

“The time has come for real and effective international action to stop this historic injustice and ongoing tragedy which has become a disgrace to humanity.”
Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas urges action on Gaza

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 17, 2025

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 118

JAISHTHA 3, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILQAD 18, 1446 HJRI

20 PAGES: Tk 15.00

আমরা কৃতজ্ঞ, আমরা গর্বিত
সমৃদ্ধি ও সম্ভাবনার পথে একসাথে পেরিয়েছি ৩২ বছর! আস্থা ও ভরসায় আমরা
ছিলাম আপনার পাশে, সবসময়।
আগামী দিনগুলোতেও আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবায় পাশে থাকার প্রতিশ্রুতি নিয়ে
আমরা আছি, থাকবো, সেই একই ভরসায়।

Private airlines caught in a bind

10 pvt carriers operated over the past 3 decades, now only 2 running

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh's private airline industry is struggling to stay afloat, hobbled by soaring fuel prices, punitive surcharges, and what operators describe as unfavourable policies.

Of the 10 private carriers that have entered the market over the past three decades, only two -- US Bangla Airlines and Air Astra -- remain in operation.

Novoair, which plans to resume flights on May 21 after weeks of suspension, stares into financial distress, underscoring the perilous state of the sector.

Industry insiders say the sector is being systematically undermined by outdated rules, excessive fees, and a lack of government support, even as international carriers tighten their grip on the market. Foreign airlines now control roughly 75 percent of passenger traffic, leaving local operators to battle for a shrinking share.

“Foreign carriers are thriving in Bangladesh's aviation market while the local ones are in a sorry state. This is mainly because the country's aviation policy is not conducive to the industry's growth,” said Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation analyst.

REASONS FOR LOCAL AIRLINES' FAILURE

- ✈ Exorbitant fees, surcharges
- ✈ High jet fuel prices
- ✈ Shortage of skilled manpower
- ✈ Poor planning, flawed marketing policy
- ✈ Wrong selection of aircraft, routes

Currently, 39 foreign carriers operate flights to and from Dhaka, compared to only three Bangladeshi airlines, including Biman. A total of 1.24 crore passengers travelled from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last year, compared to 1.16 crore in 2023, shows CAAB data.

Asked why local

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Thousands thronged the capital's Manik Mia Avenue yesterday to show solidarity with the 'Narir Dake Moitree Jatra' programme, which called for unity, vigilance, and collective resistance in the face of injustices against women everywhere.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

‘Will not back down on our rights’

Thousands of women march for equality, justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand women marched in the capital yesterday, demanding that the government act against the threats women and minority communities face and a misinformation campaign against the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.

The government must also take steps against the use of religious values to instil fear, they said.

The demonstrators gathered in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban on Manik Mia Avenue in the afternoon and then began the “Women's March for Solidarity”.

Garment workers, house staff, indigenous and Dalit women, students, teachers, sex workers, and members of the hijra and gender-diverse communities united in their call for justice, dignity, and equality.

The demonstrators demanded that political parties clearly state their policies on the rights of women, workers, and minority communities.

Among their key demands was a mandatory 33 percent representation of women in upcoming elections.



They also urged that the interim government take immediate steps to empower women and marginalised communities through education, healthcare, and economic initiatives.

The declaration was read out by Sharmin Akter, wife of July uprising martyr Mamun Mia; Shamsi Ara Zaman, mother of slain journalist Tahir Zaman; and Jayanti Chakma, an indigenous community representative.

“Rights are not granted; they must be claimed -- and we are not afraid to claim them,” read the

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Country heading in right direction

Yunus tells The Economist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is moving in the right direction despite the challenges created by the disruptive rule of the Awami League-led regime, which was ousted last year in a popular uprising, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus told The Economist.

The interim government, which took charge after the fall of the regime, is trying to “fix everything that has been destroyed” during the 16-year-long autocratic rule of Sheikh Hasina, said the report published Thursday.

According to the report, Yunus likened the Awami League rule to a continuous “earthquake”.

“We're moving in the right direction, and the people are with us. We are hopeful,” he was quoted in the report,

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SHAMMO KILLING DU students want arrest of ‘real killers’, safe campus

Issue 48-hour ultimatum

DU CORRESPONDENT

Protesting students at Dhaka University yesterday issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the arrest of the “real perpetrators” behind the murder of fellow student and Chhatra Dal leader Shahriar Alam Shammo, as demonstrations continued for a third straight day.

They also demanded justice for Shammo, a fair trial, and a safe campus.

Around 11:00am yesterday, the agitated students gathered at the base of the Raju Sculpture and staged a protest where they made the announcement.

Under the banner of “General Student Community of Bangladesh”, approximately 200-300 students marched towards Shahbagh Police Station.

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Jagannath University students stage a hunger strike yesterday afternoon at Kakrail intersection, on the third day of their demonstration, to press home their four-point demand. Inset, JNU VC Prof Rezaul Karim gives water to students who broke their hunger strike last night after it was announced that the government has agreed to meet their demands.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, RAKIB MADBER

JnU protests called off

Govt assures students, teachers of meeting their demands

JNU CORRESPONDENT

Students and teachers of Jagannath University called off their protest last night after receiving assurances from the government that their demands would be met.

Prof Rais Uddin, general secretary of JnU Teachers' Association, made the announcement at Kakrail intersection, the protest site, in the capital around 8:30pm, three days after the start of the demonstrations.

All the activities of the university will resume tomorrow, he said moments after University Grants Commission Chairman Prof SMA Faiz visited the site and said the government accepted their demands.

The development came hours after the students began a mass hunger strike at 3:30pm to press home their four-point demand. The students and teachers have been protesting since Wednesday.

Sources in the teacher and student protesters said the government has decided to increase the budget allocation for Jagannath University to Tk 251 crore and has sanctioned an additional Tk 20 crore for the construction of a temporary residential hall. It also assured that the construction of a second campus would be prioritised under a fast-track project.

The UGC chairman, along with Jagannath University Vice-Chancellor Prof Rezaul Karim, ended the students' hunger strike by offering them water.

The protesters said they would hold a press briefing soon to give their reaction.

Talking to the protesters in Kakrail, the UGC chairman said the commission worked tirelessly throughout the day to address the students' concerns.

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SHAMBHU ACHARYA'S SOLO EXHIBITION

Art that carries years of legacy

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

Though the first thing you notice right after entering might be the colours, since they are vibrant, generous, full of life, but there is something more, the scent of something older might carry you away.

Not incense, not paint, but time.

Time cooked down into lines and pigment, and tradition passed through generations. At Galleri Kaya, the solo exhibition of Shambhu Acharya, a name well known in the world of patachitra, surrounds you with artworks that seem to make you forget you're standing in a contemporary space and not a room pulled out of Bengal's own memory.

Patachitra, literally meaning "cloth painting", is a traditional art form rooted in folklore, mythology, and rural life. While many artists practice the form today, what makes Acharya's work feel different is not just the technique but the reverence. Even calling him an artist feels slightly off, it's like calling a monk a craftsman. The process, for him, seems almost like prayer, and that devotion translates into the emotion and storytelling of each work.

It's in the way the colours are made from scratch, pigments ground from brick, seeds, stone, sometimes even riverbed soil. The thickening agent? Extracted from tamarind seeds. The brushes? Made of goat's hair. "Some strokes in these paintings are not possible without these special brushes," Acharya said simply.

Among the vibrant narratives of patachitra, a quieter form of storytelling stood apart, kushthichitra, the artist shifts into monochrome, abandoning the vivid palette for earthier, ink-based minimal tones. One visitor said, "The reason why I like patachitra is these are done using a technique which is our very own traditional technique, using



PHOTO: COURTESY

all natural and handmade colours. Another intriguing thing about this exhibition was kushthichitra, I have never seen these artworks before."

Drawn at the time of a child's birth, especially in Hindu families, a kushthi records more than just name and lineage. It maps the planets, stars, and

celestial alignments at the moment of arrival, a visual document of fate. "Just like we keep records of land or property, a kushthi is the document of a person's life," said Acharya. "It tells the story from birth to midlife to death, following the astrology we've had for generations." If the newborn is a girl, she appears in the

painting; if a boy, then he, The kushthi scroll, though visually simpler than the patachitra, carries a quiet weight, attempting to tell a life before it even unfolds.

Acharya belongs to a legacy more than 450 years old, making him the ninth generation in a family of traditional artists. He didn't so much choose this path as he was born into it, long before he even learned to write the alphabets. As a child, he would drag leaves across walls and scratch bricks onto floors just to see the trace they left. The fascination with colour, its possibility and presence was always there.

That same respect for process runs through the entire exhibition, each on display paints vivid scenes from folklores, mythology and rural life, bride carried on a boat, women fetching water from river, two friends braiding each other's hair, a flute player casting a glance toward a woman and many more.

One of the visitors, Abdullah Bin Amir summed it up, "I really liked the idea about doing artworks on our folktales. It's rare to see. I personally like folklore and tales, and how the artist represented mythical characters in a traditional form, it was more than amazing. Not modernised, not abstract, just raw and true to the tradition".

These days when art is often rushed, modernised and soaked in factory made colours, Acharya's work stands a part with his honesty, devotion and tradition it carries. Both his son and daughter are picking it up slowly, the strokes, the stories, the little rituals that shaped him. And maybe that's what stays with you the most, not just that this art has lasted nine generations, but that it's still alive, still breathing, and still being passed gently, hand to hand.

DU students want Private airlines caught in a bind

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Taking position outside the station premises, demanded the immediate arrest of all those involved in the murder case, a fair trial, and a safe campus.

During this time, police were on alert in front of Shahbagh Police Station.

Mashiur Rahman Shuvo, a postgraduate student of the Institute of Education and Research, said that if the real perpetrators are not arrested within 48 hours, they will announce their next course of action on Sunday.

According to the students, a delegation of teachers, including Muhammad Abdus Salam, Asim Das, and Sirajul Islam from the Institute of Education and Research department, along with four student representatives, entered the station for discussions.

One of the protesters, Ibrahim Munshi, told The Daily Star, "This is a non-partisan banner. Various political parties are now politicising Shammo's death. But our main demand is justice for Shammo's murder."

When contacted, Shahbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Khalid Mansur told The Daily Star, "A delegation of teachers and students came to speak with us. ADC Mir Asaduzzaman of our Ramna Zone spoke with them.

"The teachers and students have presented their demands. We informed them that we have arrested three individuals. They will be brought on remand. The investigation is ongoing, and operations are underway. All those involved in the murder will be arrested soon."

Around 1:30pm, the students left the police station area.

Shahriar Alam Shammo, 25, was stabbed to death on Tuesday night near Suhrawardy Udyan. The protests began on DU campus after the killing.

A group of DU students, including leaders and activists of JCD and left-leaning student organisations, under the banner of Students Against Terrorism, have been protesting over the killing.

Shammo was the literature and publication affairs secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Sir AF Rahman Hall unit and a student of the 2018-19 session at the Institute of Education and Research.

The victim's brother has filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station. The DU administration has formed an investigation committee regarding the murder.

So far, police have arrested three outsiders in connection with the case. They have been sent to jail via a court order.

Shahbagh Police Station Sub-Inspector Tawfique Hasan said case investigators would seek a 10-day remand of the three arrestees.

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airlines fail to flourish, Novoair Managing Director Mofizur Rahman said, "Entrepreneurs are often blamed for incompetence and poor planning. This may be partially true. But one must consider that they invest in a sector where every part of the government apparatus is unfriendly, if not outright hostile, towards private airlines."

CAAB regulations are outdated and don't meet global standards, said Rahman, also secretary general of Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh (AOAB).

"Direct and indirect taxes levied on private airlines account for 50 percent of their operational costs. The industry stakeholders keep on pleading with CAAB, the ministry concerned, the tax authority and government agencies for remedies but their appeals fall on deaf ears."

Imran Asif, chief executive officer of Air Astra, said, "Based on my 15 years of experience as the chief executive of three airlines, I believe three steps could help revive the country's airline industry — adjusting fuel prices, reforming policies on fees and surcharges, and developing skilled manpower."

'Will not back down on our rights'

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declaration.

The programme began with a moving chorus of the national anthem, followed by a range of cultural performances including songs, poetry recital, and theatre performances.

The performances, drawn from diverse traditions, symbolised solidarity.

While Bangladesh has a rich history of women's participation in political and social movements, the promises of the July 2024 uprising are now under threat from patriarchal and reactionary forces, speakers said at the programme.

They said women continue to face daily harassment, exclusion from decision-making, and online abuse, aimed at deterring their political participation.

They also highlighted reports of sudden attacks, disruption of peaceful movements, orchestrated mob violence, moral policing, sexual assault, gang rape, and persistent threats.

Referring to the recent backlash over the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, the speakers said the commission submitted 433 recommendations for reforms. Instead of discussing the recommendations, a certain quarter launched a campaign of misrepresentation and propaganda against the commission members, they said.

"The interim government, established through the sacrifices and bloodshed of countless women during the July uprising, has remained shockingly silent about the ongoing

HIGH FEES, SURCHARGES

Surcharges on outstanding fees for local airlines can accumulate up to 72 percent a year, said aviation experts.

In India, the annual surcharge is between 12 and 18 percent; in Pakistan, it's only 2 percent; in Singapore 8 percent; and in Oman 10 percent.

AOAB has been demanding that the government fix the surcharge at a reasonable rate, scrapping the monthly rate of 6 percent.

"Once you fall into the surcharge trap, it becomes nearly impossible to turn things around," said Kamrul Islam, spokesperson for US Bangla Airlines.

In recent years, GMG Airlines, United Airways and Regent Airways grounded their fleet as surcharge dues kept mounting.

Regent Airways, the latest private airline to cease operations in 2020, owes Tk 283 crore in surcharge; United Airways Tk 355 crore; and GMG Airlines Tk 368 crore, shows CAAB data.

Aircraft landing and parking fees here are also significantly higher than that in many other countries.

Giving an example, Kamrul said the landing fee for a Boeing plane is Tk 15,000 at Kuala Lumpur airport. But if

oppression, humiliation, and violence against women.

"Despite heinous attacks on its own appointed commission members, the government has taken no action," read the declaration.

As the commission's recommendations reflected the core issues related to women's equality and empowerment, the campaign to disband the commission is deeply alarming.

"The government's inaction after attacks on its own appointees sends a clear message: even our most fundamental rights will be suppressed through fear and intimidation.

"We are witnessing politics of hatred, threats, and organised violence. Our legitimate demands are being silenced. We ask: whom does the government aim to appease? The extreme majoritarian nationalism and fundamentalism that crush the weak and fear a just society? The face of democracy and reform that seeks only to preserve inequality? We will not allow this to continue."

"We won't remain silent... We will not back down on our rights."

The declaration also underscored the need for formal state recognition of women in farming and domestic work; highlighted wage disparities and discrimination against indigenous, Dalit, and Harijan women.

It further noted that 96 percent of Bangladeshi women do not own land, the country leads Asia in child marriage, and ranks fourth globally in intimate partner violence. An

the same plane lands at Dhaka airport, the charge is Tk 2.50 lakh.

HIGH JET FUEL PRICE

Since jet fuel accounts for 40-50 percent of an airline's operational costs, high fuel prices render commercial operations of local airlines uncompetitive, said aviation industry insiders.

In Bangladesh, jet fuel price stood at \$0.76 per litre in the second week of May, while it was \$0.49 in Singapore; \$0.50 in Malaysia; \$0.51 in Qatar and Thailand; \$0.53 in Oman; and \$0.58 in China.

"Major carriers like Emirates and Singapore Airlines that operate long-range aircraft don't refuel at Bangladesh airports because of high fuel prices. Local airlines, on the other hand, have no option but to buy fuel at prices 20-30 percent higher than that in the global market," Imran noted.

Jet fuel prices here are not determined by free market dynamics or best practices, such as assessments by independent price reporting agencies, which help prevent arbitrary pricing, he added.

Moreover, local airlines pay a 42.62 percent duty to buy jet fuel for domestic flights whereas the duty is below 4

percent in India, said Mofizur.

LACK OF SKILLED MANPOWER, WRONG STRATEGY

Local private airlines largely rely on former employees of Biman and Bangladesh Air Force to build their workforce as the country still lacks infrastructure to train and produce skilled aviation professionals.

These ex-employees constitute the majority of the local airlines' workforce, including pilots, technicians and engineers, said Imran.

"The current situation is far from favourable for the aviation industry. A strong, competitive aviation sector cannot be built without state-backed training facilities," he added.

ATM Nazrul Islam, an aviation expert who worked for several private airlines, said the now-defunct airlines pursued flawed marketing strategies, and most of them chose unsuitable aircraft and also wrong routes.

To support his argument, he cited the GMG Airlines' purchase of a 540-seater Boeing 747 for operating flights on Dhaka-Dubai route which proved commercially unviable.

No Bangladesh airline will survive beyond a certain period unless it pays

attention to proper planning and market analysis, he noted.

WHAT THE REGULATOR SAYS

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Monjur Kabir Bhuiyan said the fees for local airlines have not been increased in recent years.

Asked about high surcharge, he said it becomes applicable only when an airline doesn't pay fees.

"The civil aviation ministry fixes surcharge. We just follow it. As far as I know, they are considering reducing surcharges. Besides, we have taken steps to cut various types of fees, including landing and cargo charges. The ministry will make the final decision."

About the claim that the regulator's policy is unfavourable to private airlines, Kabir said that there are no rules or regulations that go against private carriers.

Referring to high jet fuel prices, he said CAAB has already conveyed the matter to the government agencies concerned.

"We have made every effort to help the aviation sector thrive... If any airline cannot survive due to administrative problems or financial difficulties, there is nothing we can do," he added.

Country heading in right direction

FROM PAGE 1

which tried to paint a picture of the current situation in Bangladesh.

Noting that optimism is necessary, the report, however, highlighted the "tricky" situation the interim government is facing in implementing the reforms that stakeholders of the uprising agreed upon.

Since Sheikh Hasina's ousting, allegations of widespread corruption and abuse have surfaced, including claims that \$16 billion was siphoned annually and serious charges like murder and genocide, all of which the ex-PM denies.

While political parties are united in demanding democratic reforms to prevent such abuses from recurring, the report said bringing out "big changes" and the political consensus needed for those have proved challenging for the Yunus-led government.

The report said reform efforts began soon after Sheikh Hasina fled to India. In September, Yunus formed several commissions, staffed by civil society and academic experts, to propose changes in areas like elections, the judiciary, and the constitution.

To coordinate the reforms, the government also set up a national consensus commission, which compiled 166 recommendations so far, with input from at least 35 political parties, said the report.

The goal is to produce a "July Charter" that would enable elections and mark the start of a "new Bangladesh", Yunus was quoted in the report.

But consensus is hard to build, the report said, noting differences among

Ukraine reports loss of another F-16 fighter jet

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's air force said yesterday it lost another US-made F-16 fighter jet, a significant blow as the aircraft have provided precious help to Ukrainian forces fighting Russia's invasion.

Kyiv has not said how many of the warplanes it has received, but this is at least the second confirmed loss of the Western-supplied jets.

The air force said it lost contact with the F-16 early yesterday during a manoeuvre to repel a Russian attack.

"The pilot destroyed three air targets and was working on the fourth, using an aircraft gun" when "an emergency situation arose on board," the air force said.

The pilot ejected safely, the air force said, adding it appointed a commission to investigate.

In August 2024, Kyiv said that an F-16 had crashed while repelling a Russian missile attack, killing its pilot.

In April 2025, Russia said it downed an F-16. Ukraine did not confirm, but said pilot Pavlo Ivanov was killed during a combat mission.

This is a setback for Ukraine, which has counted on F-16s to intercept missiles and target Russian warplanes.

UN 'alarmed' by new Tripoli violence

AFP, Tripoli

The United Nations expressed deep concern Thursday over new unrest in Libya's capital, warning the clashes risk mass displacement and endangered civilians.

Heavy gunfire and explosions in Tripoli late Monday killed at least six people, according to authorities. Clashes flared again Wednesday in key areas including Tripoli's port, in what a security source called "urban warfare".

Fears of more violence lingered Thursday.

The International Organization for Migration called for a halt to hostilities.

The UN body said it was "alarmed by the recent escalation of violence", highlighting the "severe risk of mass displacement and danger to civilians".

Turkey, which backs the Tripoli-based government, said it was evacuating its nationals from the North African country.

Libya has remained deeply divided since the 2011 Nato-backed revolt that toppled and killed longtime leader Moamer Gaddafi.

The country is split between a UN-recognised government in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, and a rival administration in the east controlled by the Haftar family.



Govt sincere in developing telecom, IT sectors: CA

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the interim government is sincere in developing country's telecommunication and information technology (IT) sectors and it has ensured transparency and accountability in all the activities of these sectors.

The chief adviser made the comments in his message given on the eve of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, which is to be celebrated in the country

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Students take position in front of the Shahbagh Police Station yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of all those involved in the murder of Dhaka University student Shahriar Alam Shammo, a fair trial, and a safe campus.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Prices of rice, veggies drop in Dhaka markets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of several rice varieties, summer vegetables, and broiler chicken have fallen over the past week in kitchen markets across the capital, while onion prices remained steady and potatoes saw a slight increase.

During visits to wholesale and retail markets in Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Ibrahimpur, Shewrapara, Kazipara and Mirpur-11 yesterday, traders and consumers confirmed the downward trend in prices.

Kamal Hossain, proprietor of Mokbul Rice Agency in Mirpur-11, said the fall in rice prices is due to the arrival of new harvests. "Last week, miniket rice of different brands was sold at Tk 75-90 per kg. Yesterday, I sold them at Tk 72-85," he said.

He said BR-28 and BR-29 varieties dropped to Tk 58-60 per kg from Tk 62-64 last week. However, the price of Nazirshail and coarse rice remained unchanged, retailing at Tk 75-92 and Tk 54-56 per kg respectively.

Summer vegetables, including eggplants, gourds, pointed gourds, okra, long beans, tomatoes, bitter gourds, and ridge gourds, are now selling at Tk 30-70 per kg.

Mozammel Hossain, a vegetable trader at Karwan Bazar, said prices dropped by up to Tk 10 per kg in a week, largely due to an abundant supply.

Sazzad Hossain, a shopper at the same market, said he bought a small-sized gourd at Tk 30, down from Tk 40 the previous week. "I also bought other vegetables and a 2kg broiler chicken. Prices seemed slightly lower overall," he added.

Traders said broiler chicken was being sold at Tk 150-170 per kg yesterday, down by Tk 10 from last week. The price of Sonali chicken, however, remained unchanged at Tk 240-280 per kg.

Meanwhile, onion prices held steady, with local varieties selling at Tk 55-60 per kg at retail and Tk 48-52

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A move to mitigate waterlogging in Ctg

Illegal CCC building on Chaktai Canal demolished

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

A four-storey building illegally constructed by the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) on occupied land of the Chaktai Canal in Bahaddarhat has been demolished, marking a significant step towards restoring the port city's natural waterways.

The move is expected to help ease long-standing waterlogging in the area and aid in returning the canal to its original state.

As part of the ongoing waterlogging mitigation project being implemented by the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), the building was recently demolished, project officials confirmed.

The CCC had built the 793-square-foot structure — used as the revenue office of circle-2 — right in the middle of Chaktai Canal, one of the key drainage channels of the port city for over two decades, without obtaining clearance from the CDA.

A 2016 report by the Chattogram District Administration identified the CCC as one of the entities encroaching on the canal.

The report, obtained by The Daily Star, stated that around 48 illegal structures, including residential flats, tin-shed houses, business establishments, and warehouses, were constructed on approximately 20,000 square feet of canal land, severely choking the waterway.

The 6.9km-long Chaktai, starting from the Bahaddarhat point of the city and spanning to the Karnaphuli river, has shrivelled up noticeably due to rampant

encroachment over the years.

According to the RS survey, the width of the canal used to be about 65 feet, while the BS survey mentioned it to be 61 feet. But only 10 to 30 feet can be seen now, according to the DC office report.

During a recent visit to Bahaddarhat, this correspondent observed that debris from the demolished building, including concrete and bricks, still remains at the site.

Meanwhile, the contractor of the

Kamrul Islam Chowdhury, estate officer of the CCC, confirmed that the CDA carried out the demolition. "But we did not receive any compensation for this building as it was built on canal land," he added.

The construction work for the waterlogging mitigation project is being implemented by the 34th Engineer Construction Brigade of the Bangladesh Army.

Lt Col Md Ferdous Ahmed, the project director, said, "We have already removed the structure



waterlogging mitigation project, titled "Re-excavation, Expansion, Renovation, and Development of Canals to Alleviate Waterlogging in the City," has installed steel pilings along the canal bank to construct a protective retaining wall.

"Due to the construction of the building, the canal had turned into a narrow drain, and for years, even light rainfall would cause waterlogging in the area as proper drainage through the canal was obstructed," said local businessman Abir Ahmed.

from the canal. Since it was built on illegally encroached land, we were not required to provide any compensation to the CCC."

The other structures built on the canal will be demolished also as part of the drive to free up the waterbody, said officials.

The CDA is implementing the project to address the city's waterlogging, involving the re-excavation and renovation of 36 canals.

DEATH IN RAB CUSTODY

2 years on, no justice for Sultana Jasmine

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Justice continues to evade the family of Sultana Jasmine, a 41-year-old land office employee from Naogaon, who died in the custody of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) over two years ago.

No criminal case has been filed over her death, and a High Court rule questioning the legality of Jasmine's detention by Rab remains unresolved.

The delay in settling the legality of the detention stems from the reconstitution of the hearing jurisdiction of the HC bench that issued the rule, followed by the refusal of two other benches to proceed with the hearing.

Jasmine was picked up and detained by Rab on March 22, 2023, and died two days later at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while still in Rab's custody. Rab officials told doctors she had sustained injuries from a fall.

However, her son, Shahed Hossain Saikat, a student at Chittagong University, rejected the claim, saying his mother was healthy before her detention and had a visible head injury. "She died

due to torture in Rab custody," he alleged.

