

# DHAKA

MOITREE JATRA  
50 progressive groups extend solidarity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty progressive organisations, comprising women, workers, cultural activists, students, and professionals, have expressed solidarity with the "Nareer Dak Moitree Jatra" (March for Women's Solidarity), scheduled for 3:00pm today on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital.

Speaking at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, Shima Datta, president of Bangladesh Nari Mukti Kendra, said the most remarkable feature of the event is its diverse leadership.

"This programme is being organised at the call of women from a wide spectrum of classes, professions, and political views," she said.

Speakers criticised the exclusion of women from governance since the July uprising, despite

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DU VC works with 'political bias': Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday alleged that the vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, due to his "political philosophy", was unwilling to listen to the JCD leaders when they went to him demanding justice for Shahriar Alam Shamma.

He also questioned whether Shamma, a JCD leader, was killed for his nationalist political ideology.

He made these remarks at a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club.

Shamma, a student of DU's Institute of Education and Research and the Literature and Publication Secretary of the Sir AF Rahman Hall unit of JCD,

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DMP bans gatherings near CJ residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid ongoing demonstrations by students and teachers of Jagannath University, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police has imposed a ban on public gatherings, processions, and rallies near the official residence of the chief justice and surrounding areas.

In a public notice issued yesterday, the DMP also urged all concerned not to block roads in the name of protests or demands, saying such actions disrupt vehicular movement and cause public inconvenience.

The ban was imposed by DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali under Section 29 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976, citing the need to maintain public order.

The restricted areas include the vicinity of the chief justice's official residence, the Judges' Complex, the main gates of the Bangladesh Supreme Court, Mazar Gate, Jame Mosque Gate, the entrances to International Crimes

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
MAY 16

Fazr Juma As Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:10 12:30 5:00 6:36 8:00  
JAMAT 4:45 1:15 5:15 6:40 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

DHAKA FRIDAY MAY 16, 2025  
JAISHTHA 2, 1432 BS  
The Daily Star

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A vendor desperately clutches onto his cart as a DSCC personnel tries to pull him away. As part of DSCC's eviction drive at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday, numerous illegal makeshift shops were demolished and removed from the area. With permission from the DSCC executive magistrate, this vendor was able to remove his cart before it got destroyed.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## STRENGTHENING HEALTH FINANCING Commission for CSR-driven health fund, expat bond

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Aside from proposing a significant increase in the health budget, the Health Sector Reform Commission has suggested several innovative ways to mobilise funds to strengthen the country's underfunded health services.

The commission proposed forming at least three funds -- National Health Impact Fund, Expatriate Bond for Health Development, and Emergency Health Fund -- all to be jointly managed by the health and finance ministries and focused on specific areas within the health sector.

These proposals come at a time when the health sector receives only 5.2 percent of the national budget and just 0.74 percent of the GDP -- the lowest allocation among South Asian countries, according to the commission's report.

In its report submitted last week, the commission recommended allocating 15 percent of the national budget and 5 percent of GDP to the health sector.

### HEALTH IMPACT FUND

The commission proposed setting up a National Health Impact Fund to ensure sustainable domestic financing for the health sector.

Large corporations -- particularly those in pharmaceuticals, banking, insurance, telecommunications, and chemicals -- would be required to allocate at least 20 percent of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budgets to this fund.

A clear policy framework should be developed to ensure the fund is used solely for health initiatives and supporting government priority programmes.

It would be jointly supervised by the health and finance ministries, with an independent, non-partisan management structure free from private influence, says the commission's

report.

Key areas for investment would include maternal and child health, non-communicable disease prevention, digital



### HEALTH IMPACT FUND

Funded by mandatory 20% of CSR budgets from major industries

Targets maternal health, NCDs, digital health, and underserved areas

### EXPAT BOND FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

Invites diaspora investment in foreign currency with tax incentives

Promoted through embassies, digital platforms

### EMERGENCY HEALTH FUND

Rapid-response fund activated during health emergencies

Enables immediate financing for crises like pandemics

health infrastructure, emergency services, and expanding healthcare access in underserved regions.

Alongside mandatory contributions,

the fund would also encourage voluntary donations. To boost participation, the government may offer incentives such as public recognition as a "Health Impact Champion", honours at state events, involvement in policymaking forums, and financial benefits like tax exemptions or CSR credits, suggested the report.

Referring to similar initiatives in India and South Africa, the commission said this fund would make CSR investments more transparent, coordinated, and impactful.

**EXPAT BOND FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT**  
The commission recommended introducing a government-backed bond titled "Expatriate Bond for Health Development" to create a sustainable source of financing for the health sector.

