of the country’s export earnings, 11.5 percent of GDP, and providing employment to over four million workers, the sector has been a pivotal force behind Bangladesh’s GDP growth, rural-to-urban wealth distribution, and economic empowerment of women over the past two decades. Given its role in the economy, any local or global headwinds affecting the sector have significant macroeconomic implications, raising concerns among economists, policymakers, and industry leaders alike.

The latest tariff impositions by the Trump administration, followed by a 90-day freeze, have triggered unwanted disruptions in the global trade system. Bangladesh must assess the broader consequences of these tariffs, especially on its trade flow and export competitiveness.

As RMG remains Bangladesh’s top export, and with the United States as its largest single-country export destination, the sector is vulnerable to any protectionist measures. To formulate an effective response, it is essential to understand the concerns of the US administration, which seeks increased imports of American goods and higher foreign direct investment (FDI) into the US economy. While Bangladesh’s limited capital stock and

regulatory constraints make large-scale FDI unlikely, there is potential to expand imports of basic agricultural commodities from the US—such as cotton, oilseeds, and vegetable fats. These arrangements could be pursued through both government-to-government (G2G) initiatives and private sector partnerships, offering a diplomatic lever in ongoing trade discussions.

Understandably, industry leaders are alarmed by tariff hikes as steep as 37 percent on Bangladeshi apparel—even as some competing countries face similar increases. This raises critical questions: how competitive will Bangladesh remain in the midst of this trade war? What should be our strategic response to mitigate potential setbacks to this vital sector?

While international trade will inevitably slow, the impact will not be evenly distributed. Emerging economies like Bangladesh may find new opportunities as global supply chains realign. China, the largest apparel exporter to the US with a 21.3 percent market share, faces the highest tariff rates—bringing the total to over 100 percent on certain categories. This opens the door for Bangladesh and Vietnam to absorb some of the redirected orders from China. The challenge, however, lies in Bangladesh’s current limitations in producing higher-value apparel and man-made fibre (MMF)-based

products, where global demand is surging.

In 2024, MMF-based apparel made up only about 29 percent of Bangladesh’s production, compared to the global average of 78 percent, according to the International Textile Manufacturers Federation. To remain competitive, especially in the European Union (EU) market—where

**As RMG remains Bangladesh's top export, and with the United States as its largest single-country export destination, the sector is vulnerable to any protectionist measures. To formulate an effective response, it is essential to understand the concerns of the US administration, which seeks increased imports of American goods and higher foreign direct investment (FDI) into the US economy.**

stringent sustainability regulations are gaining momentum—Bangladesh must invest in MMF capacity, sustainable production systems, and a recycled fabric ecosystem.

The new tariff regime is also expected to trigger inflationary pressures in the US, with forecasts suggesting a rise from two to four percent. Historically, in times of economic uncertainty and stagflation, US consumers gravitate towards affordable, fast-fashion products—a market segment where Bangladesh has a significant foothold.

Notably, during the aftermath of the global financial crisis, Bangladesh’s apparel exports surged by 44 percent in 2010-11 compared to the previous year.

To successfully navigate this volatile environment, Bangladesh’s apparel sector must pursue a “triple diversification strategy”: i) geographic diversification which involves reducing dependence on Europe and the US, and exploring emerging markets; ii) fabric diversification by increasing MMF-based and recycled fabric production; and iii) product diversification by shifting towards higher-value and varied product categories.

Simultaneously, our diplomats and trade negotiators must proactively engage US counterparts, advocating for increased procurement of US cotton, which currently accounts for just nine percent of Bangladesh’s imports. Redirecting sourcing from Brazil, India, and West Africa to the US could bolster diplomatic goodwill. Additionally, marketing Bangladeshi apparel as “Made with US cotton” could strengthen our position during trade negotiations. Ensuring that our tariff rates remain at par with, or lower than, those of key competitors such as Vietnam and India must also be a top priority.

Rather than viewing the Trump-era tariffs solely as a threat, Bangladesh can treat them as a once-in-a-decade opportunity. Proactive policy measures, diplomatic engagement, and industry readiness can help absorb the shifting orders from China while adhering to sustainable practices and diversifying our export portfolio. In doing so, Bangladesh can not only withstand the current trade disruptions but also accelerate towards the sector’s ambitious target of achieving \$100 billion in exports in the coming years.

## WOMEN'S AFFAIRS REFORM COMMISSION

## Should debate over a few recommendations bury other important ones?



Kallol Mustafa  
is an engineer and writer who focuses on power, energy, environment, and development economics. He can be reached at kallol.mustafa@yahoo.com.

KALLOL MUSTAFA

Of the 11 commissions formed by the interim government as part of the state reforms initiative, most controversies are evoked around the recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission. The commission made 433 recommendations grouped under 15 thematic areas to eliminate existing discrimination against women. Some of the recommendations have been called anti-religious, and demands have been raised to dismiss the entire commission.

It is unlikely that all the recommendations of reform commission will be acceptable to all stakeholders. Therefore, an acceptable solution can be found through discussion and debate. For this, first, we need to know the details of the commission's recommendations and analyse their pros and cons. This article will first highlight the important recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, then discuss the controversial issues.

The themes around which the commission has proposed reforms include the constitution and law, public administration, political system, education, health, economy, labour and employment, social security, media, sports and culture, disasters and climate change, etc. Notable among the recommendations on constitutional and legal reform are: the elimination of all discriminatory and contradictory constitutional provisions and laws; adoption of a uniform family code that would be *voluntary for all religious communities* on all matters relating to marriage, divorce, and inheritance; recognising equal guardianship of fathers and mothers; decriminalising sex work and recognising it in labour laws; and recognise forced sex within marriage as rape in criminal law.

It has been recommended that the total number of seats in parliament be increased to 600, with 300 reserved for women. To ensure women's representation at the local government level, each ward should have one general seat and one women's seat.

The recommendations the commission made on economic rights include amending the law to ensure women's rights to khas land settlement and forest resources; recognising women as fishermen through registration; amending the inheritance law to ensure

women's equal inheritance of property; providing necessary services by creating favourable employment policies for women in the formal sector, such as establishing child day care centres, creating a work environment free from sexual harassment by formulating a code of conduct for the workplace; simplifying loan terms for women entrepreneurs; ensuring at least 40 percent female representation on the boards of directors and management levels of business and financial institutions; facilitating young women's access to employment through science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and career counselling related to the labour market, etc.

Under the health sector-related recommendations, the commission recommended formulating and implementing special policies to control unnecessary Cesarean operations. Other recommendations include strengthening maternal and neonatal mortality monitoring and review activities, increasing access to healthcare for women with disabilities, removing barriers to access to birth control methods and menstrual regularisation treatments, and amending the National Elderly Policy 2013 to provide special protection to elderly women.

Despite the increase in women's participation in the country's labour force, they face widespread discrimination and problems. On average, 85 percent of the country's workers are employed in the informal sector, for women the rate is even higher—96.6 percent, with no guarantee of fair wages, maternity and paternity leave, and social security. For these working women, the commission made several important recommendations, including: setting a minimum wage for male and female workers in every sector to reduce wage inequality; establishing strict monitoring measures to ensure equal pay for equal work; amending the labour law to increase maternity leave to six months and introduce paternity leave; establishing child day care centres both for the formal and informal workers; adopting specific policies in the provision of services by government and private hospitals to ensure the health safety workers' children in the institutional and non-institutional sectors, etc.

The commission has recommended amending laws and regulations to ensure the protection, dignity, and welfare of migrant and returnee women workers, and transparency and accountability of recruitment agencies. It has called for the inclusion of health, rights, security, and weekend issues in the bilateral agreement on immigration, and to make the embassy's labour service officers more active.

The existing social security allocation in the country is very inadequate and corrupt, with women being the biggest sufferers. Often, they stand on the streets for hours for ration but return empty handed. For this reason, the commission has called for providing any social security assistance, including subsidised food sales, in a dignified and respectful manner. The report also recommends introducing a special social security package for women employed in the domestic and informal sectors

being termed as anti-religious. However, the reality is not so simple. There is no uniform law or regulation on these issues in all Muslim-majority countries of the world.

Women's inheritance of property has long been a subject of debate in Muslim-majority countries and keeping in mind the changing socio-economic and political context, *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning of scholars) and its various forms such as *Ijma* (consensus of scholars), *Qiyas* (analogy), *Istithsan* (juristic preference), and *Maslahah Mursalah* (public interest) are being used to apply religious rules in this regard.

In his book, *Family Law Reform in The Muslim World*, Indian legal scholar Tahir Mahmood, a former member of the Law Commission of India and former dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Delhi, showed that with regard to family law, Muslim

Algeria, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan.