Jasmine had no criminal cases against her at the time of her detention. However, she was sued under the controversial Digital Security Act a day after being



Jasmine was picked up and detained by Rab on March 22, 2023, and died two days later at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while still in Rab's custody.

picked up allegedly for "siphoning off money from job seekers through a Facebook account".

On April 5, 2023, following a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Manoj Kumar Bhowmick, the HC bench of Justice Farah

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Verdict in Magura rape case today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The verdict in a case filed over the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl from Magura is set to be delivered today.

Judge M Zahid Hasan of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Magura is scheduled to announce the judgement around 9:30am, said Public Prosecutor Monirul Islam Mukul.

The court set the date on May 13 after hearing arguments from the prosecution and the defence, he added.

The four accused are Hitu Sheikh, the father-in-law of the victim's sister; his wife, Jaheda Begum; their son, Sajib Sheikh, who is the victim's brother-in-law; and Sajib's brother, Ratul Sheikh.

Hitu was charged with rape and murder, Sajib and Ratul were charged with criminal

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Those opposing polls by Dec must explain why

Says BNP leader Nazrul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Those who want to delay the next parliamentary polls must explain the rationale behind their decision, said BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday.

"Why postpone the people's right to vote? If some parties need time to organise or build alliances, that should not hinder the election," he said at a discussion organised by the Bangladesh Labour Party at Jatiya Press Club.

Citing the Labour Party's call for a December election, Nazrul said BNP supported the same timeline. "Those opposing this must clearly explain why the election cannot be held by December. The

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

200 held in joint operations

Says ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 200 people were arrested across the country during joint force operations over seven days between May 8 and May 14, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement yesterday.

In coordination with other law enforcement agencies, Bangladesh Army carried out operations in Dhaka and other parts of the country as part of efforts to maintain law and order situation.

Among those arrested were murder suspects, illegal arms holders, listed criminals, smugglers, members of juvenile gangs, illegal sand extractors, tree cutters, drug dealers and addicts, and brokers involved in illicit activities, the release said.

Ten illegal firearms, 87 rounds of ammunition, 11 bombs, narcotics, locally made weapons,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Election likely between Dec and June

Says CA's press secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said the next general election is likely to be held between December and June.

"All advisers, including the chief adviser, are working towards that goal," he said.

While speaking to journalists during a visit to the Magura Press Club, the press secretary also said the people of the country have expressed satisfaction in the decision related to Awami League, noting that the public's expectations regarding the party have been met.

"The country is on the right track. Law and order has improved... it's better than before," Shafiqul added.

He said reform efforts are underway in sectors where necessary. "Major reforms have already been introduced in the economy, with more to come," he noted.

Regarding political reforms, Shafiqul said the consensus commission held several meetings, concluding its work on May 15.

"Some are becoming impatient, but we believe our work remains focused and is progressing at the right pace in the right direction," the press secretary added.

Regarding media freedom, Shafiqul said the government is not only advocating for freedom of speech but also working to ensure a dignified life for those working to uphold press freedom.



Women take part in a performance art to raise awareness about the various challenges and injustices girls and women face in the country. This was part of the 'Narir Dake Moitree Jatra' programme that took place on Manik Mia Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

EID-UL-AZHA

19 cattle markets to be allowed in Dhaka

BSS, Dhaka

Authorities yesterday said they are set to allow 19 makeshift cattle markets within the purviews of Dhaka north and south city corporations on the occasion of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

According to officials concerned, 10 of the cattle trading stations would be set up within the purview of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and nine others under the range of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

The DNCC and DSCC officials said they have floated open tenders to allocate the space for the cattle markets under lease agreements for five days.

They said the city corporations will not allow any makeshift cattle market outside the designated places.

"We have [so far] received bidders' responses for setting up seven makeshift cattle markets under our jurisdiction," said DSCC Chief Executive Officer Dr M Zillur Rahman.

The officials said due to a court directive, the popular markets at Aftabnagar and Meradia would not be allowed this year.



A group of youths jumps off an anchored cargo ship and dives into the Kirtankhola River. Amid rising temperatures, swimming in natural water bodies like rivers and ponds is the only way for many to beat the heat. The photo was taken in the Band Road area of Barishal city yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Touchstone statue recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Rab recovered a Vishnu idol made of touchstone at a house at Dandapal Matiapara village in Panchagarh's Debiganj upazila on Thursday.

In this connection, Rab arrested a man named Abu Bakar Siddique, 29, of Pamuli Madarerjhar village under the upazila.

According to a Rab press release, the idol is 32 inches tall, 13.5 inches wide, weighs 13.5kg, and is valued around Tk 1.5 crore.

A case was filed with Debiganj Police Station against Abu Bakar, said Inspector (Investigation) Probir Sarker.

Rain, labour

FROM PAGE 5

Extension, said Boro paddy was cultivated on 185,460 hectares in the district this season, and around 90 percent of it has already been harvested.

"The rest could have been harvested quickly, but due to rain and lightning, there has been some delay," he said.

He said out of 1,004 harvester machines in the district, 734 are currently operational. However, with fewer crops left in

the fields, many machines have moved to nearby upland areas. As a result, farmers are having to rely on labourers, who are now demanding higher wages.

Netrokona has set a paddy production target of 1.262 million tonnes this season, with an estimated market value of over Tk 4,543 crore. However, due to natural disasters and a shortage of machinery, around 15 percent of the district's farmers may face financial losses.

Take steps to stop

FROM PAGE 5

ensured for people involved in cattle trading, along with measures to facilitate their safe movement.


Farida also criticised the imposition of commercial electricity tariffs on the fisheries and livestock sectors. Unlike agriculture, these sectors do not benefit from equivalent subsidies, causing hardship for small-scale farmers. She said she had already sent a demi-official (DO) letter to the Ministry of Finance urging

redress.

Additionally, she announced plans to introduce development projects specifically targeting women who rear livestock, aiming to promote inclusive economic growth.

Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Mohammad Azaz and Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) Director General Faruk Wasif were among those present at the meeting.

In Remembrance
Faruq Choudhury
1934 - 2017



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PRAYER TIMING
MAY 17

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

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Those opposing polls

FROM PAGE 3

Election Commission has already said it can be ready by June – so what is the obstacle?"

He added that a phase of the one-point movement, launched in August last year, had already succeeded with the fall of what he termed "fascism".

"Now people await the fulfilment of the rest of their demands. Many young voters have never had the chance to cast their first vote. Voting is their highest political right," he said.

Nazrul also reiterated BNP's support for political reform. "There are two ways to bring change – revolution and reform. While revolution is sudden, reform is a consensual, step-by-step process."

He proposed the creation of a reform charter by June, with all political parties agreeing and signing it. Immediate reforms could be implemented through legislation or ordinances, while those requiring constitutional changes could be addressed by the next elected parliament.

"Even if not by June, this process can be completed by July," he said, again questioning the reason behind any delay in holding polls.

"No system is better than an elected government. It may be slow or flawed, but democracy remains our only path forward," Nazrul added.

Verdict in Magura

FROM PAGE 3

intimidation, and Jaheda was charged with tampering with evidence.

According to the case documents, on March 1, the child went to visit her elder sister's house in the Nijnanduali Mathpara area of Magura Sadar. She was raped there in the early hours of March 6.

On March 6, she was taken to the Magura 250-bed District Hospital in a critical condition and was later transferred to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

On the same day, she was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in an unconscious state. She was put on life support the following night.

When her condition deteriorated, the child was transferred to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka on March 8.

On March 8, her mother filed a case with Magura Sadar Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, accusing Hitu and the other three.

On March 13, she died at the CMH after suffering three cardiac arrests.

A month after her death, on April 13, investigation officer Md Alauddin, also inspector (investigation) of Magura Sadar Police Station, submitted the charge sheet of the case before the court, naming the four accused.

On April 23, the court framed charges against them.

According to the court records, 29 prosecution witnesses testified in the tribunal in connection with the case. Recording statements began on April 27 and ended on May 7.

Prices of rice

FROM PAGE 3

wholesale, said Sabuz Sheikh, a trader at Karwan Bazar.

Potato prices, however, edged up slightly to Tk 20–22 per kg, compared to Tk 18–20 last week.

Traders expect the trend in falling prices of some essentials to continue if supply remains stable in the coming weeks.

6 killed, 40 injured

FROM PAGE 5

Banani Police Station Sub-inspector Md Sohail said the incident occurred around 2:30am in front of the Naval Headquarters.

The woman suffered critical injuries and was found lying on the road.

On information, police rescued her and took her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 4:00am, where doctors declared her dead.

The body was kept at the hospital morgue for an autopsy, confirmed DMCH police camp in-charge Inspector Md Faruk.

Police said efforts are underway to identify the deceased. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has been informed, and fingerprint analysis is being conducted to help confirm her identity.

Authorities are also reviewing CCTV footage from the area to trace the vehicle responsible for the accident, said SI Sohail.

In Gopalganj, two people were killed and at least 20 injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Kashiani upazila on Thursday night.

The identity of the deceased could not be

confirmed immediately.

Following the crash around 9:00pm, vehicular movement on both sides of the busy highway came to a halt until 10:45pm. Traffic resumed afterwards.

Quoting locals, Kashiani Police Station OC Khondokar Hafizur Rahman said the accident took place when a Dhaka-bound truck collided head-on with a New Baleshwar Paribahan bus coming from Khulna.

Police and firefighters sent the injured to Kashiani Upazila Health Complex and Gopalganj 250-bed General Hospital, he added.

In Cumilla, two motorcycle riders were killed as an unidentified vehicle hit their bike on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sadar Dakshin upazila of Cumilla on Thursday night.

The deceased were identified as Shakil Hossain, 22, son of Md Salam from Mohammadpur in Dhaka; and Sahed Shimul, 24, son of Peyar Ahmed from Chhagalnaiya upazila in Feni. Both riders died on the spot, said Mainamati Crossing Highway Police Station OC Iqbal Bahar.

The incident took place in Jor Kanon area around 10:15pm, he said.

Govt sincere

FROM PAGE 3

today with the theme "Gender Equality in Digital Transformation", an official release said.

"I am delighted to learn that World Telecommunication and Information Society Day is going to be celebrated on May 17 in Bangladesh like elsewhere in the world," he added.

The chief adviser said, "Equal participation of men

and women in all the sectors of digital transformation and utilisation of telecommunication service and IT, is a prerequisite for building a discrimination-free and modern society."

Yunus said the interim government is committed to ensure equal opportunities and rights for men and women in all the segments of digital transformation by upholding the spirit of July mass uprising.

200 held in joint

FROM PAGE 3

stolen mobile phones and passports, smuggled sugar and spices, unauthorised medicines, and cash were recovered during the operations.

They were handed over to local police stations for

interrogation and legal proceedings. The army has also been conducting regular patrols across the country to ensure public safety. In industrial areas, its presence has played a key role in calming worker unrest, the ISPR said.

2 years on, no justice

FROM PAGE 3

Mahbub, who is now elevated to the Appellate Division, and Justice Muhammad Mahbub Ul Islam issued a rule.

The court asked the authorities concerned to explain why Jasmine's detention without any prior case should not be declared illegal.

The HC also asked them to show causes as to why they should not be directed to take action against the Rab members who had detained her. It also directed the cabinet secretary to form a high-powered probe committee.

Rab's then director general MKhushid Hossain told the parliamentary standing committee on April 5, 2023, that Jasmine's "murder" had "tarnished the image of the country, Rab, and the government," acknowledging the involvement of the local Rab camp.

The government's probe body submitted its report on August 17, 2023, to the HC led by Justice Farah Mahbub. The same bench on October 15 found

the report vague and unsatisfactory.

The court scheduled a hearing on the rule for November 29, 2023.

However, as jurisdiction of the bench has been reconstituted by the then chief justice Obaidul Hassan as a "routine work", and the HC is yet to hold a hearing and deliver its verdict, said petitioner Manoj.

"I mentioned the rule before two other High Court benches, but they declined to hear it, saying they are junior to Justice Mahbub," said Manoj. He said he plans to bring the matter before another bench.

Contacted, Md Nazmul Haque Mantu, maternal uncle of Jasmine, said over the phone that no one was held accountable and put on trial over Jasmine's death in Rab's custody.

He said Jasmine had no charges against her before she was picked up.

"I didn't file any case over her custodial death because the High Court had already issued a rule," he said.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 646 OF 2025
IN THE MATTER OF:
An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) & Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994.
IN THE MATTER OF:
Md. Shawkat Hossain, son of Late Mohabbat Ali, Shareholder and Managing Director of Maple Leaf Hotel & Resorts Ltd., registered address at Plot-01, Rad-01, Uttara-01, Dhaka. -----Petitioner
-VERSUS-
The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms, TCB Bhawan (6th Floor), Kawnar Bazar, Dhaka-1215 and another. -----Respondents
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh by the petitioner for permission of the said Hon'ble Court to hold Annual General Meeting for the year 2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024 of Maple Leaf Hotel & Resorts Ltd., registered address at Plot-01, Rad-01, Uttara-01, Dhaka, incorporated on 04/08/2013, upon condonation of delay. The said application has been moved before the Court of Mr. Justice Ahmed Sohel, the Hon'ble Judge of the Company Court, High Court Division, Bangladesh Supreme Court, was pleased to pass an order on 27/04/2025 admitting said application. Any person interested in the said application may appear before the said Hon'ble Court. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of charges.
(Muhammed Arifujjaman Khan)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Room No. 216 (Annex), SCBA, Dhaka. Mobile: 01715-014714

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION
COMPANY MATTER NO. 712/2025
An application under Sections 81(2) read with Section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994.
AND
IN THE MATTER OF:
Mr. Mohammad Faruk Hossain, Managing Director of SINGAPORE BANGLADESH SERVICES LIMITED, C-11141 Address: Berun (Soytala), Jamgara, Ashulia, Dhaka. -----Petitioner
-VERSUS-
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms, 1, Kawnar Bazar, 6th Floor, TCB Bhawan, Dhaka-1215. -----Respondent.
Notice is hereby given in the effect that an application under Sections 81(2) read with Section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994, was moved in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh by the petitioner for condone the delay of holding the Annual General Meeting of the company name and style as "SINGAPORE BANGLADESH SERVICES LIMITED" The Hon'ble company Judge, MR. JUSTICE AHMED SOHEL has admitted the said application on 4th May 2025 and fixed for compliance on 22nd June 2025 Any person interested in the said application may appear before the Hon'ble court. A copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on the payment of charges.
Ripon Chandra Biswas, Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh Hall Room no. 01 (Main) Supreme Court Bar Building, Dhaka. Mobile No. 01712-0512513

আধুনিক ফুড ফ্যাক্টরী ভাড়া হবে

ঢাকার ধামরাইতে বিসিক শিল্প নগরীর সন্নিহিতে প্রধান সড়কের কাছে অবস্থিত উৎপাদনক্ষম সকল সুযোগ-সুবিধাসহ প্রতীক ফুড এন্ড এলাইভ লিঃ কারখানাটি সম্পূর্ণ কার্যকর ও চালু অবস্থায় জাপান, চায়না ও ইন্ডিয়া হইতে আমদানিকৃত অত্যাধুনিক স্বয়ংক্রিয় যন্ত্রপাতি (নুডলস, ডেইরী মিল্ক, ক্যাভি, বিস্কুট, টোস্ট, পাউডার ড্রিংক, পিনাটবার, কুকিজ, প্রোডাকশন লাইন ইত্যাদি) সংবলিত ৯৯,০০০ (নিরানব্বই হাজার) বর্গফুটের (প্রতি ফ্লোর ১৬৫০০ বর্গফুট) ৬-তলা বিশিষ্ট কারখানাটি ভাড়া দেওয়া হবে। ভাড়া নিতে প্রকৃত আগ্রহীদের যোগাযোগ করার জন্য আহবান করা হল।

protik group প্রতীক গ্রুপ অব কোম্পানীজ লিঃ এর পক্ষে-
কারখানা-ডাউটিয়া, কালামপুর, ধামরাই, ঢাকা-১৩৫০ ফোন-০১৯৬৩৬০৮৫১৬, ০১৩৩২৮১১৮১৫

6 killed, 40 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed and 40 others injured in four districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents and a news agency.

In Bandarban, a man was killed and at least 20 others were injured after a car plunged into a ravine in Alikadam upazila yesterday morning.

The accident occurred around 11:00am near Jobiram Para in the Kolarjhiri area of the upazila, said police.

The deceased was identified as Thoingya Mro, 25. All passengers onboard the vehicle were members of the Mro community and residents of the same village.

At least 20 others were injured in the accident, 10 of whom sustained critical injuries. They were sent to Cox's Bazar Christian Memorial Hospital for advanced treatment. The remaining injured are undergoing treatment at the Alikadam Upazila Health Complex, confirmed Mirza Zahid Uddin, officer-in-charge of Alikadam Police Station.

"The B-70 jeep [the car] lost control and fell about 50 feet down the hill... Police and fire service personnel reached the scene, and further details are being gathered," the OC added.

According to eyewitness, Menwai Mro, who was also attending the wedding, the car was en route to a wedding ceremony in Menpa Mro Para of Kolarjhiri from Tongpong Mro Para.

The vehicle was carrying 34 people, most of them women and children, which was far beyond its capacity.

In Dhaka, an unidentified woman was killed after being hit by a vehicle in the capital's Banani early yesterday, reports UNB.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



A local fisherman collects shrimp fry using a net in a river adjacent to the Sundarbans in Khulna. Each day during high tide, he sets up the net and lifts it just before low tide to gather the shrimp fry. He collects around 600 to 800 fry daily and sells each bundle of 1,000 fry for Tk 2,200-2,500. The photo was taken from the Sutarkhali River in Kalabagi, Dacope upazila recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Fire guts over 100 shops in Munshiganj

UNB, Dhaka

More than 100 shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Sreenagar Bazar of Munshiganj district early yesterday.

Deputy Assistant Director of Munshiganj Fire Service and Civil Defence Shafiqul Islam said the fire started from a yogurt shop around 2:00am.

Initially, the night guards, accompanied by others, tried to douse the flame but had failed, and sought help from the Fire Service, he said.

Five firefighting units rushed to the spot and doused the flame after around six hours of effort at 8:00am, the fire service official said.

The cause of the fire could not be known yet, he said.

Manzurul Islam, owner of a wholesale shop in the bazar, said he had rushed from nearby Harpara village in an attempt to save his business but to no avail.

BNP's politics now runs on AL money

Says Hasnat Abdullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (South) of the National Citizen Party (NCP), yesterday claimed that the politics of the BNP is now being funded by the Awami League.

"We have managed to ban the activities of the Awami League, but their financial network is still out of reach," he said as chief guest at an event held in Cumilla, in honour of injured and martyred of the anti-discrimination student movement.

Hasnat said, "Just as the politics of many upazilas in Cumilla is run by Awami League money, similarly, BNP's politics is also now financed by the Awami League. Those who are BNP leaders here, please don't consider us your enemies. I'm saying this for your own good. There are many upazilas in Cumilla where the politics of all parties has now been sold out to Awami League's money."

Pointing at Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, he said, "Those involved in the murders are out on bail, walking beside the families of martyrs. This is not only the government's failure but also the failure of Sir Asif Nazrul."

Hasnat said, "If the interim government thinks there are bigger reforms than the trials of the killers and the Awami League, they are mistaken. Justice for the killers is the first and foremost reform of this interim government." The event was organised by the District and Metropolitan Students Against Discrimination and was attended by leaders from various political parties, including NCP, BNP, Khelafat Majlish, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, and the AB Party.

NETROKONA'S UPLANDS

Rain, labour shortage delay paddy harvest

JAYDUL ISLAM

While paddy harvesting in the haor regions of Netrokona has been completed, farmers in the district's non-haor areas are still facing severe difficulties due to equipment shortages, natural disasters, and lack of labour.

The non-haor regions, make up of roughly 144,385 hectares of cultivated land.

Many farmers from villages in Sadar, Barhata, and Purbadhala upazilas expressed concern to this newspaper during a visit on Thursday.

Fazlul Haque, a farmer from Uradighi village in Barhata upazila, said the persistent rain had disrupted his harvest.

"Because of the rain, I couldn't harvest all my paddy. It's all ripe now. But there's a shortage of harvester machines. We can't find labourers either, and the few that



are available are charging very high wages," he said.

Md Sekandar Ali, a farmer from Khatib Nagua village in Netrokona Sadar upazila, said two boys from their village were struck by lightning while fishing in the rain.

"Now the workers are afraid to

go into the fields. And the rain just won't stop. Most of the harvesters have also moved to other areas," he added.

Mohammad Nuruzzaman, deputy director of the Netrokona District Department of Agricultural

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Take steps to stop cattle smuggling

Livestock adviser directs law enforcers ahead of Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter yesterday warned against attempts by unscrupulous traders to smuggle in cattle from neighbouring countries ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, saying such activities must be stopped.

She said the Ministry of Home Affairs has already instructed the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and the River Police to strengthen surveillance along land and river borders to prevent illegal cattle entry.

"Some dishonest traders may try to bring in foreign livestock centring Eid. This must not be allowed," she told a meeting of divisional fisheries and livestock officials at the Rajshahi Circuit House.

Farida noted that a high-level meeting has already been held at the ministry to address the issue of cross-border livestock movement.

During the same meeting, she also announced that mobile veterinary clinics will be set up at district-level cattle markets by the Department of Livestock Services, where veterinary surgeons will be available to provide medical care for livestock in the lead-up to Eid.

She said basic healthcare services would also be

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

MAHESHKHALI CHANNEL

LGED building jetty without BIWTA approval



MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Ignoring objections, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Cox's Bazar is constructing a jetty in and on the foreshore of the Maheshkhali Channel, the most important waterway in South Chattogram that flows into the Bay of Bengal.

The unauthorised structure, built without a proper feasibility study, has raised serious concerns over siltation that may eventually fill up the channel.

For the project, LGED felled thousands of mangrove trees along the channel's bank.

Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain, adviser to the Ministry of Shipping and Labour, expressed dissatisfaction during a visit to Cox's Bazar on April 24, noting that the jetty was erected without approval from the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and involved illegal tree felling.

Nayan Shil, deputy director (Port) of BIWTA, said the Maheshkhali Channel plays a critical role in draining water from South

Chattogram to the Bay of Bengal and is now at risk of sedimentation due to LGED's unauthorised construction.

"We had sent them a letter to stop the work when it started. But the government body didn't pay heed to our objection," said Nayan, who was earlier posted in Cox's Bazar. He said a new letter is being prepared to halt the construction.

"If anyone wants to construct anything on a river, water channel or its foreshore, they must take approval from BIWTA. LGED didn't take our permission. They violated the rules," he said.

A recent visit to the site revealed ongoing piling work in the channel and foreshore, with thousands of mangrove trees already cut at Gorokghata area of Maheshkhali upazila.

Though LGED is building the jetty in the main channel, there is an older jetty about 300 metres inside the Gorokghata canal, connected to the channel and close to the new construction site.

Mohammad Boni Amin, upazila engineer of LGED in Maheshkhali,

said the under-construction jetty is 700 metres long and 7.3 metres wide, with a 300-metre connecting road. The Tk 36.48 crore project began in April 2023.

"The foundation work has been completed. The old jetty is only 10 feet wide while ours is 24 feet. This project is for the public interest of the area," Boni Amin said.

The mangrove trees were planted during the 2003-04 fiscal year to form a natural coastal protection barrier. On July 31, 2023, the Coastal Afforestation Division, Chattogram, sent an objection letter to the LGED office in Cox's Bazar stating that prior approval from the environment ministry is mandatory for cutting such trees.

Mamun Khan, executive engineer of Cox's Bazar LGED, said they took permission from the Forest Department but not from BIWTA. He also claimed the jetty would not cause sedimentation in the channel.

The engineer could not confirm whether a feasibility study was conducted before starting the jetty's construction.

Man held with 2,820 yaba pills at Dhaka airport

UNB, Dhaka

A man was arrested with 2,820 pieces of yaba tablets hidden in his stomach at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, said Airport Armed Police Battalion yesterday.

A case has been filed under the Narcotics Control Act with the Airport police in this connection.

On information, the arrestee, Hossain Ahmed, 60, was detained near the northern side of the airport's Balaka building after arriving in Dhaka from Cox's Bazar on Biman Bangladesh domestic flight BS-152 on Wednesday.

Upon questioning, Hossain admitted to carrying yaba pills inside his stomach.

He was taken to the airport medical unit, where an X-ray revealed 30 capsule-shaped objects in his abdomen.

He was later transferred to Kurmitola General Hospital, where, under medical supervision, he expelled 30 tape-wrapped packets through natural means. Inside the packets, a total of 2,820 yaba tablets were found.

Police said Hossain had long been involved in drug trafficking.

Airport Armed Police said over 16,000 yaba pills were recovered in separate recent drives, which led to the arrest of five other drug traffickers.



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Global acute hunger hits new high

UN-backed report says 2025 outlook ‘bleak’ as humanitarian aid falters

AFP, Paris

More than 295 million people faced acute hunger last year, a new high driven by conflict as well as other crises – and the outlook is “bleak” for 2025 as humanitarian aid falters, a UN-backed report said yesterday.

It was the sixth consecutive annual increase in the number of people hit with acute food insecurity, according to the Global Report on Food Crises.

A total of 295.3 million people endured “high levels” of acute food insecurity last year in 53 of the 65 countries analysed for the report.

“From Gaza and Sudan, to Yemen and Mali, catastrophic hunger driven by conflict and other factors is hitting record highs, pushing households to the edge of starvation,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report.



“The message is stark. Hunger and malnutrition are spreading faster than our ability to respond, yet globally, a third of all food produced is lost or wasted,” he said.

Conflict and violence were the primary drivers in 20 countries and territories, where 140 million people faced acute hunger, the report found.

Extreme weather was to blame in 18 countries and “economic shocks” in 15 nations, together affecting a total of 155 million people.

The report warned that the outlook was “bleak” for 2025 as major donor countries have substantially reduced humanitarian funding.

“This is more than a failure of systems – it is a failure of humanity,” Guterres said.

“Hunger in the 21st century is indefensible. We cannot respond to empty stomachs with empty hands and turned backs,” he said.



Democratic Alliance (AD) party leader and Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro gestures as he takes part in a street rally in Lisbon yesterday, on the last day of the electoral campaign ahead of the snap elections tomorrow.