This bond would attract investments from Bangladeshi expatriates, offering competitive profit rates, tax exemptions or rebates, and allowing investments in foreign currencies.

The funds would be dedicated to improving the health sector -- especially primary healthcare, public hospital upgrades, digital health technologies, and social health insurance, alongside emergency health preparedness and response capacity.

The bond would be jointly managed by the health and finance ministries. To ensure engagement, the government should promote it through embassies, consultates, and digital platforms, said the report.

This initiative would reduce reliance on foreign aid and create a sustainable and long-term domestic funding source for the health sector.

Citing similar models in India and Ethiopia, the commission said it would also allow patriotic expatriates to contribute proudly and meaningfully to national development.

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## CTG OPEN DRAINS, CANALS Patchwork protections fail to save lives

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The authorities concerned have erected a temporary barrier along an open canal in Kapasgola area of Chattogram city, days after a six-month old baby fell into the canal on April 18 and died.

However, this reactive measure highlights a larger, persistent problem: the significant safety risk posed by numerous open and unprotected drains and canals across the port city, especially in monsoon.

SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), criticised this pattern of action only after accidents occur, pointing out that many other dangerous open drains, like those in Bahaddarhat, remain unprotected.

Residents fear a repeat of past tragedies, including the drowning of a vegetable trader in a flooded Muradpur canal in 2021 and the death of a university student who fell into an open drain in Agrabad the same year.

A recent Chattogram City Corporation survey identified 134 unprotected spots in drains and canals, 12 uncovered manholes, and 703 drains without slabs across the city's 41 wards.

"We have taken initiative to temporarily protect the risky spots with bamboo fences," said Pranab Kumar Sharma, deputy chief conservancy officer at CCC, adding, "We will also place slabs over the open drains."

A recent visit revealed that many drains, such as the

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A man walks on a footpath in Chattogram city, right next to an open drain. Since 2017, at least 10 people have died after falling into open drains and canals in the port city. While authorities recently took the initiative to start erecting temporary barriers along open canals in the Kapasgola area, open drains still continue to pose a major risk to passersby.

## DSCC launches eviction drive at Suhrawardy Udyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation launched an eviction drive at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday, demolishing hundreds of illegal makeshift shops and structures.

The operation, led by DSCC Executive Magistrate Md Aminul Islam, began around 9:00am near the gate adjacent to Dhaka University's Teacher-Student Centre.

The drive was conducted with the assistance of a large contingent of police personnel.

Acting Estate Manager of Dhaka University, Fatema Binte Mustafa, was present at the scene.

The move came in the wake of the killing of Shahriar Alam Shamma, a postgraduate student of Dhaka University. In response to the incident, the government has introduced a series of measures aimed at enhancing security in Suhrawardy Udyan.

These include permanently closing the TSC-adjacent gate, removing illegal vendors, increasing surveillance with CCTV cameras, installing adequate lighting, setting up a dedicated police box, and banning public access after 8:00pm.

Mohammad Aftab, who has been running a tea stall in the DU area since 2006, said, "The authorities came and demolished my stall today. When I tried to retrieve my goods, they started arresting people."

He said another shop belonging to his brother at the gate of Suhrawardy Udyan, adjacent to the TSC, was also knocked down.

"They also sealed off the gates... Setting up a new shop in a different place requires a lot of money. Where will we get that kind of money now? We have families to feed... what will we do now?"

Another tea vendor, Malek, echoed him.

**Dhaka, Tokyo outline areas of cooperation ahead of CA's visit**

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Japan yesterday outlined future areas of cooperation between the two countries, ahead of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' upcoming visit to Japan, as both sides look to take the relationship to new heights.

Japan said it would strengthen its engagement with Bangladesh under the Bay of Bengal Initiative (Big B), as the country aims to support high-quality infrastructure development projects and encourage Japanese manufacturing and production companies to expand their industrial value chains to Bangladesh, according to the Bangladesh Embassy in Tokyo.

The issues were discussed at the 6th Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Secretary-level consultations held in Tokyo.

In February this year, Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina Akiko invited Chief Adviser Prof Yunus to visit Japan for the Nikkei 30th Future of Asia event to be held on May 29-30 in Tokyo.

Yunus was also a recipient of the Nikkei Asia Prize in 2004.

The chief adviser will attend the Nikkei 30th Future of Asia event and both sides are working to arrange a bilateral meeting between Yunus and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, a diplomatic source told UNB.

The two sides confirmed that they will further strengthen the bilateral relationship in a wide range of areas, including security, economy, economic cooperation, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges, under the "Japan-Bangladesh Strategic Partnership" at the FOC, said the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



PHOTO: STAR