Therefore, when it comes to equal property rights or uniform family laws, examples of other Muslim countries can guide us in our thinking and discussions. Moreover, the Women's Affairs Reform Commission has not called for a uniform family law to be made mandatory, but recommended keeping it optional for all communities.

Legal recognition of sex workers is a complex issue with various arguments for and against it. Those against legal recognition believe that it will encourage prostitution which is an exploitative and degrading system for women. On the other hand, those in favour of it argue that due to lack of legal recognition, sex workers are deprived of various types of social protections, including healthcare. As a result, legal recognition is necessary to protect them until the situation comes when the profession will be abolished.

In their article, *Rape in the Secrecy of Marriage: Need for Criminalization*, postgraduate researcher Saloni Pradhan at the University of Leicester, and Shiv Chhatri, a policy researcher based in Karnataka, India, mentioned that 150 countries have criminalised marital rape. The basic argument is while in marriage the spouse has the right to have sex with his/her partner, that right cannot be imposed by force, coercion or abuse of authority. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world, where the matter remains as before. According to the Violence Against Women Survey 2024 conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 29 percent of married women experience sexual violence from their intimate partner at some point in their life and 9.4 percent experienced such violence in the past year. It is in such a context that the Women's Affairs Reform Commission has recommended recognising marital rape as a crime.

In the existing patriarchal social reality, it is natural to have differences of opinion and debate about some of the recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission. But one cannot demand the abolition of the entire commission just because of differences of opinion on a few issues. There are many differences on the recommendations of other commissions like the constitution or electoral reform commission, but no one is demanding to abolish them. Rather, initiatives have been taken to build consensus through dialogue and discussions with political parties and organisations through the National Consensus Commission. Similar initiatives should be taken regarding the recommendations of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

to provide health, accident, maternity and postnatal insurance benefits, unemployment benefits, and retirement benefits at low cost. Besides, reconsidering the age limit for old age allowance and creating a special emergency support fund for emergency services for taking effective measures to prevent and remedy violence against women has been recommended.

If these recommendations are implemented, even partially, the lives and livelihoods of women will significantly improve. But we are observing such a debate being created over a few recommendations that many other important recommendations are being buried under their shadow. The reform recommendations for equal inheritance of property for women, uniform family law, marital rape, recognition of sex work, etc. are

countries are divided into three groups: i) countries that follow the classical Sharia family law of Islam and do not make any reforms or changes; ii) countries that completely ignore the Sharia family law and replace it with modern law applicable to all citizens irrespective of religion; and iii) countries that implement the Sharia family law reformed with various regulations and provisions.

Examples of countries following the classical Sharia law, especially for family and personal matters, are Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait, etc. Muslim-majority countries like Turkey, Albania and Tanzania follow a secular family law which gives equal property rights to women. The countries which have introduced reforms to the locally prevalent schools of Muslim law and follow a mixed system are Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco,

from the ministry insists it was all working fine yesterday."

Meanwhile, ministers cruise around in fossil-fuel guzzling sports utility vehicles (SUVs), giving speeches about green energy in front of billboards that read "Go Green" in fonts large enough to be visible from outer space. It's satire that writes itself.

So, what can actually be done? For starters, REP 2025 needs a serious rewrite. Targets must be based on sound projections, not fantasies. A proper fossil fuel phase-out timeline must be included. Financial incentives should be made real, not theoretical. Off-grid and rooftop solar should be given a central role in industrial zones. SREDA needs to be empowered with full licensing authority, so at least someone is clearly in charge. And above all, we need to swap out all those "may's" and "could's" for "shall's" and "will's"—because climate change doesn't respond to passive voice.

Right now, Bangladesh's renewable energy policy looks like it was written to impress donors and confuse citizens. And as we fumble forward with candles during load-shedding, fanning ourselves with expired optimism, it's worth remembering potential means nothing without action.

Thus, here's hoping we graduate from glossy dreams to gritty implementation. Because sunlight may be free, but stupidity is proving to be very, very expensive.

## Watt's going on? A renewable dream stuck in load-shedding



MIND THE GAP

Barrister Noshin Nawal  
is an activist, feminist, and a columnist for The Daily Star.  
She can be reached at nawalnoshin@gmail.com.

NOSHIN NAWAL

Renewable energy in Bangladesh is a bit like your overly ambitious cousin who swears they'll start waking up at 6:00 am, run 10 kilometres, and read Tolstoy before breakfast—grand promises, minimal follow-through, and inevitably back to square one by the weekend. Every now and then, we're treated to a flashy announcement: a new solar megaproject here, a bold wind energy target there, all wrapped in glossy government statements and hashtags like #GreenBangladesh. We are now in 2025, and despite years of courtship with solar panels and flirtation with wind turbines, we're still stuck in a toxic relationship with fossil fuels—cuddling up to imported coal and whispering sweet nothings to liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Let's look at the reality behind the ribbon cuttings. Despite years of lofty commitments and climate conference pledges, renewable energy in Bangladesh accounts for only about 4.5 percent of total installed capacity, and more than 80 percent of

that comes from solar. But even that number flatters to deceive. Most of it is from small, decentralised systems—rooftop solar, solar home systems in villages—not large-scale, grid-connected solar farms. The sun might shine relentlessly here, but our solar energy ambitions collapse faster than a flimsy Dhaka umbrella in July rain.

Why is the picture so bleak in a country that quite literally bakes under the sun and gets enough wind along the coast to power an Atif Aslam concert? Because our approach to renewable energy is equal parts chaotic and comical. Think of it as a gym subscription, enthusiastically bought, barely used, and always waiting for "the first of next month."

One minute we're promising 6,000 megawatts of renewable energy by 2025, and the next, we're cutting the power sector budget by 15 percent and quietly stalling the very policy reforms that would make those targets remotely achievable.

Let's dissect the big announcement. The long-awaited draft of the Renewable Energy Policy (REP) 2025 was finally published in February, heralding the same old excitement, now with bigger numbers. It promises that by 2030, Bangladesh will generate 20 percent of its electricity—6,145 megawatts—from renewables. By 2041, this will leap to 30 percent. It sounds impressive until you realise the whole projection is based on an inflated electricity demand estimate from the Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP). According to the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a more realistic figure for 20 percent renewable electricity by 2030 would be around 5,600 megawatts, and just 10,500 megawatts for 30 percent by 2041. In other words, the government has taken some creative liberties with its math.

Let's not forget that back in 2008, Bangladesh set a modest goal of reaching 10 percent renewable electricity by 2020. That deadline ghosted us like a flaky Hinge match. Fast forward to today, and we're barely scraping five percent. Yet we are now expected to believe we'll quadruple that number in just six years. To put things in perspective, even China, the undisputed heavyweight champion of renewables, is targeting 25 percent non-fossil energy by 2030. Bangladesh, which has neither China's resources, infrastructure, nor investment climate, thinks it can match that. Bold. Delusional, but bold.

What really makes the draft policy shine, in the same way cheap plastic does under bad lighting, is its complete avoidance of any fossil fuel phase-out plan. Countries like the United Kingdom and Germany have legally committed to phasing out coal. Bangladesh? We're still busy signing new fossil fuel deals like it's 1999. The draft throws around the phrase "green energy" with such abandon you'd think it means anything remotely not-black—bioenergy, waste-to-energy, and other vaguely greenish things. Meanwhile, natural gas and nuclear power continue to dominate the IEPMP, making the entire renewable section of the policy feel like a reluctant afterthought, written at 2:00am before a donor meeting.

It gets better—or worse, depending on your appetite for bureaucratic chaos. The draft assigns oversight of renewable energy projects to the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA), while giving licensing power to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission. So now, we're left with a classic two-headed administrative monster. One body to dream up ideas, another to sign them off, and both to blame each other when nothing gets done.

Financing? That part is written in invisible ink. The policy mumbles about a Sustainable Energy Development Fund but uses delightful hedging language like "may be implemented"

and "could be considered." Which is a bit like a marriage proposal that goes, "I might, perhaps, love you... in theory." It name-drops Bangladesh Bank and the Infrastructure Development Company Limited but forgets to outline how any of this will translate into real money. There's not a single concrete strategy to generate the billions of dollars necessary for this transition. And foreign investors? The policy greets them with all the warmth of a Dhaka traffic jam. No incentives, no guarantees, just a polite shrug and a vague mention of possible stamp duty waivers.