PHOTO: AFP

Gaza suffering from a ‘deliberate starvation’

Says Council of Europe, warns Israel sowing ‘seeds for next Hamas’ in the territory

AFP, Strasbourg

The Council of Europe yesterday said Gaza was suffering from a “deliberate starvation”, and warned that Israel was sowing “the seeds for the next Hamas” in the territory.

“The time for a moral reckoning over the treatment of Palestinians has come -- and it is long overdue,” said Dora Bakoyannis, rapporteur for the Middle East at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The 46-member Council of Europe works to safeguard human rights and democracy.

“No cause, no matter how just or pure, can ever justify every means,” Bakoyannis said in a statement.

“The mass killing of children and unarmed civilians, the deliberate starvation, and the relentless pain and humiliation inflicted upon Palestinians in Gaza must end.”

Since March 2, Israeli forces have blocked all humanitarian aid entering Gaza for its 2.4 million inhabitants, now threatened with famine, according to several NGOs.

US President Donald Trump said earlier yesterday that “a lot of people are starving” in the besieged territory.

Bakoyannis said that “it takes a smart and brave nation to recognise when its actions are causing more harm than good. What is unfolding in Gaza helps no-one”.

Breaking a two-month ceasefire, Israel resumed its offensive on March 18, with the declared goal of obtaining the release of all hostages still held in Gaza.

Israeli retaliation for Hamas’ attack on October 7, 2023, has resulted in the death of 1,218 people on the Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to AFP data based on official figures.

UN rights office in ‘very serious’ financial situation

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights office based in Geneva says it is facing a dire financial situation amid deep US funding cuts, but its chief insisted there is no “panic”.

News reports this week suggested that the funding chaos gripping the United Nations had left its human rights agency panicked over a dramatic budget shortfall.

“I have seen and read all sorts of unfounded rumours: that we are all moving to Vienna, that 70 percent of staff will move to the field except management,” UN rights chief Volker Turk told a town hall meeting with staff on Thursday, according to excerpts seen by AFP.

“None of this is true.”

Swiss daily Le Temps reported on Thursday that “a wind of panic” was sweeping over the agency, suggesting it was considering relocating away from pricey Geneva to Vienna, Nairobi and other sites.

Reports of mass layoffs and cuts to operations have become commonplace at UN agencies since US President Donald Trump’s return to power in January.

Thai tycoon surrenders over skyscraper collapse

AFP, Bangkok

A Thai construction tycoon turned himself in yesterday to face charges of alleged negligence over the collapse of a skyscraper that killed dozens of people in a powerful earthquake, police said.

The 30-storey Bangkok tower crumbled in seconds, killing 89 people, mostly construction workers, when a magnitude 7.7 tremor hit neighbouring Myanmar on March 28.

The building being constructed to house the State Audit Office was the only structure to collapse in the Thai capital, raising serious concerns about safety standards and oversight.

A Thai court on Thursday issued arrest warrants for 17 people on charges of “professional negligence causing death”.





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On behalf of **Pidilite**



Mahdin Choudhury
Barrister-at-Law, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Partner, Eden Chambers, 28/A (3rd Floor), Shegunbagicha, Dhaka-1000

A man holds placards as he yells toward a patrol car near a burning barricade during a protest against gang-related violence and to demand the resignation of Haiti’s transitional presidential council, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Repeal ‘draconian decree’ dissolving political parties

UN rights chief urges Mali

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday called on Mali to immediately repeal a decree dissolving political parties and to “fully restore political rights in the country”.

The military government on Tuesday dissolved the west African country’s political parties, according to a presidency decree, the latest attempt to clamp down on the opposition.

Opposition parties had feared the move for weeks, banding together into a hundred-party coalition to demonstrate in a rare act of open defiance since back-to-back coups in 2020 and 2021 brought the army to power.

“The Transitional President should repeal this draconian decree,” UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

“Any restrictions of political participation must be consistent with

Mali’s international human rights law obligations.”

The UN rights office pointed to the arrests of at least three members of the opposition following protests sparked by the planned dissolution of political parties.

“Their whereabouts are currently unknown, the latest victims in a pattern of enforced disappearances that dates back to at least 2021,” the statement said.

Turk called on “the transitional authorities to release those who have been arrested on politically motivated grounds and to fully restore political rights in the country”.

“They must protect civic space and ensure an environment in which all people can enjoy all their rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.”

Two climbers die on Everest

REUTERS, Kathmandu

An Indian climber and another from the Philippines became the first mountaineers to die on Mount Everest in the current March-May climbing season of the world’s highest peak, hiking officials said yesterday.

Subrata Ghosh, 45, from India, died on Thursday below the Hillary Step while returning after reaching the 8,849 metre peak.

“He refused to descend from below the Hillary Step,” said Bodhraj Bhandari of Nepal’s Snowy Horizon Treks and Expedition organising company. No other details were available.

The Hillary Step is located in the ‘death zone’, an area between 8,000-metre (26,250 ft) high South Col and the summit where the level of natural oxygen is inadequate for survival.

SPYING ALLEGATION

Swedish envoy
found dead in
Stockholm

AFP, Stockholm

A Swedish diplomat arrested over the weekend in Stockholm on charges of spying and released days later has been found dead, media reported yesterday, with the foreign ministry confirming an employee had died.

The Swedish Security Service (Sapo) on Monday announced the arrest, but gave no details about the case or the suspect's identity. The following day, broadcaster SVT said the man arrested was a top diplomat.

On Wednesday, prosecutors released him from custody but said that he was still a suspect.

"We regret to confirm that a member of the foreign service has died. Out of consideration for the next of kin, we will not go into further details," the foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP yesterday.

Newspaper Expressen meanwhile reported that the man who had been found dead overnight was the one detained suspected of spying.



Palestinian men check burnt out vehicles in the Barkan Industrial area, near Salfit in the occupied West Bank, yesterday, after more than 17 Palestinian workers' cars were reportedly set on fire by Israeli settlers the night before.

PHOTO: AFP

Make a quick decision
on American proposal

Trump urges Iran on nuclear deal, warns 'something bad will happen' otherwise

AFP, Abu Dhabi

US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Iran should make a quick decision on an American proposal for a nuclear deal or "something bad will happen".

Speaking in Abu Dhabi as he capped a Gulf tour, Trump said his administration had handed Iran a proposal for an agreement, adding that "they know they have to move quickly or something bad is going to happen".

Meanwhile, Iranian senior diplomat Kazem Gharibabadi said yesterday that the latest status of the Iran-US negotiations was discussed during talks with European powers in Istanbul.

"We exchanged views and discussed the latest state of the indirect nuclear negotiations and the lifting of sanctions," said deputy foreign minister Gharibabadi in a post on X, adding that "if necessary, we will meet again to continue the talks."



On Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Tehran has no objection to US companies operating in the country, including in the oil and gas sector.

"We have no ban on the economic presence of American companies in Iran," Araghchi said, attributing the lack of US business activity to primary sanctions imposed by Washington.

"This ban has been imposed by the United States itself," he said.

"If American companies wish to invest in Iran's economy, the US must lift its own primary sanctions."

His remarks come after President Donald Trump said Washington was "getting close" to a new nuclear deal with Tehran to replace the one he abandoned during his first term in 2018.

The longtime foes have held four rounds of Omani-brokered negotiations since April 12 in their highest level of engagement since Trump's walkout effectively scuppered the 2015 deal.

Polio
outbreak
declared in
PNG

AFP, Sydney

A polio outbreak has been declared in Papua New Guinea, sparking concern about the disease's spread in a country with low vaccination rates, health officials said.

Poliovirus, most often spread through sewage and contaminated water, is highly infectious and potentially fatal.

It can cause deformities and paralysis and mainly affects children under five years old.

The virus was detected in wastewater and environmental samples in the nation's capital Port Moresby and second largest city Lae, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

'Concerned' over
challenges to
global trade: APEC

AFP, Jeju

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group said yesterday that it was "concerned" over the challenges to global trade, as ministers from APEC countries met in South Korea in the shadow of growing woes from US tariffs.

Trade ministers from the top economies that make up APEC are meeting on South Korea's Jeju Island amid concerns for the global trading system since US President Donald Trump unveiled bombshell levies on most partners.

The United States is a key APEC member and was represented by Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who held a series of bilateral meetings with nations eager to soften the blow of Washington's tariffs. "We are concerned with the fundamental challenges faced by the global trading system," trade ministers from the 21-member group, which includes China, said in a joint statement.

They urged greater cooperation, saying they "remain committed" to APEC as a means of "bringing us together to address the economic challenges facing our region".

South Korea's Minister for Trade, Cheong In-Kyo, said the joint statement was hard-won, with "significant differences" in positions clear early on in the talks.

World Press Photo
suspends credit
for 'Napalm Girl'
picture

AFP, Amsterdam

World Press Photo yesterday suspended the credit for who took one of the most iconic pictures in history, the Vietnam War image "Napalm Girl", after doubts were raised over the photograph's authorship.

The organisation, which awards one of the world's most prestigious photojournalism prizes, said it carried out its own investigation into the haunting 1972 photo – which shows a nine-year-old girl fleeing naked from a napalm strike – after the premiere of the film "The Stringer".

The documentary chronicles an investigation into rumours that the image, which helped change global perceptions of the US war in Vietnam, was taken by a little-known local freelance, not the Associated Press (AP) staff photographer Nick Ut, who won a Pulitzer Prize for the photo.



Israel intercepts
missile from
Yemen

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli military said it intercepted a missile fired from Yemen on Thursday evening and air raid sirens sounded in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The attack was claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels. It was the third time in as many days that Israel's air defences intercepted a missile that the military said was fired from Yemen.

The Iran-backed Houthis said in a statement that they had targeted Tel Aviv's international airport. "Following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several areas in Israel, a missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted," an Israeli military statement said.



Campaigners for a change in the law on assisted dying hold placards outside The Palace of Westminster, home to the Houses of Parliament in central London, yesterday, as amendments to the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill are due to be debated in the House of Commons.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia deliberately hit journos'
hotels in Ukraine: NGOs

AFP, Paris

Russia has deliberately targeted hotels used by journalists covering its war on Ukraine, the NGOs Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Truth Hounds said yesterday, calling the strikes "war crimes".

At least 31 Russian strikes hit 25 hotels from the start of Russia's full scale invasion in February 2022 to mid-March 2025, the two organisations said in a report.

One attack in August 2024 in the eastern city of Kramatorsk killed a safety adviser working with international news agency Reuters, Ryan Evans.

The hotels hit were mostly located near the front lines, the organisations said.

Just one was being used for



military purposes.

"The others housed civilians, including journalists," said RSF and Truth Hounds, a Ukrainian organisation founded to document war crimes in the country.

"In total, 25 journalists and media professionals have found themselves under these hotel bombings, and at least seven have

been injured," they said.

At least 15 of the strikes were carried out with high-precision Iskander 9K720 missiles, they said, condemning "methodical and coordinated targeting".

"The Russian strikes against hotels hosting journalists in Ukraine are neither accidental nor random," Pauline Maufrais, RSF regional officer for Ukraine, said in a statement.

"These attacks are part of a larger strategy to sow terror and seek to reduce coverage of the war. By targeting civilian infrastructure, they violate international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes."

RSF says 13 journalists have been killed covering Russia's invasion, 12 of them on Ukrainian territory.

DETAINED PEOPLE
France sues
Iran at top
UN court

AFP, Paris

Paris has filed a case against Tehran at the top UN court over two French citizens who have been held in Iran for three years, the French foreign minister said yesterday.

The announcement comes as Iranian negotiators met with their counterparts from the UK, France, and Germany in Turkey.

Cecile Kohler, a 40-year-old literature teacher from eastern France and her partner Jacques Paris, in his 70s, were arrested on May 7, 2022, on the last day of a tourist trip to Iran.

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Better protections for migrant workers vital

HRW report on migrant deaths in KSA raises fresh alarm

Only the other day, we ran an editorial on the stream of coffins carrying migrant workers home. Activists have long questioned the official narrative that most of these deaths resulted from “natural causes”—stroke, brain haemorrhage, heart attack, etc—highlighting that the deceased were often not old enough to have had serious pre-existing health issues. According to one estimate, 4,813 bodies of migrant workers were brought back in 2024 alone. Unfortunately, these bodies are not re-autopsied upon arrival, leaving question marks about the true causes of death, especially amid allegations of abuse and exploitation in a number of destination countries, especially in the Middle East.

Now, an investigation by Human Rights Watch (HRW) has added fresh urgency to these concerns, revealing that migrant workers from Bangladesh, India and Nepal died in gruesome yet preventable workplace-related accidents in Saudi Arabia. It has also confirmed the suspicion that many such deaths are classified as “natural,” and are neither investigated nor compensated as employers often evade their obligation under Saudi law that requires them to bear the costs of repatriation of the remains. For instance, HRW has found that the “No Objection Certificate” given to a Bangladeshi worker who died of “electrocution” marked the possibility of compensation as “no,” with the cause of death as “not available.” His son revealed that his employer had said that they would get compensation if they agreed on a burial on Saudi soil, which they rejected, and therefore had to pay more than Tk 5 lakh to repatriate the body, leaving them in debt.

Similarly, the families of nine deceased Bangladeshi workers have told HRW that their employers offered lump sum payments or coverage of monthly expenses provided that the dead are buried in Saudi Arabia, which most rejected despite their dire economic conditions. It goes without saying that the circumstances surrounding such deaths and the cruelties of employers or Kafils (sponsors) only add to the agony of surviving family members. The accounts provided by HRW also offer horrifying details about the deceased. Some died after falling from buildings due to lack of safety gear; some were crushed under heavy machinery or concrete blocks; others were electrocuted or fatally injured while operating unfamiliar equipment. In one case, a worker was decapitated when a machine was accidentally turned on. These are not isolated tragedies but symptoms of a systemic failure to ensure even the most basic protections for workers.

Saudi Arabia’s General Organization for Social Insurance—funded no less by a two percent salary contribution—provides mandatory coverage for work-related injuries and deaths. But the families HRW spoke to said that accessing this was a long, uphill battle and often tied to local burials. Moreover, employers often do not pay overdue wages and end-of-service benefits. This state of affairs is totally unacceptable. We urge the government to take the HRW report with the seriousness it deserves. It must engage with Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, to ensure proper compliance of their own laws as well as better safety protections and social security for our workers. These rights violations cannot go on indefinitely.

Stern actions needed to save our ECAs

Protect Sonadia Island from the encroachment of shrimp enclosures

Despite being declared an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2006, the Sonadia Island in Cox’s Bazar continues to suffer massive environmental destruction. Clearly, the existing High Court orders and government directives to protect the area have gone unheeded as local land grabbers, backed by political actors emerging after the 2024 mass uprising, continue to destroy the island’s mangrove forests for shrimp farming.

The nine-sq-km island hosts a rich ecosystem, including endangered green turtles, red crabs, 250 fish species, 170 bird species, dolphins, foxes, monitor lizards, fishing cats, and a wide variety of plant species. However, a recent *Prothom Alo* report revealed that over 1,000 acres of mangrove forest on the island—including around one lakh *keora* and *bain* trees—were burnt overnight using petrol to build seven new shrimp enclosures.

This continues a long and troubling legacy of shrimp-related encroachments in Sonadia. During the Awami League’s rule, more than 3,000 acres were cleared for 37 shrimp farms. While AL leaders were accused of enabling the deforestation before the party’s fall in August, locals now blame Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders for the recent clearing. But if you ask, leaders of both parties would deny any involvement. What’s worse, the state itself has also been complicit. In 2017, the then government leased over 8,000 acres of forestland and 2,700 acres of ECA to the Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) for a supposed eco-tourism project. To date, no eco-tourism facilities exist. In November 2024, the High Court stayed the lease and ordered the local administration to stop tree felling and shrimp farming on the island.

Despite this, the number of shrimp farms now stands at 44. In April, two interim government advisers, during their visit to the area, instructed local authorities to evict illegal enclosures, yet no action followed. Forest officials cite a lack of manpower and the threat posed by armed guards hired by shrimp enclosure owners. Local environmentalists allege that vested interests across the board are benefiting from the farms and thus resist enforcement. Under these circumstances, issuing orders is not enough. The government must take firm action to ensure compliance. It must empower the Forest Department with adequate staffing, resources, and financial incentives, and engage local communities in the process of protecting biodiversity. We cannot lose an ecologically delicate and biodiverse island to the monoculture of shrimp farming.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

School segregation outlawed in US

On this day in 1954, lawyer Thurgood Marshall scored a landmark victory as the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

Time to forge a strategic consensus on national interests



RASHED AL MAHMUD TITUMIR

Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir is professor in the Department of Development Studies at the University of Dhaka.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

The mass uprising of 2024 marked a pivotal moment for us to forge a lasting consensus on national interest and security. Yet, this imperative remains marginal in public discourse, despite its foundational importance in today’s shifting global and regional contexts. Throughout history, nations that have charted sustainable paths have done so by cultivating a strategic culture. In its absence, stability and developmental progress risk faltering.

Bangladesh has already missed at least two critical junctures to build such a consensus. The first came after the 1971 Liberation War, when the powerful unity of the time could have been harnessed to establish a robust national security framework grounded in the principles of sovereignty, equality, and justice. The second opportunity came in 1991, after the fall of dictatorship, when this crucial task was left unfinished despite the restoration of democracy.

Now, a third window of opportunity has opened. It is incumbent upon our political parties to embrace and work on this vital agenda, grounding their approach in the principles of *strategic autonomy* (the capacity to make independent decisions) and *developmental deterrence* (the assurance of peace, stability, and rights) as the bedrock of progress.

The July Charter, therefore, must incorporate a clear commitment that, following the elections, all political parties will work collaboratively towards establishing a national consensus on our core interests, national security policies, and the institutional frameworks needed to uphold them—including the formation of a National Security Council. Consensus on national interests cannot remain abstract; it must be institutionalised through a strategic culture.

Strategic culture
Strategic cultures are not born of inertia. They are forged in moments

of crisis, conflict, or transformation. After its 1962 defeat to China, India reorganised its defence posture, moving beyond a purely Gandhian ethos to a deterrence-based policy grounded in self-reliance. China, over decades, has defined its core interests with clarity: supremacy of the Communist Party, territorial integrity, sovereignty, and developmental continuity.

Across the Atlantic, the United States has consistently framed its national interest through strategic doctrines—from Monroe to Truman—tying economic prosperity to geopolitical dominance. After the trauma of 1940, France reasserted its sovereignty under de Gaulle, withdrawing from NATO’s military command in 1966 while acquiring independent nuclear capability.

Post-Meiji Japan prioritised industrialisation and national consolidation. Vietnam, emerging from colonialism and war, placed reunification and socialist reconstruction at the heart of its strategic identity. Indonesia rooted its national security in the Pancasila, an indigenous philosophy integrating moral and ideological values.

These cases affirm that it is often

moments of rupture that compel nations to define their interests, and that strategic culture must extend far beyond military doctrine, encompassing education, diplomacy, and development planning.

Strategic autonomy and developmental deterrence
For Bangladesh, the path forward lies in building a national security

architecture grounded in strategic autonomy and developmental deterrence. This is not deterrence in the classical, militaristic sense, but a strategic doctrine that ensures stable conditions for unimpeded development. Singapore’s modernisation of its defence capabilities—not for aggression, but to safeguard its economic trajectory—offers a telling example.

Bangladesh must capitalise on its demographic dividend and strategic location in the Bay of Bengal. A peaceful and prosperous Bay—the largest in the world—should be central to its foreign policy vision, while defence policy must ensure credible deterrence. Amid Indo-Pacific rivalries and regional instability (e.g. conflicts in Myanmar), strategic autonomy will help Bangladesh navigate such complexities without entanglement.

Four scenarios of engagement
Imagine four scenarios of engagement: aligning with a neighbour; leaning towards a superpower; pursuing a balancing act; and adopting an independent, mutually inclusive strategy.

The first—aligning with a neighbour—may bring tactical

Underinvestment threatens our demographic dividend



Shafa Tasneem is research associate at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). She can be reached at shafa.tasneem211@gmail.com.

SHAFATASNEEM

Bangladesh has roughly 15 years left to enjoy its first demographic dividend. But have we been able to connect all the necessary dots of developing our human capital to harness the benefits of this unique opportunity? According to the Human Capital Index by the World Bank, if a child is born in Bangladesh, they will be 46 percent productive even if they grow up enjoying complete education and full health. This percentage is lower than the South Asian and Lower Middle Income Countries’ (LMIC) average of 48 percent. The youth employment scenario is not satisfactory either. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2022, around 22 percent of the youth in Bangladesh are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The crisis is more pronounced among the female youth as they comprise 65.5 percent of the total unemployed population.

The major challenge lies in prioritisation of the policies and the lack of consistent follow-up mechanisms. It is seen that while Bangladesh could make some notable achievements by focusing on the “low-hanging fruits,” we could not harvest our “high-hanging fruits” much.

In the education sector, the country has attained notable success in primary school enrolment rate, achieving gender parity at the primary and secondary levels and distributing free textbooks countrywide. According to the Annual Primary School Census 2021, the net enrolment rate in primary education is 97.42 percent, with girls comprising 49.54 percent of the total enrolled. Targeted interventions like the

1993 Compulsory Primary Education Act, Food for Education, Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) and stipend programmes contributed to this success. Along with the government interventions, a major role in this success was played by the

immunisation, reducing maternal mortality through initiatives like the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). The initiatives were largely supported by external funding and targeted, vertical programmes. However, core systemic issues persist. We have high out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure, a critical shortage of skilled healthcare professionals, urban-rural disparities, and a growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Bangladesh has only 0.7 physicians per 1,000 people, which is lower than WHO’s recommended minimum of 1:1000. Combined with the lowest health

as an indicator for demographic dividend, the study attempted to find out whether government spending on human capital influences employment growth both in the short and long terms for Bangladesh. In the short run, increasing government spending on education leads to a significant immediate boost. For every unit increase in education spending, there is a 5.39 unit improvement, while in the long run, the impact is slightly smaller (0.24 units increase). Similarly, a one unit rise in healthcare spending results in a 10.38 unit rise in employment growth. However, there is a negative long-run effect of healthcare spending (-6.28 units).

The study result echoes the existing literature highlighting that while education and health spending yield quick returns in employment, sustaining that impact over time may require deeper structural reforms and higher investments. Without well-targeted planning, the long-term impact on employment growth will be diminishing. To improve education quality in Bangladesh, it is essential to increase national budget allocations for teacher training, curriculum update, and enhancement of employability of graduates from both tertiary and technical and vocational education systems. For health, increasing the budget in public healthcare services, hiring more nurses and doctors, emphasising nutrition for children, etc needs a much bigger focus.

Overall, Bangladesh needs to spend more on capacity-building to improve human capital, like training, research, and hiring more skilled professionals, rather than heavily investing in building infrastructure. Rather than focusing on achieving quick wins, we need to undertake structural, high-impact reforms to avoid stagnation despite early successes. A clear roadmap, political commitment, and evidence-based policymaking, along with higher public spending, are essential to translate short-term gains into sustainable development.

Bangladesh needs to spend more on capacity-building to improve human capital, like training, research, and hiring more skilled professionals, rather than heavily investing in building infrastructure. Rather than focusing on achieving quick wins, we need to undertake structural, high-impact reforms to avoid stagnation despite early successes.

development partners and NGOs.

On the other hand, due to a lack of timely and long-term planning, the quality of the education system has not improved much. The Human Capital Index found that the learning outcomes are severely low, especially in rural areas, reflected by 51 percent of the children not being able to read and understand a simple text by age 10. This results from a lack of deeper, systematic investment and reforms. Lack of investment is evident from the national budget. Bangladesh’s education budget as a percentage of GDP has consistently hovered around or below two percent over the last 15 years, significantly falling short of UNESCO’s recommended minimum investment of six percent of total GDP.

The healthcare sector shows a similar pattern. Bangladesh has had significant achievements in child

spending among 45 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in 2021, this limits the country’s ability to effectively tackle critical issues like malnutrition, urban health, NCDs, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). To fully benefit from its demographic window, Bangladesh must ensure a healthy, skilled, and productive population through stronger, sustained investments in healthcare systems, cross-sectoral collaboration, and long-term strategic planning, which currently lack adequate prioritisation and follow-through.

In an attempt to find the impact of government prioritisation in human capital, we conducted a study titled “Impact of Government Investment in Human Capital on Harnessing Bangladesh’s Demographic Dividend.” Considering employment growth

Men’s fear and women’s ‘just rights’



Anu Muhammad
is former professor of economics at
Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

“Whenever the question of women’s rights arises, excuses like religion or culture are used to stop it. Why?” This question was asked by a young woman from a Catholic family in Argentina. On another occasion, the same question came from a Sudanese Muslim woman. I am sure the same question exists in the minds of countless women in Bangladesh, too.

Everywhere—in homes, on the streets, in religious places—a number of men are eager to bring up religion whenever a women’s issue comes up. Often, we come across many men who are not religious themselves but try to use religion or culture to oppose women’s choices of clothing, lifestyle, occupations, etc. Regardless of their connection to religion, most men’s justifications tend to converge when it comes to women. This is evident across various faith systems not just in Bangladesh but across the world.

In the current Muslim inheritance law, the person who seems disadvantaged when a woman gains equal rights is the man, primarily the brother(s). If there is no brother, then the uncle(s) and their sons on the father’s side get a portion of the father’s property instead of the daughter(s) getting all of it. But were all those who started the panic over equal property rights just these brothers and uncles? It doesn’t seem so. Many in those crowds have daughters of their own. If their daughters get equal rights, what is their problem? Not many who protested equal inheritance rights have much property. What is this constant fear about, then, when it comes to women’s rights? Or are they being used as pawns by interest groups?

In Muslim family law, the reason for a woman’s smaller share of property has been that the man or men in the family would bear her full responsibility. But if this assumption no longer holds true, why won’t today’s religious scholars be open to updating the interpretations? In several countries—Turkey, Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco—religious scholars have taken steps to revise the law.

In Hindu and Buddhist societies, the tradition used to be giving a woman wealth or dowry during marriage. Sons inherited the father’s property, daughters didn’t get any share. Now, in India, equal inheritance rights for women and men have been provided legally. But in Hindu-Buddhist minority families in

Bangladesh, girls are still deprived, which is justified using religion.

In Bangladesh, the number of families where men provide for women is rapidly decreasing. In fact, among the poor, a significant number of households are run by women. In middle- and upper-class families, more and more women are working. Many women now carry the responsibility of financially supporting their families. Some argue that since women get a share from both their father’s and husband’s properties, they already receive more. However, after receiving a large share of inheritance from his father, doesn’t a man also keep an eye on his wife’s property?

It’s often assumed that all adult women are married, that their marriages are stable, and that they receive all their legal rights. But, research, field observations, and lived experiences show none of these are fully true. Unmarried, divorced or widowed women are excluded from these considerations.

There has been many cases where the inheritance that married women receive from their fathers exists only on paper. Most women still lack a stable place of their own. In some cases, their husbands pressure them to bring property from their fathers, while their brothers pressure them not to take it. If a woman takes her full share, she risks losing her connection with her natal family—the right to return, visit, or be loved.

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A woman’s right to her husband’s property is negligible, and often more theoretical than real. In both villages and cities, there are painful stories of cruelty and deprivation. Research shows that in rural farmers’ families, a woman’s working hours exceed those of men when counting all agricultural tasks, livestock care, and household work. Yet, her rights over property, maintaining which she has spent countless hours, remain uncertain. If she

one room structure on someone else’s land. She lives there with her sick mother, caring for and working hard to provide food for her. Her father had a small piece of land; her only brother took almost all of it, saying her share was spent on her dowry during her wedding. That marriage didn’t last. She returned home. The brother didn’t take her or their mother in. He says he can’t afford to feed them.

So now, women of two generations—

she has no daughter to look after her.

Inside and outside the home, many women in Bangladesh go through painful struggles. There are countless teenage girls whose lives are at risk of turning out like those of Yasmin, Tonu, and Munia. And those who survive such odds still face harassment every day. It is hard to find a girl or a woman who has not been teased or attacked by unruly males or thugs while walking on the street. Lately, my



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

manages the household with her husband, she might retain use of the property, but not ownership. If that partnership breaks down, everything—land, house, animals, crops—can disappear overnight. And if she also has no inheritance from her parents to fall back on, she is left with nothing. She may have to survive under the care of her son(s). But what if the sons refuse to do so? We often hear that sons take responsibility for ageing parents and therefore deserve a larger share of property than their sisters. But that is not always the reality. There have been countless cases where sons were found not caring for their elderly parents. Daughters, on the other hand, have been often found to have taken on that responsibility.

Let me give you an example. In my maternal grandmother’s village lives a girl named Pemi, who has speech impairment. Her hut is a

one denied property, the other with poor, uncertain income—live in a hut. Pemi tries to find work day and night to keep her mother alive. Sometimes she requests a local *hujur* for the treatment of her mother’s unknown illness. Sometimes, mother and daughter cry together—not a normal sob, but a terrifying, heart-wrenching wailing. The villagers understand: Pemi couldn’t bring along her child. Her former husband, backed by law, custom and patriarchal power, kept the child with him. Thinking about the child might be the one thing that breaks this hardworking girl’s resilience.

In Dhaka city, in our neighbourhood, I recently heard of a bitter quarrel among brothers who own a building. None of them wants to take care of their mother. They calculate the cost of her stay, food, everything. This mother’s misfortune is greater because

students—current and former—tell me of a newer kind of harassment: men standing in front of them and threatening them for not wearing a burqa, using obscene language. These men want women to be submissive and/or send them back indoors. And wearing a burqa doesn’t provide much safety either. I’ve heard of bitter experiences suffered by my students who wear it.

People in Bangladesh live under a net of oppression and discrimination. For women, this net is even more complex. If men’s groups see the woman who gave birth to them as inferior, what does that say about them? These people sometimes insist on giving women “just rights” instead of “equal rights.” But if rights are to be truly just—based on labour, contribution, hard work, and roles—then women should receive more than men. Will they accept that?

JnU crisis exposes the rot in higher education



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND
Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

When demonstrators were allowed to stage a protest in front of the Jamuna state guest house—now the official residence of the chief adviser—demanding a ban on Awami League as a party, Section 144 was paused. But it came into effect when another group of protesters attempted to use the same location to press their demands. At least 50 students and teachers of Jagannath University (JnU) were injured by police action when they attempted to reach the venue. Leaders of the National Citizen Party (NCP), who convened the first protest, argued that theirs was a national cause of larger significance, not an institutional one.

If anyone is in doubt, the misty shower sprayed by city corporation water cannons during the heatwave symbolically depicted the blessings that the first protest received. In contrast, the JnU protesters’ demands were considered unworthy of disturbing the sanctity of Jamuna. Yet, only months ago, these student bodies acted together to oust an autocratic regime. The preferential treatment of one group over another is adding to a growing resentment that allows us to rewrite the Orwellian maxim: “some students” are “more students” than others.

Fortunately, the University Grants Commission (UGC) chairman announced last evening that the government had accepted the JnU students’ demands—hours after the protesters launched a hunger strike to make their collective voice heard.

But this situation demanded intervention much earlier since the proposal to solve the JnU crisis has been with the government for a considerable time. Students are frustrated by the delay in rebuilding a second campus including housing options. The army was given verbal instructions to conduct a feasibility



At least 50 students and teachers of Jagannath University (JnU) were injured by police action when they attempted to reach the chief adviser’s official residence on May 14, 2025.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

study without any formal work order or budget allocation. The NCP protest’s success probably gave the JnU protesters (and other groups) the wrong signal that the only way to solve a crisis is to reach the shore of Jamuna. They discovered the truth the hard way.

An attempt by Mahfuj Alam, the information and broadcasting adviser, to disperse the protesters from in front of Jamuna was met with hostility and derision. The adviser, an exponent of the student-led mass uprising and an ally of the student cause, was struck on the head by a water bottle thrown by a protester. He later blamed a specific political

faction for publicly humiliating him. Prof Md Rois Uddin, general secretary of the JnU Teachers’ Association, who was present during the parley, later told the press, “You can’t even take the hit of a water bottle, yet baton charge our students and break their limbs. If any bullets are fired here, let the first bullet hit me in the chest.”

The pronouncement of solidarity

that used to offer degree courses before Dhaka University came into being was upgraded to a university in 2005. The upgrade was superficial, as it did not involve any significant infrastructural investment. The government wanted the university to raise its revenue through tuition fees. Later, it was brought under the same financial arrangement as other

be addressed in the next annual budget. They didn’t want any budget cuts, which may deter the army from engaging in construction work. They wanted ECNEC to approve their proposal. And they urged the government to offer a housing stipend for 70 percent of their students until there are proper residential facilities. Following the police action, they further demanded a thorough investigation to ensure punishment of the perpetrators. These demands are far from sudden. Years of neglect have formed the foundation of these demands.

Then again, public sentiment has been quickly shifting. The widespread sympathy that the students garnered started to lose ground fast due to the prolonged roadblocks, traffic paralysis, and media coverage. As commuters remained stuck in gridlock, businesses suffer, and patients are barred from going to hospitals because of the protests, the moral high ground of the protesters is on the verge of ruin.

The dwindling public empathy put the interim government at risk, too. As a by-product of student activism, the government can hardly afford to alienate the next generation. Then there are the ever-nagging conspiracy concerns: is the government using this crisis as a smokescreen to divert attention from other issues? A dirty laundry

geopolitical drama, the JnU protest offered a more manageable crisis. But if this is a diversion, it is a costly one.

The government has yet to declare any reform commission for education. It seems to be ignoring the sector, which is evident from the number of campus closures, clashes, and the removal of vice chancellors (VCs). The firefighting mode of the government may sound like an empty excuse. The proxy solutions are far from effective. The government needs to cure the illness affecting our higher education sector. Our universities lack funding for research and development. The abuse of autonomy needs to be checked, and transparency in hiring and accountability across the board are a must. There should be an end to politically appointed leadership. Focus should be on updated curricula to prepare students for an international job market.

After receiving assurance from the UGC chairman that all their demands would be met, students and teachers of JnU called off their protest and said all activities of the university would resume today. However, that does not mean the underlying problem is solved. We must use the JnU crisis as a catalyst for reform. For that, dialogue-based conflict resolution mechanisms are needed. The government must listen. The protest around Jamuna was not an isolated disturbance. The noise

The protesting students wanted to make sure that their cause would be addressed in the next annual budget. They wanted ECNEC to approve their proposal. And they urged the government to offer a housing stipend for 70 percent of their students until there are proper residential facilities. Following the police action, they further demanded a thorough investigation to ensure punishment of the perpetrators. These demands are far from sudden. Years of neglect have formed the foundation of these demands.

list has been aired: the Chattogram port’s access and management, the UN’s proposal for a humanitarian corridor to Rakhine state through Bangladesh, the unresolved Rohingya crisis, and informal “push-in” tactics by India. The list is serious and, quite frankly, puts our national security and regional diplomacy at risk.

Against the backdrop of such a

was produced by a failing system; the slogans shouted were cries for dignity, fairness, and a future worth studying for. Something is rotten in our higher education system. Today, JnU is showing signs of illness. Tomorrow, it could be some other institution pushing beyond tolerance. Let’s not wait for the rot to spread. Let’s listen before we act.

Jaya and Sharmin TAKE OVER

“

I want to help drive positive change in our film industry. We're witnessing a shift in Bangladeshi cinema—even Hollywood films are being replaced at Star Cineplex to make way for local productions. Despite limited resources, our directors are doing amazing work.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The stench of hexisol and death surrounds the gloomy capital. Formerly known as the hub of Bangladesh, Dhaka resides in an eerie, desolate moment in history – the Covid-19 pandemic. An unlikely pairing of a middle-class woman and her house help, in spite of all social barriers, make an unlikely bonding that

defies convention and become each other's crutch for survival in the soul-cleansing flick that is Piplu R Khan's *Jaya aar Sharmin*.

As Jaya Ahsan and Mohsina Akhter, the two leads of the film, take sips of black coffee and *rong cha* respectively at The Daily Star's studio, the excitement levels vary among the illustrious mega-star and respected theatre practitioner. “We learned nothing from the pandemic,” Jaya Ahsan sighed at one point in the interview. “We should have taken that as a warning that it is unwise to go against nature, to learn empathy and tolerance, but many, including myself, have forgotten.” The National Award-winning actress further

emphasised that going back to the pandemic days, in an earthly story about two wandering souls, would rekindle the comradery and the sense of community that was built then. “However, it is indeed heartening to see the reaction that the film got, I was taken aback by the kind messages that people sent, and the reviews on social media,” said Jaya.

For Mohsina Akhter, it is a breakout role in films, especially after travelling all over the world as a renowned theatre artist. “It was a scintillating experience, especially because the freedom that I was given by Piplu *bhai* – at first, I genuinely thought that he would not let me improvise as I do on the stage, but I was taken aback when he told me to ‘go for it’.

Evidently, Mohsina's performance as the layered Sharmin evokes a range of emotions for the viewer. These emotions in front of the camera had an unintended spill over effect. The director had staged the set in a way that the cameras were not as visible, and the suspension of disbelief was at its peak. “Regardless of if the cameras were rolling, we were simply Jaya and Sharmin – the characters – going about their day. We were not in character, we simply were. This is why the audience will find it easy to connect with us,” said Jaya Ahsan.

The artistes reminisce fondly of a time when they had to maintain an unscrupulous amount of distancing, when they were forced to shoot the film with severe limitations, which includes the lack of a supporting technical crew, including a makeup artist. “I do feel that it was charming, eye-opening even, that we went through that,” echoed the actresses.

Jaya aar Sharmin comes at a time that cultural personalities, and progressives in general, are under attack by right-wingers. In response to my curious query of how it affects them and how the artistes have decided to fight the ‘cultural’ war, Mohsina's answer is simple: “We have to resist. Through our art, through social discourse, through simply being more humane, we have to resist, and promote tolerance, there are no two ways about it.”

On the other hand, Jaya Ahsan has been fighting another fight for years – that of promoting awareness on violence against animals. “I believe that I get much more credit for that than I should,” she states ever-so-humbly. “There are actual heroes out there who have dedicated their lives to those who cannot speak.” As Eid-ul-Azha looms around the corner, the actress has but one request for her fellow countrymen: “In the season of sacrifice, please make sure to be humane towards the animals that we will sacrifice. Let's not hurt them unnecessarily, and keep them comfortable before the sacrifice is made, that is the true spirit of this season.”

As *Jaya aar Sharmin*, jointly produced by C to Cinema and Applebox films, continues to receive praise for cinemagoers, the actresses believe that the movie, surpassing its box-office legacy, will leave a humane mark on the viewer unparalleled to any other experience that they've had.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

STYLE STATEMENT CARLOS SAINZ

The flashbulbs erupted as Carlos Sainz, the matador of motorsport, traded racing leathers for red carpet elegance at the Cannes Film Festival 2025. Dressed in a classic black tuxedo with a crisp white shirt and a faultless bow tie, Sainz redefined suave with every step.

The ensemble, sharp in silhouette and rich in detail, featured a perfectly tailored jacket, satin lapels, and a cummerbund that nodded to timeless Hollywood glamour. With a calm confidence honed on the Grand Prix grid, he brought a polished charisma to the La Croisette—and Cannes couldn't look away.



WHAT'S PLAYING

‘PRETTY LITTLE BABY’ by Connie Francis

Connie Francis's 1962 track *Pretty Little Baby* is enjoying a viral resurgence across social media. Anchored by Francis's tender vocals and a dreamy, doo-wop-inspired arrangement, the song captures the ache of reconciliation—pleading for a second chance at love with soft, melodic longing.

Though recorded more than six decades ago, *Pretty Little Baby* has found new life through thousands of TikTok videos, where users pair



its romantic lyrics with slow-motion visuals, nostalgic fashion, and sepia-toned filters.

The absence of an official music video has inspired a wave of creative reinterpretations—from grainy homemade montages to lip-sync performances.

The song's emotional warmth and timeless quality have propelled it up TikTok's Viral 50 chart, cracking the top 10 in multiple countries.

TV TALKIES

‘YOU’ SEASON 5 Joe’s final reckoning

Season 5 of *You* offers a final, haunting mirror—less about Joe Goldberg (played infamously by Penn Badgley) and more about us. While previous seasons flirted with romanticised danger, this one pulls no punches. Joe's mask slips entirely, revealing not genius, but entitlement wrapped in cultural immunity.

The show forces us to confront why we sympathised with a killer in the first place, and how easily society forgives violent men. The new character Louise's arc delivers a wake-up call.

Joe once again beguiles this woman, even when she is vaguely aware of his previous murderous actions. He furthermore ruins another family to somehow also get a grasp on his withering married life.

Joe might have brought his son back

into his life to use him as an excuse for wrongdoings, but Joe receives a reality check on his monstrous self. It's not Joe's charisma that protects him—it's the world we live in.

In the end, *You* isn't just a thriller—it's a lesson in unlearning toxic love, reclaiming self-worth, and breaking cycles. A fitting, if unsettling, finale to a story that was always about more than murder.



TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Love Death + Robots



Apple TV+:
Murderbot



HBO Max
Duster



Prime Video
Overcompensating



Hulu
Nine Perfect Strangers



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Play: Pakhider Bidhansabha
May 22-23 | 4:30pm and 7:30pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Weekend Kick-Off Show
May 22-23 | 8pm-9:30pm
Naveed's Comedy Club, Gulshan 2



Musical Evening: Sinpat
Jomjomat
May 23 | 6pm onwards
Jatra Biroti



বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস ২০২৫

১৭ মে, ২০২৫

ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন





প্রধান উপদেষ্টা
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
০৩ জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৪৩২
১৭ মে ২০২৫

বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের মত বাংলাদেশেও ১৭ মে World Telecommunication and Information Society Day পালিত হচ্ছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত।

টেলিযোগাযোগ সেবা ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারসহ ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমান অংশগ্রহণ একটি বৈশ্বমুখ্য, আধুনিক সমাজ বিনির্মাণের পূর্বশর্ত। জুলাই গণঅভ্যুত্থানের চেতনাকে ধারণ করে অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন সরকার ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরের সকল ক্ষেত্রে নারী-পুরুষের সমান সুযোগ ও অধিকার নিশ্চিত করতে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ। এ প্রেক্ষিতে দিবসটির এবারের প্রতিপাদ্য 'Gender Equality in Digital Transformation' তথা 'ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন', তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি।

অন্তর্বর্তীকালীন সরকার দেশের টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি খাতের উন্নয়নে খুবই আন্তরিক। তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি খাতের সকল কর্মকাণ্ডে স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহিতা নিশ্চিত করা হয়েছে। জনগণের সরকারি সেবা প্রাপ্তি সহজতর করতে ও হয়রানি কমাতে ডিজিটাল সেবা কেন্দ্র 'নাগরিক সেবা' তৈরির উদ্যোগ নেয়া হয়েছে। সারা দেশে ইউনিয়ন নাগরিক সেবাকেন্দ্রের মাধ্যমে বিভিন্ন তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সেবা চালু করা হচ্ছে। নারী উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্য বিশেষ ফ্রিল্যান্সিং ট্রেনিং এবং নারী/কিশোরী শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য (She-STEM) ট্রেনিং এর উদ্যোগ নেয়া হয়েছে। বাংলাদেশ স্যাটেলাইটভিত্তিক উচ্চগতির ইন্টারনেট নেটওয়ার্কে যুক্ত হতে যাচ্ছে, যা প্রত্যন্ত ও দুর্গম অঞ্চলসহ সারাদেশে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন ইন্টারনেট সেবা নিশ্চিতের ক্ষেত্রে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মাইলফলক।

আমি জনগণের জন্য বিশ্বমানের টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সেবা নিশ্চিত করতে সকলকে একসাথে কাজ করার আহ্বান জানাচ্ছি। আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস সকলের সম্মিলিত প্রচেষ্টায় একটি অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক, প্রগতিশীল ও সমতাভিত্তিক বাংলাদেশ গড়ে উঠবে, নিশ্চিত হবে ডিজিটাল সমতা।

আমি দিবসটি উদ্‌যাপন উপলক্ষ্যে গৃহীত সকল কর্মসূচির সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করছি।



প্রফেসর মুহাম্মদ ইউনুস

এক নজরে ডাক, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য প্রযুক্তি খাতের উন্নয়নমূলক অর্জনসমূহ		
উদ্যোগসমূহ	আগস্ট ২০২৪-এর পূর্বে	মে ২০২৫ পর্যন্ত
Mbps প্রতি ব্যান্ডউইডথ চার্জ (সর্বনিম্ন)	৬০ টাকা	৩০ টাকা
সাবমেরিন ক্যাবল ব্যান্ডউইডথ ব্যবহার বৃদ্ধি	২.৪ Tbps	৪ Tbps-এর বেশি (মোটমত ৫০% সাবমেরিন ক্যাবল ব্যান্ডউইডথ ব্যবহারের বাধ্যবাধকতা)
গ্রাহক পর্যায়ে ইন্টারনেট সেবার দাম	ফিক্সড ব্রডব্যান্ড: ৫০০-৮০০ টাকা (১০ Mbps) মোবাইল ব্রডব্যান্ড: ২০-২৫ টাকা (প্রতি GB ভলিউম)	IIG/NTN পর্যায়ে ব্যান্ডউইডথ চার্জ হ্রাসের ফলে গ্রাহক পর্যায়ে মূল্য হ্রাস; মোবাইল গ্রাহকদের মেয়াদহীন প্যাকেজ চালুর উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;
টেলিযোগাযোগ আইন ও সাইবার সুরক্ষা অধ্যাদেশ	গ্রাহক পর্যায়ে ইন্টারনেট বন্ধ করার সুযোগ ছিল	মৌলিক অধিকারের ন্যায় গ্রাহক পর্যায়ে ইন্টারনেট বন্ধ করার পথ রুদ্ধ করতে আইন সংশোধনের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ; সাইবার সুরক্ষা অধ্যাদেশ উপদেষ্টা পরিষদে গৃহীত;
তরুণ প্রজন্মের জন্য সামাজিক উদ্যোগ	তরুণ প্রজন্মের জন্য আলাদা করে কোন উদ্যোগ ছিল না	তরুণ প্রজন্মের জন্য বিভিন্ন সামাজিক সহযোগিতা যেমন- আইসিটি প্রশিক্ষণ, মোবাইল প্যাকেজ ইত্যাদির উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;
পলিসি পরিবর্তন	বহু স্তরের নেটওয়ার্ক টপোলজির জন্য সেবার মূল্য বৃদ্ধি	নেটওয়ার্ক টপোলজিতে স্তর কমিয়ে সেবার মূল্য কমানোর উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;
ডাক বিভাগের ডিজিটাল রূপান্তর	কোন উল্লেখযোগ্য উদ্যোগ নেই	ব্রিট মাপ ও ডিজিটাল এক্সেস এবং কাউন্টার অ্যাপের মাধ্যমে ডাক বিভাগের আর্থিক সেবাসহ সকল সেবা একীভূতকরণের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;
গুয়ানস্টপ নাগরিক সেবা	গুয়ানস্টপ সেবা প্রদানের কোন উদ্যোগ নেই	'নাগরিক সেবা' নামে সরকারি সকল সেবা এক জায়গা থেকে প্রদানের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;
স্যাটেলাইট ভিত্তিক সেবা	বাংলাদেশি স্যাটেলাইট উৎক্ষেপণ করা হলেও পরিকল্পনার ক্ষেত্রে কারিগরি অদক্ষতার জন্য বাণিজ্যিক সফলতা পাওয়া যায়নি	অবিক্রীত ট্রান্সপন্ডার ক্যাপাসিটি বিক্রয়ের পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে; দেশের যার্ব সংরক্ষণ করে স্টারলিংকে-কে সেবার অনুমোদন প্রদান;
প্রকল্প গ্রহণ ও বাস্তবায়নে স্বচ্ছতা এবং দক্ষতা	ব্যয়বহুল ও অপ্রয়োজনীয় প্রকল্প গ্রহণ এবং প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নে দীর্ঘ সময় ব্যয়	অপ্রয়োজনীয় ও ব্যয়বহুল প্রকল্প পরিহার; আইসিটি খাতে দুই-হাজার কোটি টাকার অপ্রয়োজনীয় প্রকল্প ব্যয় সংকোচন; পাবলিক গ্রাইডে পটনারশিপের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ;



ফয়েজ আহমদ তৈয়্যব
মাননীয় প্রধান উপদেষ্টার বিশেষ সহকারী (প্রতিমন্ত্রী পদমর্যাদা)
ডাক, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বিগত ১৯৬৯ সালের ১৭ মে থেকে প্রতিবছর বিশ্বব্যাপী বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ দিবস পালিত হয়ে আসছে। তারই ধারাবাহিকতায় বাংলাদেশে প্রতিবছরের মতো এবারও ১৭ই মে ২০২৫ বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস পালিত হচ্ছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত। আইটিইউ (ITU) কর্তৃক এ বছর দিবসটির প্রতিপাদ্য নির্ধারণ করা হয়েছে 'Gender Equality in Digital Transformation' যার অর্থ "ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন" যথার্থ হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি।

উপদেষ্টা পরিষদ ইতোমধ্যে সাইবার নিরাপত্তা আইনের নিশীড়নমূলক ধারাগুলো বাতিল করেছে। যুগোপযোগী কিছু নতুন ধারা সংযোজন করে 'সাইবার সুরক্ষা অধ্যাদেশ, ২০২৫' নামে নতুন আইনের খসড়া অনুমোদন দিয়েছে। প্রস্তাবিত এই অধ্যাদেশে 'ইন্টারনেট'কে অন্যতম একটি নাগরিক অধিকার হিসেবে স্বীকৃতি প্রদান করা হয়েছে। সম্প্রতি মাননীয় প্রধান উপদেষ্টা ড. মুহাম্মদ ইউনুস বাংলাদেশে স্টারলিংকের স্যাটেলাইট-ভিত্তিক ইন্টারনেট সেবার লাইসেন্সের আবেদন অনুমোদন করেছেন। এ সেবা চালু হলে বাংলাদেশের প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চলগুলোতে উচ্চগতির ইন্টারনেট সহজলভ্য হবে। বর্তমানে টেলিযোগাযোগ আইন সংশোধন করা হয়েছে। ভবিষ্যতে কোন সরকার যেন নিজেদের স্বার্থে ইন্টারনেট বন্ধ করতে না পারে সে বিষয়ে সরকার কাজ করছে।

টেলিকমিউনিকেশন খাতে নাগরিকবাধ্য সেবার পরিবেশ সৃষ্টির লক্ষ্যে বাধাসমূহ এক এক করে অপসারণের ব্যবস্থা নেয়া হয়েছে। বিভিন্ন স্তরের এই বাধাগুলোর কারণে দীর্ঘদিন ধরে টেলিকমিউনিকেশন খাতে উল্লেখযোগ্য সেবার গুণগত মানোন্নয়ন সম্ভব হয়ে ওঠেনি। দেশের তেতের ইন্টারনেট ব্যান্ডউইডথ স্তরে ফাইবার ক্যাপাসিটির সর্বধিক ব্যবহারের লক্ষ্যে ডিডব্লিউএম (DWDM) প্রযুক্তিকে মোবাইল অপারেটর ও আইএসপিদের জন্য উন্মুক্ত করে দেয়া হয়েছে যা ইতঃপূর্বে শুধুমাত্র কতিপয় কোম্পানির কাছে কুক্ষিগত হয়ে ছিল। আশা করছি দেশের ৯০ শতাংশ মোবাইল টাওয়ার শীঘ্রই ফাইবার অপটিক নেটওয়ার্কের মাধ্যমে কানেক্টেড হবে যা এখন মাত্র ৩৬ শতাংশ।