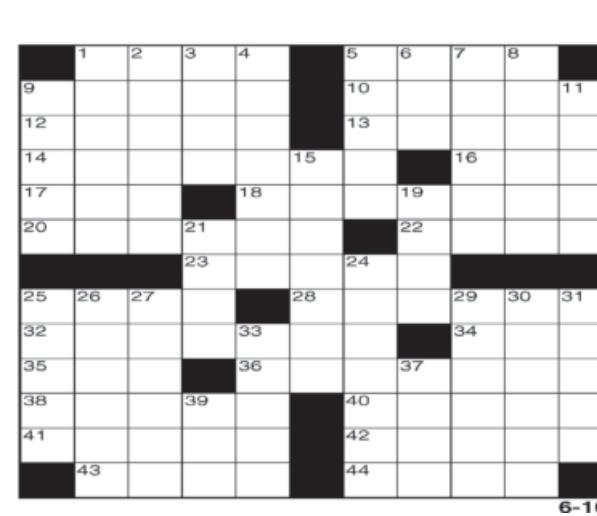
Industries, which consume most of the electricity in the country, don't fare much better. The draft policy gives a casual nod to rooftop solar for factories but offers no real blueprint for integrating solar energy into the energy-hungry manufacturing sector. It dangles carrots like "production-linked incentives may be provided" and "waivers may be considered for EVs," without saying anything. The entire policy reads like a horoscope—generously vague, suspiciously optimistic, and completely open to interpretation.

And what of our national grid? Ah, yes, that antique piece of electrical infrastructure, about as ready for a renewable revolution as a tea kettle is for launching satellites. Our solar projects sit idle because the grid can't handle the load. Wind projects are stuck in limbo. Meanwhile, someone

ACROSS  
1 Play group  
5 Plumbing problem  
9 Stair part  
10 Man of morals  
12 Prelude  
13 Where fighters go  
14 Scent  
16 Fuss  
17 Thurman of film  
18 Baffle  
20 Warehouse platform  
22 Water whirl  
23 "... who lived in \_\_\_"  
25 Carpet type  
28 Turkey's capital  
32 Public image

34 Hold up  
35 Jackson 5 hit  
36 Carpet type  
38 Vestige  
40 Midwest hub  
41 Lot choice  
42 Solitary sort  
43 Unites  
44 Washer unit  
  
DOWN  
1 Movies  
2 Of the stars  
3 Feudal farmer  
4 Acting companies  
5 Provide food for  
6 Summer sign  
7 Disney's "Lucky"

Rabbit"  
8 Spurred on  
9 Shred  
11 Stand-in  
15 Flammable gas  
19 Quick look  
21 Drops back  
24 Succeeding  
25 Petty quarrels  
26 Israel's national language  
27 Pinball palace  
29 Singer Grande  
30 Laughed loudly  
31 Dogpatch boy  
33 Some tourneys  
37 "Get lost!"  
39 Bounder



Mosharraf Karim leads Hoichoi's 'Bohemian Ghora' with strong female ensemble



Hoichoi is set to premiere *Bohemian Ghora*, featuring Mosharraf Karim in an unconventional role under the direction of Amitabh Reza Chowdhury.

Known for *Mohanagar* and *Mobaraknama*, Karim plays Abbas, a quirky truck driver whose journey unfolds through unexpected turns. "The character fascinated me from the start," said the lead actor.

The series features Tanzika Amin, Runa Khan, Moushumi Hamid, Sadia Ayman, Jui Karim, Farhana Hamid, and newcomers Aditi and Brishti.

Runa Khan portrays a bold character, while Moushumi Hamid takes on the unique role of a honey collector.

Describing the series, director Chowdhury called it a humorous yet emotionally layered tale of relationships and self-discovery.

*Bohemian Ghora* marks another collaboration between Mosharraf Karim and Hoichoi, promising dynamic storytelling with diverse female leads.

## Nazifa Tushi to return to the silver screen with 'SHOKHI RONGOMALA'

Nazifa Tushi is set to return to the silver screen as the lead in *Shokhi Rongomala*, directed by filmmaker N Rashed Chowdhury. She confirmed the news to Prothom Alo, expressing her excitement about the project.

Based on Shaheen Akhtar's novel, the film explores the life and struggles of a woman from an 18th-century zamindar family in Noakhali. Tushi, last seen in *Hawa* (2022), shared that she felt a deep emotional connection to the character due to her own Noakhali roots.

The first phase of shooting has been completed, with the second phase scheduled for June. The cast includes Swarnali Chaiti, Prantar Dastidar, Mostafizur Noor Imran, Toufiqul Emon, and Shilpi Sarkar Apu, among others. The film is expected to be released by the end of this year.

## Three eminent lyricists honoured by Lyricist Association of Bangladesh



Geetikobi Shongho Bangladesh (Lyricist Association of Bangladesh) honoured three renowned lyricists—Shahid Mahmud Jangi, Liton Adhikari Rintu, and Golam Morshed—at the inaugural edition of *Geetikobi Adda*, held last Saturday at the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro auditorium in Dhaka.

The event brought together notable cultural figures, including Naqib Khan, Foad Nasser Babu, and Shawkat Ali Emon. Hosted by Tushar Hasan, the evening featured individual sessions with the honoured lyricists, moderated by Joy Shahriar, Saki Ahmed, and Adhara Jahan.

Each shared stories from their musical journeys, accompanied by short biographical videos. The *adda* offered heartfelt tributes and highlighted lesser-known aspects of their lives.

The association also officially launched its YouTube channel at the event. Geetikobi Shongho president Asif Iqbal delivered the closing remarks, marking a significant moment in recognising the legacy of Bangla music lyricists.



## Bubly takes on a villainous role in her next project

After earning praise for her role in *Jongli* last Eid-ul-Fitr, Shobnom Bubly is all set to take another leap in her career with a new experiment as she took on a villainous role for her next project.

Reports suggest that Bubly is set to grace Eid-ul-Azha with a completely new look and role in the upcoming film *Pinik*, directed by Zahid Jewel. The project also features Ador Azad in the lead role.

This will be Bubly and Azad's third on-screen pairing, following their roles in *Talash* and *Local*.

*Pinik* is a thriller packed with suspense and action, revolving around themes of violence and revenge. The film's supporting cast includes Ali Raj, Fazlur Rahman Babu, and Azad Abul Kalam.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS?



## NATYA UTSAB 2025

Jahangirnagar Theatre will host a four-day festival under the slogan, "With toil as our tool and dreams as our guide, we breathe life into the stage."

The festival will feature an opening ceremony, stage performances of *Parabola* and *Informers*, a midnight poetry and music session, and a grand reunion on the fourth and final day.

Date: Sunday | May 13-16

Time: 7:30pm onwards

Venue: Jahangirnagar University

## Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies announces new leadership

The Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies has appointed Zahidul Islam Kochi as president and Mohammad Nurullah as general secretary.

The announcement was made last Saturday by Professor Abdus Selim during the National Film Society Conference 2025, held at the Bangladesh Film Archive seminar hall.

Discussions that day addressed challenges such as declining audiences, financial struggles, and a shortage of quality films, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen grassroots cinema culture.



# NEWS

## Curb absolute

FROM PAGE 12

Crimes Tribunal Act that allows political parties to be brought under judicial process, the BNP leader said the BNP had long demanded this move.

"During a February 10 meeting with the chief adviser, the BNP formally submitted this proposal in writing, stating that the Awami League should be held accountable as a political organisation for genocide and crimes against humanity."

Meanwhile, Nahid Islam, convenor of the National Citizen Party, stressed the need for a constituent assembly for fundamental reforms of the constitution.

"Unless there is consensus on fundamental issues like balance of power and decentralisation, democratic processes cannot function. If we truly want fundamental reforms, we must hold elections for a constituent assembly."

"Without drafting a new constitution, we cannot claim to have built a new Bangladesh."

"To abolish the fascist system, not only the constitution but also economic, political, and cultural reforms are necessary. Moreover, the fundamental principles of the constitution must be separated from partisan ideologies."

He further said NCP supports the statement of the chief adviser in that there is no connection between reform discussions and elections.

"However, before any election takes place, the trial of the Awami League and the implementation of fundamental reforms must be completed."

Criticising the 1972 Constitution, Prof Ali Riaz, vice chair of the National Consensus Commission, said the charter created room for authoritarian tendencies.

"It gave unilateral power to the prime minister and failed to ensure accountability within the executive branch. It is essential to maintain a balance of power."

Regarding the balance of power within a bicameral legislature, he said that while the upper house should have responsibilities for monitoring, giving it too much power could lead to clashes with the lower house.

Meanwhile, Irene Khan, a prominent human rights activist, urged political leaders to commit to implementing the Nagrik Coalition's seven proposals and to declare two roadmaps for their implementation.

Among others, Ganosamhati Andolon coordinator Zonayed Saki, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, and National Consensus Commission Member Badiul Alam Majumdar also spoke at the event.

## 260 individuals pushed

FROM PAGE 12

on Wednesday said, "We have strengthened border security and enhanced surveillance. We are on high alert."

The Forest department on Saturday night handed over 78 Bangladeshi nationals to the coast guards after the BSF dropped them off on a char in the Mandarbaria area of the Sundarbans.