এসব কৌশলগত এবং প্রযুক্তিগত পরিবর্তনের ফলে হাই-স্পীড কানেক্টিভিটি স্তরের উপর ডিজিটাল সার্ভিস সেবাসমূহ নিয়ে কাজের সুযোগ তৈরি হচ্ছে। ভবিষ্যতের দেশসংগ্রহ বহুবিশ্ব ডিজিটাল সার্ভিস ভিত্তিক ব্যবসার জন্য একটি উন্নত ক্ষেত্র হিসেবে দেশি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীদের আকৃষ্ট করবে এবং বৈশ্বিক প্রতিযোগিতামূলক অবস্থানে এগিয়ে থাকবে বলে আমরা আশাবাদী। আমি বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস উদ্‌যাপন উপলক্ষ্যে আরোজিত সকল কর্মসূচির সফলতা কামনা করছি।



ফয়েজ আহমদ তৈয়্যব



মোঃ জহিরুল ইসলাম
সচিব (প্লটিন দায়িত্ব)
ডাক ও টেলিযোগাযোগ বিভাগ

বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস, ২০২৫ উপলক্ষ্যে আমি দেশের সর্বস্তরের জনগণকে আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন জানাচ্ছি।

উল্লেখ্য, ১৮৬৫ সালের ১৭ মে আন্তর্জাতিক টেলিযোগাযোগ ইউনিয়ন (ITU) প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। এর শতবর্ষপূর্তি উদযাপন উপলক্ষ্যে ১৯৬৯ সাল থেকে এই দিনটি 'বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ দিবস' হিসেবে পালিত হয়ে আসছে। পরবর্তীতে ২০০৫ সালে বিশ্ব তথ্য সমাজ সম্মেলনের সুপারিশে জাতিসংঘ ১৭ মে-কে 'বিশ্ব তথ্য সংঘ দিবস' হিসেবে ঘোষণা করে। একই বছর ITU-এর প্রেনিগোনেশিয়াল সম্মেলনে উক্ত দিবসকে একীভূত করে 'বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস' হিসেবে উদযাপন করার সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হয়।

এই বছরের প্রতিপাদ্য 'ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন' এক সমরোপযোগী ও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বিষয়বস্তু। এটি প্রযুক্তিনির্ভর বিশ্বে নারী ও পুরুষের জন্য সমান সুযোগ ও অংশগ্রহণের প্রয়োজনীয়তার ওপর গুরুত্বারোপ করে।

জানিত্তিক উদ্ভাবনী অর্থনীতিতে উত্তরণের জন্য আমাদের সুশাসন, শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, কর্মসংস্থান, নারীর ক্ষমতায়ন ও সামাজিক সুরক্ষাসহ বিভিন্ন খাতে ডিজিটাল রূপান্তর নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। যদিও দেশে মোবাইল সংযোগ ১৮৬ মিলিয়ন এবং ইন্টারনেট সংযোগ ১৩০ মিলিয়নে উন্নীত হয়েছে, তথাপি এখনো নারী ও পুরুষের মধ্যে প্রবেশাধিকার ও ব্যবহারে বৈষম্য রয়ে গেছে। GSMA-এর তথ্যমতে, বাংলাদেশে মোবাইল ফোন ব্যবহারে নারীরা পুরুষের তুলনায় ২০% এবং মোবাইল ইন্টারনেটে ৩৯% পিছিয়ে। BBS-এর তথ্য অনুযায়ী, পুরুষদের মধ্যে ৪৫% এবং নারীদের মাত্র ৩২% ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহার করেন। স্মার্টফোন অ্যাক্সেস, ডিজিটাল দক্ষতা, আর্থিক সক্ষমতা ও সামাজিক বাধার কারণে নারীরা এখনও পিছিয়ে রয়েছেন। দেশে তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি খাতে নারীর অংশগ্রহণ মাত্র ২০% - এই বৈষম্য দূর করতে হলে শাস্ত্রীয় ডিভাইস, প্রশিক্ষণ ও নিরাপদ ইন্টারনেট পরিবেশ নিশ্চিত করতে হবে।

বর্তমান সরকার দেশের প্রতিটি মানুষ ও প্রতিটি অঞ্চল পর্যন্ত উচ্চগতির ইন্টারনেট ও ডিজিটাল সেবা পৌঁছে দিতে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ। এই লক্ষ্যে সরকার নীতিমালা, আইন ও নিয়ন্ত্রক কাঠামোর সংস্কার এবং টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি খাতে বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধি করেছে। সরকারি সেবাসমূহকে ডিজিটাল মাধ্যমে সহজলভ্য করার কাজও চলমান রয়েছে। ইউনিয়ন পর্যায়ে নারীবাধ্য প্রশিক্ষণ ও উদ্যোক্তা উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচি চালু আছে। মোবাইল সেট, অ্যাপটিক্যাল ফাইবারসহ অনেক সরঞ্জাম এখন দেশে উৎপাদিত হচ্ছে। সাইবার নিরাপত্তা খাতে অগ্রগতির ফলে বাংলাদেশ গ্লোবাল সাইবার সিকিউরিটি ইনভেস্টিং রোল মডেল হিসেবে স্বীকৃত। মোবাইল ব্যাংকিং ও ডিজিটাল পেমেট দেশের জনগণকে অর্থনৈতিকভাবে ক্ষমতায়িত করেছে এবং নারীরা ই-কমার্স ও ডিজিটাল গ্র্যাটিফর্ম ব্যবহার করে বৈশ্বিক বাজারে প্রবেশ করেছে।

২০২৪ সালের ঐতিহাসিক জুলাই আন্দোলন প্রমাণ করেছে, বাংলাদেশে নারীরা আজ অনেক বেশি সচেতন, আত্মবিশ্বাসী এবং নেতৃত্বদানে সক্ষম। সামাজিক যোগাযোগ মাধ্যমে তাদের সক্রিয়তা প্রযুক্তির ইতিবাচক ব্যবহারের অনন্য উদাহরণ স্থাপন করেছে।


এই প্রেক্ষাপটে, "ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন" কেবল একটি প্রতিপাদ্য নয়, এটি একটি জাতীয় অঙ্গীকার। ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ বিনির্মাণে নারী-পুরুষ নিবিশেষে সবাইকে সমানভাবে সম্পৃক্ত করার দৃঢ় প্রত্যয় আমাদের আছে।

আমি দৃঢ়ভাবে বিশ্বাস করি - সরকার, বেসরকারি খাত, নাগরিক সমাজ এবং জনগণের সম্মিলিত প্রচেষ্টায় আমরা একটি অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক, টেকসই ও প্রযুক্তিনির্ভর সমাজ গড়ে তুলতে পারব, যেখানে নারী ও পুরুষ সমানভাবে উন্নয়নের অঙ্গীকার করেন।

বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস, ২০২৫ উপলক্ষ্যে আরোজিত সকল কর্মসূচির সর্বাঙ্গীণ সাফল্য কামনা করছি।



মোঃ জহিরুল ইসলাম



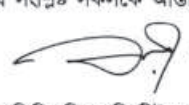
মেজর জেনারেল মোঃ এমদাদ উল বারী, ওএসপি, এনডিসি, পিএসসি টিই (অবঃ)
চেয়ারম্যান
বাংলাদেশ টেলিযোগাযোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ কমিশন (বিটিআরসি)

প্রতি বছরের ন্যায়, এবারও বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের সাথে সামঞ্জস্য রেখে বাংলাদেশে যথাযোগ্য মর্যাদায় পালিত হচ্ছে বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস। ২০২৫ সালের বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবসের প্রতিপাদ্য 'Gender equality in digital transformation' (ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন) যা প্রযুক্তি নির্ভর বর্তমান সমাজের আর্থসামাজিক উন্নয়নে নারী-পুরুষের বলিষ্ঠ পটভূমি গঠনের একটি পূর্ণাঙ্গ আহ্বান। প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারের প্রতিটি ধাপে মানুষই হবে কেন্দ্রবিন্দু-নারী বা পুরুষ নয়। আমাদের নীতিমালাগুলো এমন হতে হবে, যেখানে প্রাক্তিক ও অবহেলিত জনগোষ্ঠীর জন্য ডিজিটাল পরিবেশ হবে নিরাপদ, সক্ষমতাবর্ধক এবং প্রয়োজনামূলক।

বাংলাদেশের মানুষের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নের জন্য টেলিযোগাযোগ সেবা জনগণের মৌলিক চাহিদার অন্তর্ভুক্ত। জনগণের এই সেবা নিশ্চিতের সরকার নিরলস পরিশ্রম করে যাচ্ছে। ডিজিটাল রূপান্তর তাই কেবল প্রযুক্তিগত অগ্রগতি নয়, পরিবর্তিত সময়েরও দাবী। ডিজিটাল গ্র্যাটিফর্মের মাধ্যমে নারীরা আজ শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, উদ্যোক্তা কার্যক্রম এবং কর্মসংস্থানে আগের চেয়ে অনেক বেশি যুক্ত হচ্ছেন। অনলাইন প্রশিক্ষণ, মোবাইল ব্যাংকিং এবং ই-কমার্স নারীদের আত্মনির্ভরশীল করে তুলেছে। তবে এই সম্ভাবনা বাস্তবে রূপ দিতে হলে প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারে নারীদের সমান সুযোগ নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। একটি সমীক্ষায় দেখা যায়, বিশ্বব্যাপী ৭০ ভাগ পুরুষ ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহার করলেও নারীর সংখ্যা ৬৫ ভাগ, যার অর্ধ বিশ্বব্যাপী নারীদের তুলনায় ১৮৯ মিলিয়ন বেশি পুরুষ অনলাইনে সক্রিয় থাকেন। অনেক উন্নত দেশে পুরুষ-নারীর মাঝে ডিজিটাল বৈষম্য কম গেলেও স্বল্পোন্নত দেশগুলিতে (এলাডিসি) এটি আরো বিস্তৃত হয়েছে, যেখানে ৪১ ভাগ পুরুষের তুলনায় মাত্র ২৯ ভাগ নারী ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহার করেন। নারীদের কেবল প্রযুক্তিতেই প্রবেশাধিকার নয় বরং ক্রয়ক্ষমতা, ডিজিটাল দক্ষতা এবং প্রযুক্তি খাতে নেতৃত্বের ক্ষেত্রেও বাতিল রয়ে গেছে। শাস্ত্রীয় ইন্টারনেট, ডিজিটাল নিরাপত্তা এবং প্রযুক্তিগত দক্ষতা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে নারীদের আরও এগিয়ে নিতে সরকার, বেসরকারি খাত এবং সমাজের যৌথ উদ্যোগ অপরিহার্য। সকল ক্ষেত্রে নারী-পুরুষের সমতা-বৈচিত্র্য, উদ্ভাবন এবং উৎপাদনশীলতা বৃদ্ধির মাধ্যমে অর্থনৈতিক প্রবৃদ্ধিকে উৎসাহিত করে। আইএমএফের মতে, শ্রমবাজারে লিঙ্গ বৈষম্য কমিয়ে আনা গেলে উদীয়মান ও উন্নয়নশীল অর্থনীতির দেশগুলিতে জিডিপি ৮ ভাগ পর্যন্ত বৃদ্ধি পেতে পারে।

টেলিযোগাযোগ বিপ্লবের সর্বোচ্চ সফলতা যদি আরও আমাদের উপভোগ করতে হয়, তাহলে অবকাঠামোগত উন্নয়নের পাশাপাশি জনসাধারণকে অধিকতর ডিজিটাল সেবা গ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে অনুপ্রাণিত করে তুলতে হবে। গ্রামীণ ও প্রত্যন্ত অঞ্চলে টেওগার সম্প্রসারণে অবকাঠামোগত চ্যালেঞ্জ আমরা প্রত্যক্ষ করে এসেছি। তবে, টাওয়ার শেয়ারিং নীতিমালা বাস্তবায়ন এবং অনুমোদন প্রক্রিয়া সহজ করার মাধ্যমে নেটওয়ার্ক সম্প্রসারণের বাধা দূর করা হচ্ছে। গ্রামীণ এলাকায় নেটওয়ার্ক সম্প্রসারণে বিশেষ প্রণোদনা প্রদান করা হচ্ছে। বিটিআরসি টেলিযোগাযোগ খাতের সূত্র বিকাশ ও গ্রাহকসেবার মানোন্নয়নে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ। দেশের সর্বব্যাপী গ্রাহকদের ব্যবহৃত হ্যান্ডসেটে সকল ক্ষেত্রে প্রযুক্তিগত সক্ষমতা না থাকায় সর্বস্তরের মানুষের মাঝে নতুন প্রযুক্তির প্রসারের ক্ষেত্রে সাময়িক ধীরগতি লক্ষ্য করা যায়; যেই চ্যালেঞ্জ সমাধানে গ্রাহকদের জন্য শাস্ত্রীয় মূল্যের স্মার্টফোন সহজলভ্যতা নিশ্চিত করতে স্থানীয় মোবাইল ফোন নির্মাণ শিল্পের প্রসারণ নিশ্চিত করতে ব্যবসাবাধ্য নীতিমালা প্রণয়নসহ বিভিন্ন উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। পাশাপাশি ডিজিটাল লিটারেসি বাড়াতে সচেতনতামূলক কার্যক্রম পরিচালনার জন্য নীতিমালা তৈরি করা হয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশের টেলিযোগাযোগ খাত একটি প্রতিশ্রুতিশীল অবস্থানে রয়েছে। প্রযুক্তিগত উন্নয়ন এবং গ্রাহকদের চাহিদা পূরণে বিদ্যমান বাধাগুলো চিহ্নিত করে সেগুলো নিরলস বিটিআরসি অপারেটরদের সঙ্গে নিবিড়ভাবে কাজ করছে। সেবার মান ও পরিধি বাড়াতে সরকারের নীতি সহায়তা, অপারেটরদের বিনিয়োগ এবং গ্রাহকদের সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি একত্রে এই খাতকে আরও শক্তিশালী করবে। ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে লিঙ্গ সমতা নিশ্চিত করতে সকলে একসাথে কাজ করা এবং প্রযুক্তির অগ্রগতির সাথে সাথে মানবিক মূল্যবোধ, নৈতিকতা ও সামাজিক অন্তর্ভুক্তি যেন আমাদের প্রতিটি পদক্ষেপে প্রতিফলিত হয়। আমাদের প্রত্যাশা, বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস-২০২৫ (WTISD) উপলক্ষে গৃহীত কর্মসূচি জনগণ, নীতিনির্ধারণ, জনব্যবস্থাপনায় নিয়োজিত ব্যক্তিগণ এবং তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি সেবা প্রদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের মধ্যে সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি করবে। আমি দিবসটি উদযাপনের সাথে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি।



মেজর জেনারেল মোঃ এমদাদ উল বারী, ওএসপি, এনডিসি, পিএসসি টিই (অবঃ)



মোঃ আশরাফ হোসেন, পিইজঃ
মহাপরিচালক (অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব)
টেলিযোগাযোগ অধিদপ্তর
ডাক ও টেলিযোগাযোগ বিভাগ

বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস, ২০২৫ এর আন্তর্জাতিক টেলিযোগাযোগ ইউনিয়ন (আইটিইউ) নির্ধারিত প্রতিপাদ্য 'Gender Equality in Digital Transformation, ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরে নারী-পুরুষের সমতায়ন'। আইটিইউ-এর ১৬০তম প্রতিষ্ঠাবার্ষিকীর প্রতিপাদ্যটি আমাদের এ বিষয়ে সচেতন করে যে, নারীদের প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারে পূর্ণ অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত না করা পর্যন্ত প্রকৃত অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক ও ন্যায্য তথ্যসমাজ গঠন সম্ভব নয়।

বর্তমানে বিশ্বে প্রায় ২.৬ বিলিয়ন মানুষ ইন্টারনেট সংযোগ থেকে বঞ্চিত, যাদের বেশিরভাগই নারী ও কন্যা শিশু। বাংলাদেশেও এই চিত্র বিদ্যমান। তাই নারীর জন্য সহজপ্রাপ্য, নিরাপদ ও ক্ষমতায়নমূলক ডিজিটাল পরিসর তৈরি করা জরুরি। প্রযুক্তির কর্মভারক্ষেপ, যন্ত্র-মানবব্যবস্থা-যন্ত্র যোগাযোগ, OTT সেবার বিস্তার এবং টেলিযোগাযোগের অত্যাবশ্যক ইটিউলিটিতে রূপান্তরের প্রেক্ষাপটে প্রয়োজন একটি আধুনিক, অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক ও টেকসই নীতিগত ও প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক কাঠামো। ডিজিটাল সার্বভৌমত্ব, সাইবার ছুমকি এবং উদ্ভাবনী ইকোসিস্টেমের প্রয়োজনীয়তাও এর অন্তর্ভুক্ত। স্বল্পোন্নত দেশ থেকে উন্নয়নশীল দেশে উত্তরণের প্রেক্ষাপটে এবং এসডিজি অর্জনের লক্ষ্যে সরকার টেলিযোগাযোগ খাতে নানাবিধ উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ ও বাস্তবায়ন করছে। এ কার্যক্রমে টেলিযোগাযোগ অধিদপ্তর নীতি সহায়তা ও বাস্তবায়নের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দায়িত্ব পালন করছে।

ডিজিটাল খাতে দেশীয় উৎপাদন সক্ষমতা বাড়াতে সরকার গবেষণা, মেধাশক্তি সুরক্ষা, ডিজিটাল পণ্যের মানোন্নয়নের পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছে। এ প্রেক্ষাপটে টেলিযোগাযোগ অধিদপ্তরের ন্যাশনাল একাডেমি ফর অ্যাক্সেস ডিজিটাল টেলিকমিউনিকেশন রিসার্চ এন্ড ট্রেনিং (NAAIRI) প্রতিষ্ঠার উদ্যোগ স্থানীয় উদ্ভাবন সক্ষমতা বাড়াবে। পণ্যের মান, আন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলকতা ও নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত আইটিইউ স্বীকৃত টেলিকমিউনিকেশন কনফারেন্স টেস্টিং সেন্টার ও টেস্টিং রেজিম গঠনের কার্যক্রমও চলমান। ইতোমধ্যে অনলাইনে ক্ষতিকর কন্টেন্ট মোকাবিলায় অধিদপ্তরে সাইবার শ্রেট ডিটেকশন ও রেসপন্স সেন্টার প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হয়েছে। ম্যালওয়্যার প্রতিরোধ ও IoT বিস্তৃতির প্রেক্ষিতে টেলিযোগাযোগ অধিদপ্তর প্রস্তাবিত 'নেটওয়ার্ক সিকিউরিটি সেন্টার অফ এজিলিটি' টেলিযোগাযোগ অবকাঠামো ও সফটওয়্যারের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অবদান রাখবে। এছাড়া, প্রাথমিক শিক্ষাকে ডিজিটাল রূপান্তরের পাইলটিং এর অংশ হিসেবে টেলিযোগাযোগ অধিদপ্তর, জাতীয় শিক্ষাক্রম ও পাঠ্যপুস্তক বোর্ড, প্রাথমিক ও গণশিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয় এবং অন্যান্য অংশীদার সমন্বয়ে সুবিধাবঞ্চিত অঞ্চলের ৬৭৮টি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়/পাড়াকেন্দ্রের ১৯৭৮টি শ্রেণিকক্ষে ডিজিটালকরণ প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়ন করেছে।

5G, কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা, ক্লাউড ইত্যাদির মতো প্রযুক্তির নতুন যুগে প্রবেশের এই সন্ধিক্ষণে, প্রয়োজন অংশগ্রহণমূলক নীতিমালা ও সহযোগিতার ভিত্তিতে এমন একটি ডিজিটাল ভবিষ্যৎ যেখানে নারী-পুরুষ সবাই সমান সুযোগ পায় এবং কেউ পিছিয়ে না পড়ে।

বিশ্ব টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্য সংঘ দিবস, ২০২৫ এর সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করছি।



মোঃ আশরাফ হোসেন, পিইজঃ

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(UN-AUDITED)

FOR THE 1st QUARTER ENDED 31 March 2025



CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET

Particulars	Amount in Taka	
	31 Mar 2025	31 Dec 2024
PROPERTY AND ASSETS		
Cash	25,893,884,806	23,988,516,011
In hand (including foreign currencies)	4,691,364,355	4,571,787,155
Balance with Bangladesh Bank and its agent bank (including foreign currencies)	21,202,520,451	19,416,728,856
Balance with other banks and financial institutions	15,087,926,264	16,146,171,433
In Bangladesh	4,743,492,793	5,603,874,673
Outside Bangladesh	10,344,433,471	10,542,296,760
Money at call and on short notice	-	-
Investments	211,891,427,478	177,935,396,486
Government	200,831,340,399	167,143,008,408
Others	11,060,087,079	10,792,388,078
Loans and advances/investments	286,479,692,902	296,533,717,659
Loans, cash credits, overdrafts, etc/investments	267,621,422,724	281,966,741,409
Bills purchased and discounted	18,858,270,178	14,566,976,250
Fixed assets including premises, furniture and fixtures	5,113,250,949	5,289,381,960
Other assets	17,651,796,809	15,419,013,621
Non - banking assets	-	-
Total assets	562,117,979,208	535,312,197,170
LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL		
Liabilities		
Borrowings from other banks, financial institutions and agents	21,163,052,804	18,114,043,540
Subordinated non-convertible and perpetual bonds	7,680,250,000	7,680,250,000
Deposits and other accounts	433,271,976,694	416,727,954,479
Current/AI-wadeeah current accounts and other accounts	71,270,426,109	74,238,891,195
Bills payable	3,299,837,027	3,075,190,059
Savings bank/Mudaraba savings bank deposits	90,496,869,098	90,330,134,211
Fixed deposits/Mudaraba fixed deposits	236,993,985,321	222,238,007,353
Special notice deposit	31,210,859,139	26,845,731,661
Bearer certificates of deposit	-	-
Other deposits	-	-
Other liabilities	65,796,188,766	60,982,059,182
Total liabilities	527,911,468,264	503,504,307,201
Capital/shareholders' equity		
Total shareholders' equity	34,206,510,944	31,807,889,969
Paid-up capital	11,659,068,600	11,659,068,600
Statutory reserve	11,750,000,000	11,750,000,000
General and other reserve	11,242,024	10,640,687
Revaluation reserve	5,042,087,241	4,300,808,341
Retained earnings	5,810,526,678	4,150,895,777
Foreign currency translation reserve	(66,423,934)	(63,533,766)
Non-controlling interest	10,335	10,330
Total liabilities and shareholders' equity	562,117,979,208	535,312,197,170
OFF-BALANCE SHEET ITEMS		
Contingent liabilities		
Acceptances and endorsements	49,006,527,015	44,821,140,940
Letters of guarantee	27,235,322,855	26,869,526,977
Irrevocable letters of credit	39,641,105,387	39,630,946,979
Bills for collection	18,156,372,504	18,716,268,581
Other contingent liabilities	-	-
Other commitments		
Forward assets purchased and forward deposits placed	21,479,945,286	9,916,466,548
Total off-balance sheet items including contingent liabilities	155,519,273,047	139,954,350,025

CONSOLIDATED PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

Particulars	Amount in Taka	
	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
OPERATING INCOME		
Interest income	7,127,431,721	6,828,044,677
Interest paid on deposits and borrowings, etc	7,055,283,992	5,067,134,160
Net interest income	72,147,729	1,760,910,517
Investment income	5,736,928,937	2,612,632,905
Commission, exchange and brokerage	1,209,532,801	1,587,638,171
Other operating income	373,272,701	386,525,722
Total operating income (A)	7,319,734,439	4,586,796,798
OPERATING EXPENSES	7,391,882,168	6,347,707,315
Salaries and allowances	1,461,352,085	1,440,306,066
Rent, taxes, insurance, electricity, etc	164,083,850	164,481,444
Legal expenses	12,737,571	6,355,246
Postage, stamp, telecommunication, etc	72,819,859	51,526,559
Stationery, printing, advertisements, etc	41,415,793	33,991,355
Managing Director's salary and fees	5,795,038	3,267,241
Directors' fees	1,490,334	768,000
Auditors' fees	1,548,833	985,079
Depreciation and repairs of Bank's assets	245,381,173	244,968,927
Other expenses	601,929,244	478,817,937
Total operating expenses (B)	2,608,553,780	2,425,467,854
Profit before provision (C=A-B)	4,783,328,388	3,922,239,461
Provision for loans and advances/investments		
General provision	268,000,000	(288,498,643)
Specific provision	1,434,019,545	1,909,281,293
	1,702,019,545	1,620,782,650
Provision for off-balance sheet items	69,500,000	183,000,000
Provision for diminution in value of investments	-	120,000,000
Other provisions	50,000,000	-
Total provision (D)	1,821,519,545	1,923,782,650
Total profit before tax (C-D)	2,961,808,843	1,998,456,811
Provision for taxation		
Current tax	1,301,576,600	1,219,635,288
Deferred tax	-	-
	1,301,576,600	1,219,635,288
Net profit after tax	1,660,232,243	778,821,523
Appropriations		
Coupon/dividend on perpetual bond	-	25,068,493
General and other reserve	601,337	383,674
	601,337	25,452,167
Retained surplus	1,659,630,906	753,369,356
Attributable to:		
Equity holders of Bank Asia PLC.	1,659,630,901	753,369,346
Non-controlling interest	5	10
	1,659,630,906	753,369,356
Earnings Per Share (EPS)	1.42	0.67

CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOW STATEMENT

Particulars	Amount in Taka	
	31 March 2025	31 March 2024
Cash flows from operating activities (A)		
Interest receipts	10,381,074,328	7,704,164,629
Interest payments	(7,095,599,374)	(5,098,206,469)
Dividends receipts	186,952,598	55,721,708
Fees and commission receipts	1,209,532,801	1,587,638,171
Recoveries on loans previously written off	53,980,455	15,217,350
Cash payment to employees	(1,534,300,347)	(1,498,533,645)
Cash payment to suppliers	(64,150,164)	(52,530,787)
Income tax paid	(517,554,611)	(699,660,625)
Receipts from other operating activities	2,709,921,816	1,176,006,956
Payments for other operating activities	(860,404,729)	(706,201,506)
Operating profit before changes in operating assets & liabilities	4,469,452,773	2,483,615,782
Increase/(decrease) in operating assets and liabilities		
Loans and advances to customers and banks	10,054,024,757	1,961,070,083
Other assets	(724,835,810)	(305,024,473)
Deposits from customers and banks	16,544,022,215	15,120,763,493
Trading liabilities	3,049,009,264	(29,297,408)
Other liabilities	726,191,489	1,106,621,993
Net increase/(decrease) in operating assets and liabilities	29,648,411,915	17,854,133,688
Net cash flows from operating activities	34,117,864,688	20,337,749,470
Cash flows from investing activities (B)		
Investments in treasury bills, bonds and others	(32,825,845,932)	(26,495,484,149)
Sale/(Purchase) of trading securities	(267,699,001)	8,550,328
(Purchase)/disposal of fixed assets	(53,567,221)	(19,622,906)
Net cash flows from/(used in) investing activities	(33,147,112,154)	(26,506,556,727)
Cash flows from financing activities (C)		
Coupon/dividend paid on perpetual bond	-	(25,068,493)
Payments for lease liability	(124,092,708)	(121,962,064)
Net cash flows from/(used in) financing activities	(124,092,708)	(147,030,557)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents (A+B+C)	846,659,826	(6,315,837,814)
Effects of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalents		
	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	40,138,984,744	46,211,250,847
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	40,985,644,570	39,895,413,033
Cash and cash equivalents:		
Cash	4,691,364,355	5,035,153,131
Balance with Bangladesh Bank and its agent bank(s)	21,202,520,451	18,945,589,301
Balance with other banks and financial institutions	15,087,926,264	15,910,960,301
Money at call and on short notice	-	-
Prize bonds	3,833,500	3,710,300
	40,985,644,570	39,895,413,033

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

Particulars	Amount in Taka								
	Paid-up capital	Statutory reserve	Revaluation reserve	General reserve	Foreign Currency translation reserve	Retained earnings	Total	Non-controlling interest	Total equity
Balance as at 01 January 2024	11,659,068,600	11,750,000,000	2,685,555,009	10,257,013	(52,606,167)	3,350,452,926	29,402,727,380	10,297	29,402,737,678
Adjustment on revaluation of fixed assets and other investment	-	-	(14,477,653)	-	-	-	(14,477,653)	-	(14,477,653)
Foreign currency translation for the period	-	-	-	-	1,241,639	-	1,241,639	-	1,241,639
Transferred to General and other reserve	-	-	-	383,674	-	(383,674)	-	-	-
Coupon/dividend on perpetual bond	-	-	-	-	-	(25,068,493)	(25,068,493)	-	(25,068,493)
Net profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	778,821,513	778,821,513	10	778,821,523
Balance as at 31 March 2024	11,659,068,600	11,750,000,000	2,671,077,356	10,640,687	(51,364,528)	4,103,822,272	30,143,244,386	10,307	30,143,254,694
Adjustment on revaluation of fixed assets and other investment	-	-	1,683,446,237	-	-	-	1,683,446,237	-	1,683,446,237
Transferred to retained earnings	-	-	(53,715,252)	-	-	53,715,252	-	-	-
Foreign currency translation for the period	-	-	-	-	(12,169,238)	-	(12,169,238)	-	(12,169,238)
Transferred to interest suspense	-	-	-	-	-	(3,330,727)	(3,330,727)	-	(3,330,727)
Cash dividend paid	-	-	-	-	-	(1,748,860,290)	(1,748,860,290)	-	(1,748,860,290)
Coupon/dividend on perpetual bond	-	-	-	-	-	(343,545,616)	(343,545,616)	-	(343,545,616)
Net profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	2,089,094,886	2,089,094,886	23	2,089,094,909
Balance as at 31 December 2024	11,659,068,600	11,750,000,000	4,300,808,341	10,640,687	(63,533,766)	4,150,895,777	31,807,879,638	10,330	31,807,889,969
Adjustment on revaluation of fixed assets and other investment	-	-	741,278,900	-	-	-	741,278,900	-	741,278,900
Foreign currency translation for the period	-	-	-	-	(2,890,168)	-	(2,890,168)	-	(2,890,168)
Transferred to General and other reserve	-	-	-	601,337	-	(601,337)	-	-	-
Net profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	1,660,232,238	1,660,232,238	5	1,660,232,243
Balance as at 31 March 2025	11,659,068,600	11,750,000,000	5,042,087,241	11,242,024	(66,423,934)	5,810,526,678	34,206,500,608	10,335	34,206,510,944

SELECTED EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 1.1 Accounting policies in this Financial Statements are same as that applied in its last Annual Financial Statements of December 31, 2024. Consolidated financial Statements include position of Bank Asia PLC., Bank Asia Securities Limited, BA Exchange Company (UK) Limited and BA Express USA Inc.

1.2 Provision for income tax has been shown @ 37.50 % as prescribed in Finance Act, 2024 of the accounting profit made by the Bank after considering some of the taxable add backs of income and expenditures including provision for loans.

1.3 Cash Flow Statement
Cash Flow Statement is prepared in accordance with International Accounting Standard (IAS) 7 "Cash Flow Statement" and under the guideline of Bangladesh Bank BRPD Circular no. 14 dated 25 June 2003 which is the mixture of direct and indirect method.

2.0 **Significant Notes (Consolidated)**

2.1 Composition of Shareholders' Equity

	31 Mar 2025	Amount in Taka 31 Mar 2024
Paid-up capital (1,165,906,860 nos. Share Tk. 10 each)	11,659,068,600	11,659,068,600
Statutory reserve	11,750,000,000	11,750,000,000
General and other reserve	11,242,024	10,640,687
Revaluation reserve	5,042,087,241	2,671,077,356
Retained earnings	5,810,526,678	4,103,822,272
Foreign currency translation reserve	(66,423,934)	(51,364,528)
Non-controlling interest	10,335	10,307
	34,206,510,944	30,143,254,694
- 2.2 Net Assets Value per Share (NAV)

	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2024
Total shareholders' equity	34,206,510,944	30,143,254,694
Number of ordinary shares outstanding	1,165,906,860	1,165,906,860
Net Assets Value per Share (NAV)	29.34	25.85

Higher net profit led to higher retained earnings and an increase in revaluation reserve against government securities resulted in increased Net Assets Value (NAV) per Share compared to last year.

2.3 Earnings per share (EPS)

	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2024
Net profit after tax (Numerator)	1,660,232,243	778,821,523
Number of ordinary shares outstanding	1,165,906,860	1,165,906,860
Earnings per share (EPS)	1.42	0.67

Operating profit increased due to higher investment income, which helped cover the decline in net interest income and rising operational expenses, resulting in an increased Earnings per Share (EPS).

2.4 Net Operating Cash Flows per Share (NOCFPS)

	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2024
Net cash flows from operating activities	34,117,864,688	20,337,749,470
Number of ordinary shares outstanding	1,165,906,860	1,165,906,860
Net Operating Cash Flows per Share (NOCFPS)	29.26	17.44

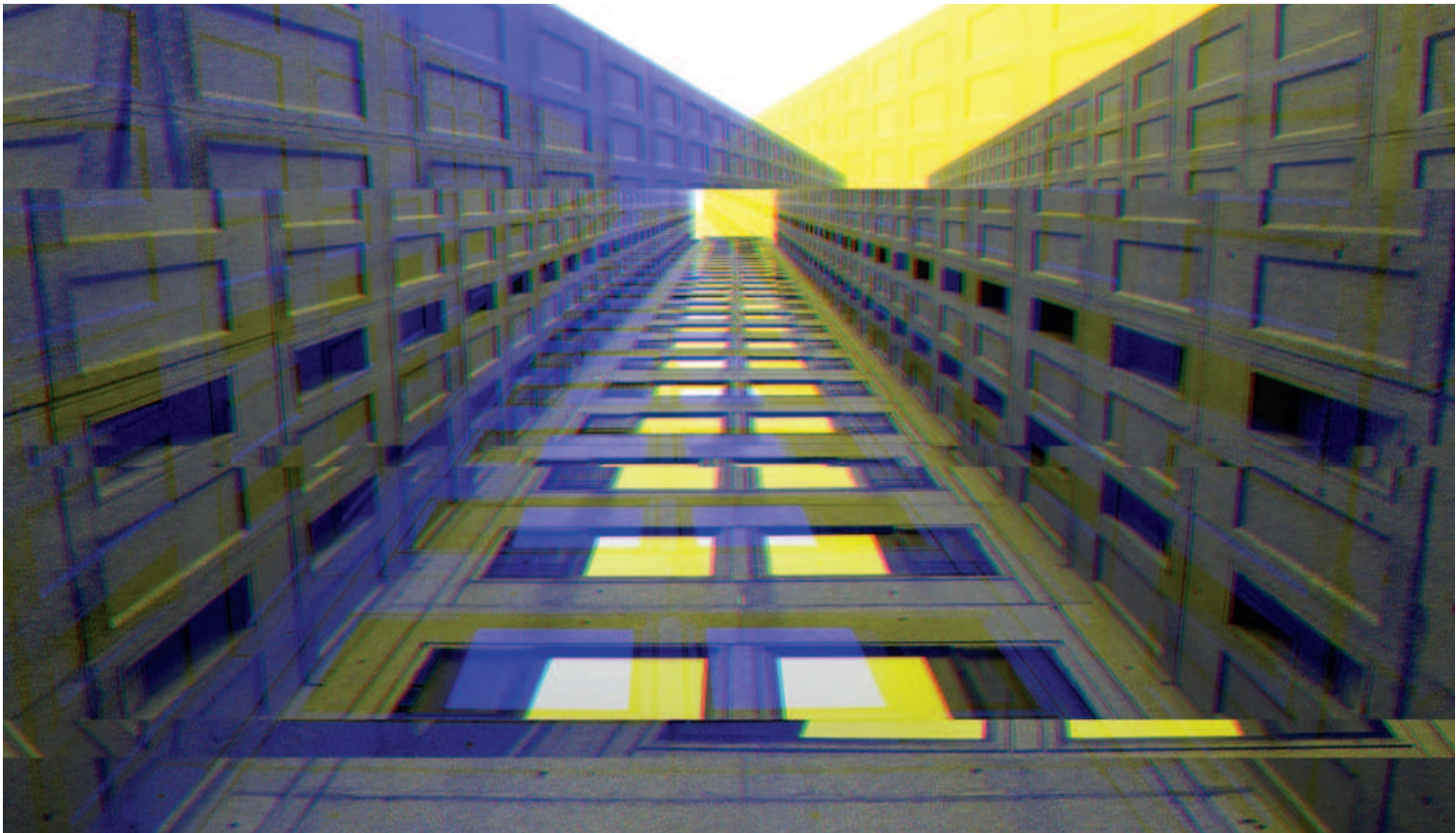
Net Operating Cash Flow per Share (NOCFPS) increased due to cash inflow by way of increase in Deposit and decrease of Loans and Advances.

2.5 Reconciliation of effective tax rate

	31 Mar 2025	31 Mar 2024
	%	Amount
Profit before provision		4,783,328,388
Income Tax as per applicable tax rate	37.50%	1,793,748,146
Tax exempted income (on govt. treasury securities)	-18.16%	(868,805,681)
On probable deductible/non deductible expenses	7.87%	376,634,135
	27.21%	1,301,576,600

- 2.6 Reconciliation of net profit with cash flows from operating activities

- | | 31 Mar 2025 | 31 Mar 2024 |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Profit before tax as per profit and loss account | 2,961,808,843 | 1,998,456,811 |
| Adjustment for non-cash items: | | |
| Provision for Loans and advances | 1,702,019,545 | 1,620,782,650 |
| Provision for Off balance sheet items | 69,500,000 | 183,000,000 |
| Provision for Diminution in value of investments | - | 120,000,000 |
| Provision for other assets | 50,000,000 | - |
| Depreciation of Property plant and equipment | 245,381,173 | 244,968,927 |
| | - | - |
| Increase/decrease in operating assets & liabilities: | | |
| Loans and advances to customers | 10,054,024,757 | 1,961,070,083 |
| Other operating assets | (724,835,810) | (305,024,473) |
| Deposits from customers and banks | 16,544,022,215 | 15,120,763,493 |
| Other operating liabilities | 3,007,307,087 | (1,013,229,389) |
| Trading liabilities | 726,191,489 | 1,106,621,993 |
| Income tax paid | (517,554,611) | (699,660,625) |
| Cash flows from operating activities as per cash flow statement | 34,117,864,688 | |



DESIGN: AMREETA LETHE

FICTION

The importance of BEING IMPERFECT

During the mandated tea break, Rahim finds himself in the company lounge. On the screen, Janatar Alo plays: a polished newsreel showing smiling farmers, record yields, children learning under solar-powered domes. The Prime Minister's face hovers above it all, benevolent and unblinking.

HAROONUZZAMAN

Stillness hangs in the air, manufactured and complete. Then it comes—the synchronised azzan, a digital decree broadcast from unseen speakers across Sonali Prantor, a gated community funded by the government for senior administrators. It reverberates through Rahim's chest like a low-frequency hum, too commanding to be sacred.

He stands at the window, gazing at the pale sky, its glow filtered and artificial under the city's light-pollution shields. The dawn outside looks more like a simulation than a morning. He inhales deeply. The recycled air carries that familiar metallic tang, faint yet always present.

"Another day," he says aloud, though no one hears him. The walls, perfectly soundproofed, absorb his voice. "Another brick in the edifice of stability."

At his minimalist desk, his fingers trace the smooth surface—uniform, unblemished. A government-issued datapad lights up with precision. Today's schedule reads: Design Review—Housing Block 7B. Ensure adherence to National Aesthetic Standard—Form 3.

No deviation. No curve. No joy.

His mind slips—just for a second—to the rickshaw rides of his youth in Old Dhaka: the clanging bells, the scent of jasmine fighting through diesel fumes, the vibrant noise of human life, spilling and spontaneous.

Now, an automated metro rail glides silently through the city. Conversations have become clipped, calculated. Efficiency replaces spontaneity.

They call it peace. Rahim calls it absence.

Inside The Walls of Conformity, the architectural firm where he works, the air is clean, temperature regulated. The only sounds: the low hum of ventilation and the quiet tapping of compliant keystrokes. Sunlight filters through anti-glare windows, leaving pale, sterile shadows on the floors.

Farzana leans over his shoulder. Her voice, like everything else here, is careful: "Rahim bhai, the community center revisions must comply with the 'Unity in Structure' clause. No curved lines. The Minister was specific."

Rahim nods, eyes locked on the blueprint—another rigid, rectangular design he has drawn a hundred times before: "Of course," he says. "Unity." Farzana hovers a second, unsure whether to say more. She doesn't. She walks away, and Rahim stares at the screen.

"Why does unity always have to be so... straight?" he murmurs.

The thought feels dangerous, rebellious. He lets it live for a few seconds longer. He almost sees it—the elegant arc he once dreamed of, a line that reached out and invited connection. He had sketched it once, years ago, before the guidelines tightened like a noose.

That curve belongs now to the graveyard of unsanctioned ideas.

During the mandated tea break, Rahim finds himself in the company lounge. On the screen, Janatar Alo plays: a polished newsreel showing smiling farmers, record yields, children learning under solar-powered domes. The Prime Minister's face hovers above it all, benevolent and unblinking.

"Such progress," says Mr. Kamal, the senior partner, his tone laced with government-certified admiration. "Truly, we're living in golden times."

Rahim sips his tea. It's too sweet. Manufactured sweet. The aftertaste clings like something he didn't consent to. His eyes drift to a tiny crack running along the pristine white wall. Just a hairline fracture, almost invisible. But it's there—a reminder that even perfection has seams.

At lunch, Rahim doesn't eat. Instead, he walks. Past the manicured courtyards, past the motion-sensing security drones, until he reaches the edge of the administrative complex—and then, beyond it.

There, hidden and overlooked, lies an overgrown patch of earth. Wild grasses. Discarded leaves. Disorder.

And a banyan tree.

The aerial roots reach down like fingers remembering the soil. The leaves rustle in a breeze that feels unapproved, natural. Rahim places his palm on the bark. It's rough, ridged with time, unapologetic. He closes his eyes and breathes in. The scent of damp soil fills his lungs—a memory more than a smell, a touch of something ungoverned.

He stays still until a sudden sound cuts through—laughter. A boy, no older than seven, darts through the undergrowth chasing a butterfly. His arms flail. His smile is crooked and wide. His joy is unscripted. Rahim watches him go, and a quiet smile finds its way to his face. Not the kind he wears in meetings. A real one. Unpractised. Soft.

Later, he enters the old data archive. It is cool, dim, and nearly forgotten—a room preserved for the sake of memory, not function. The air smells of dust and magnetised plastic.

He scans the interface and types: Artistic Expression—Unregulated Era.

The screen blossoms with chaos. Murals spilling off concrete walls, barefoot dancers leaping mid-spin, poets reciting verses into crackling microphones. Unfiltered faces. Raw emotion. Rahim slows the recording. A poet reads with fire in his voice, metaphors rising like steam from boiling water. The cadence of resistance, not yet drowned by compromise.

"To feel so deeply..." Rahim murmurs, eyes locked on the screen. "To express without fear... what was that like?"

A quiet voice replies behind him: "It was volatile. But it was alive."

He turns. An elderly librarian stands nearby. Her sari is faded but neatly pinned, her eyes gentle and sharp at once.

"Alive," Rahim repeats, as though testing the taste of the word.

She nods. "Stability asks a price, Architect. We pay with our color, our chaos, our contradictions."

For a moment, they simply look at one another. Then she walks away.

At night, the government news beams across his wall screen—record highs, perfect cities, seamless unity. Rahim doesn't watch. He opens a drawer and takes out a sketchbook. Not a tablet. Not a sanctioned file. Paper. Rough around the edges, the cover curling with age. Inside are sketches from another version of himself: bold arches, scattered balconies, rooftops that curve like waves. Illicit lines. Human lines.

He picks up a charcoal pencil. His hand trembles—not with fear, but with something older. Something that remembers. In the darkness behind his eyelids, he begins to draw: the banyan, the boy, the poet's face mid-verse. He draws not with permission but with memory. With hunger. The pages will remain hidden, unseen by the officials or committees. But within this secret act of creation, Rahim breathes.

Outside, Sonali Prantor stays silent and flawless.

But inside—inside him—something imperfect begins to stir.

Haroonuzzaman is a Bangladeshi translator, novelist, poet, researcher, and essayist. He has amassed over three decades of teaching experience both domestically and internationally, including positions in Libya and Qatar. For two decades, he served as a faculty member of English Language and Literature at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

POETRY

The moon is a cheeseball and we are effervescent

AYRA GAHAR

The moon is a cheeseball,
Cratered, yellow, and huge like your eyeballs
my eyes haven't quite opened yet
and in a million years you'll be something
and I'll be deep in the lithosphere
Waiting,
Waiting to grow legs
Waiting to learn about gravity and the moon and
forget about it and learn about gravity and forget
about it
and—
The supernovae make the earth look like a giant
strawberry cake pop And I want to take a bite out
of it but all of my teeth fell out when we got on the
Ferris wheel maybe because of gravity
We're stuck at the top of the Ferris wheel and
you're trying to explain something about physics
and gravity,
But I keep remembering you as a carboniferous
fern
You take my hands then,
I've grown into them you say
The ferris wheel is an incredulous feat of gravity,
an unending wheel of cheese and centripetal force
and you look at me and tell me my eyes look like
the moon
and there we are effervescent.

Ayra Gahar occasionally contributes to Star Books and Literature.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

déjà vu

SUMMIT HASAN

In the shadows of stillness
Where time freezes
And bounds me
To tread on a trackless road
Weaved with wonders.
I seek no solace,
Share to no one
The strong infusion
Of our soft love
Or the stories of suffering
That follows it.
That is only ours forever.
Amidst the scorching heat
Stranded with your favourite flowers,
Moving mindlessly and
Etching every alley along the way
With verses devoted to you.
Until the flowers wilted
And my pen
Ran out of ink.
Then I had to call it a day.
Finding myself again
At the edge of a circle
Whose centre is you

Summit Hasan is only rotating around and not reaching the centre thanks to centripetal force. Join him in prayers that some supernatural force is discovered that offers a one-way ticket to the centre.

FLASH FICTION

Wash your fruits

OHONA ANJUM

The fruits rot on the table, a still life of my neglect. It's a familiar scene between me and my unwashed teacups. But today, I wash the fruits. It is one of those days when exhaustion outweighs hunger, when the thought of speaking to the delivery man feels like an unbearable intimacy.

I come out of my room, a ghost in my own home, searching for any leftover that I might have forgotten about. Only two bananas and an apple remain in the glass bowl my mother gave me hoping that I might care for myself as much as I do for the aesthetics of this empty house. She sends me curry in ice cream tubs, fruits in shopping bags. Love in disposable containers.

I take the apple to the kitchen, turn the faucet. Nothing. I twist harder, my fingers white with urgency. There is no



DESIGN: AMREETA LETHE

water. I must have forgotten to fill the tank again.

I am terrible at this, I whisper to no one.

Back at the dining table, I sink into one of the eight chairs, too many for a woman who eats alone. The apple can't be that dirty. I rub it against my sleeve, a pathetic baptism. The first

bite is crisp, then. Iron. Blood. There is blood. Whose? Mine? The apple's? My mother's?

I rush to the mirror. My gums are pristine, no wound, no sin. But when I look back at the fruit, the truth reveals itself: the flesh is blackened, writhing with tiny, hungry mouths. The rot has teeth.

How do I stop the disgust? The punishment of nature for suspension. For all the things I have left undone, unloved, uneaten? The very act of preservation feels like betrayal.

And suddenly the room exhales winter. The floors are coated in dust, the teacups cradle curdled milk at their bottoms. And then I see her.

My mother stands in the doorway, her mouth sewn shut with coarse black thread. In her hands, a new bowl of fruit, fresh, glistening, perfect. She places it on the table. The threads in her mouth loosen, drip honey.

"You let everything spoil," she hums, though her lips never part.

The apple in my hand pulses, a second heartbeat. I press it to my ear. I hear it's weeping.

Ohona Anjum writes, rhymes, and studies English literature.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

YAMAL

The jewel in
Barca's Liga

CROWN



Barcelona scored at least four goals in 23 matches across all competitions this season, including in three Clasicos against Madrid.

It was the first time Barcelona won every Clasico in a season that had at least three matches between the rivals.

“In January, some people were saying we would fight to be third [in LaLiga]. We had confidence in ourselves. That’s the key.”

Barcelona forward Raphinha.

AFP, Barcelona

At just 17 years old, Lamine Yamal now has two LaLiga titles to his name -- the same as Cristiano Ronaldo managed in nine years at Real Madrid.

While his participation in the first was limited to a single brief cameo as a record-breaking 15-year-old debutant, the winger has been a chief architect of Barcelona's success this season.

It was fitting he should make the

breakthrough against Espanyol on Thursday with a sensational curling effort as Barca clinched the title.

Yamal's breathtaking displays have brought a vibrancy and life back to Barcelona that had been lacking since the club's biggest icon, Lionel Messi, departed in 2021.

Former Barca coach Xavi Hernandez brought Yamal on for the final seven minutes of a win over Real Betis in April 2023 at the Camp Nou, as the Catalans went on to win the league for the first time since 2019.

But Barca could not win any trophy that year, precipitating Xavi's exit, and Real Madrid's LaLiga and Champions League double left Barcelona soul-searching, with Yamal's growth the only bright spot.

By early 2024, the fast dribbling, immensely skillful winger had emerged as the team's key attacker -- albeit one still lacking in consistency.

A good omen then for incoming Barca coach Hansi Flick, whose free-flowing attacking style clicked with Yamal, as well as veteran striker Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha on the left flank.

With 13 assists, Yamal has the most in LaLiga, and is the top dribbler, with nearly double the amount of his closest contender, Sevilla's Dodi Lukebakio.

Yamal's irrepressible teen spirit is a big factor, with the youngster undaunted when Barcelona fall behind.

He thrived in all four Clasicos this season, as Barca triumphed each time.

They won the Copa del Rey and Spanish Super Cup by beating Real in finals earlier in 2025, before completing a domestic treble with LaLiga.

IPL, PSL
resume
today

STAR SPORTS DESK

The Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament, suspended for a week amid fighting between India and Pakistan, will resume today, with some new foreign stars joining while some others staying away.

The IPL governing council took the decision to suspend the tournament on May 9 after consulting franchises and players as India and Pakistan extended their worst fighting in nearly three decades.

The IPL still has 12 group matches left, which will be played in the cities of Bengaluru, Jaipur, Delhi, Lucknow, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

“A total of 17 matches will be played across 6 venues, starting May 17, 2025, and culminating in the final on June 3, 2025. The revised schedule includes two double-headers, which will be played on two Sundays,” India's cricket board (BCCI) said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Super League, too, will resume today. The May 8 match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings was postponed after a drone attack hit a street adjacent to Rawalpindi Stadium.

The final of the tournament will take place on May 25. The four remaining group games will take place at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, with the playoffs and final in Lahore.

Mohammedan one win
away from maiden BPL title

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC are just one win away from the coveted title of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), as the popular Black and Whites handed an emphatic 4-1 defeat to bottom-placed Chittagong Abahani at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Since the professional football league in Bangladesh was introduced back in 2007, Mohammedan have never won the top-tier title.

With their 12th win in 15 matches, Mohammedan are now very close to tasting their maiden professional football league title, requiring only one win from their remaining three matches.

The Motijheel-based outfit secured 38 points from 15 matches -- 10 points more than second-placed Abahani, who have played one match fewer than Mohammedan.

However, Mohammedan could celebrate their maiden title triumph today, subject to Abahani's defeat to Fortis FC in today's match.

In Cumilla, although hosts Mohammedan came into the match on the back of a hard-

Tigers begin T20 tune-up
under Liton in Sharjah

SPORTS REPORTER

Five months following a three-match T20I series clean sweep win in the West Indies, Bangladesh are back in the shortest format as they take on hosts UAE in the first of two T20Is at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium today.