Ziaur Rahman, station officer of the Burigalini Forest Station, said BSF personnel brought the individuals by speedboats early Friday and left them stranded.

Moshirul Rahman, Assistant Conservator of Forests, said many were found in poor health, with some bearing signs of abuse.

Two of the returnees — Saidul Molla, 27, and Abu Bakar, 22, from Narail — told The Daily Star they were detained by Indian police and kept at a BSF camp in South 24 Parganas before being pushed back.

"All the 78 individuals are now in coast guard custody, and investigations are underway for further procedure," said Lt Cdr HMM Harun-Or-Rashid, media officer of the BCG.

On the other hand, at least 59 Bangladeshi nationals were pushed back by BSF through two borders in Moulvibazar — 15 through the Dhala border in Kamalganj and 44 through the Pallarthal border in Barlekhia — on Wednesday and Thursday.

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The victims are Faruk Mia, 60, of Rasulpur village in Bhairab upazila; Faisal Mia, 28, of Srinagar village; and Kabir Hossain, 25, of Hazari Nagar village in Kuliarchar upazila.

Umme Habiba Jui, medical officer

Commander of 46 BGB Battalion Lt Col Md Zakaria confirmed the detention of the 15 returnees from Dhala.

Kamalganj police are verifying their identities.

Commander 52 BGB Battalion Lt Col Mehedi Hasan said 44 people, detained in phases from Pallarthal, were handed over to police.

Earlier on Wednesday, in Kurigram, BGB detained 44 individuals, including at least 35 Rohingyas, who were pushed in through Roumari and Bhurungamari upazilas.

Of them, 30 were detained in Roumari, and 14 in Bhurungamari, BGB officials said.

The same day in Khagrachhari, 79 more Bangla-speaking individuals were detained after being pushed in.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Nazmun Ara Sultana said all individuals are under BGB custody and the local administration is closely coordinating with border officials.

National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman on Wednesday said, "Dhaka is trying to establish contact with New Delhi on the reported pushings of people from India through the Indo-Bangladesh borders in Kurigram and Khagrachhari."

"If they are identified as citizens of Bangladesh, we will accept them. This will have to be done in a formal channel. Pushing them in is not the way," he said.

At least 10 people, including two school students, have died from lightning strikes in the last 10 days in Kishoreganj. Seven others have also been injured.

Md Rashed, general secretary of Save the Society and Thunderstorm Awareness Forum, said that a total of 75 people have died from lightning strikes from January to April 30 this year, and of them, two-thirds were engaged in agricultural work.

Our correspondents from Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj contributed to this report.

of Bhairab Upazila Health Complex, confirmed that they were brought dead to the hospital around 5:00pm.

Another farmer, Monir, 25, of Phulbaria upazila of Mymensingh, was critically injured.

Bhairab Police Station OC Khandaker Foad Ruhani confirmed the matter.

At least 10 people, including two school students, have died from lightning strikes in the last 10 days in Kishoreganj. Seven others have also been injured.

Meanwhile, three farmers died while doing agricultural work in Bhairab and Kuliarchar upazilas of Kishoreganj in the afternoon.

The victims are Faruk Mia, 60, of Rasulpur village in Bhairab upazila; Faisal Mia, 28, of Srinagar village; and Kabir Hossain, 25, of Hazari Nagar village in Kuliarchar upazila.

Umme Habiba Jui, medical officer

## Civil surgeons to seek limited

FROM PAGE 12

problems in the health sector due to lack of good governance, inadequate allocation and investment, manpower shortage, corruption, and irregularities.

The commission, in its report, said inadequate healthcare services, poor quality, and widespread disparities based on class, group, region, and gender have contributed to this crisis in the healthcare system.

As a result, many people are facing difficulties getting treatment, with some even having to seek medical care abroad, it said.

### POSSIBLE PROPOSALS

Referring to the recent incidents of violence against doctors and hospitals, Civil Surgeon of Dhaka Mohammad Zillur Rahman said they would seek workplace safety.

Civil surgeons of Chattogram, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Khagrachhari echoed the same view.

Civil surgeons of Chattogram, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Khagrachhari

He said they want "limited" magistracy powers so that they can conduct mobile courts to take immediate action against illegal private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres, fake doctors, brokers, and those in possession of counterfeit drugs.

"We cannot take immediate action against these irregularities due to lack of power," he told this correspondent yesterday.

He said that there are only two posts — director general of Directorate General of Health Services and Directorate General of Medical Education — of grade I for health service cadres.

But there are some 37,000 members under health services, so the number of top posts (Grade I,2,3) should be increased, he added.

Rajshahi Civil Surgeon SIM Raziul Karim said they face different problems, including poor health infrastructure, while providing field-level health

services.

He added that Rajshahi Sadar Hospital is currently being used as the dental unit of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. They will seek relocation of the unit by establishing a dental college and making the Sadar Hospital functional.

Sylhet Civil Surgeon Nasir Uddin said there are manpower shortage, particularly at grassroots level, which should be addressed to provide health services there. The issue is expected to be placed at the conference.

He added that they would seek instructions on how the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission would be implemented.

The issue of healthcare in remote areas like in the hills is expected to be discussed, said Khagrachhari Civil Surgeon Mohammed Saber.

Chattogram Civil Surgeon Jahangir Alam said they would take the matter of logistic support up at the conference.

## Washington

FROM PAGE 12

economies have met face-to-face to tackle the topic of trade since Trump slapped steep new levies on China last month, sparking a robust retaliation from Beijing.

### TARIFFS 'LOSE-LOSE'

"The talks reflect that the current state of the trade relations with these extremely high tariffs is ultimately in the interests of neither the United States nor China," Citigroup global chief economist Nathan Sheets told AFP. He called the tariffs a "lose-lose proposition".

India was set to send a team to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with the latest evidence of Pakistan's complicity with terrorism, per ANI sources.

In the border city of Amritsar, home to the Golden Temple revered by Sikhs, a siren sounded in the morning to resume normal activities brought a sense of relief and people were seen out on the roads.

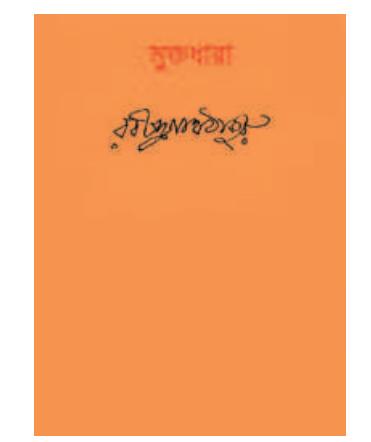
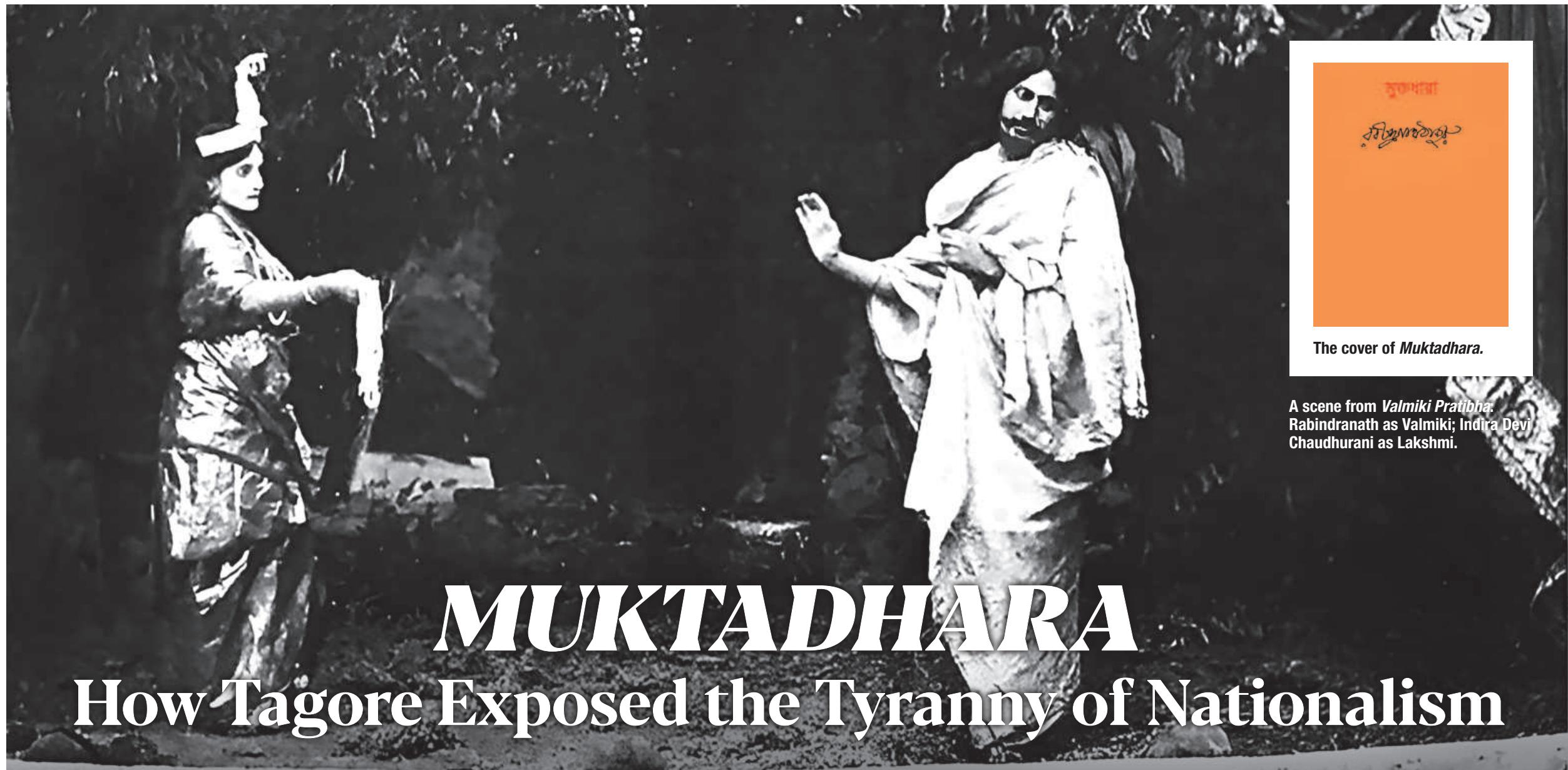
"Ever since the day terrorists attacked people in Pahalgam we have been shutting our shops very early and there was an uncertainty. I am happy that at least there will be no bloodshed on both sides," Satvir Singh Alhuwalia, 48, a shopkeeper in Amritsar told Reuters.

The two countries, born out of British colonial rule in 1947, have gone to war three times — twice over the region of Kashmir.

Hindu-majority India and Muslim Pakistan both rule part of Kashmir but claim it in full.

According to the chief adviser's press wing, the government-formed committee will submit





The cover of *Muktadhara*.

A scene from *Valmiki Pratibha*.  
Rabindranath as Valmiki; Indira Devi  
Chaudhurani as Lakshmi.

# MUKTADHARA

## How Tagore Exposed the Tyranny of Nationalism

PRIYAM PRITIM PAUL

Rabindranath Tagore, whose genius touched nearly every branch of the arts and literature, left an indelible imprint on the world of drama—not merely as a playwright, but as an actor, director, and visionary of the stage. His play *Muktadhara*, written over a century ago, stands as a luminous critique of self-interest-driven political ideologies. Living under the shadow of colonial rule, Tagore watched as the rise of machinery and technology reshaped the dreams and follies of both empire and nation. Strikingly, he not only foresaw the wounds humanity would inflict upon the climate, but also prophesied the devastating force of blind nationalism against the natural world. Historian Edward Thompson hailed *Muktadhara* as Tagore's finest prose drama, while Marjorie Sykes admired its rare, unflinching power in expressing his political vision.

### The Story of *Muktadhara*

*Muktadhara* tells the story of King Ranjit of Uttarkut, who, through the tireless efforts of the royal engineer Bibhuti over twenty-five years, constructed the mighty Muktadhara Dam, making the neighbouring region of Shitbarai dependent on Uttarkut for its water supply. Uttarkut sits in the upper basin of the Muktadhara spring's mountainous source, while Shitbarai lies below. When a new water crisis strikes and famine looms, the people of Shitbarai, led by the ascetic Dhananjay Bairagi, launch a satyagraha by refusing to pay taxes. Crown Prince Abhijit is dispatched to suppress the movement, but instead he is moved by the suffering of the people. When he reports this to the king, he is replaced by the king's oppressive brother-in-law, newly appointed governor.

Abhijit later learns from his uncle that he is not of royal blood but was found and raised by the king, born near the very spring of Muktadhara. When ordered to use the dam as a weapon against Shitbarai, Abhijit refuses and pleads with Bibhuti to dismantle it. Yet Bibhuti, blinded by pride, refuses. In an act of defiance, Abhijit opens the passage, is imprisoned, and is branded a traitor. In the end, he releases the waters—and is carried away with them.

### How *Muktadhara* Was Written and Performed

Between May 1920 and July 1921, Rabindranath Tagore travelled extensively across Europe and the United States in the aftermath of World War I. Earlier, in 1916, he had visited Japan and America, where he delivered his famous lectures on nationalism, warning of the dangers of narrow national pride and its potential to devastate both societies and nature. Meanwhile, back home in Bengal, the Non-Cooperation Movement was gaining momentum. Although Tagore remained politically engaged—often reflecting on events in his letters—his creative output slowed as he focused on his educational project, Visva-Bharati.

It was during a brief stay at Selaihada in Kushtia in late December 1921 that Tagore composed *Muktadhara*. After completing the play, he returned to Visva-Bharati, read it to the ashram community, made revisions, and initially considered naming it *Path or Street*. Eventually, it was published as *Muktadhara*. In February, he read it again at Gaganendranath Tagore's home in Calcutta. There, Tagore emphasised, "This play should not be taken as an allegory. The movement that has deeply permeated the country today is not represented through metaphor... What has been especially portrayed is that clearing the path, opening the way for human unity, is the ultimate message of all civilisation."

Biographer Prasanta Kumar Pal notes that *Muktadhara* was first published in *Prabasi* in Baishakh 1329 (1922), then as a standalone book later that year, funded by *Prabasi* editor Ramananda Chattopadhyay, who donated

3,731 copies to Visva-Bharati. Hoping to reach European audiences, Tagore translated the play as *The Waterfall*, published in *The Modern Review* in May 1922. Its critique of mechanisation likely resonated more with European readers, who were already grappling with industrialisation's effects, than with Indian audiences.

However, as Abhijit Sen noted, *The Waterfall* received less attention than *Red Oleanders*, Tagore's English version of *Raktakarabi* (1924). Surprisingly, Tagore never saw *Muktadhara* or *Raktakarabi* staged during his lifetime. He had woven 14 songs into *Muktadhara*, blending music and dialogue seamlessly.

Initially, *Muktadhara* received a lukewarm response. Though Tagore wrote to Ranu Adhikari about staging it, time constraints prevented this. It was first performed four years later by Presidency College students. In 1959, Bohurupee staged it under Shambhu Mitra, but it failed to connect. A 1996 revival by Kumar Roy and performances near the Farakka Barrage gave the play new life, especially among Narmada Bachao Andolan activists. In Bangladesh, *Muktadhara* remains part of Tagore's enduring dramatic legacy.

### Dialogues in *Muktadhara*

Drama is a concentrated effort to unite actors and audience by crafting a shared ambience—through stage design, lighting, meaningful dialogue, and the director's vision. Among these, it is primarily dialogue that generates tension, nuance, and layered meaning for the audience. In *Muktadhara*, a striking example occurs when a teacher presents his students to the king during the public celebration of the dam. The scene offers a revealing glimpse into how ideology is transmitted—even to the youngest citizens—under the guise of education. The king engages the students in conversation, probing how deeply they have internalised the prevailing political rhetoric.

**King:** They all know, I suppose, what Bibhuti has done?

**Students (jumping and clapping their hands):** Yes, yes! He has stopped Shitbarai's drinking water!

**King:** And why did he do that?

**Students:** To make them smart!

**King:** And why should he make them smart?

**Students:** Because they are badmen. King: How bad?

**Students:** Everybody knows it—they are very bad, awfully bad!

**King:** But do you know why they are bad?

**Teacher:** Of course they know, Maharaja. Now, you—didn't you read it? Didn't you read it in your book? (whispers) Their religion is very bad.

**Students:** Yes, yes! Their religion is very bad.

**Teacher:** And besides, they're not like us. Come now, speak up! (He points to his nose.)

**Students:** They haven't got high-ridged noses!

**Teacher:** Right. And what has our professor taught us? What does a high-ridged nose mean?

**Students:** The greatness of our race!

This scene, with its satirical intensity, exposes how prejudice, hatred, and racial superiority are embedded into the minds of children through manipulated education—something Rabindranath critiques with biting clarity.

Bibhuti, who spent 25 years building the dam, saw it as a triumph of human intelligence over nature: "The gods gave me water. To me, they gave power. My dam was meant to prove intelligence, not to save a farmer's maize crop."

King Ranajit of Uttarakut faced criticism from his uncle, King Visvajit of Mohangarh, who questioned the dam's purpose and the worship of Bhairava, especially dedicating

a day to celebrate a machine that blocked a sacred spring. Bhairava, after all, is also Shitbarai's deity.