While the series may appear to be just a warm-up ahead of a packed T20 calendar -- featuring bilateral series with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, and major tournaments like the Asia Cup and T20 World Cup -- it holds real value.

With a five-T20I tour of Pakistan to follow, and the Asia Cup likely to be staged in the UAE, these games offer a timely opportunity to assess conditions and sharpen plans.

This series also marks a new chapter for Bangladesh, as Liton Das begins his tenure as full-time captain in the shortest format. Though he previously led the team on an interim basis, this is his first full-time appointment in the format, lasting through to the next year's T20 World Cup. The team will be hoping Liton can inspire a more aggressive and exciting style of cricket.

Liton has led Bangladesh to some notable results across formats, including a home ODI series win over India and a T20 series victory in the West Indies. But with the captaincy now confirmed, there's also hope that he can regain form with the bat. In 2024, he managed only one fifty in 20 T20I innings, averaging just 16.26.

Beyond Liton, the focus will also be on Bangladesh's ability to get their



team balance right -- a necessity ahead of tougher assignments. Tactical calls may be required, such as whether to accommodate former captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, and if so, how to structure the starting line-up without compromising bowling options.

Spin remains a strength, led by Mahedi Hasan and Rishad Hossain, while the pace arsenal -- featuring Hasan Mahmud, Nahid Rana, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam and Tanzim Hasan Sakib -- offers the kind of variety that can trouble even elite batting line-ups.

Meanwhile, the UAE have left out many of their top cricketers for the series against Bangladesh and named a relatively inexperienced side, led by opening batter Muhammad Waseem -- the highest run-getter in T20Is in the world since his debut in 2021.

Regarding the head-to-head results, the Tigers are still unbeaten against the UAE in this format, having won all three games. But in 2022, when both sides last played in Dubai during a two-match series, the hosts gave the Tigers decent challenges in both losing affairs.

As the sun sets over Sharjah, Bangladesh embark on more than just another T20 assignment. This is a moment of recalibration -- a chance to not only tune up combinations and strategies, but to redefine how they approach this format under a fresh leader.

Will Liton's leadership spark a shift in the Tigers' T20 identity? Can the team find fluency, intent and balance before the heavyweight challenges ahead?

The answers may begin to unfold tonight -- under lights, under scrutiny, and under new leadership.

Captain Nazmul inspires
U-19s to SAFF final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh overcame a nervy first half to earn a gritty 2-1 victory over Nepal in a semifinal fixture of SAFF U-19 Championship in India's Arunachal Pradesh yesterday.

Captain Nazmul Huda Faisal led from the front after assisting the first goal for Ashikur Rahman before tapping in the second within a span of seven minutes in the second half to ensure Bangladesh's final berth, though Nepal tried to bite back with a late goal from Sujan Dangol.

Bangladesh, who became champions in the SAFF U-20 Championship last year, will now take on the winners of yesterday's second semifinal between Maldives and India.

At Golden Jubilee Stadium, both teams fought equally, as expected. Bangladesh enjoyed a lion's share of possession and created more chances, but it was Nepal who came close to breaking the deadlock after 15 minutes. However, goalkeeper Ismail Hossain Mahin denied the Nepalese forwards, while Nepal were also thwarted by the woodwork on the half-hour mark.

Bangladesh squandered two chances afterwards before Nepal defender Madan



Paudel made a goalline save, thwarting a goal-bound header 10 minutes into the second half.

After surviving a fumble from goalkeeper Mahin, Bangladesh broke the deadlock in the 74th minute, with Ashikur nodding in a well-judged corner from Nazmul, who then doubled the lead with a tap-in after substitute Mohammad Manik brilliantly snatched the ball from a Nepalese defender and squared it for Nazmul inside the box in the 81th minute.

Nepal bit back to pull one back in the 87th minute, with Sujan side-volleying a low cut-back into the net, giving goalkeeper Mahin no chance to react.

SHORT CORNER

Rakibul, Mahfuzur shine in Emerging
Team's series win over SA

Rakibul Hasan and Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby's all-round brilliance helped Bangladesh Emerging Team clinch a 34-run win in the series-deciding third and final one-dayer to complete a 2-1 series victory over their South African counterparts in Rajshahi on Friday.

BFF slaps six-month ban on Saad

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) disciplinary committee has handed down a series of sanctions to Bashundhara Kings and their personnel following incidents of misconduct during a recent Bangladesh Premier League fixture against Abahani. Kings defender Saad Uddin has been banned for six months and fined Tk 50,000 for physically assaulting match commissioner Sujit Banerjee.

CR7 tops Forbes' list of highest-paid
athletes for third year in a row

Cristiano Ronaldo topped Forbes' list of the world's highest-paid athletes for the third consecutive year and the fifth time in his career. Following his move to Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, Ronaldo's estimated total earnings are around \$275 million.

**Read full stories on The Daily Star website.

Palace eye FA Cup
glory as City seek
salvation

AFP, London

History beckons for Crystal Palace at Wembley in Saturday's FA Cup final as Manchester City have one final shot at avoiding a rare trophyless season under Pep Guardiola.

Twice FA Cup runners-up, Palace have never won a major trophy in their 119-year history. The Eagles sense this may finally be their time up against a City side far from their former glories of Guardiola's trophy-laden reign.

Palace warmed up for the Wembley showpiece by cruising to a 2-0 win at Tottenham last weekend to equal their record of 49 Premier League points with two games of the season to spare.

Victory would secure entry to one of Europe's major club competitions for the first time in Palace's history with a place in the Europa League at stake.

City's laboured display in drawing a blank at bottom-of-the-table Southampton last weekend gave Palace even more reason to believe.

However, Guardiola's men are unbeaten in 10 games, including a 5-2 demolition of Palace in the Premier League last month despite falling 2-0 behind.

City's fightback at the Etihad Stadium that day was sparked by Kevin De Bruyne rolling back the years.

The Belgian has just three games left as a City player after a glorious decade in Manchester and will be aiming to add one more to his 14 major honours with the club.

After an unprecedented four consecutive English top-flight titles, City find themselves battling just to secure a top-five Premier League finish and a place in next season's Champions League. Anything other than victory would cap what Haaland described as a "horrendous" campaign for a squad of serial winners.



Biman flight lands safely after losing wheel mid-air

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight landed safely in Dhaka yesterday despite losing a wheel from its left side main landing gear shortly after take-off from Cox's Bazar.

The incident occurred moments after flight BG 436 took off from Cox's Bazar Airport at 2:19pm en route to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, said ABM Rawshan Kabir, general manager (public relations) of Biman.

The aircraft was carrying 71 passengers at the time.

"Biman's engineering department and the airport authorities had taken all preparations at the airport for the landing of the aircraft without one of the left wheels of the main landing gear. The passengers and the aircraft are safe," Rawshan told The Daily Star.

The flight landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 2:20pm without any incident, he added.

Biman authorities said the

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4



A mourner reacts during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, at the Indonesian hospital in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pakistan FM calls for 'composite dialogue' with India

Says truce extended till May 18

AGENCIES

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has called for a "composite dialogue" with India to address the contentious issues between the two sides.

Addressing the Senate on Thursday night, Dar said the "ceasefire" with India has been extended till May 18, but a political dialogue will ultimately have to take place to resolve the problems between the two neighbours.

"We have told the world that we will hold a composite dialogue," Dar, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, said.

He also said that the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of Pakistan and India would again get in contact on May 18, reports Dawn.

Meanwhile, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said yesterday the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should reconsider a one billion dollar loan to Pakistan, alleging Islamabad was "funding terror".

"I believe a big portion of the \$1 billion coming from IMF will be used for funding terror infrastructure," Singh told troops at an air force base in western India. "I believe any economic assistance to Pakistan is nothing less than funding terror".

India and Pakistan last week launched missiles, drones and artillery strikes on each other before a ceasefire that began Saturday.

'Case was filed to harass us'

Ctg journos allege it was the complainant who attacked them

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Many of the 26 journalists accused in an attempted murder case filed by a pro-BNP lawyer in Chattogram have alleged that the charges were based on distorted facts.

Rezaul Islam, a member of the Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum's Chattogram unit, lodged the case with a Chattogram court on May 13.

The court directed the Police Bureau of Investigation to probe the case against 37 individuals, including the journalists, on charges of an assault on Rezaul on May 1, 2025. Rezaul also alleged that the accused had abducted and mugged him.

Among the 11 other accused, six were labelled in the case statement as "Awami terrorists". Rezaul said in the case statement that all the accused are affiliated with the Awami League, Jubo League, and their associated organisations. They were involved in extortion, murder, and other criminal activities, and they attacked protesters during the July uprising, he alleged.

The accused had repeatedly threatened him to withdraw the cases he filed on behalf of the families of some of the victims of the July atrocities, Rezaul said.

Describing the alleged attack on him in the case statement, Rezaul said he was on his way to a Sramik Dal programme when he saw the accused were assaulting a member of the organisation near the Jamiatul Falah Mosque gate.

When he approached the scene, the accused questioned him about filing the July killing cases, attacked him, and snatched Tk 30,000 and a mobile phone from him, he wrote in the case statement.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

A pro-BNP lawyer filed the attempted murder case against 37 people, including 26 journalists, on May 13.

A top company official sent to jail for 'forging' ministry letter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday sent a Bashundhara Group official to jail in a case over an alleged attempt to evade over Tk 50 crore of port charges by submitting a forged letter from the shipping ministry.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Sarkar Hasan Shahriar gave the order in the afternoon after police produced him before the court in connection with the case filed by the port authorities on Thursday night.

Suspect Md Foyezur Rahman, 42, is a senior general manager at Bashundhara Group, according to the First Information Report filed by Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, chief assistant of the Traffic Department at Chattogram Port.

The court ordered the police to produce the suspect before the court on June 19, 2025.

According to the case statement, "109 containers (equivalent to 214 TEUs) imported by Bashundhara

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

Many in Gaza 'starving'

Says Trump, Palestinian rescuers report over 74 deaths in Israeli air strikes; dozens injured

AFP, Gaza City

US President Donald Trump said yesterday "a lot of people are starving" in the besieged Gaza Strip, where rescuers reported more than 74 deaths in Israeli air strikes since midnight.

Trump's brief comments on Gaza came as he capped the first foreign tour of his second term that saw him visit several Gulf countries but excluded key ally Israel.

A two-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas collapsed in March, shortly after Israel reimposed a total blockade on Gaza that aid agencies say has sparked critical food shortages.

Yesterday, Gaza's civil defence agency said that 56 people had been killed in Israeli strikes since midnight, with medics reporting dozens more injured. When asked by AFP, the Israeli army made no comment on the strikes.

"We're looking at Gaza. And we're going to get that taken care of. A lot of people are starving," Trump told reporters in Abu Dhabi.

Israel cut off aid to Gaza on March 2, a tactic it has said is intended to force concessions from Hamas, which is still holding dozens of Israeli hostages it seized in October 2023.

Hamas insisted on Thursday night that the restoration of humanitarian assistance to the war-ravaged territory was "the minimum requirement" for talks.

It also warned that Gaza was not "for sale" hours after Trump again floated taking over the territory and turning it into "a freedom zone".

The World Health Organization said that the last hospital in Gaza providing cancer and cardiac care had stopped functioning after an Israeli attack.

The UN health agency chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X that an attack on Tuesday left the European Hospital in

Khan Yunis "severely damaged and inaccessible".

It is "no longer functional", he said, adding that a WHO team had evacuated emergency medical staff who had worked through the attacks.

"A strike hit nearby just before the mission," Tedros said, adding that the staff had been taken to the Nasser Medical Complex.

» **Hamas official says Gaza not 'for sale'**

» **Entry of aid 'minimum requirement' for talks: Hamas**

» **WHO says Gaza's last cancer hospital stops working**

Two stabbed to death in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two men were stabbed to death in separate incidents in the capital's Shankar and Jigatala areas last night.

The deceased Nure Islam, 26, a freelance photographer, was a resident of Shankar Bus Stand area, while Samiur Rahman, 23, a student of Dr Maleka University College, lived near Hazaribagh BDR Gate 5.

Nure Islam's elder brother, Usman Gani, said muggers stabbed his brother and took his two cameras. When he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, doctors declared him dead around 9:30pm.

Meanwhile, around 7:30pm, Samiur was stabbed by unidentified assailants near Jigatala Bus Stand area.

Locals rescued him and took him to Japan Friendship Hospital. Later, when he was transferred to DMCH, where doctors declared him dead at 9:00pm, said his friend Tanvir Hossain.

Hazaribagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Saiful Islam said, "Some 15 assailants armed with sharp weapons attacked Samiur and several others. Samiur died while at least three others were injured."

The OC added preliminary information suggests a previous dispute resulted in the attack.

Inspector Md Faruk, in charge of the police outpost at DMCH, said the bodies have been kept in the hospital morgue.

Political consensus a must on aid corridor: NCP

The party launches youth front

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must hold discussions with the political parties before finalising any decision on the proposed humanitarian channel to send aid to Myanmar's Rakhine, National Citizen Party Member Secretary Akhter Hossain said yesterday.

"Whether a humanitarian corridor is needed, who will control that corridor, and what kind of movement will take place through it -- all these issues must be discussed with political parties before any decision is made," he said.

Akhter made the comments while addressing the inaugural ceremony of NCP's youth wing, Jatiya Juboshakti, at Abrar Fahad Avenue in the capital's Gulistan area.

"Because it is the people of Bangladesh who will determine the country's future. No foreign lords will be allowed to interfere in our politics," he said.

He called upon the government to ensure that decisions related to Bangladesh's independence, sovereignty, and national security are taken in consultation with all political parties.

The NCP leader also urged anti-fascist forces to continue their fight against fascism, oppression, and authoritarianism despite their ideological differences. "The people do not wish to rehabilitate the Awami League."

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Rows of CNG-run autorickshaws and makeshift stalls illegally occupying the majority of the road near the capital's Jurain rail crossing area leave little room for other vehicles, which causes severe congestion frequently throughout the day. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BGB, locals step up vigil amid push-in fears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

To resist any attempted push-in of people from India, Border Guard Bangladesh intensified patrols and heightened vigilance in the bordering villages of Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar upazila.

Amid the situation, residents of Nalgarghya and Noabadi also joined the efforts on Thursday night, according to local government officials and villagers.

Around 11:00pm, announcements from mosques urged residents to stay alert, locals said.

Sadhana Tripura, upazila nirbahi officer of Bijoynagar, said, "Locals stood by the BGB to resist any attempted push-in. Everyone in the border areas remains alert. The situation is now under control."

Lt Col Jabbar Ahmed, commanding officer of BGB Battalion 25, told The Daily Star, "Given the overall situation in the country, we are maintaining maximum alert along the border. Anticipating a possible push-in, we have taken advance preparations and strengthened patrols in the area."

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1



THE ORGANIC shift

Inside Bangladesh's growing appetite for clean eating



PHOTO: PARAMOUNT AGRO LIMITED/O'NATURAL

AYMAN ANIKA

When Farzana Karim, a Dhaka-based HR professional, developed chronic acidity, she tried everything from antacids to Ayurvedic concoctions.

Nothing worked until she made a switch in her diet.

"I started buying fish, fresh fruits, and selected dairy products from an online page that primarily sells organic foods," Farzana says.

"I didn't expect miracles, but within weeks, I felt a difference," she adds.

Farzana isn't alone. A growing number of Bangladeshis are reassessing their food choices – not out of luxury, but necessity.

The last few years have witnessed a noticeable shift in consumer food behaviour in urban Bangladesh. From regular rice to pesticide-free parboiled varieties, from chemically ripened bananas to heirloom papayas

Ashna Afroz Ahmed, founder of Prakriti Farming, points out that fruits and vegetables are always top of the list, especially during seasonal periods.

"People always look for them, mangoes, lychees, leafy vegetables, and grains like black cumin or brown rice. Also, free-range chicken and pure cow's milk, ghee, mustard oil – these are among the most popular organic items that people order."

Consumers in this space are no longer passive. They research, compare, and often rely on social media and trusted networks to validate the sources of their food.

One of the biggest hurdles for any organic food seller in Bangladesh is navigating a saturated and unregulated market. With few official certification systems, anyone can claim their products are "organic", and many do.

increasing," says Hussain. "Compared to when we first started, the difference is huge. Now we can't even meet the production capacity according to demand," he adds.

Yet, with this rising interest comes scepticism. Not every label that claims to be organic truly meets the standards. Without regulatory certification, the market has become cluttered with sellers making unverified claims, and customers are left trying to decipher which sources to trust.

"Customers are interested, yes, but they're also cautious. They often ask, 'How do I know this is really organic?' That's where transparency comes in. We try to answer with honesty and show them what goes into the process, from seed to delivery. The trust must be earned every time," she elaborates.

The result is a dual challenge for ethical producers: not only do they have to ensure quality, but they must also constantly educate, convince, and retain a customer base that's more informed, yet wary. As the market expands, this question of authenticity will only grow louder, pushing sellers to be more transparent and urging policymakers to step in with standardisation.

She emphasises that if clean food is to reach more people, not just Dhaka's middle or upper class, then affordability and infrastructure must be addressed.

AWARENESS AS THE TIPPING POINT

In terms of growth, both sellers are cautiously optimistic.

"This market may dip when people realise not all 'organic' is genuine," Hussain admits. "But in the long run, awareness will grow. People are becoming more conscious, and that will create a stronger, more honest organic food market."

Afroze agrees. "In Bangladesh, the demand

The last few years have witnessed a noticeable shift in consumer food behaviour in urban Bangladesh. From regular rice to pesticide-free parboiled varieties, from chemically ripened bananas to heirloom papayas – people are not just looking for food but food they can trust.

papayas – people are not just looking for food but food they can trust.

This movement toward organic and whole foods may still be modest in scale, but it's gaining ground steadily, one market shelf and home kitchen at a time.

WHAT'S ON THE ORGANIC PLATE?

While "organic" can be a vague term, in the Bangladeshi context, it often refers to food grown without synthetic pesticides, preservatives, or artificial hormones – and more recently, food produced in closed-loop, environmentally conscious systems.

"Our most in-demand products are hydroponic vegetables: multi-coloured capsicum, cherry tomatoes, eggplants, even honeydew melons," explains Abdullah Al Hussain, head of E-commerce and Digital Marketing at Paramount Agro Limited. "All are grown in temperature-controlled greenhouses using clean water-based nutrition."

Launched first for in-house consumption within the Paramount Group, the company's clean food initiative quickly expanded into a commercial venture.

O'Natural now supplies hydroponically grown produce, raw honey, and preservative-free sweets – all produced in controlled environments and delivered fresh.

"We started this journey not for business, but for our consumption," Hussain adds. "Later, seeing the potential, we went commercial. But even now, we stick to the core idea, offering clean, daily-produced food without preservatives."

For consumers like Mehjabin Islam, a 32-year-old working professional in Dhaka, that trust develops over time.

"I started small... just tried a few vegetables from an organic vendor a friend recommended. But over time, I noticed the taste, the freshness, and how I felt after eating them," she shares. "Now I regularly buy from two sellers I trust. It's not cheap, but I know I'm paying for real food, not marketing."



In a space where anyone can claim "organic," brands that provide visible proof – photos of their farms, detailed sourcing info, or consistent product quality – build a loyal customer base. Without institutional safeguards, this kind of accountability remains the only currency that works.

DEMAND IS RISING, BUT SO ARE THE QUESTIONS

"The demand for organic food is definitely



"Everyone is claiming to be organic now," Hussain continues. "But how many are truly following organic standards? The term has become diluted because there are no strong checks. Real organic farming requires distance from pollution sources like textile or chemical factories – how many follow that?"

Afroze of Prakriti Farming echoes this concern from a seller's perspective.



THE COST OF STAYING CLEAN

But good food doesn't come cheap, especially when grown ethically. Both Afroze and Hussain agree that cost is a defining challenge in sustaining and scaling clean food production.

"True organic farming, especially greenhouse-based, has high production costs," says Hussain. "But the market is flooded with cheaper products that claim to be organic without actually being so. Our prices don't match those, but our practices are real."

Afroze echoes this concern. She says, "To minimise this cost, I'm not sure if it's possible right now. We are losing a lot of people because of that. Maybe public or private sector help can bridge that gap."

for organic food has increased significantly, especially in urban places like Dhaka and Chittagong. I think the adulteration in food has pushed this kind of shift."

In short, the organic food movement in Bangladesh is still young and fragmented, but undeniably growing. It's not driven by luxury, but rather by the fundamental right to eat clean, safe food.

From farm-to-table startups to hydroponic pioneers, from subscription vegetable boxes to preservative-free sweets, the industry is finding its footing, often without institutional help. What sustains it is trust, education, and a growing public consciousness about what's at stake.

As urban Bangladesh wakes up to the reality of what's on its plate, the organic shift may be more than a trend – it may be the beginning of a food culture that values integrity over illusion, and quality over quantity.

Vanishing Livelihoods

The Pen Engravers and Repairmen of Bangladesh



The country's only surviving 'Pen Hospital', located in Baitul Mukarram.

AMAIN BABU

There was a time when pens had “health issues” and needed to be taken to the “Pen Hospital.” These were makeshift roadside stalls or small shops where skilled artisans—pen repairmen and engravers—restored broken nibs, leaky reservoirs, and cracked barrels with careful precision. Especially in Dhaka during the 1970s and ‘80s, these craftsmen were a common sight.

The popularity of fountain pens, dip pens, and felt-tip pens gave rise to this craft. Repairmen sat near busy areas like Chawk Bazar, Baitul Mukarram, Patuatuli, and the courts, armed with wooden boxes or briefcases filled with tools. Using discarded or broken pen parts, they could assemble a new pen—often from scratch. Yet, despite their skill, these artisans never gained formal

recognition as a distinct profession.

In Europe, the equivalent was known as a “pen maker and engraver.” While South Asia lacked such a title, the roles were similar. Some repairmen specialised in polishing or engraving names on pen bodies, watches, and even bicycles. Young students, eager to mark their belongings, would get their names engraved—paying a modest fee per letter. These artisans were affectionately called “pen doctors” or “pen engineers.”

In cities like Dhaka, Rajshahi, Pabna, and Rangpur, pen hospitals often emerged near major colleges. Many repairmen also ran small shops selling pens and ink. Others were itinerant, visiting schools and offices in search of work. One would hear school caretakers call out, “Kids, the name-writer is here!” Middle-aged men with dusty briefcases

would set up just outside school gates, offering engraving and minor repairs. The most artistic part of their work was name engraving. Using tools like miniature chisels and handheld hammers, they would etch names

into plastic or metal pen surfaces with astonishing accuracy. Some even offered engraving in Bengali, English, Urdu, or Arabic. The tools they used resembled thin pens, each suited for different materials—watches, nameplates, or pen bodies. With the spread of ballpoint pens in the mid-1990s, demand plummeted. School corridors that once bustled with children queuing to engrave their names on fountain pens fell silent. Still, a few continued to adapt. Mohammad Shahab Uddin Mir of Kishoreganj, now in his late 60s, began in 1982 under the guidance of his uncle. Today, he etches names onto mobile phone covers and motorcycles instead.

to refer to such artisans as “nokkashi” or “nakashi”—terms not widely used elsewhere.

There’s evidence that similar “pen hospitals” existed outside Dhaka. In 1962, one such shop opened in Pabna’s Indrapatti area, near Edward College, and continued operating until 2005. Students not only bought new pens there but also repaired their old ones.

While engraving was beautiful and affordable, pen repair was often costlier and more time-consuming. In the 1980s, engraving might cost Tk 2, but repairing a fountain pen could cost anywhere between Tk 5 and Tk 40. Curious schoolboys would often gather for hours just to watch the intricate work.

Pen engravers and repairmen gradually disappeared with the rise of mass-produced plastic pens and digital writing. However, a few names still persist—Abdul Quddus and Mohabbat Mostafa in Dhaka, and Imtiaz Ali and Dilip Basak in Kolkata. They are among the last to carry the legacy of this profession, holding onto their craft despite minimal demand.

There were always two kinds of craftsmen—those who could engrave and those who could repair. But the few who mastered both were rare and revered.

Today, pen repair may be obsolete, but engraving survives in fragmented form. Fountain pens still exist as luxury items, and some enthusiasts continue to seek out these artisans. Government offices and courts once had regular ink and pen vendors who often doubled as repairmen. In Dhaka’s New Market or Gulistan, names like Khokon, Kalam, and Shafique were once well-known.

As digital communication dominates and handwritten letters fade away, the memory of these pen artists—engravers and repairers alike—deserves to be preserved. They were more than craftsmen. They were the guardians of tools that shaped ideas, carried knowledge, and recorded history.

Amain Babu is a journalist and researcher.



Dhaka’s legendary repairman, Mohabbat Mostafa (L), with his mentor, Abdul Quddus (R).

Left in the DARK

Eye Victims of the July Uprising

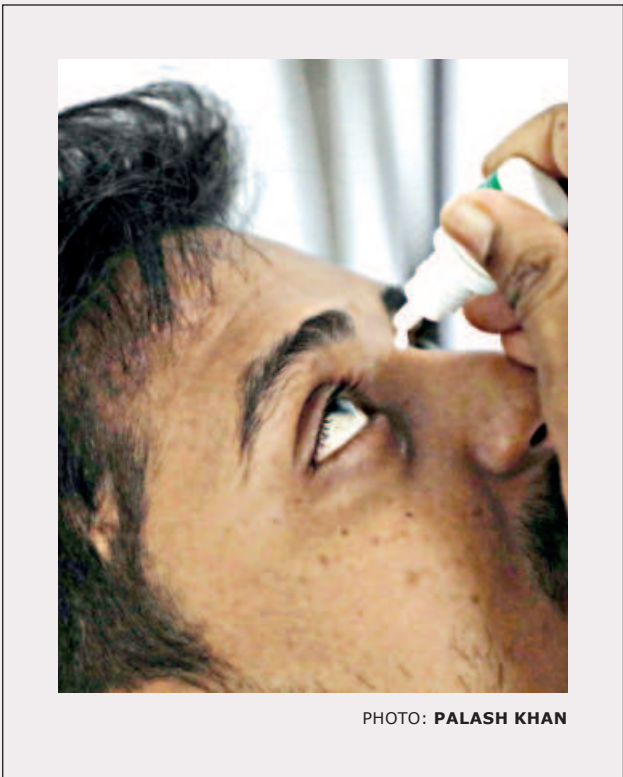


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MIPTAHUL JANNAT

Nine months have passed since the July Uprising, yet its human toll continues to surface—survivors left scarred, jobless, and crushed by mounting debt. Among the most visible yet overlooked are those who lost their eyesight—many now living with permanent disability and fading hope.