Ranajit replied fiercely: "To conquer our enemies, Bhairava is ours—our victories are His. He reclaims his gift by piercing Shitbarai and offering it to Uttarakut." Visvajit shot back: "That's not worship—it's payment."

The most suspenseful event in the drama is the revelation that Abhijit is not the king's true son. Learning of his birth by the Muktadhara falls, this discovery shapes his final mission: to release the spring and clear the path.

Ranajit's temper flared when he suspected that it was Visvajit who had revealed to Abhijit the truth about his origins—that he had been found beneath the falls of Muktadhara. Visvajit admitted as much and recounted a striking moment: "I saw him (Abhijit) standing on the terrace, gazing towards Gouri's Peak. 'What do you see, brother?' I asked. 'I see roads,' he said, 'roads not yet built—roads of the future that cross those forbidding passes, roads that will bring the distant near.' As I listened, I thought: 'Some vagrant mother bore him by the springs of Muktadhara, and who can keep him bound?' I could no longer keep silent. I said, 'Brother, from the moment of your birth, the Lord of the Hills welcomed you to the road. No conch shell called you within doors."

Ranajit now understood why Abhijit's loyalty had drifted from the royal house of Uttarakut. Abhijit had openly demonstrated his alienation by reopening the Nandi Pass—a route that, once cleared, connected both Uttarakut and Shitbarai. But this very path to unity had been forcefully closed again with the construction

**Second Shiv:** No culture at all. Their so-called scriptures—what even is in them?

**First Shiv:** Nothing! Absolutely nothing. And did you see their writing? Like a trail of white ants.

**Second Shiv:** Exactly! White ants—they gnaw everything to pieces with their so-called culture.

**Third Shiv:** And then bury it all under their mounds.

**First Shiv:** Yes—killing our bodies with their weapons, and our minds with their books.

**Second Shiv:** They are steeped in sin. Our guru says even crossing their shadow is a pollution.

This dialogue powerfully illustrates how mutual hatred—fuelled by distorted beliefs, cultural superiority, and predisposition—pervades both sides. Rabindranath highlights how deeply these divisions are entrenched, affecting not only the common people but also institutional thinking, from everyday life to classroom instruction.

### Characters in *Muktadhara*

Critics have observed that the identity of Uttarakut is revealed through the tension between Bibhuti and Abhijit. While Bibhuti embodies the mechanical mind—the triumph of machines—Abhijit represents the human spirit that resists dehumanisation, merging the poet's soul with the rebel's courage. His rebellion is tragic because it is life itself, not just another lifeless force, that rises against the machinery of domination. As Pramath Nath Bisshi noted, Bibhuti and Abhijit represent two realms—the mechanical and the post-mechanical—that together form Uttarakut's full identity. They are not opposites but complements, bound in relation.

Similarly, the soul of Shitbarai emerges through the interplay between Dhananjay Bairagi and the suffering masses—the "beaten ones." Dhananjay's duality shows in his call to resist violence with non-violence, while his human vulnerability responds with grief or anger. Just as Uttarakut fails to grasp Abhijit's message, Shitbarai cannot absorb Dhananjay's deeper moral vision. While Uttarakut rallies around nationalism, Shitbarai places blind faith in a heroic saviour.

The relationship between King Ranajit and Abhijit also carries tragic weight, reminiscent of Creon and Antigone. Ranajit, bound by duty, cannot understand Abhijit and ultimately imprisons him—turning the rebel's death into both a political and deeply personal tragedy.

### Ekla Cholo Re

The dam not only made life in Shitbarai unbearable by blocking the natural flow of the spring, but it also cost the lives of many people from Uttarakut who were forced into labour to realise this grand vision. Every boy aged eighteen and above was seized to serve as part of the workforce behind this boastful monument, built to assert dominance over Shitbarai.

One of the most haunting figures in the drama is Sumon's mother, who appears repeatedly, seemingly losing her mental stability as she searches for her missing son—taken away for the dam's construction and never heard from again. Yet Bibhuti remains unmoved, declaring, "Their lives were not given in vain, and my dam is completed." They become martyrs to their own progress—what we might now call martyrs for development. However, from the king to the common people, the lives of many like Sumon were ultimately regarded as expendable in the name of Uttarakut's national interest.

In *Muktadhara*, two distinct collective dispositions emerge. On one side, the people of Uttarakut turn vehemently against Prince Abhijit for opening the Nandi Pass, denouncing him as a traitor to the state. Their

anger is so consuming that they demand to seize him from royal custody and subject him to an immediate trial—bypassing both legal procedure and the authority of the king, whom they suspect may pardon him out of paternal affection.

On the other side, the people of Shitbarai are driven by a singular desire for revenge. They place blind faith in Dhananjay, their chosen leader, expecting him to deliver immediate relief from their suffering. This mirrors a familiar pattern: the uncritical worship of a messianic figure and total submission, which Dhananjay himself detests. Both groups, in their own ways, reveal how collective passion can overshadow justice, reason, and self-awareness.

Amid this frenzy, only one woman dares to speak the truth: that the prince committed no crime by opening the pass.

### After 100 Years of *Muktadhara*

Rabindranath engaged deeply with the realities of both the colonised world and the so-called free nations of Europe, America, and Japan. Born and raised in the cosmopolitan city of Calcutta, he also spent extended periods in the rural heartlands of East Bengal. This dual exposure shaped his critical insight and sensitivity to the profound social, environmental, and ecological changes unfolding around him. In his travelogue *Japan Jatri*, based on his first visit to Japan in 1916, he wrote in his letters:

The cities in this world that are truly alive have been built through human compassion. Be it Delhi, Agra, or Kashi—human joy has brought them into being. But the goddess of commerce is ruthless; beneath her feet, the lotus of beauty in the human mind-lake does not bloom. She does not look towards people—she desires only commodities; the machine is her vehicle.

When our ship was coming down the Ganges, we saw the shameless cruelty of commercial wealth along both banks of the river. It is because she holds no affection in her heart that she has been able to so easily destroy the beautiful riverside of Bengal's Ganges.

Notably, in the play *Muktadhara*, we see the other side of the coin to the destruction of the environment and the river—driven by the interests of a particular nation seeking to subjugate others by asserting supremacy through geographical positioning, aided by scientific knowledge and technology. This stands in contrast to the focus on commerce that Tagore reflected on in *Japan Jatri*.

Beyond the crisis of nationalistic ideas, the contemporary debate between Rabindranath and Gandhi over machines and technology becomes crucial—and even more relevant in today's world. The shadow of this debate is prominently reflected in the play. While Gandhi viewed the machine as inherently problematic, ultimately seeing it as a source of tyranny over both humans and nature, his position leaned towards the eradication of machines altogether.

Rabindranath, on the other hand, believed that science and technology should not be rejected irrationally. He acknowledged their dangers but maintained that their impact depended on the rationality and ethics with which humans employed them. However, in today's world, the line between rational and irrational use has become increasingly blurred.

As Ashis Nandy observed, "Patriotism is sentimental; nationalism is an ideology," and Rabindranath composed over 200 poems imbued with the spirit of patriotism, consistently rejecting the ideological rigidity of nationalism—a stance that also finds powerful expression in his symbolic drama *Muktadhara*.

Priyam Pritim Paul is a researcher and journalist.



COURTESY: THEATRE BAILEY ROAD.

A scene from *Muktadhara* (2013), staged by Theatre Bailey Road and directed by Naila Azad.

of the dam.

Enraged by what he saw as defiance and betrayal, Ranajit ordered King Visvajit to leave Uttarakut forever. In a symbolic reversal of allegiance and control, he exiled Visvajit and incarcerated Abhijit—for daring to reopen the Nandi Pass to save the Shitbarai people from continual famine.

In response to the injustice imposed by Uttarakut, the people of Shitbarai express their resentment—revealing not just resistance but also deep-seated stereotypes and disdain. Their conversation reflects how prejudice and misperception were embedded in the everyday discourse of common people, mirroring the same kind of hatred.

**First Shiv:** What strange faces these Uttarakut fellows have! It's as if the Creator began shaping a lump of flesh but never finished the job.

**Second Shiv:** And those absurdly tight clothes—have you ever seen anything like it?

**Third Shiv:** They've wrapped themselves up like packages, afraid a piece of themselves might fall off.

**First Shiv:** They're born to drudgery—always loitering around markets and ferries.



## BARCA EDGE CLOSER TO TITLE WITH THRILLING CLASICO WIN

Raphinha scored twice as Barcelona overcame a two-goal deficit to secure a crucial 4-3 home victory against rivals Real Madrid in a pulsating Clasico on Sunday. Kylian Mbappe netted a hattrick, taking his tally to 37 goals from 54 games across competitions, as the French forward became the player with the most goals in debut season for Real Madrid. Mbappe surpassed Ivan Zamorano's 37-goal record back in 1992/93 season. However, even a blistering Mbappe could not help Barca from extending their lead at the top of the standings to seven points over second-placed Real Madrid. With three matches remaining, one more victory will clinch a 28th league title for the Catalans.