Their stories go beyond physical injury. They reveal gaps in state support, bureaucratic delays, and a deeply unjust aftermath.

Visible Wounds, Invisible Burdens

Md Shahinur Miah was shot in both eyes during the uprising. Even after seven surgeries, one eye is completely damaged, and the other has only blurry vision. Formerly an auto-rickshaw driver and the sole breadwinner of his family, Shahinur now lives in darkness—both literally and economically. He sold his vehicle to keep his family afloat. “Sometimes, I feel like a burden,” he said. “There are nights I think of ending it all.”

He isn’t alone. Md Mijanur Rahman Badol has undergone multiple operations and is burdened by growing debt, despite receiving some grants from the government and civil society. These funds are fragmented, delayed, and often inaccessible without relentless follow-up. Despite his growing debt, he still has to spend thousands just to reach Dhaka for treatment.

Another victim, Syed Hasibun Nabi Raju, Savar correspondent for Maasranga Television, sustained gunshot injuries while covering the events of 5 August. He still has 92 pellets lodged in various parts of his body, including his eyes.

“I’m surviving with my left eye. My right eye is completely gone. Even with the left, I can only make out outlines—I can’t recognise faces,” he said.

Dr Khair Ahamed Choudhury, Director of the National Institute of

Ophthalmology & Hospital (NIOH), explains: “Pellet or gunshot wounds to the eye often cause irreversible damage on the very first day. Recovery is slow and staged—many cannot expect full restoration.”

Prof Dr Md Shafi Khan, Cornea Specialist and Phaco Surgeon at Bangladesh Eye Hospital & Institute, adds: “If the damage is minimal, vision may be recoverable—sometimes with a cornea transplant. But if internal structures are severely harmed, treatment is much more difficult and full recovery unlikely.”

Caught in Bureaucratic Limbo

Many victims report not receiving promised hospital bill reimbursements, despite commitments made in February. One-time grants and monthly stipends were also announced, but as of May, remain only partially implemented.

Victims were categorised by injury severity to guide relief efforts, yet many remain misclassified and denied appropriate support.

Md Shahinur, who lost one eye and has blurred vision in the other, was placed in Category B. He continues to petition for reclassification to Category A, but the process is slow and marked by poor coordination and limited empathy.

Others, like Ashrafur Islam, have paid out of pocket for their treatment and weren’t even aware of the promised aid. “I was ill and couldn’t collect the information about the disbursement. Others got it, I didn’t,” he said.

This raises a crucial question: should victims, already suffering physically and mentally, be expected to chase down financial aid?

Where Is the System?

Md Faruk Hossain, Joint Secretary and

In-Charge of the July Mass Uprising Cell at the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, stated, “One-time allowances of BDT 2 lakh, out of the approved BDT 5 lakh, have already been disbursed to Category A and B victims in most divisions—except Chattogram and Rangpur.”

He added that disbursement in those two divisions would begin the following week. “Monthly stipends will commence in July,” he said.

For those with urgent needs, such delays only deepen their suffering.

“Frequent queries, incomplete victim information, and the absence of a streamlined system have caused delays—despite our best efforts,” he noted. “In many cases, victims cannot be reached even after multiple attempts. Limited formal education among some also complicates communication.”

The Dignity They Deserve

Every victim interviewed expressed the same needs: a monthly stipend, lifelong free treatment, and recognition. What they’ve received instead are fragmented support measures and delayed promises.

Md Mijanur now depends on loans from relatives. His most urgent need? A proper house. “I had to stop construction after losing my job. If the promised funds were released, I could have finished it.”

Others, like Shahinur, are still fighting for basic dignity. “Correct my category. Give me the allowance. I’m not asking for luxury—just survival,” he said.

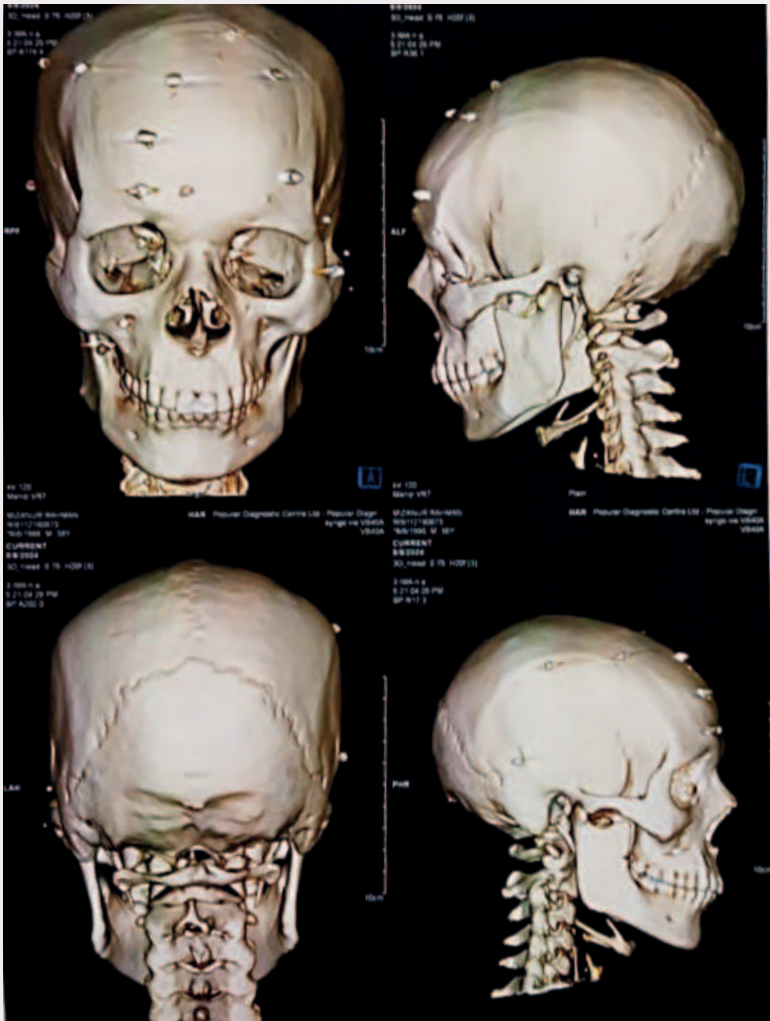
The Time for Action Is Now

As the dust of political change settles, these victims remain caught in a humanitarian vacuum. A centralised rehabilitation programme, coordinated across ministries and grounded in transparency, is urgently needed.

While efforts may be present, the ongoing delays continue to compound the challenges. “Many issues have emerged now—injured victims are protesting, some getting aggressive,” says Nusrat Jahan, student representative at CMH appointed by the Health Ministry. “This could have been avoided had prompt action been taken from the beginning.”

Dr Choudhury echoes the call for long-term support: “These patients require lifelong care—treatment may continue for years.”

Miftahul Jannat is a journalist at The Daily Star



COURTESY: MD MIJANUR RAHMAN BADOL

A CT scan reveals the silent agony—like many other victims, Md Mijanur Rahman Badol still has gun pellets lodged in his face and skull.

Beyond development paradox & UNNAYAN WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Why institutional reform must begin with the right narrative

The reform initiative must shift the focus from process to outcomes. Too often, institutional success is measured by whether a circular has been issued, not whether a problem has been solved. How results are meaningfully achieved must become the central concern of reform thinking. Such a mindset shift is long overdue.

HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

As Bangladesh seeks to recalibrate its path in the aftermath of recent upheavals, the time is ripe to revisit an oft invoked but under-examined agenda: institutional reform. Institutions are crucial to understand, as they are foundational for governance, transformation, and economic development. It is tempting to dive straight into prescriptions—restructure this ministry, decentralise that department—but such surface-level enthusiasm risks masking deeper, structural blind spots unless we first confront a fundamental challenge: our burden of flawed narratives. Reform narratives orient us to focus on certain aspects of institutions while overlooking others—ultimately shaping which policy actions are prioritised.

In the 1990s, a popular intellectual shorthand coined by some economists described Bangladesh's experience as a "development paradox"—growth without governance. When governance was said to be absent, the empirical focus was largely on corruption—primarily measured through indicators like Transparency International's rankings, which listed Bangladesh among the most corrupt countries. The phrase caught on, reinforced by these international rankings of corruption and governance deficits. Yet this narrative glossed over key institutional breakthroughs during that same period, which was also marked by competitive politics. Private banking and private universities emerged in the early 1990s, marking major institutional expansion in the finance and education sectors. The period also

saw the transformative spread of mobile telephony and the institutionalisation of social protection programmes such as the old-age allowance and stipends for primary and girls' education.

These were not anomalies; they were significant governance reforms that underpinned growth and social development. Corruption was certainly a reality in that period, but the narrative framing was flawed because it overlooked major governance reforms in banking, education, and telecommunications. To reduce the decade to a 'growth without governance' paradox was to obscure the very institutional drivers that enabled growth. This is why I want to emphasise that, when engaging with institutional reform, it is essential that the narrative is not built on a selective reading of the empirical record.

The misalignment between narrative and empirical reality was not unique to the 1990s. Fast forward to the period of the fallen regime from 2009 to 2024. We again witnessed the re-emergence of a similar paradoxical narrative. This time, the dominant discourse was 'unnayan without democracy'. While apologists for the autocratic regime promoted the idea that development did not need democracy and growth must be pursued at any cost, this too was a flawed narrative. Beneath the surface, competitiveness declined, the employment elasticity of growth sharply dropped, and inequalities reached alarming levels. Economic and political governance—particularly of the transformative kind—retreated.

The cost of flawed narratives is not merely semantic. They orient our gaze towards certain institutions while rendering others invisible. Consider two broad types of institutions: watchdog bodies and grooming institutions. Watchdogs are designed to monitor and enforce accountability—catching corruption, ensuring

compliance. Grooming institutions, on the other hand, do not punish but instead focus on nurturing and building capacity, developing people, and strengthening systems. Unfortunately, due to dominant but flawed narratives, our reform efforts have historically leaned too heavily towards watchdog-type institutions. As a result, we tend to overinvest in bodies tasked with punishing deviation, while neglecting institutions designed to nurture competence and initiative. The Anti-Corruption Commission or consumer rights bodies may attract media attention, but where are the institutions that build the next generation of public health professionals or local administrators?

The second point I want to raise is about clarity of purpose. We often talk about restructuring institutions—how a bank should be managed, or how a ministry or an agency could be reorganised. But before institutional reform can be meaningfully undertaken, we must ask: what are the end goals we seek to achieve? What is it we want these institutional reforms to deliver? Otherwise, institutional reform risks being driven by narrow bureaucratic interests. For example, a ministry might push for changes that serve its internal concerns, rather than broader national priorities—better service delivery, greater equity, faster justice, enhanced preparedness, or stronger accountability.

What are the end goals of reforming



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

workers find pathways to formal protection, and that domestic investors are not crowded out by headline-grabbing FDI summits. It is about ensuring that the benefits of reform are not monopolised by a few but reach the many.

Reimagining the economic role of the state is also critical to getting the reform narrative right. Today, as the stability of the global trading system comes under strain, economic nationalism has once again emerged as a significant idea. However, neither market fundamentalism nor the command economy concept of an earlier era is particularly useful here—nor is a bureaucratic dominance that is red tape-friendly and hoirani-prone. Institutional reform needs to strengthen that part of the economic role of the state that catalyses innovation and long-term resilience.

Looking at Bangladesh—and indeed, South Asia more broadly—there is a particular character to the way economic transformation happens, quite different from East Asia. Much

institutions are often headed by generalist administrators, their leadership determined less by expertise and more by bureaucratic convenience. Reform agendas become vehicles for career placements rather than systemic transformation. The result is institutional mimicry—reform in form, not substance.

The reform narratives have also been overly supply-driven. Demand-side inputs, especially from SMEs, youth, women, and local actors, remain weak or co-opted. During a recent dialogue with small business owners, one entrepreneur lamented: "We are asked for feedback but never see it reflected in the final policy." FBCCI and other chambers were meant to be demand-side vehicles—but are they truly voicing the policy and reform needs of the community? Similarly, SMEs lack organisational channels to push for reforms that would benefit them. Other countries, like Turkey, have successfully set up such vehicles, allowing both large and small businesses to shape meaningful reforms.

Some imperatives are now clear. First, we need a personnel policy that prizes merit and nurtures professional specialisation. Second, we must empower local institutions—not simply decentralise for form's sake. Third, we need a "redundancy audit" of outdated regulations. One such regulation is the requirement for police verification for jobs—a colonial relic that served little purpose other than delay and rent-seeking. It took years to roll back something that had long outlived its usefulness.

Think of the proverbial machhimara kerani—the office clerk who, having once killed a fly with a file, now repeats the ritual endlessly because it has become 'procedure'. Institutional reform must also address a cancer institutionalised by the autocratic regime: the mainstreaming of rampant conflicts of interest in economic governance.

Finally, the reform initiative must shift the focus from process to outcomes. Too often, institutional success is measured by whether a circular has been issued, not whether a problem has been solved. How results are meaningfully achieved must become the central concern of reform thinking. Such a mindset shift is long overdue.

Institutional reform, in its true sense, must go beyond merely creating new agencies or laws. At a deeper level, we also need to address the issue of policy sovereignty—which is not just about political independence but also about ensuring that the policies and reforms we adopt are genuinely suited to our needs and not overly influenced by external experts or agencies. To do that, we must first unburden ourselves of flawed narratives and rediscover the empirical truths and aspirations that truly define our national journey.

This speech was delivered by Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, Chairman, Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), at the 6th Bangladesh Economics Summit 2025, organised by the Economics Study Centre, University of Dhaka. The Daily Star team and Namira Shameem of PPRC assisted with the transcription of the recorded speech.



economic governance? Growth, yes—but what kind? Bangladesh can no longer rely on the old formula of cheap labour. If we do not transition towards a growth model rooted in productivity, skills, and domestic innovation, we risk stagnation. Do we want an export-driven strategy only, or one that equally values the domestic economy and its potential to drive inclusive growth? What are the new growth drivers beyond RMG and remittance that can take Bangladesh further in its economic journey? Are we listening to entrepreneurs on the ground to identify and nurture these potential new drivers? Should we not hold a summit—like the recent one on foreign investment—to support and encourage local investors, many of whom may already have considerable resources to reinvest in the country? How can the focus on employment generation be placed at the heart of the growth strategy? These are the priorities that the reform narrative must embrace as its key end goals.

Economic justice too has emerged as a defining aspiration. And it is not just about poverty alleviation or redistribution. It is about ensuring that local governments have the autonomy to act, that informal

of the transformation in Bangladesh has been initiative-driven rather than policy-led. In many cases, progress occurred not because there was a clear policy, but because someone took initiative—within or outside government.

For example, farmers began experimenting with solar irrigation techniques on their own, and over time, this reshaped the agricultural landscape. So, when we talk about institutional reform, we must ensure that new regulatory burdens do not close down these spaces for individual or collective initiative. Over-regulation can end up stifling this vital source of innovation.

Yet even where reform initiatives have been launched, many have ended in dead ends. We have created institutions without staffing them properly. We have built infrastructure without equipping it with the necessary personnel or decision-making power. Consider BARD in Cumilla, once envisioned as a global centre of excellence, now faded from prominence—not for lack of vision, but because human resources and autonomy never caught up with infrastructure.

Not filling sanctioned posts at operational levels year after year is an institutional disease across the gamut of the public sector. Service delivery institutions—hospitals and ports, to name just a few—lack critical financial and administrative autonomy. Specialised



How Chattogram built its economic legacy



Four large steel plants of leading business groups — Abul Khair Group, BSRM Group, GPH Group Steel Mills and KSRM — and around 30 traditional and semi-automated mills are located in Sitakunda, meeting nearly 50 percent of the nation's total demand for steel

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, *Ctg*

Picture a crowded harbour where the salty seabreeze carries whispers of far-off lands, where merchants of all creed and caste haggle over silks and spices, and where towering ships of all varieties — Chinese junks, Arab dhows, and Portuguese carracks — sway gently in the waters of the Bay of Bengal.

One of the most famous harbours in ancient times, the port in Chattogram has been the ultimate pit stop for traders, explorers, and fortune-seekers for over 2,000 years.

Thanks to its strategic geographic location as a natural sea harbour that offers access to vast plainlands but remains surrounded by hillocks, the anchorage in Chattogram has featured in some of the richest chapters of history.

The maritime Silk Road — the ocean-based sibling of the famous caravan trails — ran straight through the Bay of Bengal, with the jetties in Chattogram being the star player.

All the way back in the 4th century BC, sailors were dropping anchor here, turning the Bay of Bengal into a buzzing hub of commerce.

By the 2nd century AD, the legendary geographer Claudius Ptolemy had inked the location onto his world map, mentioning it as one of the finest ports in the Eastern World.

Five centuries later, Chinese traveller Xuanzang declared it “a misty beauty emerging out of the misty water”, as mentioned in Routledge's International Dictionary of Historic Places. Much later, even Marco Polo was said to be left in awe of the lush landscape that provided the backdrop for the harbour.

Throughout chapters of chaos, conquest and colonisation, the port of Chittagong always emerged as a thriving commercial hub, whether it was when Arab merchants dominated in the 9th century or under Portuguese hold in the 1500s.

WHERE PIONEERING INDUSTRIES FOUND THEIR FEET

Since days of yore, the bustling landscape of trade and commerce due to the proximity to the port, in combination with hinterland connectivity, has seen the Chittagong region rise to the top as the go-to spot for export-oriented industries.

For example, although Sylhet dominates the scene now, tea production in Bangladesh started in a hilly area of Chattogram in 1843.

The region also sparked the boom in export-oriented ready-made garments, which now account for over 80 percent of the country's export basket, in 1977, when the nation's first RMG unit was built in Kalurghat industrial area.

Furthermore, the oldest and most historic tea trading hub in the country was established in the region in 1949, followed shortly after by the country's pioneering steel re-rolling company, which found a home in the region's

Nasirabad industrial area in 1952.

Additionally, the country's only state-owned fuel oil refinery, Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL), was established in the region in 1968. Currently, a subsidiary of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), which is also headquartered in the division, ERL has a refining capacity of 1.5 million tonnes.

Likewise, state-owned Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL), along with its two associated units, Diammonium Phosphate Fertiliser Company Ltd and local multinational joint venture plant Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company Limited, are located on the southern bank of the Karnaphuli river, with jetty facilities near the port.

Playing host to the country's premier seaport also made Chattogram the ideal venue to host the nation's first export-processing zone, which was developed in South Halishahar in 1983.

SITAKUNDA: A STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

The numbers, provided by the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), show that there are a total of 4,007 registered manufacturing industrial units in greater Chattogram, from Feni to Cox's Bazar, excluding those in export processing zones. Of these, around 2,500 are now operational.

Data from Industrial Police shows that around 1,650 small, medium and heavy industrial units are now

GPH Group Steel Mills and KSRM — and around 30 traditional and semi-automated mills are located in Sitakunda, meeting nearly 50 percent of the nation's total demand for steel.

Four out of the five major CI sheet-making plants are also set up in the sub-district, meeting 70 percent of the country's total demand. These four plants are owned by Abul Khair Group, PHP Family, KDS Group and TK Group.

Despite the massive scale of operations there, Sitakunda remains just a small glimpse into the overall scenario in recent times.

Looking back at history, the Chattogram region's impact on key domestic industries becomes undeniable.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE STEEL SECTOR

There was no steel plant on Bangladeshi soil until 1952. That year, a few merchants hailing from Gujrat took separate initiatives, setting up three or four small manual rod-making plants in Chattogram.

While the other initiatives did not progress well, Akberali Africawala's family, the founders of the first plant under what is now the BSRM Group, found success.

The country's first billet-making plant, the state-owned Chittagong Steel Mills, was also founded here in 1967 before being shuttered 39 years later, paving the way for private initiatives in the sector to flourish.

Although there are around 42 steelmakers in Bangladesh, the

account for around 62 percent of total steel-melting capacity.

BSRM Managing Director Aameir Alihussain said Chattogram has become the place to be for all heavy industries, not only the steel sector, mainly due to its proximity to the port.

Since the steel industry is highly dependent on imports for raw materials, Alihussain said the advantage of being as close to the port as possible comes in the form of low transport costs.

“If you set up a factory anywhere else, such as Dhaka, you need to transport raw materials all the way to Dhaka, and then the finished products need to be brought here again for sale. That makes transport costs very high,” he said.

No steel factory located in Dhaka sells its products in the Chattogram market since it is unviable, he added, saying that heavy industry must be set up in Chattogram.

HUB FOR CI SHEET INDUSTRY

Another pioneering moment came with the establishment of the state-owned Chittagong Steel Mill in 1967, signalling the beginning of domestic production of corrugated iron (CI) sheets used widely for housing and factory roofing.

However, this factory proved inadequate to meet domestic demand.

So, the private sector stepped up in the mid-80s, with some Chattogram-based businesses initiating CI sheet production by importing intermediate raw materials.



operational in Chattogram.

To take a closer look, one must journey to this south-eastern part of the country. And among stories of industrial development, the Sitakunda upazila is a standout.

Before the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, widely considered the country's economic lifeline, reaches the port city, it traverses through this upazila.

This twist of fate has turned the nearly 500 square kilometre sub-district into a bustling industrial hub, with over 200 industrial units springing up.

On one side of the highway, along the sandy beach on the Bay of Bengal, you will find the world's largest ship-breaking industry by volume, handling around half of the world's discarded ships.

On the other side, one can witness various industrial units ranging from steel re-rolling plants, corrugated iron (CI) sheet manufacturing units, cement factories, glass factories, jute mills, textile mills, vehicle assembling units and even container depots.

Four large steel plants of leading business groups — Abul Khair Group, BSRM Group,

four leading producers are based in Chattogram and currently cater to around 53 percent of the nation's total demand, according to market studies and industry insiders.

These four major steelmakers are: Bangladesh Steel Re-Rolling Mills (BSRM), Abul Khair Steel (AKS), GPH Ispat and Kabir Steel Re-Rolling Mills (KSRM).

According to BigMint, a platform for commodity price reporting, market intelligence and consulting, BSRM caters to around 25 percent of domestic demand while AKS contributes 14 percent, GPH 8 percent and KSRM 6 percent.

At present, the country's steelmakers have a combined capacity of 90 lakh tonnes each year against an annual requirement of around 70 lakh tonnes. A BigMint study shows that steel factories in Chattogram

Between 1998 and 2004, five Chattogram-based industrial groups, namely Abul Khair, PHP, TK, KDS and S Alam Group, set up large factories to manufacture raw materials such as cold rolled coils to produce CI sheets.

At present, these five manufacturers control 99 percent of the CI sheet market.

These factories have also invested in producing more durable and multi-dimensional CI sheet products.

SHINING BRIGHTEST IN SHIP-BUILDING

Around 200 registered shipbuilding yards are active across the country, most of which are located in the Narayanganj area.

However, these are mostly conventional operations making commodity and passenger vessels for domestic use.

In the past 25 years, at least 20 shipyards have been modernised and are now capable of building international standard vessels upon extensive modification.

Two out of these 20 shipyards, namely Chattogram-based Western Marine Shipyard and Dhaka-based Ananda Shipyard and Slipways Limited, have set a new benchmark by building and exporting a total of 44 ocean-going vessels since 2007. Chattogram's stake in

this particular segment is also higher than Dhaka's. Out of the 44 ships exported from Bangladesh so far, 34 were built by Western Marine.

The country's first export processing zone was set up in Chattogram in 1983. However, although it offered a sprawling 453 acres of land, only a few industrial units called it home.

In the 42 years since, the number has climbed to 144, including 78 RMG factories.

Since all 501 industrial plots in the zone were allocated around 15 years ago, currently, the factories here are expanding vertically.

The factories at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone exported goods worth \$1.8 billion in the first nine months of this fiscal year.

The largest privately-owned EPZ, the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ), was also set up in Chattogram's Anwara upazila in 1999.

A subsidiary of the South Korean Youngone Corporation, the KEPZ currently hosts 48 industrial units, largely under the ownership of Youngone.

Presently, KEPZ factories export goods worth approximately \$400 million each year.

Another state-run EPZ, named the Karnaphuli EPZ, was set up in 2006. It now has 48 industrial units, including 23 RMG factories, employing over 77,000 individuals.

'COMMERCIAL CAPITAL' IN NAME ONLY

Although the country's second-most populous city is often termed the commercial capital in modern day, many believe it remains a mere political slogan in light of the challenges that the city and the region as a whole still face.

A lack of proper infrastructural development and policy support, courtesy of the negligence of policymakers, forced many entrepreneurs to gradually shift their businesses to Dhaka.

Yet, the region remains at the heart of the country's economy, and the reason for that is simple.

The Chattogram port is the premier driver of the country's economic engine, facilitating 92 percent of Bangladesh's seaborne trade while handling 98 percent of the country's total containerised goods transport.

However, its immense economic potential is stifled by challenges brought on by inadequate infrastructure development and a heavy reliance on Dhaka for crucial regulatory support for business.

Congestion at the Chattogram Port, higher cargo handling costs, higher logistics and transport costs, and inadequate transportation networks hinder the city's economic growth.

Satyajit Barman, head of grain in TK Group, said almost 85 percent of the food grain trading business, once based in Khatunganj, has shifted to Dhaka due to exorbitant cargo handling and transport costs.

Bad management of warehouses and illogical weight limits on carrying cargo transport along the Dhaka-Chattogram highway have also had an impact.

Most businesses stressed the need to address these issues to help Chattogram realise its full potential.

From its golden days to its pivotal role in Bangladesh's industrial rise, Chattogram has always thrived at the intersection of history and opportunity.

Yet, for all its past glory and present potential, the city's future now depends on overcoming infrastructural bottlenecks and policy neglect.

PHOTOS:
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