## SAFF U-19 C'SHIP Bangladesh into semis with 3-0 win over Bhutan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh romped to the semifinals of the SAFF U-19 Championship with a 3-0 win over Bhutan in their second and last group-stage match in Arunachal, India yesterday

Morshed Ali and Sumon Soren found the net in the first first-half to give Bangladesh a 2-0 advantage before Nazmul Huda Faysal scored in stoppage time to cap off a comprehensive victory for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh opened the scoring in the 13th minute when Faysal turned smartly in the Bhutan half and played through a line-breaking pass for Morshed who galloped into the box from the right flank before curling it in with his left foot. Morshed was at it again, creating constantly from the left, as he dribbled through and directed a low-driven cross into the box. A defender managed to poke it away, but it was picked up by Soren found the net with his left foot.

In the dying minutes of the game, the Bhutan goalkeeper fluffed a clearance near the half-way line, which was pounced on by Mohammad Manik and picked up by Morshed, who ran through on goal, evading two defenders with his pace before cutting it back to an onrushing Faysal, who produced a striker's finish.

Golam Rabbani Choton's side had squandered a 2-0 lead in a 2-2 draw in their first group match against the Maldives on Friday but managed to stage a remarkable comeback today to confirm the last four of the tournament.

## 'Life in sports is yet to return'

Since the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024, the Youth and Sports Ministry formed a five-member Search Committee on August 29 to reform sports in the country. The committee was reconstructed on October 1 and was assigned to reform constitutions in sports, alongside forming ad-hoc committees of national sports bodies. After the duration of the Search Committee ended on May 10, Jubaidur Rahman Rana, the committee's convenor and former national shuttler-turned-organiser talked to *The Daily Star's* Anisur Rahman about their successes, failures, obstacles, and future plans.

**The Daily Star (DS):** Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud said on Saturday that the tenure of the Search Committee in sports would not be extended further. What has your experience been over the past seven months?

**Jubaidur Rahman Rana (JRR):** We had hoped to accomplish many things -- drafting a good constitution, forming strong committees, and holding proper elections. I would say we achieved about 50 percent of our goals, though others may claim it's closer to 80 percent. However, our primary task was constitutional reform in sports, which remains incomplete.

**DS:** How much will the Search Committee be able to meet the expectations of reforming constitutions in sports?

**JRR:** I met with the sports advisor today [Sunday]. He said a new committee would complete the remaining work. While he didn't specify whether it would be a separate body, it's likely that the existing Search Committee members will continue the task. Around 80 percent of the constitutional reform has been completed so far.

**DS:** Did the sports advisor mention anything specific about reforming the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) constitution?

**JRR:** Yes, he emphasised the need to reform the BCB constitution. He asked me to include him and five others in the BCB constitution reform committee. He also told me that committee's name will be changed once the ad hoc committee's work is complete.

**DS:** How is reforming constitutions in sports actually done?



**JRR:** We can't impose a new constitution on anyone. Instead, we sit with all stakeholders before drafting the constitutions. These drafts are then sent to the federations for review. If they have suggestions or concerns, we address them before finalising. Many existing constitutions lack proper election procedures, and several are simply copied from other federations.

**DS:** The Search Committee's tenure expired on Saturday, but it only formed 29 ad-hoc committees. What about the rest?

**JRR:** We submitted ad-hoc committees for 30 federations, but the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation's committee has been pending for four months despite submission. We submitted committees for the remaining 23 on May 5 and will officially hand them over tomorrow [Monday].

**DS:** After working seven months to form committees for all 53 sports bodies, do you think it was a success, or are you disappointed?

**JRR:** Honestly, I don't feel we achieved success. We couldn't fully satisfy anyone. When one person does a job alone, the outcome is different than when five people are involved. All five of us were deeply involved in sports, but how did we do anything different than any random five people who probably would have taken a similar amount of time to form all these committees? Perhaps, we should be held accountable for that. We spent seven months on this -- can we return that time to the athletes?

**DS:** Why did it take seven months to form

just 53 committees?

**JRR:** There was a lack of cooperation. For example, even after discussing with around 10 to 70 people to form a committee, some of our recommended names were missing from the final list. Committees were often published weeks after we had submitted them. That's why it took seven to eight months.

**DS:** How much did the 29 new ad-hoc committees do to breathe life back into sports since the fall of the Awami League government?

**JRR:** Honestly, life in sports is yet to return. I visited several districts and divisions recently, and many playgrounds are overgrown with knee-high grass. What have we achieved? We formed ad-hoc committees with 17 to 19 members, while the actual committees should include 27 to 29. So we're short by 10 members who could have contributed meaningfully.

**DS:** When should elections in sports be held?

**JRR:** Elections should only be held after the constitutions are reformed. The government should prioritise these reforms; otherwise, the purpose of forming the Search Committee remains unfulfilled.

**DS:** Did you face any pressure while forming the ad-hoc committees?

**JRR:** Yes, there was pressure from outside, but we didn't give in to it. However, we did have to consider some internal recommendations.

**DS:** Do you have any regrets about the past seven months?

**JRR:** Not exactly regret, but we started with a much more cooperative environment. Over time, we couldn't unite under a collective vision. Eventually, individual agendas surfaced, leading to conflicts.

## What to WATCH

T Sports  
Bangladesh  
Emerging vs South Africa Emerging  
1st ODI  
Live from 9:00 am

## Liton's challenge in balancing captaincy and performance

SPORTS REPORTER

Liton Das' form has been poor for a while, not having scored a fifty in ODIs since the 2023 ICC ODI World Cup, but as a skipper he impressed with his tactics in a 3-0 T20I series sweep in West Indies last year. With Liton now officially in charge of Bangladesh in T20Is, questions are being raised over whether he can overcome the concerns over his form and other challenges that kept him away from captaincy in the past.

"We have to understand that the Bangladesh team captain is the captain of the entire country. It's a very difficult job," Bangladesh team's senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin said while addressing questions on Liton's captaincy yesterday.

"All of us have to support him. The captain will run the team, so he needs wholehearted support. If he gets that freedom, he will do well. From the outside, it may seem that captaining a team is



easy, but in reality, it isn't," Salahuddin added.

Liton carries a quiet demeanour but at times has reacted hot-headed in the media in the past. The captain's job is building morale and consolidating any issues within the side, both of these tasks require level-headedness.

"From what I had seen of Liton before to what I saw in the last series as captain — to me, it felt like night and day. If you listen to him talk now, you'll notice that a lot has changed," Salahuddin said regarding how much captaincy has opened Liton to taking more responsibility.

But Salahuddin also had warnings in regards to captaincy, especially when a player is not performing with the bat as he should. Former T20I skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto had spoken about not being able to run things as he wanted to and for Liton to succeed, Salahuddin felt that aspect needs to be ensured.

"Strength-wise, he is a good tactician, he knows about field placements and strength of the bowlers and he analyses the game well. If we talk about his weakness, since he has not scored many runs for a while, it is his weakness for the time being. But I feel he will come out of it," Salahuddin said on Liton's strength and weakness.

"If you don't let a captain plan the way he wants, then why make him captain in the first place? Once you choose someone as captain, you have to give him full freedom — because he's the one running the team," Salahuddin said.

Salahuddin also said that in order to succeed as a captain, Liton has to learn how to handle criticism.

"I'm trying to teach one thing — this responsibility brings fame, as well as criticism with it. He has to learn how to handle it."



## Kane's first, Mueller's last

AGENCIES

Bayern Munich's final home game of the Bundesliga season was a day of poignant endings and long-awaited celebrations, as club legend Thomas Mueller bid an emotional farewell and Harry Kane finally lifted the first major team trophy of his senior career.

The champions, who had already sealed their 34th Bundesliga title a week earlier, marked the occasion with a 2-0 victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach at the Allianz Arena. But beyond the scoreline, it was a day defined by symbolism and sentiment.

For Kane, it was a moment long in the making. The 31-year-old England captain, who had endured heartbreak in six previous finals with Tottenham, England, and Bayern, finally felt the weight of expectation lifted as he stood drenched in celebratory beer, clutching the Bundesliga shield.

"It was a long time coming," Kane told Sky Germany. "It's an incredible feeling... a lot of hard work, a lot of sacrifice in between, for moments like this — to enjoy it with the team, enjoy it with the fans. I'm loving every minute."



### MUELLER'S CAREER BY NUMBERS

2x Champions League	Bundesliga	Champions League
2x UEFA Super Cup	Matches: 502	Matches: 163
13x Bundesliga	Goals: 150	Goals: 57
6x German Cup	Assists: 178	Assists: 34
8x German Super Cup		

Kane opened the scoring with a deft header in the 31st minute — his 25th league goal of the campaign — putting him on course to finish as Bundesliga top scorer in his debut season. It also capped a week of validation for the England striker, who said he hoped this title was "just the first of many."

Amid the celebrations, Kane paid tribute to fellow England international Eric Dier, who is set to depart Bayern at the end of the season. Dier too claimed his first

career trophy, a shared milestone for two players long accustomed to near misses.

As Kane's journey of fulfillment continued, the club simultaneously turned a page on one of its most enduring chapters. Thomas Mueller, playing his 750th match for Bayern, took center stage for an emotional farewell in his final home appearance after 25 glittering years.

The 35 year old forward, who has amassed a staggering 13 Bundesliga titles and two Champions League trophies, was the first to hoist the shield aloft — a symbolic gesture handed to him by captain Manuel Neuer.

"I loved being a modern gladiator," Mueller said to a packed stadium. "For many, including myself, it is a tough moment but a beautiful one too. The appreciation you gave me is unique."

The game closed with Michael Olise sealing the 2-0 win in the 90th minute, shortly after Mueller left the pitch to a thunderous ovation.

With Vincent Kompany securing a title in his debut season as coach, Bayern now celebrates both legacy and renewal — bidding farewell to a legend while embracing the bright beginnings of others.

► Atletico Madrid striker Alexander Sorloth scored four goals inside 30 minutes, including the fastest hattrick in LaLiga history, in a 4-0 home win over Real Sociedad on Saturday.

► The Norwegian forward completed his treble in the opening 11 minutes, the earliest ever in the competition, before adding a fourth goal to seal the rout.

► Sorloth's hattrick, which came between the seventh and 11th minutes of the game with the striker taking just 237 seconds to net all three goals, was four minutes faster than Edmundo Suarez's in 1941 and Carles Best's in 1929.

► Sorloth became Atletico's leading scorer in LaLiga this season with 17 goals, two more than inform striker Julian Alvarez, who was suspended.

► The Norwegian previously scored four goals in a match in May last year, helping former team Villarreal hold champions Real Madrid to a 4-4 draw when it took him 56 minutes for all four goals.



PHOTO: REUTERS

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## Curb absolute authority of PM

**Speakers say at Nagorik Coalition event**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a civil society event yesterday called for curbing the absolute powers of the prime minister and carrying out fundamental constitutional reforms, among other steps to build a more balanced and democratic state.

They made the observations during a discussion titled "Seven Proposals of the Nagorik Jote for Constitutional Reform" organised by the civic platform "Nagorik Coalition" at the auditorium of the International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka.

Addressing the event, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said, "There is a growing call for limiting the prime minister's tenure to two terms. But this isn't enough. Curbing the prime minister's absolute powers is most important."

Referring to proposals for a constituent assembly to draft a new charter, he said it may take two to three years. "In neighbouring countries, the drafting of a new constitution has taken as long as eight to nine years."

Asif Nazrul proposed that the next parliament could function as the constitutional authority until a new constitution is enacted and make necessary amendments to the 1972 constitution as needed.

Also speaking at the event, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed argued that rather than drafting an entirely new constitution, the existing one could be amended through national consensus.

"In that case, forming a Constituent Assembly may not be necessary."

Welcoming the amendment to the International

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## Civil surgeons to seek limited magistracy powers

**Their first-ever conference begins today**

TUHN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As the first-ever Civil Surgeon Conference begins today, the doctors are expected to seek limited powers of magistracy to take prompt action against illegal healthcare facilities.

They will also demand more workplace safety, an increase in the number of top posts in the health service cadres, solutions to the ongoing manpower and accommodation problems as well as timely promotions.

They are likely to seek guidance on how the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission, which submitted its report last week, will be implemented, and what their roles will be in the process.

The Daily Star came to know about their demands after talking to five civil surgeons of Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Khagrachhari ahead of the two-day conference in Dhaka.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate the conference at his office at 10:30am. Next sessions will be held at the Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Centre of Bangladesh Medical University.

Several advisers and secretaries of different ministries and divisions concerned are expected to join the sessions, said a Health Services Division official.

The Civil Surgeon Conference, designed like the annual DC conference, aims to facilitate direct dialogue between central authorities and top district-level health officials, as well as to strengthen coordination among various government agencies.

The conference is going to be held days after the Health Sector Reform Commission has identified multifaceted

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

**HAMID'S DEPARTURE  
Govt forms probe body with three advisers**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a high-level committee, consisting of three advisers, to investigate how former president Abdul Hamid left the country through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and whether there was any negligence involved in the process.

Education Adviser Prof CR Abrar will lead the committee. The other members are Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, and Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Sakkhat Hossain.

Hamid, who left for Thailand on Wednesday night, served two consecutive terms as president during the tenure of the Awami League government.

His departure has sparked widespread reaction.

Following the incident, Superintendent of Kishoreganj police

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## Indo-Pak fragile ceasefire holds

**Trump pledges increased trade with both countries, Kashmir solution**

AGENCIES

A fragile ceasefire was holding between India and Pakistan yesterday, after hours of overnight fighting between the nuclear-armed neighbours, as US President Donald Trump said he will work to provide a solution regarding Kashmir.

The arch rivals were involved in intense firing for four days, the worst in nearly three decades, with missiles and drones being fired at each other's military installations and dozens of people killed.

A ceasefire agreement was reached after diplomacy and pressure from the United States, but within hours, artillery fire was witnessed in Indian Kashmir, the centre of much of the fighting.

Blasts from air-defence systems boomed in cities near the border under blackout, similar to the previous two evenings, according to authorities, residents and Reuters witnesses.

By dawn, the fighting and explosions reported overnight had died down on both sides of the border, according to Reuters witnesses.

Power was restored in most areas along India's border towns after a blackout the previous night.

Trump praised leaders of both countries for agreeing to halt the aggression. "While not even discussed, I am going to increase trade, substantially, with both of these great



**Pakistan lost '35 to 40 military personnel': India military**

**Indian army chief grants 'full authority' to commanders for counteraction if ceasefire violated**

**Pakistan seeks lasting settlement of Kashmir dispute**

**260 individuals pushed in by India so far**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has pushed at least 260 individuals, including Rohingyas, into Bangladesh since last Wednesday through borders in Satkhira, Moulvibazar, Kurigram, and Khagrachhari.

These individuals are in custody, and officials are verifying their identities, said officers of police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and the Bangladesh Coast Guard.

The BGB had called for flag meetings and sent a strong protest note to the Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

The BSF had yet to respond to any of the calls for flag meetings, said a top BGB officer, requesting anonymity.

The BGB has also beefed up security along the border.

BGB Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzaaman Siddiqui

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**The 19th edition of the traditional sampan race in Chattogram concluded yesterday, marking the final day of the four-day event. Held annually alongside the Chatgaiya Cultural Fair, the race aims to raise awareness about protecting the Karnaphuli river.**

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**Taliban govt suspends chess in Afghanistan**

AFP, Kabul

Taliban authorities have barred chess across Afghanistan until further notice over concerns it is a source of gambling, which is illegal under the government's morality law, a sports official said yesterday.

The Taliban government has steadily imposed laws and regulations that reflect its austere vision of Islamic law since seizing power in 2021.

"Chess in sharia (Islamic law) is considered a means of gambling," which is prohibited according to the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice law announced last year, sports directorate spokesperson Atal Mashwani told AFP.

"There are religious considerations regarding the sport of chess," he said.

"Until these considerations are addressed, the sport of chess is suspended in Afghanistan," he added.

Mashwani said the national chess federation had not held any official events for around two years and "had some issues on the leadership level".

Azizullah Gulzada owns a cafe in Kabul that has hosted informal chess competitions in recent years, but denied any gambling took place and noted chess was played in other Muslim-majority countries.



**Washington hails 'progress' after trade talks with China**

AFP, Geneva

Washington expressed optimism after trade talks with China aimed to de-escalate trade tensions sparked by President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff rollout.

"I'm happy to report that we've made substantial progress between the United States and China in the very important trade talks," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told reporters in Geneva.

"The talks were productive," he said, taking no questions from the media, but promising a "complete briefing" on the outcome of the talks today.

Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who also took part in the two days of closed-door talks with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, said that the differences between the sides were "not so large as maybe thought".

After the first day of negotiations, Trump had posted on Truth Social that the discussions had been "very good", describing them as "a total reset negotiated in a friendly, but constructive, manner".

Beijing had yet to comment yesterday, but on Saturday Chinese state news agency Xinhua described the talks as "an important step in promoting the resolution of the issue".

The meetings marked the first time senior officials from the world's two largest

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